



**Trilateral Strategic Cooperative Mechanism
Between Japan, the United States, and Vietnam:
A Proposal**

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Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS (www.pacforum.org) operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate arenas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) Fellows

In 2010, the Pacific Forum CSIS with generous support from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation established the SPF Fellowship Program to nurture the next generation of specialists who will be committed to broadening and strengthening the Japan-US alliance. Through a combination of resident and non-resident fellowships, the Pacific Forum CSIS reaches out to the next generation of leaders in our two countries to reinvigorate the security relationship. SPF Fellows develop and apply innovative and creative solutions to 21st-century problems. They focus on underdeveloped aspects of the relationship to ensure that the alliance is ready to deal with current and future problems. By recognizing and addressing a wider range of issues and actors that are part of this partnership, SPF Fellows ensure the resilience and effectiveness of the alliance for the next half century.

Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	iv
Project Overview	v
Executive Summary.....	vii
Trilateral Strategic Cooperative Mechanism Between Japan, the United States, and Vietnam: A Proposal	1
About the Authors	7

Acknowledgements

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Project Overview

Japan-US-X Project

This Trilateral Strategic Cooperative Mechanism is a part of the Japan-US-X Project promoted by Sasakawa Peace Foundation (SPF) Fellows of the Pacific Forum CSIS. This project has three objectives: first, it seeks to revitalize the alliance by reaching out to new partners and engaging the region. The Japan-US-X mechanism can be trilateral, quadrilateral, or even larger. Partners can be other Asia-Pacific nations as well as countries further afield to solve transnational challenges including piracy, terrorism, trafficking, and cybersecurity. Second, it aims to raise the appreciation, profile, and value of the Japan-US alliance in the region and beyond by integrating the alliance more deeply into the regional security architecture. Finally, this project hopes to promote the minilateral model for regional security architecture where partners can and are encouraged to accept new roles beyond their traditional areas of responsibility, to contribute more to regional safety and stability.

The Japan-US-Vietnam mechanism is the second proposal in this project. The first proposal, “The United States, Japan, and the Republic of the Philippines: Toward a Trilateral Maritime Partnership for the 21st Century,” was published in 2011. (For details, contact the Pacific Forum CSIS at pacificforum@pacforum.org.)

Executive Summary

Asia's security and stability are being challenged by evolving dynamics in China and on the Korean Peninsula. While parts of this region enjoy unparalleled growth in economic and political power, the economic recession has imposed financial constraints on some countries and their security strategies. It is becoming evident that the traditional bilateral security arrangements inherited from the Cold War must embrace more robust burden sharing, stronger assurances and clearer commitments from all concerned parties. This dynamic period requires new, flexible security partnerships to meet modern challenges at the "minilateral" level.

Japan and the United States have a six-decade long alliance, and should use that tie as a core to expand a minilateral security mechanism to the region and beyond. Hanoi, Tokyo, and Washington are in an excellent position to establish a trilateral security arrangement, as they share common interests, including maritime security in the South China Sea, as well as nuclear safety and security. The three countries have existing bilateral security relationships. Vietnam and the United States established a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on defense cooperation in September 2011; Japan and Vietnam signed one the following month. The opportunity is ripe to create a security arrangement that is convergent, coherent, and enduring.

To do so, the three countries should establish a strategic cooperative mechanism. They should pursue the mechanism both at the Track 1 and 1.5-levels. Track-1 cooperation starts with a Maritime Security and HA/DR (humanitarian assistance and disaster relief) Partnership. To identify additional collaboration areas and mutual concerns, a Japan-US-Vietnam (JUSV) Trilateral Conference and Fellowship should be established.

An annual conference at the Track 1.5-level will allow participants to share insights and perspectives on maritime security in the South China Sea, nuclear safety and security, HA/DR, and implications of the rise of China and to seek new areas of trilateral cooperation. The DAV, the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), and the Pacific Forum CSIS would serve as the key contacts to bring together scholars and government officials from each country.

Furthermore, a fellowship should be established for long-term research exchanges of scholars to study these topics, to cultivate policymakers and opinion leaders, and facilitate academic and policy debates. This fellowship will create communication channels and networks between the academic and policy communities, to expand linkages among the three countries not only at a personal but also at an institutional level to ensure enduring constructive relations. The Pacific Forum CSIS, JIIA, and DAV will help fellows access governmental organizations and think tanks in each country.

Finally, a Maritime Security and HA/DR Partnership should be established. Capacity building in maritime security and HA/DR is vital given rising tensions in the South China Sea and countries remain vulnerable to natural and nuclear disasters. Japanese Self-Defense Forces and US forces will provide capacity-building training for the Vietnamese Maritime Police and Navy with maritime patrol aircraft.

Trilateral Strategic Cooperative Mechanism Between Japan, the United States, and Vietnam: A Proposal

Background

Asian security remains uncertain due to the rise of China, the continued bellicosity of the North Korean regime, and regional dynamics that include, among other issues, terrorism, territorial disputes and nuclear proliferation. Regional affairs will remain unpredictable given elections and transitions in China, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States in 2012. Furthermore, the “3/11” triple disaster in Japan reminded the international community that security includes not only national defense, but also human security. Yet, the economic recession has dramatically decreased budgets and impacted the capacity of regional countries to defend national interests and contribute to international security. Even though senior US officials including President Barack Obama emphasized the US “pivot” to Asia during recent travel throughout the region, allies and partners remain concerned about the effect of fiscal constraints on US security commitments in Asia. All of them are struggling to shape this new regional security architecture as regional leadership and organization evolve.

The regional security architecture debate is moving beyond traditional bilateral arrangements in search of an equation that allows for more robust burden sharing, stronger assurances, and clearer commitments from all concerned parties. Furthermore, there is awareness in Washington that the old ‘hub and spokes’ system of alliances inherited from the Cold War era is no longer sufficient to meet modern challenges. Instead, a new flexible mechanism is beginning to be adapted: a minilateral model.

Integrating the Japan-US alliance as a foundation of the regional security architecture, this approach can create security relationships and embrace new partners across the region. Hanoi, Tokyo, and Washington are in an excellent position to establish a trilateral security arrangement as they share a common interest in maritime security in the South China Sea, HA/DR, nuclear safety and security, as well as managing the evolving regional balance of power. The three countries already have bilateral security relationships. Japan and the United States have an alliance that has endured for six decades. Vietnam and the United States signed an MOU on defense cooperation on September 20, 2011; Japan and Vietnam signed one the following month. The opportunity is ripe to create a security arrangement that is convergent, coherent, and enduring. Tokyo and Washington can revitalize their alliance by working with Hanoi as a new partner. This minilateral model would appeal to potential future partners and contribute to peace and prosperity in the region.

Trilateral Strategic Cooperation Mechanism

The Pacific Forum CSIS trilateral project team proposes a strategic cooperative mechanism among the three countries. The three countries should pursue the mechanism both at the Track 1 and 1.5-levels. The Track-1 level cooperation starts with a Maritime

Security and HA/DR Partnership because such capacity-building is currently the most urgent requirement. To identify further potential collaboration areas and mutual concerns, a Japan-US-Vietnam (JUSV) Trilateral Conference and Fellowship should be established.

The First Pillar: Maritime Security and HA/DR Partnership

Concerns:

Capacity building in maritime security and HA/DR is more important than ever as the South China Sea faces increasing tensions and countries remain vulnerable to natural and nuclear disasters. Each of the three countries is aware of the threats that such disasters pose after Hurricane Katrina in the United States, the Great Tohoku Earthquake and nuclear crisis in Japan, as well as annual typhoons and tsunamis in Vietnam. Vietnam is especially vulnerable to natural disasters due to its long coastline; an average of six to eight typhoons hit Vietnam annually. Global warming aggravates the frequency of disasters including cyclones, droughts, and floods.

Training for Maritime Security Capacity-building:

Security cooperation in the form of training engagements focused on maritime patrol aircraft offers an opportunity to strengthen maritime security. Considering that extensive coastline, enhancing maritime domain awareness is critical to counter threats ranging from illegal fishing to narcotics trafficking. The Vietnamese Marine Police and Vietnamese Navy have, and will continue to take possession of new maritime patrol aircraft, including Airbus C212 400 and Viking Air Twin Otter 400 over the next two years. The Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF) has experienced P-3 Orion crews with skill sets that would be very capable of engaging in such capacity-building.

Maritime Patrol Aircraft are an important platform for HA/DR operations especially search and rescue efforts where aerial surveillance can advise units moving to disaster sites. Patrolling this domain has the benefit of meeting Vietnamese concerns over South China Sea maritime disputes without being explicitly antagonistic toward other regional players as these platforms have a dual-use character. In a region vulnerable to disasters, this offers an opportunity for information-sharing/early warning since having “eyes-in-the-sky” can provide critical information to headquarters and national decision-makers during a crisis.

The United States should engage Vietnam on the command and control component of supporting these maritime patrol aircraft. With both the Vietnamese Marine Police and Navy operating different platforms, it is essential to fuse data sensors collect to realize the value of the investment in these platforms and also to share actionable intelligence among warfighters. A US Coast Guard Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST) could support Vietnamese capacity-building of its Marine Police, an objective identified by senior Vietnamese officer Lt. Gen. Pham Duc Linh in 2011. The MSST can also bring its expertise in search and rescue operations, a mission for which tugboats such as the CBS 9003, which entered service in July 2011, have been identified for.

Capacity-building for HA/DR:

Trilateral capacity-building, information sharing and joint exercise for HA/DR in case of both natural and nuclear disaster should be another priority in light of the US and

Japan's nuclear deal with Vietnam. In fact, the first nuclear plant in Vietnam, Ninh Thuan, is planned to be built only 100 kilometers from the fault line on the coast of south-central Vietnam. Furthermore, key Vietnamese industries in tourism, seafood, and energy sectors are concentrated in the coastal area. The SDF and US forces acquired HA/DR expertise in a joint operation manner during *Operation Tomodachi*. The US Marines Corps should spearhead this capacity-building having conducted chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) training last year in Japan.

It is critical to extend such bilateral and unilateral efforts into a trilateral mechanism, particularly since natural and nuclear disasters rapidly become transnational concerns. Tokyo and Washington agreed on the importance of launching a regional HA/DR hub in Japan at the Japan-US Security Consultative Committee in June 2011. This is a golden opportunity for the three countries to present the hub as a model of minilateral HA/DR collaboration to the international community. Furthermore, this concerted effort will enhance regional safety and stability.

The objectives of the maritime security and HA/DR partnership are:

- To improve the capability to deal with natural and nuclear disasters;
- To increase the technical capacity of the Vietnamese forces to successfully employ equipment procured through their modernization program;
- To increase situational awareness by engaging in timely information sharing;
- To enhance the capacity to operate in a combined environment with partner nations and convey how interoperability benefits Japan and the United States in pursuit of shared interests; and
- To enhance stability in the South China Sea.

The Second Pillar: Trilateral Conference

An annual conference is recommended at the Track 1.5-level to share insights about maritime security in the South China Sea, international maritime law, nuclear safety and security, HA/DR, and the rise of China and its implications for the region. This pillar also would help identify new areas of trilateral cooperation at the Track 1-level.

The DAV, JIIA, and the Pacific Forum CSIS would serve as the key contacts to bring together scholars and government officials from each country, based on their existing partnership and networks with the governments and other research institutions. Each conference would include presentations and panel discussions on issues of mutual interest and concern. One of the three institutes would integrate presentations and key findings into a single document and publish it within three months after each conference. This responsibility would rotate annually. In addition, each would submit a short summary of key findings and policy recommendations to the governments in English and their own language within three months after each conference.

Given the sensitivity of information and insights to be shared, this would be held under Chatham House Rules. This also would help mitigate negative reactions from regional states.

The objectives of the trilateral conference are:

- To exchange views and perspectives on issues of common concern regarding the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region including maritime security in the South China Sea, international maritime law, nuclear safety and security including the progress of Chinese nuclear programs, HA/DR, the rise of China and its implications in the region, and the impact of domestic economic and political concerns on foreign policy;
- To seek new areas of trilateral cooperation to address regional security concerns;
- To research these issues cooperatively;
- To produce policy recommendations to each government based on these findings; and
- To enhance regional security through minilateral solutions based on the Japan-US alliance and the MOUs between Vietnam and both countries.

Funding:

The project will seek funding from the three countries' governments, foundations, and research organizations. Each country must bear at least 20 percent of the cost for each conference.

Timing:

A preliminary meeting between representatives of all the institutions will take place within four months to establish lines of funding, the initial research program, and annual meeting framework. This will be put into MOU form.

The first annual meeting should be hosted by the Pacific Forum, CSIS by January 2013, with a rotating chairmanship thereafter. The host institute for a given year would be responsible for the administration and organization of the event, with its partner institutes choosing their own delegates (including government observers).

The Third Pillar: JUSV Fellowship

A fellowship should be established for long-term research and exchange of scholars to study these topics. This aims at cultivating future policymakers and opinion leaders to contribute to academic and policy debates. The Pacific Forum CSIS, JIIA, and DAV will help fellows gain access to governmental organizations and think tanks in their respective country.

The fellowships will be for one year. In each round, one fellow per country will be appointed. The three fellows will spend four months together in each of the three countries to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the partner countries.

After the completion of the fellowship, fellows are required to submit a policy paper in English to the Pacific Forum CSIS, JIIA, and DAV within one year with a summary in their own language. Each institute will be responsible for distributing the paper to relevant government officials and scholars along with publishing on their websites and in print. Furthermore, the institutes will help fellows publish commentary and research, develop a writing skill for policy recommendations, and understand how political and economic constraints work in each country. This expertise would allow fellows to cultivate

problem-solving expertise in a practical manner. Current and former fellows are expected to participate in trilateral conferences, present on key findings from their fellowship, and help draft policy recommendations after each conference.

The objectives of the fellowship are:

- To foster next generation scholars and opinion leaders to contribute to academia and the policy community on key regional concerns by deepening expertise in each country;
- To create communication channels and networks between the academic and policy communities; and
- To expand professional networks among the three countries not only at a personal but also at an institutional level to ensure enduring relations.

Eligibility:

Candidates should be citizens of one of the three countries with an undergraduate degree and at least three years of professional experience, or with equivalent qualification. Fellows will be chosen based on their topic relevancy, professional and academic background, as well as their cultural awareness. Since they should build a bridge between the government and academia, it is critical to have sensitivity toward the cultural, historical, and political differences among the countries and communities.

Application procedure:

Candidates have to submit their CV, research proposal, and three letters of recommendation. Fellows will be chosen by a selection committee consisting of three officials/scholars from each country.

Funding:

Funding will be sought from various government ministries and research organizations from all three countries. Each country must bear the costs of at least 20 percent of the fellowship.

Timing:

The first group of fellows will be chosen by June 2013 and will be deployed at an institution of the candidates' choice.

About the Authors

Mr. Justin Goldman is a resident SPF Fellow with CSIS Pacific Forum. He earned an MSc in Strategic Studies from the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS). As an Associate Research Fellow in Military Studies at RSIS, he provided instruction at the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute, including the Naval Advanced School and the Campaign and War Studies component of the Command and Staff College. He was a West Africa analyst for the Marine Corps and was deployed to the Africa Partnership Station in 2008. In spring 2005, he was a researcher in the office of the Right Hon. Colin Breed, MP.

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Ms. Mihoko Matsubara is a SPF Research Fellow at Pacific Forum CSIS and was a foreign liaison officer at the Japanese Ministry of Defense, and worked in close contact with the US government and military. Her work has earned her three letters of appreciation and 11 commendation coins from the US Forces Japan and Washington, and one commendation from the Ministry. She received her BA in Literature from Waseda University, Tokyo, and MA in International Relations and Economics from the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University as a Fulbright Scholar.

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initiate a quadrilateral dialogue bringing together the United States, Japan, China and the Republic of Korea (ROK). She received her BA (with honors) from Hunter College.

Masamichi Minehata is a SPF fellow at the Pacific Forum CSIS. He was awarded a PhD at the University of Bradford's Department of Peace Studies in July 2010 on the issues of Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). Over the previous years, his primary research focus has been set out to promote global biosecurity education for life scientists under the auspices of the UK Prime Minister's Initiative on International Education (awarded by the British Council, UK). Related publications with his research include a book chapter in 'Education and Ethics in the Life Sciences: Strengthening the Prohibition of Biological Weapons,' edited by Brian Rappert (Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2010), as well as the award winning essay 'Preventing Biological Weapons in the 21st Century: Ethics, Life Scientists and the Role of Next British Government,' *2010 Science, Ethics and Politics Competition in Honour of Memory of Nobel Prize Laureate Joseph Rotblat* (British Pugwash Group, UK. 2010).

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