

Study Group on “Medium- to Long-term Prospects for Japan-US-China Relations”

May 27, 2011

[Overview of Research]

International relations in the Asia-Pacific region (Greater Asia) are being pursued today in the context of a complex regional order characterized by both cooperation and competition. The conclusion of free trade agreements is deepening economic interdependence even as China's rapid rise is altering the power relationships in the Asia-Pacific region (causing a power transition) and changing military/security relationships substantially. These changes in power relations have also compelled changes in the nature of the Japan-US alliance. A key issue for Japan at present is considering how best to address China's economic and military rise and the accompanying power transition and how to pro-actively involve itself in the formation of a regional order. The Study Group will focus in particular on the role of regional institutions in the above issues, examine the involvement of Japan, the US, China and ASEAN in regional institutions over recent years, and consider how Japan in future can help put together co-existing regional institutions.

When considering the tasks and direction of Japan's foreign policy, thought must be given not only to relations between states but also to the internal politics of individual countries. The impact of domestic politics on foreign policy cannot be overlooked. With a non-transparent regional order expected to continue, future scenarios concerning the regional order must also be postulated so that Japan can take on an active role rather than simply reacting to whatever scenario turns out to be true. Japan must boost its value and presence in Asia and, to that end, it should assist in putting together various bilateral and multilateral institutions and ensure that these regional institutions combined as a “bundle”

promote overall economic exchange. Japan should devise measures to divert political/military confrontation and defuse disputes by encouraging countries to exercise self-restraint. The Study Group will endeavor to develop concrete policy recommendations on the aforementioned issues.

[Overview of Activities]

The Study Group as a whole meets about once per month. Study Group meetings feature presentations by specialists and progress reports on Study Group members' research. Through research, conducting interviews and carrying out surveys, Study Group members prepare reports in their respective areas of responsibility, and these research findings are made available to the broader public through symposiums and reports. Three subcommittees have been established to examine particular topics in greater detail, meeting on an irregular basis as necessity dictates. These subcommittees are as follows.

Subcommittee No. 1: Subcommittee for Research on the Power Transition and the Transformation of International Relations (theoretical research)]

This Subcommittee examines in a theoretical fashion the transformations occurring in the international politico-economic order as a consequence of China's rise, as well as likely future developments. Clarifying the major transformations in international politics/economics is a key issue for the Study Group's project, and Asia is the region in which the power transition has had the most conspicuous effects.

Subcommittee No. 2: Subcommittee for Research on the Power Transition and Regional Institutions in Asia

This Subcommittee looks at international relations in Asia, where the international power

transition is reflected in the most radical fashion in international relations, particularly those among Japan, the US, and China, and primarily examines the various institutions developed to adapt to this power transition as well as the interrelations between these regimes.

Subcommittee No. 3: Subcommittee for Research on the Power Transition and Japan-US-China Relations

This Subcommittee examines medium- and long-term trends and scenarios in Japan-US-China relations, Japanese foreign policy issues and measures that should be taken in light of the transitions in international and regional power and the formation of regional and ad hoc institutions to adapt to those transitions as well as developments in bilateral relations (institutions). This research will also entail scrutinizing developments in Japan-US-China international relations within the broader context of the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, the Subcommittee will discuss Japan's policies toward the US and toward China.

[Study Group Members]

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