Russian International Affairs Council

POLICY BRIEF

Regional Security in Northeast Asia and the Russia–Japan–U.S. Triangle

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No. 16, May 2018

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Regional Security in Northeast Asia and the Russia–Japan–U.S. Triangle

The three nations of Russia, Japan, and the United States face common security challenges in Northeast Asia. The nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula remains the most pressing among these. Despite the recent positive developments, its long term solution remains far from guaranteed. The task of accommodating the growing China's influence is another challenge to be dealt with by the three powers. The global context of deteriorating relations between Russia, on the one hand, and the U.S. and its Western allies, on the other, further complicates the situation in the region. Nevertheless, despite their differing national security agendas, Russia, Japan, and the U.S. do have substantial overlapping interests, and cooperating on these would be beneficial for each of the three nations as well as for the entire region.

Northeast Asia: strategic landscape and challenges

It has become almost commonplace to say that, in the coming decades, the Asia Pacific is bound to become the global crux of economic and political power. At the same time, the long-term stability and peace of the region, especially of its Northeast Asian part, should not be taken for granted, as numerous security challenges capable of undermining this stability are present there.

The **nuclear problem of the Korean Peninsula** is the most pressing and vital of the security issues the region is facing. North Korea obtaining a full-fledged nuclear and missile capability would deal a fatal blow to the non-proliferation regime. However, a military solution – an option not ruled out by the United States and its allies – will certainly entail prohibitive costs as well. Not only would military action not sanctioned by the UN Security Council further undermine the UN-led international order, and not only would the direct humanitarian and economic losses be immense. Even worse, the end of the period of peace that has been maintained in the region for more than half a century would probably make other states more willing to use force in the future. It is in this sense that even a successfully executed "bloody nose" strike that does not immediately lead to a full-scale conflict may pave the way for a much bigger war in the future.

On the other, hand regional players have been successful in capitalizing on the thaw brought about by the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics – at least in the short term perspective. In late April 2018, a top level summit between South and North Korean leaders was held[1], which may possibly be followed by North Korea-U.S. and North Korea-Japan summits. Still, it remains unclear whether these developments will result in any sort of a major breakthrough, or, at least, a sustainable stabilization of situation in the peninsula. The achievement of a long-term solution of the issue remains far from guaranteed.

The **rise of China**, encompassing the growth of its economic, political, and military might, is another major challenge to be dealt with by regional players. The long-term implications of this are as yet unclear, and should Beijing choose to embark on a policy more antagonistic to the U.S.-centered international order, the possibility of which seems rather high given the recent trends in China's politics, the fragile equilibrium of regional peace may not survive.

Japan's gradual turn towards a more proactive security policy, while not a threat per se, is also an important development that is capable of changing the balance of power in the region.

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[1] North and South Korean Leaders Held Historic Summit: Highlights // CNN. 27.04.2018. URL: https://edition.cnn.com/asia/live-news/north-korea-south-korea-summit-intl/index.html

Therefore, its regional implications deserve close attention of both academics and policy makers.

Finally, the issues of **strategic balance in the region in general and the balance of military capabilities between Russia and the U.S. in particular** are also of great importance from the point of view of the security situation in Northeast Asia. The deterioration of Russia-U.S. relations that became especially severe since the 2014 Ukraine crisis and that, more recently, was further exacerbated by allegations of Russia's interference in the U.S. presidential election of 2016 cannot but affect the security situation in Northeast Asia.

The Russia – Japan – U.S. triangle: regional security strategies

Russia

For Russia, its position as a stakeholder in the Northeast Asian region is dictated, first and foremost, by the need to facilitate the development of its Far Eastern region, which, in the words of Vladimir Putin, is Russia's national priority for the entire 21st century.[2] Securing peaceful and friendly relations with the key regional powers, China, Japan, and South Korea, is, therefore, a necessary precondition for securing economic and social development of this part of the country.

The priorities of Russia's policy in the region, as well as its major concerns, can be inferred from the two key policy documents of the nation's foreign policy – the Strategy of National Security (approved by the President on December 31, 2015)[3] and the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation (approved by the President on November 30, 2016).[4] According to these documents, Russia recognizes the situation in the Korean Peninsula as one of the major global "seats of tension," but unlike the U.S. and Japan, who see North Korea as the sole source of this tension, the Russian Federation stays neutral and states instead that Moscow "has always championed a non-nuclear status for the Korean Peninsula and will support its denuclearization in every possible way," further adding that it "will seek to ease confrontation and de-escalate tension on the Korean Peninsula, as well as achieve reconciliation and facilitate intra-Korean cooperation by promoting political dialogue."

China's rise is not seen as a reason for concern at all, neither in policy documents, nor in politicians' statements, though some academics and journalists do express uneasiness about the future of Russia-China ties[5]. Instead, the goal to "proactively step up cooperation in all areas" is being officially proclaimed. Moscow and Beijing share the view that a multi-polar world order, rather than the one led exclusively by the United States, would be more just and preferable.

Relations with Japan in the security sphere, meanwhile, are somewhat complicated. On the one hand, despite Japan following other Western states in imposing sanctions on Russia after 2014, these sanctions were, in the opinion of many experts, purely symbolic and had almost no negative effect on bilateral relations.[6] Moreover, with Shinzo Abe visiting Russia in May 2016, and Vladimir Putin going to Japan in December 2016, as well as with numerous meetings of the two leaders in various international venues, the relations between the two countries seem to be experiencing an upward trend. The resumption of meetings in the "two plus two" format (ministers of defense and foreign affairs) in March 2017,[7] as well as the visit of Valery Gera-

[2] Vladimir Putin. Russia's Role in Securing Asia's Prosperity // Bloomberg. 08.11.2017.
URL: https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-11-08/vladimir-putin-russia-s-role-in-securing-asia-s-prosperity

[3] Russian National Security Strategy, December 31, 2015.
URL: http://www.ieee.es/Galerias/fichero/OtrasPublicaciones/Internacional/2016/Russian-National-Security-Strategy-31Dec2015.pdf

[4] Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, November 30, 2016.
URL: http://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/official_documents/-/asset_publisher/CptICkB6BZ29/content/id/2542248

[5] As an example of an alarmist, if not especially widespread opinion on this issue, see: Alexander Khramchikhin. Drakon prosnulsya? Vnutrennie problemy Kitaya kak istochnik kitajskoj ugrozy Rossii [The dragon has awoken? China's internal problems as a source of Chinese threat to Russia; in Russian]. Moscow, 2013.
For examples of less pessimistic, yet still somewhat sceptical evaluations of the two nations' ties, see: Alexander Gabuev. How to Keep Attention on China [in Russian] // Carnegie Moscow Center. 05.07.2017. URL: https://carnegie.ru/2017/07/05/ru-pub-71431; Vita Spivak. Vysokie ozhidaniya smenilis' razocharovaniem [High expectations have been replaced by disappointment; in Russian] // Carnegie Moscow Center. 03.07.2017. URL: http://carnegie.ru/2017/07/03/ru-pub-71422

[6] Alexander Panov: "Yaponiya sdelala svoj vybor v pol'zu Rossii" [Japan made a choice in favor of Russia; in Russian] // Argumenty i fakty. 29.10. 2016.
URL: http://www.aif.ru/politics/world/aleksandr_panov_yaponiya_sdelala_svoy_vybor_v_polzu_rossii

[7] Japan, Russia hold first 'two-plus-two' talks since Crimea annexation // The Japan Times. 20.03.2017.
URL: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/03/20/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-russia-resume-ministerial-security-talks-tokyo-looks-progress-isle-row/#.WqPTB-jFKUk

simov, Russia's Chief of the General Staff, to Japan in December 2017[8] show that the two nations consider trust-building between their militaries to be an important task as well.

The upbeat mood of the recent relations with Tokyo is, however, soured by Moscow's attitude towards the U.S.-led international order in general. Russia's National Security Strategy openly states that the nation's independent foreign and domestic policy "is giving rise to opposition from the United States and its allies, who are seeking to retain their dominance in world affairs" and that "the opportunities for maintaining global and regional stability are shrinking significantly with the siting in Europe, the Asia Pacific region, and the Near East of components of the U.S. missile defense system." These concerns are caused by Japan's upgrade of its military capabilities as well, what is confirmed by Moscow's voiced criticism of plans to add new elements to the Japanese national system of missile defense.[9]

Japan

Japan's national security policy, set out in such documents as the National Security Strategy[10] and National Defense Program Guidelines[11] (most recent versions of both adopted in December 2013), as well as the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation[12] (adopted in April 2015) is characterized by the following features.

Since the Liberal Democratic Party returned to power in 2012 under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japan's security policy has been emphasizing the concept of "proactive pacifism", according to which Japan, while keeping in place its exclusively defense-oriented security policy and maintaining the U.S.-Japan alliance as its central pillar, is going to increase its contribution to international security and peacekeeping cooperation.[13] The most obvious expression of this seems to be the so-called "security laws" passed in September 2015, which enabled Japan to exercise the right of collective self-defense.[14] Despite the existence of strict limitations on the use of this right, these measures generated significant backlash from both within[15] and without[16] the country (most of the latter came from China), with critics accusing Shinzo Abe of attempts to steer Japan in the direction of "remilitarization." Still, the general trend of Japan's security policy can indeed be summarized as a move, albeit a very incremental one, from the exclusively defense-oriented posture of the postwar decades towards the position of a "normal country" when it comes to defense matters.

Meanwhile, the regional priorities of Japan's security policy can, in effect, be described as an effort to respond to the two key challenges – North Korea and China. It is the DPRK's nuclear and missile program that serves as the *raison d'être* for Japan's missile defense system and even fuels the debate on the possibility of Japan obtaining offensive weapons capable of striking enemy bases.[17] And it is concern about China's rapid rise and increased presence in such areas as the East China Sea and the South China Sea that made Japanese military planners prioritize the development of conventional capabilities that can be used to defend the nation's southwestern borders and the "remote islands" that lie there, especially in the case of so-called "gray zone incidents."

United States

The United States undoubtedly remains the major power both globally and in the Asia Pacific region, at least as far as security issues are concerned.

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[8] Japan woos Russia for Its own security // Nikkei Asian Review. 11.12.2017. URL: https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Japan-woos-Russia-for-its-own-security

[9] MID: "Ustanovka PRO v Yaponii negativno povliyaet na otnosheniya Moskvy i Tokio" [Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Installation of missile defense in Japan will negatively influence relations between Moscow and Tokyo; in Russian] // Rossijskaya Gazeta. 28.12.2017. URL: https://rg.ru/2017/12/28/mid-ustanovka-pro-v-iaponii-negativno-povliiaet-na-otnosheniia-moskvy-i-tokio.html

[10] National Security Strategy, December 17, 2013. URL: http://japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/documents/2013/__icsFiles/afieldfile/2013/12/17/NSS.pdf

[11] National Defense Program Guidelines, December 17, 2013. URL: http://www.mod.go.jp/j/approach/agenda/guideline/2014/pdf/20131217_e2.pdf

[12] The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, April 27, 2015. URL: http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/shishin_20150427e.html

[13] Where will 'proactive pacifism' lead us? // The Japan Times. 07.03.2015. URL: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/03/07/national/media-national/will-proactive-pacifism-lead-us/#.WrTyyujFKM8

[14] Diet enacts security laws, marking Japan's departure from pacifism // The Japan Times. 19.09.2015. URL: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-enacts-security-laws-marking-japans-departure-from-pacifism-2/

[15] Huge protest in Tokyo rails against PM Abe's security bills // Reuters. 30.08.2015. URL: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-politics-protest/huge-protest-in-tokyo-rails-against-pm-abes-security-bills-idUSKCN0QZ0C320150830

[16] News Analysis: Why Japan's gov't-proposed security legislation so controversial // Xinhuanet. 15.07.2015. URL: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-07/15/c_134414454.htm

[17] Japan and the ability to strike enemy bases // The Japan Times. 19.04.2017. URL: https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2017/04/19/editorials/japan-ability-strike-enemy-bases/#.WqPpgejFKUk

The opaque nature of foreign policy decision making within the current administration could not but reinforce concern about the U.S. foreign policy priorities and commitments among American allies and other states.

During the 2016 election campaign, Donald Trump criticized his nation's allies for free-riding and even hinted at the possibility of Japan obtaining nuclear weapons of its own, though eventually he disavowed the latter statements.[18] Later he hinted at the U.S. military commitments being contingent on other states' financial contributions to military cooperation with the U.S. and their own defense.[19] These demands are not exactly unprecedented (the parallel with the Nixon Doctrine with its statement that "the defense of freedom is everybody's business – not just America's business"[20] is particularly salient), and yet they came as troubling news to Japan in general and Shinzo Abe in particular, whose hurry to establish contact with the new American leader[21] can at least in part be explained by the desire to alleviate these security-related concerns.

More recently, the position of the U.S. on the key security issues of Northeast Asia has also seemed to lack a consistent trajectory. The President's praise to China and its leader during his visit to Beijing in November 2017[22] were followed by him naming China and Russia as the two rivals that "challenge [the United States'] interests, [its] economy, and [its] values" and stating that, in dealing with them, "unmatched power is the surest means of […] defense" during the State of the Union Address in January 2018.[23]

The same, at least, seeming unpredictability characterized the U.S. administration's posture on the North Korean issue. In the first weeks of 2018, many analysts feared that a strike against North Korea was almost imminent,[24] but early March witnessed an unexpected turn towards diplomacy, as President Trump, baffling not only foreign allies, but even his own administration officials, suddenly expressed his willingness to meet with Kim Jong-un for talks.[25] At the time of writing it was still unclear whether this would result in an actual diplomatic breakthrough. Moreover, whether to characterize this as erratic behavior of an unpredictable leader, or a skillful and well-thought-out, if somewhat risky, strategy successfully executed by an experienced deal-maker, is ultimately up to the person making this assessment, as the President's critics insist on the former interpretation, while his supporters prefer the latter one. And yet, whatever the actual results of these most recent steps might be, it is clear that the present U.S. security strategy is conducted in a way that undermines the role of multilateral formats and alliance commitments, which is certain to have a long-lasting effect on the way the security situation in Northeast Asia develops.

The Russia – Japan – U.S. triangle: problems and prospects

Many geopolitical triangles, quadrangles and other configurations have entered international relations parlance as cases of more or less institutionalized international cooperation. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad), consisting of Australia, India, Japan, and the U.S., is one example thereof; the China – Japan – South Korea triangle, with trilateral summits held relatively regularly, is another. The Russia – Japan – U.S. triangle seems, however, to be mostly an analytical tool, rather than a potential multilateral format, and will most likely remain so at least

[18] Trump flip-flops on Japan nukes // CNN. 02.06.2016. URL: https://edition.cnn.com/2016/06/02/politics/donald-trump-nuclear-weapons-japan/index.html
[19] Trump Again Questions US Commitment to Defend NATO Allies // Atlantic Council. 12.12.2017. URL: http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/natosource/trump-again-questions-us-commitment-to-defend-nato-alliess
[20] Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam. 03.11.1969. URL: https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/forkids/speechesforkids/silentmajority/silentmajority_transcript.pdf
[21] Japan PM is first foreign leader to meet Trump // BBC. 17.11.2016. URL: http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37946613
[22] Trump, Aiming to Coax Xi Jinping, Bets on Flattery // The New York Times. 09.11.2017. URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/09/world/asia/trump-xi-jinping-north-korea.html
[23] The full speech – Trump's State of the Union address. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/30/the-full-text-of-trumps-state-of-the-union-address
[24] Is Trump Preparing for War With North Korea? // The Atlantic. 31.01.2018. URL: https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/01/trump-north-korea-sotu-cha/551933/
[25] With Snap 'Yes' in Oval Office, Trump Gambles on North Korea // The New York Times. 10.03.2018. URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/world/asia/trump-north-korea.html

until the negative dynamic of Russia-U.S. relations is overcome.

Still, it is worth noting that the relations between the parts of this triangle have remained stable, which does permit us to talk about this structure as a valuable asset of the Northeast Asian region. The U.S.–Japan alliance has been the backbone of Japan's foreign and security policy throughout the entire postwar period. Naturally, the alliance has been not without contradictions of its own. The U.S. demanding a greater contribution from Japan, and Japan harboring doubts about the reliability of American security commitments has been a recurring theme since the early postwar period. In this sense, the confusion that arose in Japan during the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign is nothing particularly new and need not be overestimated.

The Russo-Japanese relations have warmed up significantly in recent years. However, the goal of concluding a peace treaty and solving the territorial issue between the two countries once and for all may be as elusive as ever, even while Shinzo Abe may not be able to admit it for political and personal reasons.[26]

Another weak spot of the current rapprochement between the two nations is the fact that personal contacts between Vladimir Putin and Shinzo Abe are its main driving force. While the content of suggested cooperation, such as Abe's Eight Point Cooperation Plan, or joint economic activity in South Kuril Islands,[27] aims to put bilateral ties on a footing more solid than mutual sympathy between the two leaders, it is unclear whether the positive momentum will be preserved in the mid- to long-term perspective.

Finally, the U.S.-Russian relations are the weakest part of the triangle, as they seem to have reached the lowest level since the end of the Cold War. However, the contradictions and conflicts of interest that do arise between the two states mostly concern problems external to Northeast Asia. These are issues either originating from other regions (such are the problems related to Crimea, Ukraine, or Syria), or related to a wider framework of relations between Russia and the U.S. (the accusations of attempts to influence domestic politics, or issues of strategic balance fall into this category). As far as Northeast Asia is concerned, however, the positions of the two countries are not as irreconcilable as may seem.

On the issue of the Korean Peninsula, Russia emphasizes fostering dialogue and mutually halting aggressive actions. Most recently, this has been expressed in the "dual freeze" plan, co-sponsored by Russia and China, according to which Pyongyang would stop its missile tests, while Washington and Seoul would refrain from military exercises.[28] The United States, meanwhile, prioritizes the de-nuclearization of the DPRK, so that it under no conditions becomes a threat to the U.S. itself, and, as recent events show, Washington's strategy may involve both willingness for dialogue and readiness to increase pressure. While President Trump is often criticized for reckless brinksmanship[29], he has openly rejected regime change as a foreign policy goal.[30] This means that the new American leader is not going to pursue the strategy that not only dragged previous U.S. administrations into prolonged and costly wars and threw vast areas of the Middle East into chaos, but also, in the case of the Ukraine crisis, became one of the main reasons for the current deterioration of the U.S.–Russia relations. All of this means that the U.S. and Russia's approaches to the Korean problem differ more in tactics than in strategy.

Finally, the accommodation of the rising China, that is seen by some as the key long-term security issue of the region, may be another area where positions of Russia, on the one hand, and the United States and Japan, on the other, are

[26] Northern Territories issue haunts Japan's leaders // Nikkei Asian Review. 06.03.2018. URL: https://asia.nikkei.com/Viewpoints/James-D.J.-Brown/Northern-Territories-issue-haunts-Japan-s-leaders?page=2
[27] We are Tomodachi. Japan and Russia Edition 2017. The Government of Japan. URL: https://www.japan.go.jp/letters/ebook61/book.pdf
[28] North Korea 'dual freeze' plan working, Russia's UN envoy says // TASS. 09.02.2018. URL: http://tass.com/politics/989330
[29] In confronting North Korea, Trump risks disaster // The Washington Post. 01.02.2018. URL: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2018/02/01/in-confronting-north-korea-trump-risks-disaster/?utm_term=.2db89eb9061b
[30] Donald Trump: 'We will stop racing to topple foreign regimes' // The Guardian. 07.12.2016. URL: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/dec/07/donald-trump-we-will-stop-racing-to-topple-foreign-regimes

not as diverse as one might believe at first. Russia does have comprehensive and strategic partnership with China, but so does the European Union. At the same time, neither the 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between Russia and China[31], nor the multilateral arrangements Russia and China are part of (such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, or the institutions established within the BRICS format) have any significant attributes of a true military alliance. In fact, the need to diversify Russia's diplomacy in the Asia Pacific and to avoid the overreliance on China can even be named as one of the driving factors behind the recent Russo-Japanese rapprochement. Russia's cautiousness to avoid becoming too dependent on China is mirrored by Beijing's unwillingness to evade a binding commitment to Russia, which became obvious as Chinese leadership avoided taking Moscow's side after Crimea's reunification with Russia in March 2014.[32]

As Russia is as yet unwilling to become China's junior ally, the United States' enthusiasm about "containing" China seems to be reducing as well.

The Trump administration's attention seems to be focusing more on the issues of the Korean Peninsula and trade, to the detriment of attempts to resist China's presence in the South China Sea.[33] Of course, the situation is nuanced and prone to change,[34] but, for now, the contrast seems clear with the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" policy, that was widely believed to be an attempt to contain China militarily and otherwise.[35] And, therefore, the worst-case scenario, under which Russia, on the one hand, and the U.S. and Japan, on the other, would find themselves on the opposite sides of a new bloc structure, may still be avoidable.

[31] The Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, July 24, 2001. URL: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/t15771.shtml
[32] China's Soft 'Nyet' To Russia's Ukraine Intervention // Forbes. 05.03.2014. URL: https://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabetheconomy/2014/03/05/chinas-soft-nyet-to-russias-ukraine-intervention/#198b6dc44ced
[33] With Trump Focused on North Korea, Beijing Sails Ahead in South China Sea // Foreign Policy. 16.11.2017. URL: http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/11/16/with-trump-focused-on-north-korea-beijing-sails-ahead-in-south-china-sea/
[34] Donald Trump backs joint naval exercises in South China sea // The Australian Financial Review. 24.02.2018. URL: http://www.afr.com/news/donald-trump-backs-joint-naval-exercises-in-south-china-sea-20180223-h0wkwc
[35] The Pivot to Asia Was Obama's Biggest Mistake // The Diplomat. 21.01.2017. URL: https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-pivot-to-asia-was-obamas-biggest-mistake/

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS

To maintain peace, security, and strategic stability in Northeast Asia from the viewpoint of the Russia-Japan-U.S. triangle, the following measures and steps could be recommended:

1. On the Korean issue, and in the short term-perspective, **Russia needs to encourage and support all attempts at dialogue between Pyongyang and Seoul/Washington**. With situation in constant flux, and both the North Korean and the American leaders being prone to provocative and potentially dangerous actions, no chance at reconciliation must be wasted.
2. Should the dialogue with North Korea prove possible to maintain, **the United States should strive to upgrade their contacts with North Korea** from leader-to-leader bilateral talks **to a more multilateral and institutionalized format**. A return to the six-party talks, probably, under a different name, is one possibility. A new format with a different list of participants, but that would still include the key regional stakeholders, Russia and Japan among them, is another one.
3. **The United States and Russia should make utmost effort to overcome the vicious circle of distrust, accusations, pressure, and threats** that is building up between them, and **the political will necessary for this must be exercised by both sides**. At the very least, Moscow and Washington should not let this negative dynamic influence the prospects of their cooperation on the issues of security in Northeast Asia.
4. The potential **resumption of talks on the Korean issue should be used as an opportunity for increasing dialogue between Russia and the United States** as well, with the prospect of turning this ad-hoc format into a comprehensive regional collective security framework.
5. **The existing multilateral frameworks**, such as the East Asia summit, or G20, **should be used to the maximum to further cooperation on vital security issues**.
6. To preserve the achievements of the Russo-Japanese rapprochement and to expand them into the domain of security, **further confidence-building measures need to be undertaken by Moscow and Tokyo**. This could include deepening the exchanges between the militaries and law enforcement agencies, conducting joint exercises, or widening the agenda of top-level meetings to include a wider scope of regional issues.
7. **Japan needs to be careful to ensure the preservation of its exclusively defense-oriented posture**. The desire to respond to new challenges by moving in the direction of a "normal country" is understandable. However, excessive actions in this area may cause a security dilemma, wherein Tokyo's efforts will serve to trigger a regional arms race and thus diminish, rather than increase the nation's security.
8. Finally, creating **conditions for China becoming a cooperative and responsible power** should be one of the top priorities of all regional states concerned. **For the United States and Japan, it would mean not trying to contain or exclude China**, and being open and responsive to its initiatives and legitimate claims. **For Russia, it would mean continuing to maintain friendly and cooperative relations with Beijing, while keeping a reasonable distance** and not committing itself to this cooperation – neither in words nor in deeds – to such an extent that this effectively becomes an anti-U.S. pact. The allure of securing a powerful ally is, again, understandable, but, in the long run, the return of bloc thinking is going to be detrimental to the entire international community.

Notes

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