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East Asia (Re)Surging

Understanding Northeast Asia’s Post Cold War

International relations

Na’oki ONO

Tokyo-Toshi University

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After the cold war, while the US remains as only super power, its global influence has been weaker than that during the cold war, due to US’s declining interests in global affairs and rise of emerging powers, such as China, India. One of the outcomes of the post cold war global systemic transformation is increasing importance of regional international systemic developments. What is critical is that features of regional international systemic situation are very different by region. For example, in Europe, understood from the fact that EU membership has been expanded to former Soviet’s satellites in Eastern Europe, intensive efforts to establish a security community in Europe have been in progress. On the other hand, in Sub-Saharan Africa there have been very few territorial disputes among nation states based on artificially created borders drawn by colonial powers at the Berlin Conference in 1884. Except for such cases as Ethiopia’s integration of Eritrea and their invasion in Somali territory, power maximization behavior through territorial expansion has not been typical international conduct of Sub-Saharan African nations. Latin American situation is similar to the Sub-Saharan case. While territories of Latin American countries are based on Spanish colonial administrative districts, power maximization has not been primary objective of their international conduct after their independence. Also on the Indian subcontinent where the British India was divided into India and Pakistan by their
religion in 1947, India has not pursued power maximization by taking Pakistan’s territory.

East Asia, in particular Northeast Asia, is one of regions critical in understanding the post cold war global structural transformation. And the region has become one of global interests in at least three respects. First, East Asia has been the most dynamic area in the post cold war world economy. This situation is brought by higher economic performance of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and other economies of the area. East Asia, in particular Northeast Asia, has become power house of the world economy after the cold war. Second, while the Chinese economy has been growing at about 10% annually for more than two decades, the PRC has been increasing its annual military expenditure at more than 10% since the mid 1990s. As a result of this rapid and substantial budget increase, size of the Chinese military expenditure is the largest in Northeast Asia. And the Chinese Navy at present has become very active not only within the region but also outside of Northeast Asia. So combined with the DPRK’s nuclear and missile development problem, Northeast Asia has become one of global security concerns. Third, as a result of the rapid and considerable economic growth for more than two decades, the PRC has become the world largest emission gas supplier and one of the biggest contributors of the global warming and acid rain problems. In other words, in addition to economic and security concerns, Northeast Asia has become critical in global issues. And the PRC’s position in dealing with global issues is a reflection of its priority of self-interests to collective interests.

So the focus of this essay is East Asia, in particular, Northeast Asia's regional structural features of international relations. After analyzing international systemic and state level factors, the region’s historical background of the regional
international relations since the 19th Century and Northeast Asia’s peculiar features of inter-state relations will be examined to understand reasons why mutual distrust is prevailing and international cooperation is difficult in Northeast Asia and to draw policy implications.

II. Features of Northeast Asia’s post cold war regional international relations

Comparing with those of Europe, North America and other regions, there are some distinct features in Northeast Asia’s post cold war international relations different from those in other regions. First, unlike Europe and North America, Northeast Asia’s post cold war international relationship is based on mutual distrust and in some cases antagonism among countries in the region.

Northeast Asia has been experiencing rapid and significant regional international systemic structural transformation after the cold war. Changes have mainly been driven by the PRC’s rapid rise, Japan’s long term stagnation and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) or North Korea’s nuclear and missile developments. On the other hand, Northeast Asia’s economic inter-dependence has significantly deepened after the cold war. And Japan’s largest trade partner changed from the US to China in 2004 and Korea’s largest trade partner at present is also China. With the absence of concerns on the US-Soviet rivalry after the cold war, Northeast Asia’s international relations have become the priority issue for the countries in the region.
However, unlike Europe, in particular EU, where the international relations are based on mutual cooperation in the region and EU's membership and areas of cooperation have been expanding by limiting self-interests of individual countries, international conducts of countries in Northeast Asia is based on their self-interest and possibility of regional cooperation is slim. And Northeast Asia’s international relations are filled with mutual distrust and antagonism.

In addition, under the circumstance and although Northeast Asia’s economic interdependence has been significantly deepened, the PRC has been using her increased economic power for its political purposes. For example, the PRC proposed to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as an alternative for the Asian Development Bank dominated by the US and Japan. And at his official Seoul visit in July 2014, the PRC’s president Xi Jinping proposed the Republic of Korea (ROK) to join the AIIB as major member and agreed to negotiate their bilateral Free Trade Area and to start direct settlement between Korean Won and Chinese Yuan in their trade. Also outside Northeast Asia, the PRC has been extending substantial development assistance in such regions as Africa and South Asia.

Also understood from the fact that the PRC has been increasing its annual military spending by more than 10% since 1989, international conduct of the PRC, on its neighbors in particular, is based on military power maximization. And the PRC’s international conduct has invited competition of expansion of military expenditure of neighboring countries. As a result, Northeast Asia’s international relationship after the cold war is security oriented and has more tensed than before. Under this military power oriented international relationship, primary interest of countries in Northeast Asia is not group interest but self-interest of each country.
III. Limits of Explanation based on NEA’s international system level situation

Understood from the above, mutual distrust is the feature of Northeast Asia’s post-cold war regional international relations, despite their intra-regional economic interdependence has been significantly deepened so that mutual cooperation would have been highly beneficial for all nations in Northeast Asia. So the issue to be analyzed is to explain reasons why it is difficult to promote mutual cooperation among countries in the post cold war Northeast Asia and why economic interests are secondary and used as means to pursue political objectives.

One possible systemic explanation is transformation of Northeast Asia’s international systemic structure. That is, because of the PRC’s rise and Japan’s stagnation, it is inevitable that differences of interests between Japan and the PRC could lead to conflict in the region. And the PRC’s ambition will also lead to conflict with the US. This possibility was predicted and the PRC took the “Peaceful Rise-Development” position in the 1990s. And it was in 2009 when the PRC left from this position and began to take more assertive position.

However, the US presence in Northeast Asia based on the alliance relations with Japan and the ROK is significant and the US capability at present is far better than that of the PRC. In addition, since intra-regional economic interdependence has been substantially deepened, it is critical for the PRC to maintain sound economic relations with its neighbors in East Asia. So escalating security conflicts does not
serve the PRC’s long term interests. And it is not clear why the PRC changed its position in its international conduct from cooperative to conflictive in 2009.

Regarding its relationship with Japan, the PRC’s position has significantly changed. During the cold war period, the PRC was weak and had lots of domestic problems and it was necessary for her to introduce technological knowledge and import capital goods and other requirements to promote her economic development. However, after the cold war and through the foreign direct investment promotion policy under the post cold war economic globalization, it has become much easier for the PRC to introduce technological knowledge and procure goods and services required for her economic development globally, so Japan’s importance for the PRC has declined. Considering its rapid rise and Japan’s long term stagnant situation, it is possible for the PRC to take more assertive position to Japan after the cold war. And her territorial claims of the Senkaku Islands on East China Sea to Japan could be considered as reflections of the changing power balance.

On the other hand, however, anti-Japanese demonstrations in the PRC triggered by such occasions as so called “historical problems” and Japanese PM’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine are not caused by and related with the changing power balance of the two countries. Thus the international systemic transformation cannot explain all of the PRC’s international conducts in the region after the cold war.

Regarding international conducts of the ROK, while she maintains the alliance relations with the US, the ROK seeks to keep partnership relations with the PRC. And since the end of the Lee Myung-bak administration, the ROK began to take more assertive or conflicting position to Japan and the bilateral relationship
became much more tensed ever before. After the Lee administration, the situation remains the same under the Park Geun Hye administration. Korea shares border with China so the ROK has to take into account of her geographical location in her relation with the PRC, which is different from Japan who does not share land border with the PRC. Under China’s rise, it is plausible for the ROK to pay more attention toward the PRC than to Japan. On the other hand, maintaining alliance relationship with the US is vital for the ROK to protect her autonomy under the PRC’s rise, in addition to the concern on the DPRK. Under the circumstance, although the bilateral relationship with Japan is not vital as that with the US, deterioration of the bilateral relationship with Japan means weakening of alliance network under the US umbrella. So the deterioration seems to be not rational for the ROK. And it is difficult to understand that the ROK’s more assertive position toward Japan even after the Lee administration as rational conduct under Northeast Asia’s post cold war international systemic environment. And it is possible to consider that the ROK’s assertive position to Japan is a reflection that the ROK’s international conduct is based on not collective/group interest but its own self-interest.

After the cold war, Japan’s position in the US-Japan alliance has reversed. During the cold war, the alliance was vital for the US to deal with the USSR. But as the end of the US-Soviet rivalry, the US lost the most important reason of making alliance with Japan. On the other hand, under the intensified Northeast Asia’s post cold war international security environment, it has become more critical for Japan to maintain the alliance with the US than the alliance during the cold war period. In fact, Japan has become more cooperative in maintaining the alliance by taking such measures as the introduction of the new defense cooperation guideline in 1996, dispatching the Maritime Self-Defense Forces to the Indian Ocean in 2001 and the Grand Self Defense Forces to Iraq in 2003.
Although her responses in security issues have been compatible with Northeast Asia’s regional international systemic transformation, Japan still hesitates to make the most important decision necessary for adopting the transformation, that is, revision of the Article 9 of the constitution. And Japan’s diplomacy with her neighbors is not successful and it is not possible to explain the deterioration of the bilateral relationship with the ROK as a rational outcome of Northeast Asia’s post cold war international systemic transformation. Also Japan’s adaptation to the post cold war economic globalization has not been successful and experiencing two decades of economic stagnation.

What can be confirmed here is that while some international conducts of Japan, the PRC and the ROK could be considered as responses to Northeast Asia’s post cold war regional international systemic transformation, there are conducts that cannot be deemed as rational responses to the systemic transformation. And it is necessary to focus on factors other than international systemic level situation for explaining Northeast Asia’s post cold war international relations.

V. State level factors preventing to take rational choices

In addition to Northeast Asia’s international systemic situation, there are country specific state level factors that have strong influence on respective country’s international behavior.
As for the PRC, the CCP leaders are vulnerable to the People’s Liberation Army’s hardline position and to biased and highly nationalistic public opinion strongly influenced by the Patriot Education introduced by Jiang Zeming in 1994. Increasing influence of the CCP’s hardline position is a reflection of long term trend of weakening of the CCP leaders’ position in the highest echelon of the party and their necessity of securing support of the PLA under the circumstance. And the CCP’s volatile position to biased and highly nationalistic public opinion is linked with their legitimacy problem of ruling the country after the defeat of communism in the cold war. Under the circumstance it was vital for the CCP’s to secure general public’s support for their ruling after the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 under the socialists defeat at the cold war. And Jian Zeming chose patriotism as the alternative justification of ruling under the CCP’s leadership. And as a result of the “Patriotism Education” combined with provision of controlled information on political facts, China’s general public with biased historical knowledge became highly nationalistic. And Japan easily became scapegoat of the biased nationalism but it is necessary for the CCP to accommodate the nationalism.

Among countries in Northeast Asia, the PRC and the ROK are successful in adapting the post cold war world transformation. After the East Asian currency crisis in 1997/1998, the ROK introduced various liberalization measures and recovered from the crisis relatively quickly. While she has maintained economic growth momentum and her balance of payment is in record surplus, however, income inequality has widened and unemployment in younger generation is still serious. Under the circumstance, there are two domestic factors which affect the ROK’s international conducts. One is nationalism sentiment of general public. Since the ROK was established after WWII and had devastating experience during the Korean War, civil war, maintaining solidarity was critical to cope with the situation and nationalism has worked as one of important elements for the national
unity. In this connection, Korea’s colonial experience under Japan provides common ground to promote unity of the nation. But the fact also tends to promote anti-Japanese sentiment among general public. The other domestic element is use of international problem for domestic political objectives. After then President Roh Tae-woo’s 6.29 declaration of democratization in 1987, the ROK reintroduced direct presidential election system. The president has been elected under the system since 1988 and president’s approval rating has become important. Presidents are paying attention to their approval ratings during their tenure and if the support declines, the president tries to increase support to him/her by introducing measures which could help to increase the approval rating. Foreign policy issue is one of measures presidents exploit to increase the approval rating. Typical example is President Lee Myung-bak’s sudden visit to Takashima-Dokudo, islands of territorial disputes between Japan and the ROK. One of reasons of the visit was to improve his declined approval rating at the end of his tenure⁶. On the other hand, President Park Guen Hye enjoyed relatively high approval rating in early days of her administration. One of the reasons of high approval rating is her efforts in international affairs⁷.

Among three countries in Northeast Asia, Japan is the least successful country in adapting to the post cold war world transformation. During the cold war, Northeast Asia’s security environment around Japan was very safe. And under the alliance with the US, it was not necessary for Japan to make serious efforts for protecting her own security. Under the circumstance, Japan’s institutional capability in dealing with foreign relations and security was very limited. For example, number of personnel of Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs was much less than that of such counties as West Germany and France⁸ and the share of their budget was very small. The Japanese economic growth during the cold war period was led by manufacturing sector. But many production bases of manufacturing industries have

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moved emerging countries like the PRC under the post cold war economic globalization, it is essential for Japan to transform her economic structure from manufacturing oriented to other sectors oriented, such as financial, computer software. But Japan’s pace of the transformation has been very slow and not successful. As a result, the Japanese economy has stagnated for more than two decades after the cold war. And because of the weak civil society there are very few NGO in Japan competent to contribute to the global governance. Thus while some measures in security have been introduced, Japan’s preparedness to the post cold war global transformation as well as Northeast Asia’s regional international systemic transformation is not enough to deal with new problems emerging after the cold war. And Japan’s responses are “reactive”, that is, doing something after problems occur.

Considering the country specific domestic problems, it is plausible to understand that due to domestic level problems in respective countries in Northeast Asia, conflicts are inevitable in post cold war international relations among countries in Northeast Asia.

IV. Historical background of Northeast Asia’s international relations

While regional international systemic situation combined with state level situations of countries in the region help to understand developments of Northeast Asia’s post cold war international relations, they are not necessarily explain why Northeast Asia’s post cold war international relations are based on more mutual distrust and self-interest oriented than those in other regions as Europe. To explain
the difference form other regions, it is helpful to understand Northeast Asia’s historical background. There are three historical features peculiar to Northeast Asia and critical to understand the regional international relations. That is, lack of experience as nation states in the regional international relations since the 19th Century until the end of WWII, the lack of enough opportunities of dealing with diplomatic and security issues during the cold war period and strong nationalism sentiment in the PRC and the ROK.

(1) Northeast Asia’s international relations since the 19th Century until 1945

Countries in Northeast Asia were exposed to the Euro-centric international system at the beginning of the 19th Century. While Japan successfully adapted to the new international order through opening the country to the West and introducing nation state system after the Meiji Restoration, the Qing dynasty in China and the Lee dynasty in Korea failed to adapt.

The Qing dynasty tried to maintain the Tributary System, which is discussed in the next section, and attempted partial adaptation of nation state system, but the progress was very slow and faced with strong resistances of vested interests groups. So it was not possible to stop their declining process, and the dynasty collapsed in 1911. And nationwide civil war between warlords dominated China’s domestic situation since then so that it was not possible for China to function as a nation state after 1911, although the Kuomingtang superficially represented as the Chinese government until the end of WWII.
On the Korean Peninsula, the Lee dynasty maintained the “closed door” policy under the Tributary System until 1876 when she was forced to open the country by the Japanese “gun-boat” diplomacy. And after the opening of Korea, the power struggle among factions in the court between supporters of introduction of the Western system and technologies (reformers) and anti-modernization conservatives continued so their adaptation to the new regional international environment was very slow. That is the reason why the Korean Peninsula was colonized by Japan in 1910.

Because of the absence of effective government in China capable to provide services required and the colonization of Korea, there was no opportunity for countries in Northeast Asia to practice effective diplomatic conduct until the end of WWII.

(2) Low priority of foreign affairs during the cold war

Except for the period of the Korean War, Northeast Asia’s security environment was very stable during the cold war. After the Korean armistice in 1953, focus of the US-Soviet rivalry was out of Northeast Asia. And the military priority of the USSR was in Europe and their military capability in the Far East was limited and weaker than that of the US. In Northeast Asia, the ROK and Taiwan’s international behavior were managed under their alliance with the US. And the DPRK’s international behavior was constrained under its alliance with the Soviet Union.
Under the circumstance, the PRC’s priority under Mao Zedong was nation building through transforming the economy into a socialist economy and promoting economic development. But as a result of Mao’s failed policies of the Great Leap Forward in the 1960s and the Great Cultural Revolution began in mid-1960s, the PRC was under continuous domestic turmoil until the death of Mao in 1976 and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s credibility of ruling the country was significantly weakened. That was the reason why Deng Xiaoping launched the Reform and Opening-Up Policy since 1978. Maintaining stable relations with her neighbors was, thus, vital for the PRC during the cold war period.

As for Korea, after the Korean Armistice, policy priority under the Park Chung-hee administration was to promote economic development. Under the Miracle of the Han River, the ROK’s economic and military capabilities surpassed those of the DPRK by the end of the 1970s. So combined with the restraint of the Soviet Union, it was more and more difficult for the DPRK to destabilize the Korean Peninsula.

With the absence of major security threats, Japan became one of industrialized economy by mid-1960s and her major trade markets were the US and West Europe. In other words, countries of Northeast Asia were not major interest for Japan during the cold war.

Thus diplomatic links were not essential and strong among countries in Northeast Asia during the cold war. And in addition to the lack of diplomatic relations before WWII, opportunities of intensified diplomatic relations among countries in Northeast Asia were very limited and not vital.
(3) Strong nationalism sentiment in the PRC and the ROK

The last point derived from the historical background of Northeast Asia is the fact that except for Japan, all states in the region were established after WWII. So their priority was nation building and because of their humiliated experience after the opening of their countries in the 19th Century, nationalism sentiment was very strong among people in the newly established states in Northeast Asia, i.e. the ROK and the PRC.

(4) Historical background preventing rational choices in international relations

What can be confirmed here is that there are three features affecting Northeast Asian states’ decision making in international relations: lack of experience as nation state to deal with international relations from the 19th Century until the end of WWII, and strong nationalism and low policy priority of international relations during the cold war.

The critical implication derived from the analysis here is that dealing with their regional international problems is a new challenge that countries in Northeast Asia have faced after the cold war. But they did not have enough experience in diplomacy. So it is inevitable for them to go through trial and error process. The PRC’s unstable foreign policy position towards neighboring countries, Japan’s very slow process in dealing with security problems and Korea’s changing position by different administration might be reflections of this legacy of the region.
In addition, because of strong nationalism sentiment in the PRC and the ROK, their primary concern was their own self-interests and Northeast Asia’s regional group interests are not critical for them. Thus promoting regional cooperation among the countries is difficult from.

V. Northeast Asia’s peculiar features of inter-state relations

(1) The Tributary System and Northeast Asia’s international relations

Although lack of opportunities and necessity of diplomatic relations after the 19th Century are critical in understanding Northeast Asia’s post cold war unstable international relations, historical developments of the region’s international relations do not mean that there had been no inter-state relationship in Northeast Asia before the 19th Century. On the contrary and instead of lack of inter-state relationship, there had been long history of inter-state relations in Northeast Asia. The relationship, however, is quite different from the relationship based on the Westphalian system established in Europe after 1648.

Inter-state relationship in Northeast Asia had been dominated by the Tributary System under Chinese empires, but it was not the regional international order but a device developed by Chinese empires to maintain stability in its relationship with neighboring countries⁹.
While international relationship among nation states is a horizontal relationship among sovereign states with legal equality, the Tributary System was a formal order based on a vertical relationship between Chinese Emperor and tributaries or a hierarchical relationship between empire China and the tributary states (or tributaries). The situation that the relationship between Chinese emperor and tributaries was vertical was, in many cases, a reflection of the fact that the Tributary System was based on asymmetrical power distribution between China and tributary states. And this means that power maximization was not the primary objective of states under the Tributary System and the strategy of weaker states' international behavior was to bandwagon with China. And the system was a kind of arrangement to avoid military conflicts with equal and/or stronger states for China.

And the fact that the Tributary System was based on asymmetrical power distribution and worked as an international order under the Chinese empires for centuries means that under the Tributary System, territories and population of Chinese empires and tributary states were separated from each other. So unlike Europe where territorial border and notion of “nation” emerged after the Westphalia Treaty in 1648, territorial border and notion of “nation” existed for centuries and much before 1648, under the Tributary System.

On the other hand, although the relation between empire China and tributaries was vertical, tributary states were able to enjoy significant benefit from the system, because Empire China provided security protection umbrella and tributaries was able to enjoy significant trade benefits from China. In other words, imperial China used economic opportunities as means for political objectives. And since the Tributary System was mutually beneficial, it was acceptable for both empire China
and tributaries to maintain the system and the system worked as the international order under the Chinese empires until the 19th Century.

Thus while the Tributary System is quite different from the international system based on nation states in Europe, it worked as a device to maintain order and stability of the Chinese empires and surrounding states.

However, the hierarchical order under the Tributary System was only a formality and not always reflected actual power distribution between China and its neighboring states. In particular, before China had been unified and established a centralized government system for the first time under the Sui dynasty (581~618), China had not been strongest state and there had been various Northern nomads who had been much stronger than then Chinese empires. Under the circumstance, Chinese empires had used the Tributary relationship to accommodate interests of nomads and to avoid war with stronger enemies

On the other hand, there were empires which pursued territorial expansion, such as the Yuan and the Qing dynasties. They were stronger than neighboring states at the time of existence. Also China’s southern territories such as Guangdong and Fujian had been acquired as China’s new territories by invasion of Northern Chinese. Thus in some cases, Chinese empires took realist-type behavior provided that their power had been strong enough to occupy territories of other states and they had had will of invasion.
The other feature of the Tributary System is that since power maximization through territorial expansion was not the primary objective of the system, it was a matter of choice for states other than China in Northeast Asia to join the system. In fact, except for brief period in the Ashikaga period, Japan did not join the system and only maintained trade relations with China. And since not all the states in the area joined the Tributary System, there was no formal (state to state) diplomatic relationship. In other words, there was no international relation covering all of states in Northeast Asia before the 19th Century.

Thus, while it had dominated foreign relations among the Chinese Empires and its tributaries, the Tributary System had not necessarily been Northeast Asia’s regional international order before the 19th Century. And there was no international system based on nation states before the 19th Century.

(2) China’s imperial legacies

While the PRC has no history as nation state before its establishment in 1949, it has a long history based on the Tributary System and imperial China. But the Chinese imperial way of ruling is also quite different from practices developed in the West. China’s traditional concept of ruling is based on not “rule by law” but “rule by virtue” \(^1\) \(^3\). As revealed in weakness of China’s legal system and law enforcement capability, China’s tradition of less respect to rule of law still remains strong. And “rule by virtue” or “ruler’s will” today means the CCP’s position so their will could be more important than international law. But during the cold war, the PRC took a “closed door” foreign policy until Den Xiao-ping’s rise in 1978 so that this problem was not revealed under their low-key position in international politics
during the cold war years. After the cold war and under their rapid rise, however, China’s traditional legacy of "rule by virtue" seems to become visible from outside, as confirmed from their piracy of intellectual properties of original products and active cyber-spying.

In addition, China's tributary system is not based on nation state system and until the establishment of the PRC, China had no experience of nation state. This means that it is doubtful for the PRC to have clear sense and understanding of national border. This is because the tributary system, which is based on center-periphery relationship or not between sovereign states, had no national border concept. As a result the PRC tends to neglect national borders defined by international treaties concluded between sovereign states and to make its self-defined territorial claims to such countries as Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The other legacy of China’s imperial ruling is that ruler’s sense of vulnerability of maintaining support of the general public. This is because emperor’s mandate from heaven can be revoked whenever the emperor lost support of the general public so that it is critical for rulers to accommodate interests of the general public. The CCP’s desperate struggle to maintain economic growth momentum and the introduction of the “Patriot Education” could be considered as legacies of China’s imperial tradition.
VI. Concluding remarks

Northeast Asia’s post cold war regional international relationship is constrained not only by the global systemic structural situation but also the region’s peculiar features developed in the past. And it is confirmed that there are state level constraints of respective country which prevent for them to take international conducts compatible with the prevailing international situation. Among the state level problems, the most serious state level problem is the PRC’s domestic features. In addition, it is also confirmed that region’s peculiar features prevent the countries in the region from taking international conducts compatible with the prevailing world systemic structural situation.

One implication derived from the above is that Northeast Asia’s international relations would be conflictive and messy for the time being. Due to the region’s peculiar features and country specific constraints, the international behavior of countries in Northeast Asia at present is based on political process model type behavior so that it is difficult to expect that their international conducts are compatible with rational choices drawn from the prevailing international systemic situation.

Second implication is that since the factors preventing to take rational choices are state level and region’s peculiar features, it would be difficult to find short time solutions to change international conducts of Northeast Asian states and it would be plausible to consider that frictions among regional powers would continue for some time. And trial and error process will be inevitable before they will be able to
maintain international relations with mutual trust and cooperative position, observed in Europe.

Third, to avoid the situation, efforts at both state and society will be required. At state or government level, it is important to take measures to evade lack of communication and to promote confidence building among countries of the region. But the most critical problem is to correct misperception of general public on other countries in the region and to promote mutual understanding. This is because the misperception and the mistrust with strong nationalism lead to Northeast Asia’s unstable and antagonistic international relationship.

As for China, although it must be very difficult to change, it is necessary for the CCP to stop the Patriotism Education introduced in 1994 to justify their legitimacy of ruling the country and used to scapegoat Japan to escape for them to be criticized by the general public. On the other hand, the CCP’s problem in decision making seems to be very difficult to solve. So even if ending the Patriotism Education, the PRC’s domestic feature will contribute to continuation of Northeast Asia’s unstable international relations.

In the case of Japan, general public’s poor understanding of modern history of Northeast Asia has been inviting antagonism of neighboring countries so that her history education must be revised to improve the general public’s understanding of the modern history of the region. And to end Japan’s reactive international conduct, political and administrative reforms are necessary. But similar to China, it is difficult to expect fundamental transformation of the existing institutions overnight.
What is critical is to promote mutual understanding among general public of the region. In this connection, role played by non-state actors, in particular, NGOs in each country is critical. But since civil society in Japan and China at present is still very weak, it is essential to strengthen civil society of Northeast Asia.
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8 As of 1989, number of personnel of Japan’s foreign office was 4000, which was smaller than that of France (7200), West Germany (6200) and far less than that of the US (16000).

9 For the discussion on the Tributary System of this part relies mainly from Hori Toshikazu, *Chuugoku to Kodai Ajia Sekai* (China and Ancient East Asian world), Iwanami Shoten, 1993.

10 Although territorial expansion was not critical objective of nations under the Tributary System, until the establishment of the Sui Empire in 581, China expanded its territory towards south where there were arable
lands but did not invade North, the land of nomads who invaded China whenever their power rose. After integration of the territory under the Sui Empire, there was no attempt to expand the Chinese territory.

1. Hori, op. cit.
