

Decentering from the US in Regional Security Multilateralism:
Japan's 1991 Pivot

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Introduction

Why, after having consistently pursued an isolationist strategy of avoiding security ties with partners other than the US, and having followed the US in opposing regional security multilateralism, did Japan suddenly reverse its position and get out in front of the US with its first post-war security regional initiative on the cusp of the Cold War's end? This article addresses this question by tracing the internal debates, policy process and motivations that drove Japan reverse its position, a process that transformed Japan into the leading champion of regional security multilateralism in East Asia.

The 1991 Nakayama proposal was widely regarded by many Japanese foreign policy elites as Japan's first post-war regional security initiative.¹ This initiative also marked the first time Japan acted in regional security in opposition to US policy. It

represented a definitive break from Japan's previous position of opposing regional security multilateralism, and simultaneously recast Japan as a leader in promoting this very construct. Why was there such a dramatic and sudden change? This article identifies a combination of changes in national interest, specifically the declining adequacy of the US 'cap-in-the-bottle' strategy for reassuring neighboring countries that Japan would not again become a military threat, and, ironically, fear of US abandonment, as the key causes of this decentering of Japanese regional security policy away from the US as its sole security partner, and toward building security relations with other actors.

The rest of this article consists of nine sections. The next section explains Japan's Cold-War era opposition to security multilateralism in the context of its security isolationism. The next two sections examine Japan's rethinking of security multilateralism and the resurgence of Japan's reassurance imperative at the Cold War's end. The following section analyzes MOFA's quiet rethinking and nascent policy change, while the subsequent section summarizes how the end of the Cold War prompted Japan to abandon security isolationism and embrace multilateralism by April 1991. The next section looks at Japan's attempts to build consensus on security multilateralism through ASEAN. The subsequent two sections analyze the Nakayama

proposal and reactions to that proposal. The conclusions spell out the implications of the Nakayama proposal for Japan's decentering from the US as its sole security partner.

Japanese Opposition to Regional Security Multilateralism

Although Japan had long supported regional multilateral economic cooperation in various guises, Japan was consistently negative toward regional security multilateralism. This partly stemmed from Tokyo's post-war regional security isolationism, which had helped Japan avoid entrapment in US wars, including in the Vietnam War at a time when virtually all other US allies became entrapped. .

Another major reason for Japan's opposition to regional security cooperation was Soviet support for the idea. Beginning in 1969 Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev had promoted a multilateral collective security pact for Asia. This proposal targeted the US and its network of regional alliances with a clause banning foreign military bases in Asia. It thus appeared to constitute more of an effort to obtain unilateral advantage for the USSR than a plan for a meaningful regional security forum (Youtz and Midford, 1992, pp. 5-6). In July 1986 in a speech in Vladivostok, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev revived the idea of creating a multilateral security framework in East Asia. In contrast to Brezhnev's collective security proposal, Gorbachev proposed a cooperative security

forum modeled on the Council on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) for Asia (sometimes called a CSCA). (Youtz and Midford, 1992, p. 6)

The East Asia of the 1980s stood in sharp contrast to Europe, where various like- and unlike-minded multilateral security institutions coexisted, including the CSCE, NATO, the Western European Defense Union (WEU), and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Although the US had promoted a NATO-style Pacific Pact in the 1950s, Washington subsequently decided that its system of bilateral alliances (spokes converging on the US hub) was more advantageous.

The US also opposed an unlike-minded multilateral forum because of Soviet support for the idea. The US wanted to lock the Soviets out of the region, leaving them diplomatically isolated and denying access to East Asia's dynamic capitalist economies. Washington also feared that security multilateralism would lead inevitably to naval arms control, coupled with the expectation that the US 7th Fleet, given its naval dominance, would be called upon to make large asymmetrical cuts (Youtz and Midford, 1992, pp. 18-20).

Consequently, as the Cold War was ending the US rejected multilateral security proposals made even by allies, including South Korea, Australia, and Canada. In an October 1990 address, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific

Affairs, Richard H. Solomon, unconditionally rejected region-wide security multilateralism for East Asia: 'When we look at the key determinants of stability in Asia...it is difficult to see how a Helsinki-type institution would be an appropriate forum for enhancing security or promoting conflict resolution.'(Solomon, 1990, pp. 5-6; Youtz and Midford, 1992, p. 18)⁶ As late as August 1991 Solomon claimed that the US position had not changed.(Satoh, 1994, p. 13)

Japan followed the US lead in opposing proposals for establishing regional multilateral security forum in East Asia. Tokyo shared Washington's concerns about the implications of security multilateralism in East Asia. Tokyo also feared that Soviet multilateral security initiatives, including those made by Gorbachev in the late 1980s, were designed to draw the US and its allies into naval arms control negotiations.. Finally, reflecting the Fukuda Doctrine's pledge to not become a military power, Japan refrained from even discussing security with its East Asian neighbors. Consequently, Japan did not believe it could meaningfully participate in a regional multilateral security forum.(Sudo, 1992; Satoh 1992, p. 65; Satoh 1991, p. 104)

Given Japan's isolationist and dependent regional security posture, Tokyo closely followed Washington's line of opposing regional security multilateral, even when the initiative came from US allies.(Satoh, 1994, p. 13; Satoh, 1991, p. 103)¹¹ In

August 1990, shortly after Australia and Canada made proposals for establishing a regional security forum at that year's ASEAN PMC,¹² Japan rejected both proposals: 'Japan is negative toward a plan for an Asia-Pacific security grouping similar to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)....Japan doubts if such a grouping could produce fruitful results.... Conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region would be better settled through meetings of the concerned parties rather than at an international security forum.'(Japan Times, 1990, August 13-19) As late as October 1990, Japan publicly dismissed regional security multilateralism as unrealistic.¹⁴

Japan's Emerging New Thinking about Security Multilateralism

Despite Tokyo's stubbornly consistent opposition to regional security multilateralism, especially to any proposal that might resemble a CSCA or Soviet proposals for CBMs, defense intellectuals were quietly started rethinking the possible benefits for Japan of regional security multilateralism. Those doing the rethinking saw three benefits: first, facilitating a larger security role for Japan by reassuring Asian nations dubious of Japan's character as a military power, second, encouraging the US to remain militarily engaged in East Asia and the alliance with Japan, and third, neutralizing Moscow's diplomatic offensive emphasizing security multilateralism and CBMs, while also easing tensions with the USSR.

As early as 1988, Nishihara Masashi, a prominent Japanese defense intellectual, identified the merits of regional security multilateralism for Japan's national interest. In *From the Perspective of Strategic Studies (Senryaku kenkyū no shikaku)*, Nishihara argued that a security multilateralism was useful less for pursuing confidence building with the USSR, and more for facilitating Japan to play a larger regional security role while reassuring Asian nations concerned about a 'resurgence of Japanese militarism.'(Nishihara, 1988, p. 273) He showed a keen concern for Japan's reputational problem as a military power and the need for reassurance.(Nishihara, 1987) According to Nishihara, Japan's efforts at reassurance are 'often awkward...it seems that Japan, even when it just repeats [the promise to uphold] its peace constitution and defensive defense, still provokes unease among neighboring countries about "a resurgence of militarism in Japan.'(Nishihara, 1988, p. 273) This reality made it hard for Japan to expand its security role and necessitated dependence upon the US. If Japan pursued an independent course it would have to greatly build-up its military, and this would cause 'a large reaction among neighboring states, and cause Japan to lose a number of friendly countries.'(Nishihara, 1988, p. 269) Even a modest expansion of Japan's security role was potentially risky. 'In the future, even if a majority of Japanese support participation of the SDF in UN peacekeeping operations, but the reaction of Asian nations is as it is

now, perhaps they will hurl the accusation that this participation is preparation for the future use of force abroad by the SDF. This makes especially important measures for more skillfully explaining to neighboring countries our strong intention that military force will not be exercised apart from self-defense.’ While avoiding the word ‘multilateral,’ Nishihara in the next sentence to propose a multilateral security dialogue: ‘It might be useful to have a conference involving a number of Asian countries regarding mutual military roles.’(Nishihara, 1988, p. 273) This proposal and its rationale resembles the Nakayama proposal of three years later (see below).

Beyond seeing regional security multilateralism as a means for reassuring Asian nations, Nishihara proposed a separate multilateral structure for keeping the US engaged in East Asia. Called the Pacific Common Security Fund, this multilateral fund would help defray the costs of US forces stationed in the region. Members would include the US, Japan, and other US regional allies. (Nishihara, 1988, p. 274-5). This advocacy of like-minded security multilateralism also found echo in the Nakayama proposal.

In March 1989, Japan Forum, a foreign-policy think tank, presented policy recommendations to then Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru. Avoiding significant input from MOFA, and endorsed by a group of leading scholars, politicians, journalists, and

businessmen, this report advocated using multilateral approaches, as well as bilateral approaches, to regional security. It proposed a regional multilateral security dialogue to build confidence with the USSR. (Japan Forum on International Relations, 1989)

Although focusing on how to reduce military tensions with the Soviet Union, this report nonetheless noted that Japan's ability to play a larger military role was limited by Asian mistrust: 'it is clear that none of Japan's neighbors want to see Japan accept a large military role. ...Although Japan is an economic superpower, an extremely strong opposition would emerge in China and Korea, as well as the countries of Southeast Asia, if it should decide to undertake a military role in the region.' (Japan Forum on International Relations, 1989, pp. 17-8, 24, 25) Unlike Nishihara, however, this report did not consider the possibility that security multilateralism could be used to reassure Asian nations concerned about Japan playing a military role. Rather, the report argued that Asian mistrust of Japan as a military power necessitated continued reliance on forward deployed US forces. (Japan Forum on International Relations, 1989, pp. 17-8, 24, 25)

Sueo Sudo, a Japanese defense intellectual and specialist on the Fukuda Doctrine, suggested in early 1991 that the time was right for Japan to begin playing a more active role in Southeast Asian security. Citing the negative reactions by ASEAN

countries to the May 1990 Thai proposal for naval and other bilateral military cooperation between Thailand and Japan (see below), Sudo recommended that Japan play a low key and indirect role. 'For example, Japan could provide indirect assistance to modernise the defence systems of Asean. It could also share the financial burden of American military involvement in Southeast Asia.'(Sudo, 1991, January, 31)

However, Japan '...would first of all have to take some precautionary measures, or confidence-building measures.' (Sudo, 1991, p. 342; Sudo, 1991, January, 31) Although not specifically mentioning a multilateral dialogue, Sudo's insistence on the necessity of reassurance as a prerequisite to a larger Japanese security role largely corresponds to the ideas that were beginning to penetrate the cloudy gates of the Foreign Ministry.

The End of the Cold War and the Resurgence of the Reassurance Imperative

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, and the crumbling of the Soviet bloc over the ensuing months, Japan's reputational predicament deepened. These events caused Japan to loom larger in a region where the Soviet military was in retreat, and US budget deficits and economic frictions with Japan were raising questions about the US military presence. Japan had long had an economy greater than the combined GDPs of all other East Asian nations, including China, combined.

Ironically, it was a US military officer who focused attention on Japan's regional military potential and the need to 'contain' Japan so it did not again emerge as a military threat. In a press interview US Marine Major General Henry C. Stackpole III claimed 'no one wants a rearmed, resurgent Japan. So we are a cap in the bottle, if you will.' Echoing earlier perceptions that have been at the heart of Japan's reputational predicament Stackpole added that 'the Japanese consider themselves racially superior. They feel they have a handle on the truth, and their economic growth has proved that.' Although claiming that Japan already, has 'a very, very potent military,' Stackpole argued that Japan would remilitarize only 'if US forces withdraw,'(Hiatt, 1990, March 27) a remark not very reassuring to a region that was increasingly worrying about US staying power and fraying relations between Tokyo and Washington.

In May 1990, reflecting this environment, but also Thailand's benign view of Japanese military power relative to those of other Southeast Asian nations, Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan proposed joint naval maneuvers in the South China Sea to visiting Japanese Defense Agency Director Ishikawa Yozo. He coupled this with a proposal for a meeting of senior Japanese and Thai military officers to discuss regional security in light of a possible regional US military downsizing.(Sudo 1991, January, 31; & Hiatt, 1990, May 10) Chatichai expressed concern about a possible power vacuum

emerging from a US military withdrawal, and suggested that ‘other forces’ could come contribute to regional stability. Ishikawa understood Chatichai’s words as an invitation to Japan to play such a role.(Sudo 1991, January, 31; & Hiatt, 1990, May 10)²⁹ This provoked a sharp response from Singapore and other Southeast Asian nations, with Singapore’s authoritative *Straits Times* blasting Thailand for offering Japan a strategic ‘toehold’ in the region. (Hiatt, 1990, May 10) Another indication of growing regional angst about Japan stepping in to fill an apparent regional security vacuum came two months later at the 1990 ASEAN PMC meeting, where Malaysia’s Foreign Minister openly expressed concern about the future direction of Japan’s defense policy.(Satoh, 1991, p. 105)

US demands for Japan to dispatch the SDF overseas to support US military operations during the Persian Gulf Crisis and subsequent Gulf War between August 1990 and April 1991 only deepened Japan’s reputational predicament, as this challenged Japan’s long-standing policy of never dispatching the SDF overseas for any reason. Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki responded by proposing a bill before the National Diet in October 1990, for dispatching SDF and other personnel overseas as members of what the bill called a ‘UN Peace Cooperation Corps (UNPCC).’ This bill provoked sharp and sustained criticism from East Asian nations. Countries that had suffered the

most under Japanese occupation, China and Korea, reacted with the most suspicion,³² whereas Southeast Asian countries, somewhat less harmed by their experiences with Japanese occupation, were less militant in their opposition.³³ After a month of debate the bill was scrapped, with Japanese public opposition playing a key role in killing the bill.(Midford, 2011, chpt.5)³⁴

Yet, even in MOFA there was recognition of the significance of ‘strong opposition’ not only in Japan, but also ‘in the Asia-Pacific region as a whole to the concept of Japan’s sending combat forces abroad,’ which ‘derives from memories of Japanese aggression before and during World War II.’(Sato, 1990/91, pp. 42, 47) In the wake of this debacle Japan faced renewed pressure to contribute to US military operations during the Gulf War. After attempts to dispatch military transports to aid refugees failed, Japan dispatched minesweepers to waters off Kuwait and Iraq following the end of hostilities, the first deployment of Japanese military units overseas since the Second World War, and a deployment that raised more questions about Japan assuming a military role beyond its borders. MOFA was careful to have its ambassadors brief regional countries about the dispatch and gage their reactions before announcing the dispatch. Given the non-combat and post-conflict nature of the dispatch, and its purpose of restoring common sea-lanes of communication in the Persian Gulf, top officials in

neighboring countries expressed little opposition, except for China, who asked that the dispatch be handled ‘cautiously’ given ‘the extreme sensitivity’ of SDF overseas dispatches. The Philippines said it could support the dispatch so long as it did not ‘affect the wonderful image that Japan has nurtured in Asia under its peace constitution.’(ARPD, 1991, April 23)

Thus, during the Gulf War Japan found itself whipsawed by conflicting American and Asian demands. The Americans demanded a Japanese contribution of personnel to the US-led multilateral force in the Gulf, while several Asian countries wanted Japan to maintain its policy of not dispatching the SDF overseas. Tokyo concluded that it would have to expand its role in international and regional security. Tokyo also realized that a larger security role, including even modest steps such as SDF non-combat participation in UN peacekeeping operations, would require extensive reassurance of Asian countries.

At first, Japan responded with little more than a reaffirmation of the Fukuda doctrine. During a visit to Southeast Asia in May 1991 Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki recognized that Japan’s overseas deployments would produce further anxiety, but sought to reassure Asians:

With emphasis on personnel cooperation in our contribution to the post Gulf War situation....I am well aware that the course which Japanese policy might take could well spark concerns among some of our Asian neighbors that Japan might once more be embarking on a path to a military power. ...Japan has very

recently decided to send minesweepers to the region. This action does not mean that Japan is assuming a military role in the international community and does not represent any change in Japan's basic defense policy.(MOFA,1991, p. 432)

Nonetheless, Japanese diplomats were already concluding that Tokyo would need a broader framework for reassuring Asian countries. This provided an incentive to promote security multilateralism.³⁸

Quiet MOFA Rethinking and Nascent Policy Change

Behind the public façade of consistent opposition to regional security multilateralism, the proliferation of new and varied proposals for multilateral security frameworks, and mounting criticism, both international and domestic, were starting to impact thinking within MOFA about the continued viability of just saying no. Larger global events, not least of all the winding down of the Cold War in Europe also created pressure for sweeping policy change.

One early catalyst for MOFA's reassessment of security multilateralism was a post-Berlin Wall internal review that articulated a desire to move beyond Japan's traditional regional political role that had ranged from negative to passive, and the country's regional security isolationism. The goals of playing a more active political and security role, while reassuring Asian countries were emphasized by an internal

MOFA task force organized by then Vice Foreign Minister Kuriyama Takakazu in 1989.(Sato, 2007, pp. 97-98)

These two goals were stressed in a widely discussed May 1990 article Kuriyama published in *Gaikō Forum* (a foreign affairs journal tied to MOFA). Emphasizing that Japan did not wish to create the image of an emerging military great power, Kuriyama, echoing the Fukuda Doctrine, asserted: ‘even as a great power, having sworn to never become a great military power, Japan’s international contribution is limited to a non-military character.’ Insisting that Japan would nonetheless expand its contribution for maintaining international security, Kuriyama claimed that ‘outside the framework of the Japan-US security system,’ Japan’s contribution to international security would be through exclusively ‘non-military means.’⁴¹ Finally, Kuriyama suggested that a larger and more active role would be predicated on the reassurance value of the US alliance: ‘The security system makes it easy for neighboring countries to accept a large political and economic role from Japan.’⁴² Later, Kuriyama recalled that at the time he thought Japan’s security policy needed to become ‘more diversified,’ and that ASEAN was the ‘natural partner’ for that diversification.(C.O.E. Oraru, 2005)

Kuriyama’s 1989 reassessment task force had also been given responsibility for coming up with a response to Soviet proposals for creating a CSCA, proposals made in

advance of Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's planned visit to Japan in September 1990, and Soviet President Gorbachev's planned visit in spring 1991. The goal was to find ways to respond to these Soviet proposals beyond just saying 'no.'⁴³ It was in this context that another catalyst for the transformation of Japan's policy on regional security multilateralism arrived in the person of Satoh Yukio, a career diplomat who became the Director General of the Information Analysis Research and Planning Bureau in January 1990.

Upon becoming assuming this post Satoh was given a large report compiled under his predecessor, which was one part of the work of Kuriyama's task force, and was assigned to helping the European Division respond to Soviet CSCA and CBM proposals. After reading the report Satoh rejected its findings, believing that they were too reactive. Satoh argued it was 'strategically better for Japan to take the initiative in promoting regional security dialogue than to react to Soviet proposals.' (Satoh, 2007, p. 97) This account admits the catalytic influence that Soviet proposals ultimately had on Japanese policy, including the radical rethinking that was to become the Nakayama Proposal. This influence was magnified by Australian and Canadian proposals for creating a CSCA. Satoh thought these proposals were based on a European model that was inappropriate for the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁵ Rather than simply reacting to these proposals,

Satoh proved to be creative in conceptualizing, and even theorizing, about, regional security.⁴⁶

Conceptualizing a Regional Security Dialogue. Satoh started rethinking Japan's traditional blanket rejection of region-wide security multilateralism. Satoh claims that he engaged in intense consultations with his American counter-parts, and reached a consensus not only to reject Soviet CSCA proposals, but also to support security multilateralism through 'an incremental approach of expanding gradually the role of existing regional mechanisms, such as ASEAN-PMC and APEC would be preferable to creating a new organization.' (Satoh, 2007, p. 98)

The first semi-public indication of Satoh's new thinking came in a paper he presented in early September 1990, and published in *Survival* in winter 1990-91 by IISS. This paper was approved by MOFA, (Satoh, 2007, p. 103) and thus can be considered to unofficially reflect the direction of MOFA's thinking. There he wrote about the need for a multilateral forum to reenforce regional stability. In his presentation at the 32nd Annual conference of IISS, , Satoh argued that a CSCE-type arrangement would not be appropriate for the Asia-Pacific due to different geopolitical realities compared to Europe.. Instead, Satoh argued 'existing organizations, such as ASEAN PMC, and APEC,' will 'make valuable contributions to the evolution of a mechanism for regional

stability.’(Satoh, 1990/91, p. 43) This was the first time a Japanese diplomat publicly endorsed the utility of a region-wide multilateral political and security dialogue.

In the same paper Satoh also discussed Asian concerns about a possible shift in Japanese policy ‘to one of dispatching armed forces abroad,’ especially ‘combat forces.’ Satoh argued that the Japan-US alliance played a reassurance role in backing up the Fukuda Doctrine’s pledge ‘of not becoming a major military power. The policy of maintaining an exclusively defensive force posture in terms of both weapons systems and scope of operations is reassuring to countries in this region. The key condition permitting Japan to pursue this policy is the alliance with the United States.’(Satoh, 1990/91, pp. 46-47)⁵⁰ Beyond the reassuring impact of the alliance, Satoh did not yet identify a regional multilateral security dialogue as a means to allay regional concerns about Japan deploying the SDF overseas, or the course of Japanese defense policy more generally.

In another paper Satoh started drafting around the same time he presented a Japanese view on how to reduce tension on the Korean Peninsula. Satoh asserted there is no ‘doubt that broader forums for regional cooperation are important for the Asia and Pacific region,’ and echoed more emphatically the point he made in his IISS paper: ‘it is far more effective and pragmatic to use the existing forums and processes...[to address]

questions of reduction of tension, enhancement of political stability and arms control and security.’ This was a step beyond the IISS paper in that it clearly identified security issues, including ‘arms control’ and ‘tension reduction’ as issues that a regional dialogue could discuss.(Satoh, 1991, p. 105)

These two papers illustrate MOFA’s quiet rethinking regarding regional security cooperation, and were to prove influential, as the dramatic change in Japanese policy that unfolded in 1991 largely followed the general direction laid out in these two papers. Nonetheless, Satoh’s and MOFA’s thinking remained vague and underdeveloped.

The first public sign that MOFA was beginning to rethink its opposition to multilateral security cooperation appeared in September 1990, when Shevardnadze visited Japan.

While Satoh had been leading the effort to respond to Soviet CSCA proposals, and his IISS paper can be considered a draft of that response, in fact, Shevardnadze hardly mentioned these proposals during his visit. On the other hand, Japan agreed to a Soviet proposal to commence a bilateral security dialogue. The first meeting, held in Moscow in December 1990, represented the first time that postwar Japan began a wide-ranging security dialogue with a country other than the United States. Satoh led the Japanese delegation in these ground-breaking talks, during which he learned that Moscow was no

longer placing high priority on their CSCA and CBM proposals.(Sato, 2007, pp. 99)

This allowed Sato to shift focus away from rejecting Soviet proposals and toward thinking proactively about what Japan could do to create a regional multilateral framework suited to its national interests, and with less concern that the Soviets would try to hijack such a proposal for their own ends.⁵⁷

Sato circulated his IISS paper within MOFA to build consensus among the various bureaus with responsibility for Asia-Pacific security. ‘Although the paper did not arouse much attention at that time, this exercise no doubt helped create among the officials concerned a common perspective on the issue, thus paving the way for later approval of Foreign Minister Nakayama’s January 1991 foreign policy speech to the Diet,’ which Sato’s bureau prepared.(Sato, 2007, p. 99)

Nakayama’s annual Diet address thus became the first authoritative indication that Japan was reconsidering its policy on regional security multilateralism. After echoing Sato’s arguments from his IISS paper about the geo-political differences between Europe and the Asia-Pacific, and rejecting a CSCE Helsinki-like multilateral process, Nakayama issued a call for giving ‘serious consideration to how to ensure long-term stability in the Asia-Pacific region.’ He called for expanding ‘dialogue and co-operation on various political and economic questions in the region, making full use

of existing for a,' such as the ASEAN PMC and APEC. He then boldly added 'based on this position, Japan proposes to promote dialogue with interlocutors of the Asia-Pacific region for the purpose of forming an international consensus on how to achieve long-term stability in this region.'(MOFA, 1991, pp. 391-2)

Satoh arranged to have excerpts of Nakayama's Diet speech published in the documentation section of IISS' journal, *Survival*, two months later, excerpts that introduced the key changes in Japanese policy regarding security multilateralism (no other portions of Nakayama's speech were included).(Japanese Embassy, 1991) Satoh considered this an 'effective' way to signal western policy elites about Japan's changing views on regional security multilateralism. He also circulated his paper on how to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula to his MOFA colleagues. Satoh claims these actions helped lay 'the groundwork for the next phase of policy-making...preparation of the Nakayama proposal.'(Satoh, 2007, p. 99; Satoh, 1991)

From Regional Security Isolationism to Promoting Multilateralism

Overall, the passing of the Cold War exerted a strong influence on Japan's position toward regional security multilateralism. The security dialogue with Moscow not only subsequently served as the model for the series of bilateral dialogues Japan initiated

with China and South Korea, but may have encouraged the MOFA to separate the concept of a security dialogue from more encompassing, and implicitly threatening concepts, such as arms control or collective security, and may thereby have encouraged policy-makers to experiment with the concept of multilateral security dialogues.

Building on this initial dialogue, Moscow and Tokyo drafted a memorandum initiating bilateral consultations on regional issues in Asia during Gorbachev's visit to Japan. (MOFA, 1991, pp. 316-7) These agreements, and Gorbachev's visit itself helped overcome fears in Tokyo that security multilateralism would undermine the US-Japan alliance. During his visit to Japan, Gorbachev emphasized that the USSR no longer opposed the US-Japan alliance: 'We have no subversive intentions whatsoever in relation to the military-political structures that have come about in this region.' (Youtz and Midford, 1992, p. 10)

Although announced changes in Soviet intentions combined with declining Soviet power were another factor encouraging Japan's change of course, Japan's changing view of regional security multilateralism in Spring 1991 was not a direct consequence of improving Japanese-Soviet relations. Indeed, throughout this period, and for at least a year after the Nakayama proposal, Japan continued to oppose inviting

the Soviets into a regional security forum. Rather, the declining Soviet threat put at risk the US-Japan alliance. Although Tokyo had seen a Soviet sponsored CSCA as a threat to the US military presence, by 1991 Japan was beginning to see a carefully crafted multilateral forum of American-aligned states as potentially ensuring a continued American presence while simultaneously reassuring Japan's Asian neighbors.

A final factor motivating Japan's change in policy was the emergence of a competition for regional leadership: by 1990 an open competition had emerged over how and by whom a regional multilateral security forum would be developed. Tokyo feared that its fundamental security interests, including the US alliance, would be endangered if Japan did not assume a leadership role in the institution-building process from the beginning. Japan also gradually became eager to take a leadership role for its own sake. As one of Japan's leading defense intellectuals put it, Japan 'wanted to show that it could take the initiative on something.'⁶⁴

By 1991 Japan had thus concluded that Soviet CSCA proposals no longer posed a significant threat to the US military presence in East Asia. Instead, the winding down of the Cold War itself had become the threat. A multilateral security forum went from being a threat to the American presence to a means for ensuring its continuation. Most decisively, the expectation of a declining US presence and commitment along with an

already declining Soviet presence increased Japan's actual and potential regional military weight. Even without a complete American drawdown, Japan faced an incentive, articulated by US demands during the Gulf War, to step into what was then seen as a widening security vacuum. Hence, Japan could use the creation of a multilateral security forum as a means for reassuring Japan's neighbors and as a portal channeling Japan's emergence as a player in regional security.

This configuration of interests lead Japan to adopt a leadership strategy toward security multilateralism with three goals: 1. Propose a like-minded security forum excluding the socialist powers, 2. Propose a security forum designed to keep the US regionally engaged; and 3. Propose a security forum suitable for discussing Asian concerns about Japan's security policy. These last two goals were also justifications for Japan taking the initiative and abandoning the Fukuda Doctrine's taboo on Tokyo talking about and participating in regional security.

Consensus Building with ASEAN

By mid-1991, it had become clear that many of ASEAN's most influential defense intellectuals were considering the possibility that ASEAN should organize 'new inter-governmental measures for region wide conflict-resolution and

cooperation.’(ASEAN-ISIS, 1991, p. 19) Given that Japan had promoted a special relationship with ASEAN since the Fukuda doctrine, ASEAN’s openness to security multilateralism posed both a threat and an opportunity for Tokyo. ASEAN’s flirtation with this concept could be a threat if it produced security structures that undermined the US-Japan alliance or Japan’s Soviet policy. On the other hand, because of the very close diplomatic relationship that had developed between Japan and ASEAN since the late 1970s, ASEAN was the best potential partner for co-sponsoring a multilateral security forum; Japan was comfortable dealing with ASEAN.⁶⁶

Indeed, Satoh latter suggested that the proposal reflected Tokyo’s intention that Japan and ASEAN together form the core coalition for regional consensus building on security multilateralism.(Satoh, 1994,p. 12) The combined diplomatic weight of ASEAN and Japan could largely ensure the realization of any forum they crafted, even in the face of American opposition. Given that the USSR and China were not members of the ASEAN PMC, the prospects for crafting a multilateral forum that excluded the socialist powers seemed promising.

By spring 1991 ASEAN thinking about security multilateralism was maturing. ASEAN security intellectuals, especially the influential directors of the ASEAN Institutes of Strategic and International Studies, had ambitions to fashion an

Asia-Pacific multilateral security dialogue. Because MOFA was not then engaged in policy planning talks with ASEAN foreign ministries, ties with ASEAN-ISIS scholars took on added importance, especially with Jusuf Wanandi, chairman of CSIS Indonesia. According to Satoh, Wanandi ‘was almost the only interlocutor with whom I could consult over Japan’s evolving views on Asia-Pacific security.’ (Satoh, 2007, p. 100)

Like Japan, the directors of ASEAN-ISIS saw an opportunity to assume regional leadership and feared that ASEAN’s interests would be left behind if they were not involved from the beginning. ASEAN-ISIS’s ideas on how to create a regional security forum became clear at the sixth annual meeting of their directors held in Jakarta June 2-3, 1991, although they began considering the question at the fifth annual directors’ meeting in Bangkok in May 1990. Significantly, Satoh was invited as a guest speaker and observer to this meeting. In Jakarta, the ASEAN-ISIS participants and Satoh agreed that the time was ripe for establishing an Asia-Pacific multilateral security dialogue. However, Satoh and the ASEAN participants disagreed on the issue of including the socialist countries: the ASEAN-ISIS participants reached a consensus on including the socialist countries, whereas Satoh was more cautious, suggesting preconditions on Soviet participation, notably Soviet agreement to enter negotiations for returning the Northern Territories to Japan.⁷² He also suggested membership for the

USSR and other socialist countries should be delayed three to five years.⁷³ The ASEAN participants wanted to locate this dialogue in an extension of the PMC, such as an 'ASEAN PMC-initiated conference.' Satoh suggested using the PMC itself.

Two days later, on June 5, another conference: 'ASEAN and The Asia-Pacific Region: Prospects for Security Cooperation in the 1990s,' opened in Manila. This meeting was on a more official level, sponsored as it was by the Philippine and Thai Foreign Ministries, and charged with reporting its findings to the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting in July. Satoh, Wanandi, and several other Jakarta conference participants attended the Manila meeting. There, a consensus emerged, supported even by participating American officials, to the effect that an ASEAN Asia-Pacific security dialogue was an idea whose time has come.⁷⁴

In his presentation, Satoh emphasized Japan's priority of ensuring a continued US military presence in the region, and stressed Japan's responsibility to repair the damage done to the bilateral alliance by the Gulf War. Satoh advocated expanding the ASEAN PMC's (or APEC's) agenda to include security issues. One major purpose would be to help insure a continued American military presence in the region. (Satoh, 1991, 5-7 June, pp. 11,14) However, he also linked security multilateralism to Japan's need to reassure its neighbors, a point he had not made in Jakarta. Satoh stated that

Japan would play a larger and more active role in Asia-Pacific security, and that this necessitated that Japan use a multilateral security framework as a means to reassure Japan's neighbors.⁷⁷ According to Satoh:

Politically, Japan has been keeping a low profile. Behind this has been a concern that a high political posture on the Japanese part might arouse skepticism and concern among Asian people, who still remember the Japanese attempt to dominate them by force, ...participation of the SDF, if any, will be limited to the areas of non-combat operation.In the coming years, Japan will engage herself more positively than before in the process to enhance political stability and security in the Asia and Pacific region. ...Yet, anxiety on the part of many Asian countries about the possibility of Japan becoming a "military power" will persist unless....[Japan involves] herself in the process of regional dialogue on this question.(Satoh, 1991, 5-7 June, pp. 24, 25, 26)

Satoh noted that at the 1990 ASEAN PMC, Malaysia had raised the hitherto delicate question of Asian fears about the future course of Japanese security policy, signifying, in Satoh's view, that the PMC had matured enough to be used as a forum for a security dialogue, and for Japan to reassure its partners about its security intentions.(Satoh, 1991, 5-7 June, pp. 24) Satoh then spelled out a modification to Japan's Fukuda doctrine pledge to not be a military power: 'It is important for Japan to commit herself to the policy of not becoming a 'military power.' But it is equally important for Japan to place herself in multilateral venues, wherein the countries which

are worried about the future direction of Japanese defense policy can express their concern.’(Satoh, 1991, 5-7 June, p. 26)

The brilliance of Satoh’s conceptualization is that he took what had been a reason for Japan not to be involved in regional security, namely regional distrust of Japan as a military power stemming from East Asian memories of its wartime behavior, and flipped this into a justification for Japan to engage in security dialogue with its neighbors, so that it could address these fears. He effectively turned the Fukuda Doctrine on its head.

Satoh’s overture was enthusiastically accepted by the ASEAN representatives at the Manila conference; they invited Japan to become more involved in regional security dialogue and to discuss Japanese defense and national security policies as they evolve.⁸¹

This enthusiastic response contributed to Satoh’s and MOFA’s belief that ASEAN would support a multilateral security initiative from Japan.

After Manila, Satoh continued onto Kuala Lumpur, where he attended the Fifth Asia-Pacific Roundtable sponsored by ISIS Malaysia. There he was interviewed by *ISIS Focus*, a limited-circulation publication of ISIS Malaysia. In this interview he stated his ‘personal opinion’ that the PMC should be used for a regional political dialogue on

security issues, although he did not give any indication that he wanted Japan to take the initiative. Satoh placed two issues at the top of this dialogue's agenda: 'how far the United States is going to withdraw and how far Japan will expand her political and military role in this region.' Pointing to a dialogue as key for promoting 'mutual assurance,' Satoh acknowledged that regionally 'anxiety about the possibility of Japan becoming a big military power still persists. Behind it there are bitter memories of the past.' Therefore, it is Japan's 'responsibility, I think, to expose ourselves to the expression of concern about Japan.'(Zainuddin, 1991)

When Satoh returned to Tokyo, he gave his colleagues a top-secret briefing that largely recapped what he said in Southeast Asia. He emphasized that Japan should propose a multilateral security dialogue, to deal with the two major regional concerns: possible US withdrawal and a possible Japanese military role.(APD, 1991)

The Nakayama Proposal

The outlines of the July 1991 Nakayama proposal emerged from Satoh's participation in the Jakarta and Manila conferences.

Nakayama's language on Japan's need to reassure its neighbors through a regional security dialogue was similar to that used in Satoh's Manila conference paper. After mentioning Japan's intention to participate in UN peacekeeping operations, Nakayama

stated: ‘this expansion of the Japanese political role in the Asia-Pacific region has

caused anxiety and concern among other

countries, as to how far our role would expand and whether or not it would take on military dimensions.’

He then proposed a multilateral ‘forum for political dialogue where friendly countries in this region could engage in

frank exchanges of opinion on matters of mutual interest. I think, for example, that the aforementioned concerns and apprehensions about the future direction of Japanese foreign policy are a worthy topic for such types of political dialogues.’

By proposing to place this dialogue within the PMC, the Nakayama proposal also

excluded the socialist countries. However, it went farther than Satoh’s paper, explicitly

arguing that the ASEAN PMC security dialogue to be restricted to ‘the friendly

countriesus.’(MOFA, 1991a, pp. 469-470)

Another similarity between Satoh’s Jakarta presentation and the Nakayama proposal was the rejection of ‘confidence-building measures.’ Besides the perceived connection between CBMs and CSCE, Satoh argued that CBMs were measures to be taken by enemies (e.g. the two blocks in Europe), not friends. Since Japan, ASEAN, and the PMC dialogue partners were ostensibly friends, Satoh feared that proposing CBMs might cause Japan to label itself as an ‘enemy.’ To avoid this danger, he developed a new concept applicable among ‘friends:’ Mutual Reassurance Measures (MRMs: *Sōgo ni anshinkan wo takameru sochi*).⁹⁰ In his speech, Nakayama proposed

a similar concept: a mutual reassurance dialogue (Otagai no *anshinkan wo takameru tame no taiwa*). (MOFA, 1991a, pp. 469, 470)

It is important to emphasize that in two important and inter-related respects the ASEAN ISIS declaration and the Nakayama proposal differed. First, the ASEAN-ISIS declaration advocated the creation of a separate ‘ASEAN PMC-initiated conference on security, to be called the ‘Conference on Stability, and Peace in the Asia Pacific.’ Second, the ASEAN-ISIS declaration included the Socialist countries: China, the USSR, North Korea and Vietnam. The Nakayama proposal, by contrast excluded the socialist countries. The desire to exclude the USSR also influenced Japan’s decision to propose the PMC itself, rather than a separate PMC-sponsored conference, as the multilateral security- dialogue venue. Tokyo feared that it would be harder to exclude the USSR from a new venue. Indeed, when the ARF was created two years later, very much along the lines suggested by the ASEAN-ISIS declaration, this proved to be the case.

Reactions to the Nakayama Proposal

ASEAN and the US initially reacted negatively to the Nakayama proposal. According to Japanese diplomats interviewed by the author, the rushed nature of the Nakayama proposal was one reason for this negative reaction. Although Satoh’s ideas

were positively received in Jakarta and Manila in June, he gave no indication that he intended to turn them into a Japanese initiative at the ASEAN PMC meeting the following month. ASEAN's time frame was slower: the ASEAN-ISIS declaration was intended for the Fourth ASEAN Summit Meeting to be held in Singapore in February 1992.⁹⁴ The Nakayama proposal caught ASEAN and the US almost totally off-guard, in part because ASEAN was informed only one day in advance, and the US was informed only two days in advance.

In MOFA there was fear that if Japan let the opportunity of the 1991 PMC pass it by, it might be preempted by another country, or possibly by ASEAN itself at its February 1992 Summit Meeting. Preemption would not only mean losing a chance to prove that Japan could take the initiative, but also pose the more concrete risk that ASEAN might publicly propose a forum including the USSR, a possibility Japan wanted to head off.

The two differences between the Nakayama Proposal and the ASEAN-ISIS Declaration, together with the suddenness of the Japanese initiative, explain some of ASEAN's opposition to the Nakayama proposal. Although the ASEAN states all supported the idea of formally adding security to the agenda of the PMC, they feared

that creating a SOM to prepare for this dialogue, as Nakayama proposed, might weigh down the PMC, causing it to lose its broad political and economic focus, and end up as a narrowly defined security forum by default. (Midford, 2000, pp. 385, 395; Richardson, 1991, October; Kyodo, 1991, July 23)

Last, but not least, the cool reaction also reflected fears about Japan assuming a leadership role in regional security. Above all there was suspicion that Japan would use its sponsorship of the PMC security proposal as a means to usurp control of the dialogue from ASEAN, ultimately establishing a non-ASEAN venue. Wanandi, the architect of the ASEAN-ISIS Declaration, claimed that ASEAN was negative toward the Nakayama proposal 'because the Japanese proposal means an institutional change from an ASEAN organized one, namely the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference or ASEAN PMC, to something different.'¹⁰³ An ASEAN diplomat echoed this view, arguing that ASEAN, not Japan, should 'decide on the framework of such a forum.' (Pura, 1991, July 24)

MOFA bureaucrats interviewed by the author agreed that suspicion of Japan's motives was a major reason why ASEAN's reaction to the Nakayama proposal was negative. According to one former diplomat with expertise in security, the Nakayama proposal raised doubts about Japan's 'true intentions.'¹⁰⁵

Lending credence to this view, an ASEAN diplomat suggested that one reason for ASEAN's wary reaction to the Nakayama proposal was 'mixed feelings' about Japan's expected growing influence in Southeast Asia as the U.S. reduced its military presence. (Pura, 1991, July 24) Asian and Western officials present at the 1991 ASEAN PMC meeting suggested that the basic outlines of the Nakayama proposal would prove acceptable to ASEAN eventually, but only when presented in a way that reduced Japan's 'security profile.' (Richardson, 1991, October) Thus, the Nakayama proposal, sudden as it was, and in light of Japan's bad reputation, proved to be more disturbing than it was reassuring.

In keeping with their desire to assume a leadership role, Japanese diplomats were surprisingly undeterred by the negative reactions they received from ASEAN and the US. The day after making his proposal, Nakayama told reporters that he thought he had obtained ASEAN's 'understanding' of his proposal, and said that Japan would press ASEAN to convene his proposed SOM before the July 1992 ASEAN PMC meeting. At the same time, however, he sought to reassure ASEAN that Japan continued to see the US military presence as central to Asia's security. MOFA spokesman emphasized Japan's intention to press forward despite ASEAN's tepid reaction: 'What we'd like to see is to have expanded, deepened discussion on political

and security matters,' adding that Japan would like to see its concept accepted before the July 1992 PMC. To accomplish this goal, and to cement a Japanese-ASEAN coalition for designing a security dialogue, Japan proposed that the Japan-ASEAN Forum be expanded to discuss political issues. (Pura, 1991, July 24; Midford, 2000, p. 387)

Despite the cool reception accorded the Nakayama proposal, it nonetheless acted as a catalyst promoting the development of Asia-Pacific security multilateralism. Most importantly, the Nakayama proposal encouraged the Bush administration, especially Secretary of State Baker, to reassess Asia-Pacific security multilateralism. As a result, signaled a more favorable attitude toward Asia-Pacific security multilateralism during a November 1991 address in Tokyo; he repeated this position a few months later in a *Foreign Affairs* article. (Baker, 1991, pp. 5–6) This new position became clearer in January 1992, in the Tokyo Declaration on the US–Japan Joint Global Partnership, where the US and Japan endorsed a regional multilateral dialogue through existing fora such as the ASEAN–PMC or APEC.

Conclusions

The Nakayama proposal constitutes the turning point when Japan departed

from its isolationist and dependent regional security strategy of merely following US policy. Japan not only adopted a new and independent policy, it got out ahead of the US and pursued its initiative even in the face of US opposition. Remarkably, Japan was even able to convince the US to reverse its position and come out in support of regional security dialogue. The Nakayama initiative was not an aberration, but rather marked the end of Japan's previous regional strategy of security isolationism, and the beginning of Tokyo's leadership in promoting regional security multilateralism, often with support and collaboration from Washington, but not always. Indeed, Japan became willing to pursue forms of regional political multilateralism that both involved security discussions and excluded the US, such as the ASEAN Plus Three Forum, the Northeast Asian Three Cooperation, and the Asian European Summit.

Japan's reasons for making the Nakayama proposal came down to a combination of the reassurance imperative and fear of abandonment. As Japan grew as an economic power, and the US faced increasing economic difficulties maintaining its massive military as the Cold War was winding down at the beginning of the 1990s, Japan was called on by its US ally to contribute more to regional and global security. With the emergence of a regional power vacuum as Soviet and US forces drew down, Japan felt an incentive to expand its security role, yet faced deep suspicion from its

Asian neighbors. Tokyo came to see security multilateralism, especially a multilateral dialogue, as a major way to reassure East Asian countries and discourage counter-balancing against Japan's expanding security role.

Thus, we can conclude by the beginning of the 1990s Japan was becoming too big for continued containment within the Japan-US alliance. Japan would have to begin playing a direct role in regional and global security, and regional security multilateralism would help facilitate this change, and hence Japan pursued the idea, even in the face of initial US opposition. At the same time, Japan saw a multilateral forum as a way to keep the US militarily engaged with East Asia and Japan, thereby avoiding the risk of abandonment.

Hence, Japan's decentering away from the US as its sole security partner and toward regional security multilateralism and security cooperation with non-US partners was initially launched as a means to strengthen Japan's alliance with the US, and to convince East Asian nations that they could trust Japan playing a role in regional security. The former goal is thus consistent with the collective-binding hypothesis identified in this special issue. The later goal, on the other hand lends some support to both the hedging hypothesis and normal-nation hypotheses. Building trust in Japan's role as a regional military power, while also supporting the alliance, overtime promised,

if successful, new opportunities for Japan to play an expanded and independent role. Indeed, overcoming regional suspicions has arguably always been the key for Japan to regain strategic independence as a great military power, a military power that could be more independent within the US alliance, or secure even outside of it.

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¹ Interview with a MOFA diplomat, July 1991.

¹¹ Also based on interviews with two middle-ranked MOFA diplomats, March 10, 20 and 28, 1994, a former Soviet Desk chief (Soren-ka) from the early 1990s, July 7, 2011, and an interview with a retired diplomat on August 19, 1994.

¹² On these proposals, see Clark, 1990. Concerning the Australian initiative, see Evans, 1990.

¹⁴ See a speech by Hiroshi Kitamura, Japan's Ambassador to Canada, at Queen's University, 10 October 1990, as cited by Dewitt & Evans, 1991, pp. 8-9.

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³² Regarding these reactions see Burton, 1990; Japan Times, 1990, October 22; ; Fujie, Nakamura, et. al., 1991.

³³ Overall see Burton, 1990; On reactions in the Philippines, see Fujie, Nakamura, et. al., 1991, pp. 102-4; and Lu, 1991.; Lu, 1993, p. 45. Regarding reactions in Indonesia and Malaysia see Goh, 1992; and Lubis, 1992; Thailand, which had the least traumatic occupation experience of all, was notable for its

silence about sending the SDF overseas. See Nakamura, et. al., 1991, pp. 83-4, 172-177; Robinson, 1991.

³⁴ Vocal Asian opposition to the bill might have reinforced the Japanese public's opposition.

³⁸ A retired MOFA diplomat emphasized the importance of the Gulf War shock as a motivation behind the Nakayama proposal. Interview of August 19, 1994.

⁴³ Interview with a retired MOFA diplomat, August 19, 1994, Tokyo.

⁴⁵ Interview of February 20, 2004.

⁴⁶ Satoh also focused on countering Soviet CBMs proposals, a topic outside the scope of this article.

⁵⁰ Later Satoh would restate this more emphatically: "No country in Asia would want to deal with a Japan that was severed from the US." Quoted by Brown, 1993, p. 556.

⁵⁷ However, MOFA's Soviet desk worried as late as July 1991 that the Nakayama initiative would give the Soviets just such an opportunity.

⁶⁴ Interview of April 27, 1995.

⁶⁶ Based on interviews conducted with two MOFA diplomats, on August 19, 1994, and March 28, 1994..

⁷² Interview with Paul Evans, an observer at the ASEAN-ISIS Jakarta Conference, September 17, 1994. According to him, Satoh was relatively "soft" on Soviet participation, and indicated that his views had changed over the previous six months. Later, a Western diplomat characterized as "acute" Japan's "resistance" to involving the socialist countries in a regional security dialogue in June 1991. Personal communication of October 13, 1994.

⁷³ Personal communication with a Jakarta meeting observer, October 13, 1994. Later, Satoh characterized his position this way: "First, I thought we should create a forum among ourselves, and then invite the Socialist countries afterward." Interview of February 20, 2004.

⁷⁴ Desaix Anderson, Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, insisted that the US was interested in a region-wide security dialogue, but that the proposals made up to that time had not proved convincing. Based on the notes of a Manila conference participant that were shared with the author in a personal communication of October 13, 1994.

⁷⁷ Based on the notes of a Manila conference participant that were shared with the author in a personal communication of October 13, 1995.

⁸¹ Based on the notes of a Manila conference participant that were shared with the author in a personal communication of October 13, 1995.

⁹⁰ Interview with an observer at the ASEAN-ISIS meeting, September 19, 1994.

⁹⁴ Personal communication from Jusuf Wanandi, March 10, 1995.

¹⁰³ Personal communication with Jusuf Wanandi, March 10, 1995, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Interviews with a retired MOFA diplomat, August 19, 1995; and two mid-level diplomats on March 10, 1994 and April 4, 1994.