

## Northeast Asian Security Architecture

**Panel:** Session 7 (Lilac/Tulip)

**Date/Time:** April 27 2012 / 9:30-10:45

**Organizing Institution:** Center for a New American Security

**Speakers:** *Patrick Cronin*, Center for a New American Security (moderator)  
*Randall G. Schriver*, Armitage International  
*Soeya Yoshihide*, Keio University  
*Wang Dong*, Peking University  
*Leif-Eric Easley*, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

### *Panel Short Summary*

Stephanie Nayoung Kang, Seoul National University  
Daniel Katz, Center for a New American Security

The absence of an institutionalized Northeast Asian security architecture has raised questions about how the countries in the region should cooperate on security issues. Dr. Patrick Cronin stated that thinking about architecture is overly suggestive of a boundary. Although a majority of the speakers agreed on the need for architecture, they had contrasting approaches on how to normatively and pragmatically construct a security architecture in Northeast Asia.

Mr. Randall Schriver focused on why there have not been more established and enduring efforts at creating a security architecture. Historical animosity and competition due to sovereignty and territorial disputes have made institutionalizing multilateral security cooperation difficult. Schriver suggested that the U.S. should therefore pursue ad hoc approaches through “minilateral” efforts, existing structures, and trial and error.

Professor Soeya Yoshihide argued that there are two evolving regional trends. The post-Cold War era led to the rise of nontraditional security issues and the creation of multilateral initiatives. However, traditional security issues have persisted. The foremost traditional security concern is how states should respond to the rise of China, which has emerged as an independent entity. Soeya advocated for the coexistence of a rising China and Japan, though he also emphasized the need for cooperation between the middle powers including Australia and South Korea.

Professor Wang Dong asserted that four different factors contributed to the absence

of Northeast Asian security architecture: North Korea as a spoiler, territorial disputes, rising nationalism, and the U.S. return to Asia. The strengthening of U.S. alliances with regional partners has heightened fears in China of containment and reduced its incentive to pressure North Korea to denuclearize. The bilateralism of the American-led alliance system should be reconciled with a multilateral framework.

Professor Leif-Eric Easley presented his observations on the issues of trust and practical solutions for creating a security architecture. On trust, he stated that security architecture and trust operate in a “chicken and egg” paradigm; mere talk of trust-building does not actually forge trust; a foundation of trust can facilitate cooperation during a critical crisis. Easley further argued that shared decision-making, strengthened institutions and burden-sharing are necessary for successful creation of security architecture. He concluded by saying that Asian countries do not have the luxury of focusing solely on regional architecture because they are global actors who must be involved in global governance.

During the question and answer period, Brookings Institution Senior Fellow Jonathan Pollack asked whether it was possible for countries to address the hardest issues first since this would compel bureaucracies to articulate national goals and anxieties clearly and resolve bilateral conflicts. Easley responded that increased transparency is essential for trust-building and countries can follow up on the good political slogans of their domestic leaderships in order to achieve regional security cooperation. Wang said countries need to understand how power influences their proposals and strategies. Soeya advocated for joint ownership of ideas to enhance cooperation.

The panelists agreed that the feasibility of Northeast Asian security architecture remains an unanswered question. There was consensus on the desirability of pragmatic action with tangible results.

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