

The Nexus Between Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Cooperation in Japan-China Relations: Environmental Security and the Construction of a Northeast Asian Region

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Abstract

This paper aims to contribute to the understanding of regional international relations by looking at bilateral and multilateral security cooperation. It focuses on the two major East Asian states, Japan and China. Mostly limited to questions of traditional security, Japan-China relations are often characterized as the result of a power shift, contentions about history or conflicting identities. However, since the 1990s, dynamics of globalization are dramatically changing and complicating the socio-economic and political environment in East Asia. It is thus necessary to analyze regional and bilateral security cooperation comprehensively. This paper therefore seeks to explain the nexus between questions of traditional and non-traditional security in Japan-China relations. It evaluates policy coordination through bilateral and multilateral channels in the areas of environmental security against the background of their overall security-political relationship since the mid-1990s. In this regard, the study analyzes the development of cooperation within the frameworks of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) and the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP). Subsequently, it assesses the proposition that cooperation in areas of non-traditional security is politically easier to realize than cooperation in the area of traditional security, and that such functional cooperation is conducive to the improvement of international relations through the building of political trust. Finally, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of how dynamics of globalization transform the nature of international relations and influence the course of future regional cooperation in East Asia.

Keywords

Japan-China Relations, Regionalism, Confidence and Security Building Measures, Environmental Security, Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting, Northwest Pacific Action Plan

Introduction

Over the past decades, waves of economic development caused a surge in intra-regional trade flows, led to a certain degree of division of labour between East Asian countries and to the emergence of nascent regional structures. More importantly, the spread of similar patterns of increasing economic production and consumption, as well as other dynamics of globalization such as the accelerating spread of new means of telecommunication and transportation are rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in Northeast Asia. Subsequently, issues of social, energy, maritime, environmental and human security became part of the political agendas. Given their transnational character, all of these developments foster the expansion of interests and practices beyond established boundaries (Rosenau 1996). Despite steadily growing interdependence, however, regional political cooperation has remained modest. Mutual distrust continues to hinder further integration of communities and prevents effective solutions to transnational security challenges. Most striking is the lack of collective action due to the complicated relations between the two major actors of the region, Japan and China.

By looking at Japan-China security relations, this study shall contribute to the understanding of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. It analyzes the interplay between the management of policies in traditional security on the one hand and non-traditional security on the other hand. While traditional security involves the prevention and defence from attacks by

organised, state-controlled armed forces, non-traditional security encompasses a wide range of threats to national and human security as well as the responses to them. Similar to neo-functional explanations of regionalism it is often argued that East Asian regional cooperation in response to non-traditional security concerns is politically easier to achieve than cooperation in traditional security matters (Akaha 2004, Valencia 2000, Wang 2005). The main argument is that non-traditional security threats create imperatives for states and political communities to work together in order to solve the problems affecting their stability. Moreover, it is argued that cooperation in areas of non-traditional security in functional issues, contributes to the building of political trust and therefore leads to enhanced international security-political cooperation. Other reasons might be that relevant issues are not associated with deliberate, targeted and sudden state action which threatens the core of another state's national security, that is territorial and political control. So as to assess this claim, and given the profound impact of dynamics of globalization in the form of rapid economic development on East Asian states and societies in particular, an important puzzle is how non-traditional security problems and traditional national security concerns are interlinked. This leads to the following questions: How did Japan-China cooperation in the area of non-traditional security develop since the mid-1990s compared to cooperation in areas of traditional security? Did the nature and quality of cooperation in non-traditional security differ from the one in traditional security? If so, why did it show differences? And why did cooperation in areas of non-traditional security happen in some cases and why not in others?

Because rapid industrialization and changing patterns of consumption as hallmarks of East Asian development lead to the increasingly salient depletion of natural resources and are the sources of transboundary air and ocean pollution, environmental security is of particular importance to regional cooperation.

This paper argues that provided a basic political will, environmental security cooperation can serve as a diplomatic tool to further and improve bilateral relations in the security-political sphere. The analysis of two cooperation mechanisms reveals that inter-governmental cooperation at the working level is fraught with various problems of collective action ranging from questions of financing to transparency, and governing capacity. Despite the limited progress of environmental security cooperation at the working level, however, the study comes to the conclusion that cooperative rhetoric and symbolic action which put other countries in a positive light are able to build political trust between states and societies. As a result of the growing awareness of the need for environmental protection, the fact that Northeast Asia is ecologically a region translates into enhanced political regional cooperation.

The argument is presented as follows. The second section of the paper clarifies the concept of security and discusses its application to environmental problems. The third section elaborates on how non-traditional security cooperation may lead to the improvement of political relations. The fourth section outlines the development of the security-political relationship between Tokyo and Beijing to be used as a benchmark. The fifth section explores environmental security cooperation in Japan-China relations at the high diplomatic level. The sixth and seventh sections assess environmental security cooperation at the ministerial and working levels by looking at case studies of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) and the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP). The final section concludes with the assessment of the proposition that environmental security cooperation is conducive to the improvement of bilateral relations and subsequently leads to better regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Security as Stability of Social Order

In order to operationalize the concept of security it is necessary to answer the questions about the referent of security and the range and nature of threats which are of concern. The conceptualization of security developed by Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde (1998) explains

how specific issues become objects of security politics and analysis. An actor describes a problem or a phenomenon as something exceptional which is existentially threatening a specific referent object. The argument is that therefore emergency measures which go beyond the common political process need to be taken. The success of these securitization moves in the form of a 'speech-acts' which are mostly performed by political actors depends on whether or not, the audience accepts it and adopts the threat perception. According to this definition, security is of a subjective quality and essentially a product of communicative interaction. Caballero-Anthony et al. (2006) point to the importance of closer analysis of the questions why securitization occurs and how it takes place. This includes questions about the motives and intentions of securitizing actors as well as the impact of securitization on political outcomes. The fact that certain social groups or individuals are often unable to voice their concerns in political processes means that securitization may not occur, despite the objective presence of existential threats to individuals and communities.

This raises the question of whether the state as referent object is the appropriate unit of analysis. As Dupont (2001:229) stresses out '(...) the security of states has no real meaning if divorced from its human constituents'. This is even more the case when one tries to define the desirable outcome of activities to render human communities secure. Camilleri (2000) asserts that what is critical is the maintenance of a social order which is able to generate sufficient degrees of confidence into the future. Security is therefore a psycho-social condition. In an effort to give the concept explanatory power despite its multidimensional character, Camilleri (2000:308) in line with McSweeney (1999), conversely defines *insecurity* as 'related to the experience of social disruption, the fragility of social relationships, the absence of cognitive control over, or affective empathy with, various forms of human interaction (which obviously include the ecological implications of such interaction)'. Camilleri consequently defines insecurity as the 'perceived disruption – actual or potential – of the social order'. In this paradigm where insecurity is inextricably linked with the problem of collective identity, nationalism and the nation-state are modern and far-reaching responses to the experience of insecurity (Camilleri 2000). However, problems such as the lack of capacity and good governance, as well as the increasing salience of transnational phenomena challenge the conventional notion of states as single providers of security for their citizen. This is especially the case in East Asia, where the distinction between state and government is often blurred as the latter itself is constituted by the ruling party. Opposing the ruling party therefore means opposing the state (Tow, Thakur, Hyun 2000). The resulting priority of the preservation of political power by governments has the implication that the safety and welfare of citizens, let alone environmental concerns are of secondary importance. As a consequence, there can be no reliable analysis of security problems without a close look at the underlying social and institutional conditions.

With the development of new concepts of security after the end of the Cold War it has become common to speak about environmental security, and globalization is increasingly understood in this context. The main reason is that beginning from the 20th Century, human development is characterized by the enormous expansion of the global population and its movement into urban areas. As a result, systems have been established to move various sorts of commodities from rural areas into burgeoning cities (Dalby 2008). This phenomenon is especially true for Northeast Asia. The question is therefore what meaning environmental security has for the authorities in Tokyo and Beijing and how it influences bilateral relations. Empirical evidence does not support the general argument that environmental security problems lead to interstate conflict. Rather, environmental degradation does affect local communities and may contribute to domestic instability (Homer-Dixon 1999; Deudney 1999). However, transnational environmental problems do have high potential to affect the relations between states adversely (Elliott 2002). In this context, it is useful to look at the securitization of environmental degradation because it shows how issues become the part of political

agendas and which priority they get. Securitization triggers two debates: one about the underlying risk assessment, and one about the strategic answer to it. Moreover, if the security discourse persists, it will result in community-building and institutionalization (De Wilde 2008). De Wilde also notes that in large parts of these discourses, more often than the environment itself, the preservation of existing levels of civilization is the referent object. Ultimately, the debate is therefore about which groups (professions, industries, and countries) need to change their behaviour in order to render the patterns of consumption sustainable and reduce the threats to common environmental security (De Wilde 2008). On this background, Deudney (1999) opposes the securitization of environmental problems and their linking with national security, as he fears that it would reinforce the 'us' versus 'them' thinking which he sees as inherent to nations and intensify interstate tensions.

The analysis of official documents and the discourses among opinion leaders in Northeast Asia reveals that, with the exception of climate change and hydrocarbon supplies, environmental concerns are securitized only to a very limited extent. Instead, resource scarcity, pollution and environmental degradation are widely understood as technical problems. One reason might be that the environmental security agenda, due to its dimensions which require the fundamental change of much of the present global structures in terms of world economy, international system and cosmopolitan values, is simply unmanageable (De Wilde 2008). Moreover, environmental threats appear in various shapes and affect communities in different, often gradual ways and to different extents. It is therefore difficult to include these phenomena in a consistent securitizing act. Lastly, those actors who would be in positions to securitize environmental problems, despite their salience in view of social stability, may not be interested to allow for any social mobilization out of fear of the loss political control.

Despite these drawbacks, the analytical lens of security studies is applied for this research as it provides a consistent conceptual framework on the one hand, and helps to answer the question of social (and political) mobilization with regard to international cooperation on the other hand. The fact that non-traditional security concerns such as environmental scarcity and pollution are often of transnational character means that transnational and international cooperation is necessary to address these common problems. The strict adherence to norms of non-interference and classical understandings of state sovereignty often hinder pragmatic cooperation and even prevent effective domestic responses. The next section briefly reviews propositions for why and how increasing interdependence among states leads to stronger intergovernmental cooperation and may weaken 'us' versus 'them' and 'inside hierarchic order and security' versus 'outside anarchy and insecurity' conceptions of the global system.

Explaining Regional Intergovernmental Cooperation

In view of the difficulties to substantially improve the relations between Japan and China in the area of traditional security due to the lack of political trust, it is often argued that instead of focussing on the disputed issues only, one should shed more light and devote more efforts to areas in which common interests can easier be identified. It is argued that, by focussing on more technical questions there are possibilities to build trust through cooperation which will eventually spill-over into the security-political realm, and help to alleviate politico-military threat perceptions. At the least, such cooperation in East Asian maritime affairs in particular, is seen as an effective confidence and security building measure (Valencia 2000). This way of looking at things becomes salient when the increasing interdependence of East Asia societies and states is considered.

The question to be explored is under what conditions and how political communities are able to improve cooperation between them. Deutsch (1964:11) elaborated on several factors which determine political integration understood as '(...) `state of mind` or disposition

to be cohesive, to act together, and to be committed to mutual programs (...)' . The argument which is most referred to with regard to East Asia is the importance of shared functional interests. In his transactionalist approach Deutsch points to the necessity of determining the relevance and extent of shared functional interests according to the belief of the people involved rather than on the basis of the actual reality. Moreover, as functional interests may change, a closer look at the politically dominant interest groups is in order. Haas' (1964) neofunctionalist approach is best known for the argument that cooperation in one sector generates spillover effects and leads to the deepening, and the broadening of cooperation to other sectors, and eventually makes political loyalties shift to new institutions. The weaknesses of the seminal works of Deutsch and Haas which make their approaches difficult to be applied to Northeast Asia are twofold. First, the diversity of political and economic systems in the region means that the necessary background conditions are partly nonexistent (Acharya, Johnston 2007). Second, both approaches, although they do mention ideational factors, neglect the importance of socialization processes which determine the values and norms which political communities hold and consequently affect domestic as well as international integration (Risse 2006). With regard to security studies, the second shortcoming means that the interplay between so-called `high-politics` of traditional security and the `low-politics` of non-traditional security can hardly be explained.¹ In view of the salience of history disputes, territorial disputes and military modernization which characterize international relations in East Asia, however, the discussion of changes in mutual images, norms of non-interference and sovereignty, as well as the construction of threat perceptions are essential in explaining the lack of collective action.

In order to assess the influence of dynamics of globalization on Northeast Asian international relations and the relevance of non-traditional security cooperation, this paper will first explore whether and why cooperation in non-traditional security issues may be easier to achieve than cooperation in traditional security issues. Second, it seeks to verify and specify how functional cooperation may increase political trust between two state actors. Functional cooperation, that is cooperation in non-traditional security issues, may be easier to realize between Japan and China because:

1. it is suitable for individual politicians to serve as diplomatic tool to bring positive contributions into high-level meetings with their foreign counterparts and results from their efforts to show their constituencies;
2. it is less publicized in the media and thus less sensitive for politicians in weak power positions to undertake and to sell compromises to their constituencies;
3. it is less controversial because the concerned issues are not directly touching founding myths (historical understandings) of a social group and a particular state;
4. compromise in functional areas is not perceived as reducing the own security in view of a threat from the other party, because non-traditional security threats do not originate from deliberate state action. As a result, structural (geopolitical) constraints are largely inexistent;
5. it is easier to find non-controversial areas to engage the counterpart, because the possibilities for technical cooperation outnumber the contentious issues of traditional security issues by far, and
6. technical questions allow it to advance cooperation through small steps because they are often more complicated and can be deconstructed.

In short, one could ask whether the distinction between non-traditional security cooperation and traditional security cooperation is one between technical, fact-based versus symbolic, ideational actions of a state. With regard to the second argument to be assessed in this paper,

functional cooperation, that is non-traditional security cooperation, may build political trust because:

- A) functional cooperation reinforces the parties' qualities as partners, equal actors and political subjects instead of making one party an object of international politics;
- B) successful cooperation demonstrates ability and capacity of a political actor as common problem-solver, thereby increasing its domestic and international legitimacy;
- C) it helps to de-securitize a relationship through technical dialogues, the exchange and generating of common knowledge, and the dissemination of this knowledge to increase transparency and predictability;
- D) it engages, nurtures and creates cooperative elements (epistemic communities) of a social group or a state and gives them a bigger role;
- E) it allows for social mobilization and the strengthening of political leadership without the necessity of the 'othering' of another social group or state.
- F) it increases the amount and the quality of communication between the respective state administrations.

In order to evaluate the similarities and differences between traditional and non-traditional security relations, the development of Japan-China bilateral cooperation in the area of traditional security shall be compared with the area of environmental security as example of one non-traditional security concern. For the purpose of this research project, environmental security is limited to transboundary ocean and air pollution which affects public health and has detrimental effects on farming and fishery in neighbouring states (Harris 2002, Kim 2004).

The sphere of environmental security has been chosen because it is considered as growing in salience due to the rapid growth of industrial production and consumption, and the enlargement of common markets combined with other systemic dynamics such as population growth, the spread of new technologies and the increasing mobility of people. It is relevant since it is related to the ability of the respective societies to meet their basic needs, to secure and improve their living standards, and ultimately to maintain political stability. As a result, environmental issues are a significant factor in the bilateral relations between Japan and China. Moreover, national governments as regulators are heavily involved and remain important actors. Lastly, environmental cooperation is clearly more technical in nature and therefore, allegedly, provides better opportunities for cooperation between states than issues of traditional security.

In order to strengthen the analytical coherence of the study, the impact of climate change on international security and international cooperation is excluded because it is of global nature. Second, the study will not directly discuss the politics of Japanese official development aid (ODA) to China. The reason is that ODA, as a term describing the way of funding is a form of cooperation which is largely motivated by material incentives rather than based on normative grounds. Thus, such forms of cooperation in which one party is paid for changing its behaviour are less suitable for the assessment of understandings which may lead policy-changes in the long-term. The mechanisms of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) and the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) are chosen as case studies because they make it possible to cover three different levels of interaction between the Japanese and Chinese state's administrations: the head of state (diplomatic), the ministerial, and the working level. Moreover, as indicated below, these mechanisms feature prominently on the foreign policy agendas of both, Japan and China.² The cases do not necessarily provide enough evidence to generalize the conclusions. Nevertheless, the insights help to understand the argument that increasing interdependence leads to better cooperation.

The Evolution of Cooperation in Traditional Security Between Japan and China

In order to make the fields of traditional and non-traditional security comparable, it is not only necessary to outline the general trends, but also to describe the changing patterns of cooperation ranging from the head of state down to the working level. With regard to the general trends since the mid-1990s, two points seem most important. First, the Japanese side is worried about the modernization drive of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) which is accompanied and financially bolstered by the rapid growth of the Chinese economy. Prime Minister Hashimoto during his visit to China in September 1997 clearly addressed this concern which became more and more pronounced with the continued increases in defence spending, especially in the areas of strategic weapons, the air force and the navy.³ The Chinese navy's enhanced activities around Japan from spring 2000 on and the lack of transparency on matters of national defence contributed to rising threat perceptions until today (MOD 2008). Second, on the Chinese side, there is a longstanding anxiety over the status of Taiwan, as well as the reaction of other East Asian states and the US on the increase of its political and military weight. In this regard, the development of more active Japanese security policies and the continuing strengthening of the military alliance with the United States are of importance (Hughes 2006, Midford 2004).

When Prime Minister Hosokawa visited Beijing in March 1994, a series of cooperative projects in various fields were agreed upon. This included the resumption of the defense dialogues which were suspended after the Tian An Men incident. Subsequently, bilateral security dialogues were held annually. These talks continued even through the difficult times when the tensions between Taiwan and the Mainland strongly affected Japan-China relations, the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands dispute escalated, the Guidelines for US-Japanese Defense Cooperation were revised, and Prime Minister Hashimoto visited the Yasukuni-shrine in 1996.

At the occasion of the visit of Chinese defence minister Chi Haotian to Tokyo in February 1998, an agreement on defence exchanges was signed with the intention to give the previous meetings, which were largely symbolic and superficial, more depth and content.⁴ During Jiang Zemin's visit to Japan in November 1998, similarly to 1994 and 1997, a wide range of areas of cooperation were identified. Among the so-called 33 points were also new proposals for confidence and security building measures in the military sphere. These included the establishment of a 'hotline' between Beijing and Tokyo through which, in case of an unforeseen incident, both governments would have the possibility to immediately clarify a critical situation related to national security with the competent authority on the other side. Moreover, mutual port-calls by naval ships were proposed. The promotion of defence exchanges was again a main point on the agenda when the Chief of the Japan Defense Agency visited Beijing in May 1999. When Prime Minister Zhu Rongji visited Tokyo in October 2000 amid intense diplomatic negotiations on various issues such the increased Chinese naval activities, the flaring up of the East China Sea territorial disputes, tensions between Taiwan and the Mainland, and Japan's UN Security Council bid, the hotline proposal was still not implemented, although it had been agreed upon in principle several times before.

Only in 2003 the limited plans for defence exchanges were put into practice when the Chinese National Defence University and the Japanese National Institute of Defense Studies started to exchange colonel-class personnel (Masuda 2009). A prior notice system for ocean research around disputed areas in the East China Sea, agreed upon by the foreign ministries in February 2001, could not prevent confrontations around the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands. The situation became most critical in 2004 and 2005 when the Japan Coast Guard arrested Mainland activists on one of the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands, and Beijing dispatched ships of the People's Liberation Army Navy to the island group (Valencia 2007). Only after the Prime Ministers Wen Jiabao and Abe Shinzo again agreed on mutual port calls of naval ships and defence exchanges in April 2007, the proposals dating back to 1998 were partly implemented. At the occasion of President Hu Jintao's visit to Japan in May 2008 there was an

understanding that cooperation between Chinese and Japanese defence forces should be enhanced in areas such as disaster relief and peace-keeping operations, and deepened down to the military unit level. The proposal of hotlines between political and defence authorities of Japan and China, however, has not been implemented until today. Neither does a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on search and rescue at sea between Japan and China exist, although the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) does encourage littoral states to do so (Samuels 2008).⁵

Apparently, cooperation in the area of traditional security is strongly influenced by the state and the fluctuations of bilateral political relations. While defence dialogues and exchanges became slightly more sophisticated over the years, they did not lead to an alleviation of mutual threat perceptions, and there was no significant progress in the area of security cooperation. If we explore the causes which hinder the establishment of basic confidence and security building measures, not to mention political compromises to de-escalate tensions and build trust, several points are worth discussing in order to compare them with obstacles to cooperation in the non-traditional security sphere.

First, given their wartime history, there is a longstanding enmity between the military establishments in both countries, which may in many cases root deeper than those among politicians, and directly translate into threat perceptions and strategic calculations.⁶ The Cold War and post-Cold War security order in East Asia did not change these perceptions (Drifte 2003). Second, since military thinking and planning is designed and tasked to prepare the defence of national security interests in any contingency, territorial disputes in the East China Sea make the PLA and the Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF) automatically become adversaries. Third, the prevailing public opinion in each country towards the other, coupled with the weakness of the incumbent political leaders, makes it difficult for politicians to compromise on territorial disputes and other longstanding controversial issues. As a result, there is not much room to improve the situation. The fact that the cautious attempt of President Hu and Prime Minister Fukuda in 2008 to separate the exploration of natural gas in the East China Sea from territorial claims stalled, is a good illustration of this point. Chinese commentators saw the deal as giving in to groundless Japanese claims. An additional reason, however, may have been the change in political leadership with the election of Aso Taro to Prime Minister, and the increasing unpredictability due to the lack of political continuity in Tokyo. Fourth, structural (geopolitical) factors seem to inhibit the establishment of bilateral confidence and security building measures as well. In 2008, hotlines between the Chinese and Korean navies and air forces, as well as relevant Chinese and the US authorities, were set up. Contrary to that, different definitions of 'hotline' seem to be the obstacle between Tokyo and Beijing. Thus, for the Japanese side, Beijing's desire to include information exchange on JSDF activities which are conducted under the US-Japan alliance, such as the prior notice of combined US-Japanese exercises, is not acceptable. On the other hand, the Chinese side has the impression that the Japanese authorities, due to their strong desire not to upset US interests and strengthen the alliance, show too little flexibility and are thus unable to conclude a reciprocal agreement when it comes to the exchange of information.⁷

In summary, one is compelled to conclude that in the area of traditional security cooperation very few, if any substantial progress has been made since the mid-1990s. This is despite the significant improvement of diplomatic relations from September 2006 on. Against this backdrop, the significant cooling down of diplomatic relations around 1996 and especially in the period from 2001 to 2006 provides a good frame of reference for a comparison with the evolution of cooperation in non-traditional security matters.

Environmental Cooperation in High-level Bilateral Diplomatic Relations

When Prime Minister Hosokawa visited Beijing in March 1994, the first agreement between Japan and China on environmental protection was signed. Its main purpose was to establish

the 'Japan-China Joint Committee on Environmental Protection and Cooperation' which serves as means to exchange of views on environmental issues, as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the field. In May 1996, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Japan-China peace treaty, the 'Sino-Japan Friendship Center for Environmental Protection' and the 'Japan-China Comprehensive Forum on Environmental Cooperation' were established.

At the bilateral summit between Prime Minister Hashimoto and President Jiang Zemin in September 1997, the project titled 'Japan-China Environmental Cooperation Toward the 21st Century' was proposed. It consisted of two pillars: the 'Japan-China Environmental Development Model Cities Plan', and the 'Project for Improvement in Environmental Information Network'. Prime Minister Hashimoto, in his analysis of international relations in East Asia and between China and Japan mentioned environmental issues, including climate change, energy conservation, and trade and investment as particularly important areas for bilateral cooperation.⁸ Subsequently, in April 1999, the 3rd Joint Experts Meeting selected Guiyang, Chongqing and Dalian as model cities and the two governments agreed on the exchange of notes in regard to the portion of the 4th ODA Yen Loan which included related projects. During Jiang Zemin's visit to Japan in November 1998, 33 points of cooperation, including environmental protection were agreed upon. Also, as a positive gesture, Jiang brought with him the declaration of full membership of China in the Japan-sponsored initiative to monitor acid rain deposition in East Asia (EANET) (Nam 2002). At the occasion of the July 1999 visit to Beijing, Prime Minister Obuchi proposed the set up of a 10 billion yen fund in Japan, encouraging Japanese citizens' groups and other bodies to engage in greening cooperation in China. The proposal was meant to become a third pillar in Japan-China environmental cooperation, together with the two initiatives undertaken by his predecessors Takeshita and Hashimoto. Japanese assistance to China in environmental protection continued as the priority of the revised ODA policy implemented from 2001.⁹ However, environmental cooperation only resurfaced in official statements again, together with other areas, when Prime Minister Abe visited Beijing in October 2006.¹⁰

The intention to promote bilateral relations with environmental cooperation became more concrete when Wen Jiabao visited Tokyo in April 2007. Now, environmental cooperation was declared as one, or even the main means to 'construct a mutually beneficial strategic relationship based on common strategic interests'. The 'Joint Statement on the Enhancement of Cooperation for Environmental Protection' included a comprehensive and detailed list of areas and projects in which cooperation should be enhanced. Moreover, the statement explicitly mentioned the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM), the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP), the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) and ASEAN+3 as frameworks to promote regional environmental cooperation. Bilateral mechanisms such as the Japan-China Joint Committee on Environmental Protection and Cooperation, the Japan-China Comprehensive Forum on Environmental Cooperation, and the Sino-Japan Friendship Center for Environmental Protection were included as well.¹¹ At the occasion of the visit of Hu Jintao to Japan in May 2008, a number of cooperation projects related to environmental protection and management were positively mentioned and enhanced cooperation was agreed upon.¹² Finally, when Communist Party of China's (CPC) Politburo Standing Committee Member Li Changchun (the head of the CPC's propaganda department) visited Tokyo in March 2009, the call for enhanced environmental cooperation was the main message delivered to the public. Other than the ones mentioned above, environmental issues were brought up as items on the agendas of the meetings between China, South Korea and Japan on the sidelines of ASEAN+3. These included the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meetings (TEMM), the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) and others.¹³

From the analysis of the above official press releases, statements and declarations, one can conclude the following. First, that environmental protection is seen as common interest

and frequently put forward as a mean to strengthen bilateral and regional cooperation. Second, when political relations were most tense, environmental cooperation was not mentioned because there was no will to cooperate, and sometimes not even to communicate. The diplomatic use of environmental cooperation suggests that the impetus which is required to start major projects presupposes a relatively improved political situation and mutual willingness to advance by changing the basic framework of bilateral relations. This was the case in 1994, 1998 and 2007, but not during the period from 2001 to September 2006. The following sections will look at two case studies in order to analyze the nexus between environmental cooperation and traditional security cooperation at the ministerial and the working level.

The Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM)

The TEMM mechanism established in 1999 is the highest level of intergovernmental cooperation on environment in Northeast Asia. At the annual meetings, the three environment ministers exchange information, views, and concerns about regional problems. They also discuss potential measures to address and further promote environmental cooperation. Additionally, there exists a working group which acts as secretariat and proposal-making body. Recently, an ad hoc working group of the three Director-Generals on dust and sandstorms has also been convened. The priority areas of TEMM are: 1) raising the awareness that the three countries belong to the same environmental community 2) promoting information exchange 3) strengthening cooperation in environmental research 4) fostering cooperation in environment-related industries and transfer of environmental technologies 5) exploring appropriate measures to prevent air pollution and to protect the marine environment, and 6) the strengthening cooperation to address global environmental issues such as biodiversity and climate change. In addition, the scope of meetings was expanded to include waste management, chemical pollution, energy, water-related issues, as well as the reconstructing of societies upon sound material cycles and circular economies.¹⁴

Over the last 10 years, annual meetings were hosted and chaired on a rotating basis. Each meeting produced a joint communiqué, and identified various projects within the five priority areas listed above. Thus, according to those involved, officials of the three countries have been working closely together and built mutual trust.¹⁵ In this respect, personal relationships are explicitly mentioned as being significant to ensure the sustainability of TEMM. As such, it is probably the politically most stable mechanism among the three countries, only comparable to the finance ministers meetings.¹⁶ Despite the fact that the projects implemented by TEMM have been small compared to the environmental problems in the region, its importance for concrete outcomes in the promotion of environmental cooperation in the region is allegedly widely acknowledged.¹⁷

A closer look at the joint communiqués of the annual meetings shows that there have been discussions on various environmental concerns, as well as approaches and initiatives to address them. Also, the agenda has been expanded as new problems such as marine litter and transboundary movement of hazardous wastes became salient. While the joint communiqué of 2004 reveals that there has been discontent because of the lack of output orientation, effectiveness and efficiency of TEMM projects, the more recent communiqués all convey the message that the cooperation at the ministerial level has been good and that TEMM projects were output-oriented and effective. The communiqués do acknowledge, however, the need for the promotion of collaborative research, information and data exchange, and the enhancement of specific measures to address environmental degradation in Northeast Asia.¹⁸ In order to make TEMM more efficient and able to contribute more to the management of the regional environment, a recent tripartite report proposed to lay down basic principles and objectives of TEMM, to set up a secretariat, to create a body for proposal-making and implementation supervision, to establish a financial mechanism, and to coordinate project implementation.¹⁹

Various programmes and projects undertaken at the national and multilateral level are regularly recognized as important and worth supporting by the three ministers. This includes initiatives such as the COOL BIZ campaign which obliges Japanese government officials to work in offices with air-conditioning set at 28C in summer while allowed to dress less formal. At the same time, other concerns and programmes such as acid deposition, waste management or ocean pollution were continuously discussed with few if any visible progress over the years. This suggests that TEMM operates at the lowest common denominator. While the commissioning of a tripartite research report on environmental management in Northeast Asia may be seen as an achievement, better coordination among the various initiatives is urgently needed if substantial progress is to be made.²⁰ This situation has not changed since the publication of previous research (Nam 2002). Apart from the fact that projects implemented under the auspices of TEMM are small-scale and mostly limited to the organization of conferences and workshops, it remains questionable whether TEMM was able to provide political impetus and support for more substantial projects in priority areas.²¹ Nevertheless, TEMM seems to be a political-diplomatic success as the working atmosphere between the ministers was good and constructive, despite considerable diplomatic tensions between the countries, for example in 2004 and 2005.

TEMM is arguably the most important mechanism for the promotion of environmental cooperation in Northeast Asia and an indication of the strong will of the participants to cooperate on matters related to the environment.²² Thus, it can be seen as an umbrella framework within which other initiatives and projects are conducted. In order to see how the allegedly good cooperation at the ministerial level translates into effective action, it is necessary to analyze the progress of specific projects which were implemented under the political sponsorship of the three environment ministries. The following section therefore aims to assess the effective output of environmental cooperation by looking at a project which is repeatedly mentioned in the TEMM joint communiqués.

The Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)

NOWPAP was adopted by the People's Republic of China, Japan, South Korea and Russia as part of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Regional Seas Programme in 1994. This form of cooperation dates back to 1991, when national representatives of the four countries met in Vladivostok to discuss an action plan for the environmental management of the Northwest Pacific.²³ The overall goal of NOWPAP is 'the wise use and development of the coastal and marine environment so as to obtain the utmost long-term benefits for the human population of the region while protecting human health, ecological integrity and the region's sustainability for future generations'. More precisely, this leads to a strategy for wise management of the Northwest Pacific area which consists of five elements that are: monitoring and assessment of the environmental condition; creation of an efficient and effective information base; integrated coastal area planning; integrated coastal area management and the establishment of a collaborative and cooperative framework.²⁴

The implementation of the action plan is principally to be financed by the member state's contributions to a trust fund of at least 400'000 US Dollars (USD) annually. Initial financial and administrative support was available from UNEP while the littoral states are responsible for the plan's implementation. The annual intergovernmental meetings (IGM) represent the main governing body of NOWPAP. Moreover, UNEP was aiming for the early establishment of a regional coordinating unit (RCU) to be responsible for the execution and coordination of the projects under the action plan.

The following history shows the most important steps in the development of the regional action plan and its implementation. The 1st IGM in 1994 formally adopted the action plan and included the identification of five priority areas. The 2nd IGM in 1996 approved the geographical scope and a tentative scale of contributions to the trust fund for 1997. The 4th

IGM in 1999 led to the agreement on the establishment of 4 Regional Activity Centres (RAC). The 6th IGM in 2000 agreed in principle to establish a co-hosted regional coordinating unit (RCU) in Toyama, Japan and Busan, South Korea. The 7th IGM in 2002 led to a detailed agreement on a plan for the establishment of the RCU in Toyama and Busan. Moreover, in 2002, the RACs in Beijing (Data & Information Network RAC/DINRAC), Daejeon (Marine Environmental Emergency Preparedness & Response RAC/MERRAC), Toyama (Special Monitoring & Coastal Environmental Assessment RAC/CEARAC), and Vladivostok (Pollution Monitoring RAC/POMRAC) became operational. The technical coordination and information exchange between the 4 RAC's and the RCU on their respective projects, apart from the IGM, is ensured through so-called national Focal Points Meetings (FPM) held annually by each RAC. The 8th IGM in 2003 adopted the NOWPAP regional oil spill contingency plan. In 2004, the co-hosted RCU was opened in Busan and Toyama and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Regional Cooperation Regarding Preparedness and Response to Oil Spills was signed. The 10th IGM in 2005 approved new directions for RAC's, expanded the geographical coverage of the NOWPAP oil spill contingency plan, and approved a marine litter activity. The 12th IGM in 2007 approved in principle the draft of a regional action plan on marine litter and the draft text of the NOWPAP Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan expanded to include noxious substance spills. The latter was formally adopted at the 13th IGM in 2008. Most recently, the 14th IGM in 2009 agreed on the development of a project on the assessment of the current status of marine and coastal biodiversity in the NOWPAP region.

Looking at the development of the NOWPAP mechanism, it seems appropriate to say that steady progress has been made in terms of organizational development and the implementation of projects. The biggest success of NOWPAP is the MOU on a regional contingency plan in the event of oil and noxious substance spills. Subsequently, oil spill exercises were conducted in the Aniva Bay (Sakhalin) in 2006 by Russia and Japan, and in 2008 near Qingdao with participation of South Korea and China. The NOWPAP contingency plan successfully went through a reality check when Korean, Chinese, Japanese and Russian authorities joined hands to fight 'the worst ever oil spill in the Korean history' which happened in December 2007 near the port of Incheon.²⁵

As it becomes apparent, a first complication in regional cooperation happened, when Japan and South Korea could not agree on where to establish the regional coordinating unit (RCU). Both countries vied for the leadership and control in establishing NOWPAP. Eventually, its functions were split between a branch in Busan and one in Toyama, and UNEP stayed in charge of it. The most pressing concern, however, is financial. NOWPAP started with the goal of establishing an initial trust fund of 400'000 USD. For the year 2008, the tentative contributions of Japan and South Korea covered the major shares of USD 125'000 and 100'000 respectively, while Russia was ready to commit 50'000 and China 40'000 USD.²⁶ Here, it is necessary to note that Russia did not contribute for about 8 years. Moreover, the operation of the two-split RCU consumes a big proportion of the small budget.²⁷ Given the enormous problems with water and air pollution around industrial areas, NOWPAP with its focus on environmental protection of coastal areas, is of second or third priority to the Chinese government. This may be different from the importance which Japan and South Korea attach to the protection of their long coast lines. Moreover, there is a general attitude in China, that developed countries carry greater responsibility and need to share a bigger burden in environmental protection since their earlier economic development caused irreversible environmental damages which needs to be taken into account nowadays. As a result, China is willing to increase its contribution proportionately based on the principle of 'common but differentiated responsibilities', if other countries increase theirs. While Seoul is relatively flexible, Tokyo seems only willing to increase its share if Beijing shoulders a proportionately bigger share.²⁸

When it comes to the technical operation of NOWPAP RACs, the diverging national priorities are also reflected. Japan pays importance to marine litter and coastal environmental assessment whereas South Korea and China want to focus on alien invasive species in the future. While this kind of technical discussions is inherent to multilateral frameworks, the differences grow in salience when the tight budget and unequal cost-sharing is considered. Further, the administrative structures in each state are prone to complicate national and international cooperation. In China, the Ministry of Environmental Protection is responsible for NOWPAP while the effective environmental management of coastal and marine areas is the realm of the State Ocean Administration which is directly subordinate to the State Council and therefore not obliged to report to the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Issues related to sea-traffic on the other hand, fall into the competence of the Ministry of Transportation's Maritime Safety Administration MSA and the ships of the Fishery Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture patrol the seas as well.²⁹ In Japan, the Coast Guard, as part of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport is comprehensively responsible for the coastal environment and needs to coordinate with the Ministry of the Environment. The inter-agency coordination problem becomes even more pronounced when the important role of local governments for the success in reaching the goals of NOWPAP is considered. Despite this fact, NOWPAP does not include local governments. It can thus be concluded that maritime environmental management which naturally includes coastal areas, is a complex undertaking since it requires extensive national and international collaboration. A further major obstacle to effective environmental management has been the unwillingness, and partly the inability, of national agencies and the involved researchers to disclose and exchange scientific data within NOWPAP. This is a very significant shortcoming as consensual scientific knowledge is the indispensable base for any future strategies and projects. Another political issue which affects the goal of NOWPAP is the absence of North Korea in the framework. Last, but not insignificant are the difficulties caused by the lack of English language competence among the involved officials.³⁰ According to one source this stands in contrast to the UNEP Regional Seas Program covering Southeast Asia, where communication between officials is much easier in this respect.

In short, one is compelled to conclude that the positive rhetoric at high-level meetings between heads of state, prime ministers and environment ministers, which so often stressed the importance of environmental protection, and programs such as NOWPAP in particular, did not translate into much action and output at the working level. Although there were a number concrete projects implemented, they remain small scale, are insufficiently coordinated and suffer from basic problems due to the lack of political will to invest resources and cooperate stronger. Does this mean that the cooperation in environmental security is meaningless for the improvement of the security-political relations between Japan and China?

Conclusion: The Meaning of Environmental Security Cooperation for Northeast Asia

The first part of this section draws the conclusion with regard to the question whether and why cooperation in environmental security issues is politically easier to realize than in traditional security issues. From the analysis of high-level diplomatic meetings since the mid-1990s, it can be concluded that environmental cooperation serves as diplomatic tool to promote intergovernmental cooperation between Japan and China. This is possible since there is an understanding that the advancement of environmental protection is a win-win situation for all. In this area, both countries were able to find a role which is accepted by the other. While China can learn from Japan's experience and technological knowledge to alleviate its environmental problems, Japanese firms are able to sell their products and services while negative effects of environmental degradation originating in China and affecting Japan can be reduced. This kind of cooperation is therefore seen as mutually beneficial. However, the lack of progress between 2001 and 2006 shows that a basic willingness for cooperation at the top

political level is a precondition for the improvement of the existing, as well as the establishment of new frameworks of intergovernmental cooperation.

Despite the prevailing mistrust, cooperation in environmental protection may be easier to achieve because it is not considered to be politically sensitive. This means that politicians and bureaucrats who cooperate with the other side are far less scrutinized for the engagement with the difficult neighbour. One reason therefore is that environmental security cooperation does not touch upon questions which are linked to the historical understandings which underpin the modern Japanese and Chinese states (Tamamoto 2005). Moreover, environmental problems are perceived to be more connected to the lack of governing capacity than deliberate hostile action of one state against another. Cooperation in this field is therefore not seen as potentially harming national security. This may also be the reason why structural constraints in the form of geopolitical calculations which inhibit confidence building in the traditional security sphere are affecting environmental cooperation much less.

Furthermore, cooperation is most likely facilitated because the area of environmental protection offers a wide range of potential projects as seen in the discussions of the three environmental ministers at TEMM. These issues are often very technical in nature. As technicalities are rather complex for the public to understand, and discourses about environmental security are highly fragmented, it is possible to undertake relatively small cooperative projects and advertise them in a positive light without necessity to take high financial and political risks. The assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency depends on small groups of experts involved, and the possibility to gain an overall picture is even more difficult for the general people. Cooperation projects such as TEMM and NOWPAP, once established, continue to run despite diplomatic tensions. Only when frameworks of cooperation are to be upgraded, the political dimension comes into play again. As higher authorities need to commit financial and other resources, review and establish new procedures and understandings how to relate to the other side, political concerns start to affect functional cooperation stronger again.

With regard to the question of whether and how environmental security cooperation can build trust in the security-political area, a few conclusions may be drawn. As demonstrated above, the area of environmental security is very useful to engage in cooperative rhetoric and positive (symbolic) action. This may help to counter negative images and threat perceptions in the politico-security area. Despite the limited output of the few and rather small-scale environmental protection projects, and the reluctance to exchange scientific data, cooperative action is likely able to contribute to the de-securitization of the bilateral relationship. Because security-political frictions too, are created and reinforced by symbolic and rhetoric action, they can, probably even need to be improved by symbolic and rhetoric action as well. Instead of depicting the other side as potential enemy or rival, environmental security cooperation helps politicians who are willing to find a *modus vivendi* to engage in positive identification of the other party as a partner.

There are limitations of this effect though. In view of the relatively small scale of cooperative action and the consequently weak environmental management, the propositions that environmental security cooperation reinforces states' capacity as problem-solvers and that it allows for social mobilization without 'othering' of one party, could not be confirmed by this study. As soon as environmental problems become bigger and threaten bilateral relations more directly, calls for output-oriented action on a bigger scale may become louder. Subsequently, conflicts over priorities and cost-sharing may challenge the cooperative symbolism and limit positive effects on political relations between neighbouring countries. The differences in political commitment, the willingness to bear costs equally, and the unequal ability to improve state capacity may also lead to additional complications. If solutions to new challenges can be found and new roles established cooperation may be elevated to higher levels, lead to stronger cooperation and produce positive spillover effects

into the political sphere. However, in order to gain reliable insights into such mechanisms, further research encompassing several case studies in various spheres of functional cooperation should be undertaken.

Last, it should not be forgotten, that this study did not assess one of the outstanding strengths of cooperation in environmental security, which is the involvement of stakeholders beyond the national level. Since environmental issues directly concern societies across state boundaries, the engagement in environmental protection has the potential to bring not only politicians and bureaucrats, but also provincial and local governments, as well as actors of civil society in contact.

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that, given the fact that Northeast Asia is ecologically already a region the, albeit slowly, growing awareness for the need to protect the environment is conducive to the political construction of Northeast Asia. First, environmental security cooperation serves as substitute for the lack of confidence and security building measures in the traditional security sphere and contributes to the improvement of Japanese-Chinese relations which are central to any region-building project. Second, cooperation in environmental management, together with functional cooperation in other areas, can serve as means to enhance mutual knowledge among Northeast Asian societies and has the potential to change negative images and roles based on previous and outdated understandings. Third, environmental security cooperation which necessarily needs to take into account the imperatives of the regional ecological interdependence, may eventually promote the political awareness of the common existence in a Northeast Asian region.

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¹ It is notable that Haas (2004) in the foreword of his last publication describes his neofunctionalist approach as forerunner of and now being part of constructivism. He goes as far as to suggest his own 'pragmatic constructivist' approach.

² <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/index.html>, and <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2721/>, accessed 24.09.09.

³ 'Speech of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto – Seeking an New Foreign Policy Toward China', available: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/regionasia-paci/china/seeking.html>, accessed 13.01.09.

⁴ Interviews, Beijing and Tokyo, March and April 2009.

⁵ Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), *Memorandum No. 13: 'Guidelines for Maritime Cooperation in Enclosed and Semi-enclosed Seas and Similar Areas of the Asia Pacific'*, available: <http://www.cscap.org>, accessed 20.05.09.

⁶ Interviews, Tokyo and Beijing, March and April 2009.

⁷ Interviews, Tokyo and Beijing, March and April 2009.

⁸ 'Speech of Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto – Seeking an New Foreign Policy Toward China', available: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/regionasia-paci/china/seeking.html>, accessed 13.01.09

⁹ See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan's statements on the revision of the ODA policy, available: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/reform/index.html>; and

http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/oda/region/e_asia/china-1.html, accessed 10.05.09.

¹⁰ 'Japan-China Joint Press Statement', 08.10.06, available <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint0610.html>, accessed 26.12.08.

¹¹ Available: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/joint0704.html>, accessed 08.01.09.

¹² 'Joint Press Statement on the Strengthening of Exchange and Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of China', 07.05.08, available: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/china/pv0805/press.html>, accessed 26.12.08.

¹³ 'The Action Strategy on Trilateral Cooperation among the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea', adopted on November the 27th, 2004, available:

<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/dqzzywt/t175827.htm>, accessed 25.05.09.

¹⁴ Website of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM), available: <http://www.temm.org>, accessed 15.05.09.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹⁷ 'Final Report, Tripartite Research on Environmental Management in Northeast Asia, January 2009, pp. 28, available: <http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/modules/envirolib/view.php?docid=2253>, accessed 17.05.09.

¹⁸ Website of the Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117, 118.

²⁰ 'Final Report, Tripartite Research on Environmental Management in Northeast Asia, January 2009, p. 102.

²¹ The only project of significant scale is the one addressing dust and sandstorms (DSS). This initiative, however, was initiated and funded by international organizations such as UNEP, UNESCAP, the Asian Development Bank and the Global Environmental Facility. TEMM has substantially engaged in it only since 2006.

²² TEMM Joint Communiqué 2006; and 'Final Report, Tripartite Research on Environmental Management in Northeast Asia', pp. 28.

²³ United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), NOWPAP website available:

http://www.nowpap.org/about_02.php, accessed 03.02.09.

²⁴ NOWPAP Action Plan, available: <http://enviroscope.iges.or.jp/modules/envirolib/view.php?docid=2253>, accessed 25.05.09.

²⁵ United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), NOWPAP website, accessed 16.02.09.

²⁶ NOWPAP, 'Report of the 13th NOWPAP IGM', 26.11.08, p. 27, available: <http://www.nowpap.org/>, accessed, 25.05.09.

²⁷ Interview, April 2009.

²⁸ NOWPAP, 'Report of the 13th NOWPAP IGM', 26.11.08, p. 20, available: <http://www.nowpap.org/>, accessed, 25.05.09.

²⁹ Together with the People's Liberation Army Navy and the Ministry of Public Security's Border Control Department, and without the Ministry of Environmental Protection, these agencies which dispose of instruments for law enforcement at sea are called 'the five dragons'.

³⁰ 'Final Report, Tripartite Research on Environmental Management in Northeast Asia, January 2009, p. 101.