

Lessons of the CSCE/OSCE process: relevance of military transparency for Asia and North-East Asia

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Mr. Chairman,

May I join the previous speakers in thanking the Japanese Government and CSCE for organizing this important conference. The structure of the conference allows us to focus on three aspects of security: political-military, economic and human dimension of security.

In my paper I have focused on three issues: prospects of establishing an Asia-Pacific regional (APR) security structure and military transparency, pressing issue of North-East Asian security and the outcome of the Mongolia conference on relevance of the lessons of the Helsinki process for other regions.

Prospects of establishing an APR security structure and military transparency

From time to time debates are held on establishing an APR security architecture or community. Such ideas have been flagged during the cold war as well as in the post-cold war period.

As to the type or purpose of such a security architecture, there are different understandings: many favor confidence-building and consultative fora, while others, though far few, favor strong structures with problem solving or decision-making powers.

In broad terms, the APR can be divided into 6 different regions: Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, North-East Asia, South-East Asia and the South Pacific. However, they cannot be clustered into one single geo-political space with an overarching security vision or strategic goal because they are different. The existence of different regional fora are institutional expressions of direct or indirect cooperation of these states in their respective regions or among regions.

Today the success and failure of establishing either APR or regional security structures to address the issues of the XXI century will depend to a great extent on its inclusiveness as well as the positions of and relations among the major powers. The CSCE process has vividly demonstrated that security-building processes could best be promoted through confidence-building measures (CBMs), including increasing military transparency, especially among the major powers. The notion of military transparency should include not only military capabilities but also military development and doctrines, strategic goals and political intentions. In the APR case this means first and foremost military transparency of existing and emerging regional powers, especially of U.S., Russia, China, Japan, India, Iran and Pakistan. Greater military transparency is especially

needed to reduce tension in the potential flashpoints, including in Kashmir, on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan strait.

One important aspect of transparency is military modernization. Since some of the countries of the APR are developing their military potential “commensurate with their economic power”, it is very important that the modernization is also commensurately transparent. CBMs could be supplemented by more proactive measures. However, until common security interests are clearly defined and recognized, multilateralism would have its limits due to different national interests and priorities as well as lack of full confidence.

Pressing issue of North-East Asian security

North-East Asia is the region where two of the three potential flashpoints are located and where there still are unresolved territorial and overlapping maritime claims. Potential oil or natural gas reserves in some of these areas could raise the stakes.

US maintains strong security ties with Japan and the Republic of Korea, who are its main allies and are under US security umbrella. NEA countries are also following closely the peaceful rise of China and the developments on the Korean peninsula. The resolution or lack of resolution of DPRK’s nuclear weapons issue would greatly affect the security and relations among the major powers. Also the nature of the rise of China (or its interpretation) and reaction of other powers to it would shape the future relations in the region.

The emerging power realities would need for the major powers to recognize their differences and make pragmatic adjustments to their policies with regard to others, including acceptance of China’s political realities and its legitimate needs, Russia’s legitimate place in the region, Japan’s disproportionate political and economic weights, the collective needs and interests of ASEAN, etc. The threat of terrorism, insurgency and other violent acts so far are relatively low in NEA.

The Six party talks together with the bilateral and trilateral consultative mechanisms constitute the core of the present security arrangement. The Six party talks, based on common security concerns could lead to identifying clearer reasonable security concerns of each party and to common security understanding. This could form the basis of a future framework. The fact that the parties have agreed to address broader security issues, including security structure within the talks, shows that the major regional powers are open-minded to such a development.

Military transparency would be an important indicator of mutual understanding and greater trust. The success of the Helsinki process to a great extent depended on the agreement and agreed measures of military transparency that lead to greater trust and confidence. This would equally apply to NEA.

Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula followed by the establishment of a North-East Asian nuclear-weapon-free zone (NEA-NWFZ), consisting of Japan and the two Koreas, with the five nuclear-weapon states providing security assurances to the zonal states would be both a confidence-building and security enhancing measures. In such an arrangement Japan would be provided with security assurances by China and Russia, and DPRK – by the US. This could be a win-win solution to one of the security challenges of the region and could change the security relationship of the states of the region.

Outcome of the Mongolia conference on relevance of the lessons of the Helsinki process for other regions

The question of the relevance of experience of the CSCE process for other regions has been raised since early 1980s. However there has not been much follow-up on its lessons for other regions until very recently. Since 2006 international meetings have been held to assess the relevance of CSCE experience for NEA. Last April the Institute for Strategic Studies of Mongolia, in collaboration with the George Marshall Center and with the support of the German Government organized an international conference entitled “Present and Future Security Environment in North-East and Central Asia: Ulaanbaatar – New Helsinki ?”.

The agenda, the papers presented and discussion held have been captured in my paper. The conference did not set an ambitious goal of making specific recommendations either to scholars, security experts or governments. However, it provided an opportunity to exchange views and share experience on the complex issues of national and regional security. All agreed to the usefulness of the conference. There were proposals to hold similar meeting to address concrete issues or one specific geographic region. Perhaps the next Chairman of OSCE, being a Central Asian country member of OSCE, would find it useful to have some follow-up meetings highlighting different aspects of this multidimensional security issue. CICA experience could be useful in this regard.