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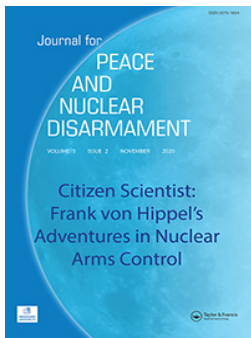
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To cite this article: Hugh Miall & Ria Shibata (2020) Open Hearts, Open Minds: Trust, Confidence and Security Building in Northeast Asia, Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, 3:2, 366-384, DOI: [10.1080/25751654.2020.1856556](https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2020.1856556)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2020.1856556>



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Published online: 08 Dec 2020.



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Open Hearts, Open Minds: Trust, Confidence and Security Building in Northeast Asia

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ABSTRACT

The East Asian peace has lasted since 1979, but regional and global rivalries, unresolved historical grievances, and new nuclear weapons threaten its continuation. In order to reduce these risks, confidence-building measures and crisis management mechanisms are needed. How can the states in Northeast Asia develop such measures, given their high level of mutual distrust? Should confidence-building measures come first, or does confidence-building depend on prior trust-building?

This paper explores insights from the academic literature on trust, highlighting the role of trust entrepreneurs, who are willing to open their minds to the possibility of new relationships. Five steps are identified which can lead away from mistrust. The first is to replace enemy images with a recognition of a shared security dilemma. The second is to signal a willingness for change. The third is to persist even when signals are not returned. The fourth is to enter dialogue. The fifth is to pursue steps that embed further cooperation.

This approach is applied to confidence-building, trust-building, and security building in Northeast Asia. A pathway forward is sketched, starting with confidence building between the two Koreas, leading on to a peace treaty, a nuclear weapon free zone, and co-operative security arrangements in the region.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 8 June 2020

Accepted 23 November 2020

KEYWORDS

Trust; confidence-building; East Asian peace; East Asia security; nuclear free zone

The Long East Asian Peace

A striking feature of East Asia¹ has been the relative peace that has prevailed since 1979, when the last significant interstate fighting took place between China and Vietnam. Europe is often taken as the textbook case of a zone of peace, but, as Timo Kivimäki (2010) and Stein Tønnesson (2009) have pointed out, East Asia has also experienced a long period free of interstate war. This is illustrated in the data on battle-deaths since 1946. Kivimäki (2016, 41) calculates that the average annual rate of battle-deaths fell by

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¹In this article, we discuss the peace in East Asia and the threats to it in East Asia as a whole, since it is an integrated economic region with interconnected security issues. In the section on trust we limit our focus to Northeast Asia. Northeast Asia comprises China, Mongolia, North and South Korea and Japan. East Asia also includes the ASEAN members and Taiwan.

94–98% between 1946–1979 and 1980–2005.² In 1946–1979, East Asia accounted for 80% of battle deaths in the world, due principally to the Korean War, the Chinese Civil War and the Vietnam War. But after 1979, this fell to 6% in 1980–89 and less than 2% between 1991 and 2015, according to Tønnesson (2017, 10–11).

This dramatic reduction in armed violence is very significant for cooperative security. If it is possible to largely eliminate interstate armed violence in the region over a long period, it suggests that a further extension and even deepening of the peace in the region may be possible. What then explains the phenomenon of the long East Asian peace, and can it be sustained?

Realists argue that a stable balance of power in East Asia kept the peace for this period, underpinned by the existence of strategic nuclear deterrence.³ On this view, any attempt to undermine the existing alliance structure or to do away with deterrence would risk ending the Asian peace. Against this view, it can be pointed out that the East Asian power balance was never bipolar and changed over time during the period. Nuclear weapons failed to deter the North Korean attack on South Korea or the Chinese decision to come to North Korea's aid during the Korean war. Nor has extended nuclear deterrence been effective in preventing North Korea's boundary incursions and provocations, or in stopping North Korea acquiring nuclear weapons. It seems plausible that nuclear weapons have a chilling effect on decisions to go to war, but it is implausible that they are capable of preventing all such decisions, especially in contexts of crisis and escalation, when the risks of accident and inadvertent escalation are high.

Kivimäki and Tønnesson find the main explanation in the policies of the East Asian states themselves. Kivimäki (2016, 24) attributes the peace to three factors – the East Asian states' overriding commitment to economic development, the non-interference norm, and the conflict-avoiding, face saving approach. Tønnesson (2017, 15) attributes the peace to the spread of a commitment by political leaders to prioritise state-driven development and avoid war, which started in Japan, spread to ASEAN, and then to China. He also credits the US-China rapprochement, leading to the restoration of diplomatic relations in 1979, for giving the post-Mao leaders confidence that they could prioritise economic development without worrying about external attack (Tønnesson 2017, 15). In each case, state commitment to economic growth resulted in a prolonged economic boom, which in turn cemented in a preference for peaceful development. Kivimäki (2012) emphasises that the explanation for the East Asian peace differs from Europe post-1945. It was achieved not by resolving outstanding conflicts, or by setting up multilateral institutions on the model of the European Union. Rather, the East Asian peace was based on restraint, consultation with other states and non-interference norms⁴ This also suggests different lessons regarding the threats to the peace and the means of prolonging and strengthening it.

²The range in percentages reflects the estimates in different datasets. The battle deaths indicator captures combatant and civilian fatalities from direct violence between governments or between governments and rebel groups and excludes one-sided violence and non-state violence. As Kivimäki shows (2016:44–45) one-sided violence by the state against civilians has fallen sharply, notwithstanding some prominent incidents, and non-state violence is low compared with elsewhere.

³For a summary of the realist arguments, see Tønnesson (2009).

⁴A range of other factors are canvassed in Bjarnegård and Kreutz (2017).

Threats to the East Asian Peace

It is important to recognise that the East Asian peace was not a peace in the positive sense of warm relations, nor was it a security community between states, nor did it protect human rights. Rather, it was a *de facto* agreement to avoid violent conflict, to respect state sovereignty and to avoid interventions in other states.

The conditions that created the long Asian peace may be weakening in the current context. Rising nationalism has reduced the commitment of political leaders to renounce war and avoid disputes (Ryu 2017; Shibata 2018). Japan's former Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and his successor Suga Yoshihide have sought to eliminate the war-renouncing clause in the Japanese constitution, and President Xi Jinping of China has refused to rule out the use of force in the sovereignty dispute between Taiwan and China. Although commitment to the priority of national development remains strong, some state development projects, such as China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), have become a source of rivalry, and even of perceived security threats (Li 2020). The PLA has been concerned about security threats to China's right to development (Li 2020, 177–178). Rivalry also developed over competing trading and investment programmes, though the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) may yet establish a free trade zone throughout East Asia. The non-intervention norm remains strong, but it does not protect against cases where sovereignty is disputed, such as in the Korean peninsula and in the case of Taiwan. The norm of avoiding conflict and saving face has not prevented the revival of maritime disputes, which have provoked armed confrontations and damaged relations between China and its ASEAN neighbours, as well as with Japan and the United States.

Tønnesson (2017, 198–204) identified five trends as potential threats to the peace – a transition of power to China, strategic competition between China and the United States, the revival of great power alignments, military build-ups and slowing economic growth. There is evidence of all of these gathering pace up to 2020.

The East Asian peace always had exceptions. Both North Korea and Myanmar prioritised military considerations over economic development. North Korea and South Korea continued to be legally in the state of war that has continued since 1950. The crisis in 2017, when North Korea tested a hydrogen bomb, exchanged nuclear threats with the United States and launched missiles over Japan, indicated the vulnerability of the peace to this threat. Tensions eased in 2018, thanks in part to confidence-building measures between Pyongyang and Seoul. The DPRK-ROK and DPRK-US summits resulted in the historic Panmunjom Declaration, in which Presidents Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-in declared “that there will be no more war and a new era of peace has begun on the Korean peninsula”. However, the failure of the United States and the DPRK to agree on denuclearisation and the disappointing outcome of subsequent summits meant that the early promise of the inter-Korean process withered, and North Korean missile tests resumed. The Korean problem remains the key threat to peace in the region.

Japan, China and South Korea all have territorial disputes with one another. China and Japan, under nationalist leaderships, are distrustful of each other's strategic intentions. Chinese leaders have stoked fears that Japan will return to the aggressive policies of the past, and the anti-Japanese demonstrations in China in 2005 and 2012 disturbed public opinion in Japan. The strengthening of the Japanese Self Defence Forces and the Liberal Democratic party's wish to revise Article 9 added to these concerns. On the Japanese side, the defence

minister has expressed concerns about China's new ballistic and hypersonic missiles, and complained of Chinese lack of transparency over doctrine, military budgets, and weapons systems (Harding and Barber 2019).

The Changing International Context

A further major threat is the developing rivalry between the United States and China. The rapprochement between the US and China in the 1970s was an important factor precipitating the long peace. Over subsequent decades, China's leaders followed Deng Xiaoping's principle of "hide your strength, stay in the shadows". China achieved its extraordinary economic transformation in a long "peaceful rise", tacitly accepting the US-Japan alliance (Ikenberry 2013, 21). The United States and China became economically interdependent, but despite the potential in their relationship for cooperation, relations started to deteriorate from the mid-2010s (Foot and King 2019). The primary source of the rivalry was the growing economic and military strength of China, and the fear that this created in the United States that a more assertive China will clash with US interests. As Coker puts it, the United States and China are "exceptional powers", whose visions of world order differ radically (Coker 2015). For believers in power transition theory, a rising, revisionist power challenging a conservative, status quo power presents a risk of war. Under the Trump Administration, the United States saw China as a strategic competitor that was seeking "to displace the United States in the Indo-Pacific region" (White House 2017, 25). Washington expressed concern about China's assertive claims in the South China Sea and the East China Sea, of the threats to Hong Kong and Taiwan and to human rights inside China, and of China's military modernisation, including deployments of intermediate range nuclear missiles (White House 2017). Beijing is fearful of the US forward defence policy, of encirclement, of threats to its sea lanes and development, and of the placement of new missiles around China, including Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) in South Korea and the possible installation of intermediate range missiles in Japan and South Korea (Makino 2019). China's defence spending as a proportion of government expenditure is well below that of the United States, but China's rapid economic growth has been accompanied by a corresponding rise in defence spending and capabilities, especially in the maritime sphere. This has created concern in US military quarters. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review notes that "China's military modernization and pursuit of regional dominance have emerged as a major challenge to U.S. interests in Asia" (Office of the Secretary of Defense 2018, 31). These security fears go along with economic disputes over intellectual property rights, technology transfer, and currency devaluations. The loss of American industrial jobs to China was a key factor in bringing the Trump administration to power in 2016, with an American First, protectionist agenda. The subsequent trade war has damaged both economies and, if allowed to continue, may lead to economic decoupling between the United States and China, as firms seek supply chains in other countries. It has damaged relations and heightened the strategic rivalry (Lukin 2019).

These security issues have been exacerbated by the erosion of the arms control regime and new developments in military technology. In 2019, the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty, and Russia quickly followed. Talks on New START (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) have stalled. The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty has not been renewed. Only the Non-Proliferation Treaty survives, but the failure of the nuclear weapons

states to honour Article VI makes the outcome of the Review Conference (now postponed to 2021) uncertain (Lodgaard 2019).

The erosion of the arms control regime has been accompanied by a new phase in the arms race, notable for the proliferation of new technological systems, including nuclear-armed cruise missiles, hypersonic missiles, precision weapons, and other such systems. A common feature of these new weapons is that they blur the boundary between nuclear and conventional weapons and reduce the decision time in the event of attack. They are thus regarded as seriously undermining strategic stability and increasing the risks of accidental or inadvertent war, in east Asia as elsewhere.

Our argument is not that the East Asian peace is necessarily over, but that the threats to it are growing. There is still the opportunity and incentive for states in the region to pursue a peaceful path of economic development. The Covid-19 pandemic is also a reason for international cooperation, although in 2020 it became another factor in the worsening relations between the United States and China, and its economic repercussions for the region remain to be fully seen.

The Trust Deficit in Northeast Asia

The trust deficit in Northeast Asia stems in part from these strategic rivalries and in part from bitter memories of the past. Competitive nationalism and divergent collective memories of the same traumatic history have been powerful drivers of the negative relationships in the region.

Historical memories at the heart of each country's national identity impede trust building. Narratives of past injustices committed in the colonial and wartime eras, together with territorial disputes, strengthen the appeal of nationalism and lead to negative public stereotypes. These narratives are significant for shaping national identity. Political leaders draw on them to generate public support and legitimacy. They intersect with contemporary international tensions and security issues to generate mistrust between states.

Chinese memories of the Japanese wartime occupation still play a powerful role in the narrative of Chinese national identity, together with memories of the century of Chinese humiliation. On the Japanese side, nationalist sentiment supports the aspiration to become a "normal" power willing to use its armed forces and not ashamed of the past. Similarly, North Korea and South Korea mistrust each other because of their long history of military confrontation and their competing visions of a unified peninsula.

We illustrate the problem of mistrust in the region by examining in more detail the relationship between Japan and South Korea. Even though the two states have well-interconnected economies and share similar values and an alliance with the United States, their mutual distrust is high. Seventy-five percent of South Koreans feel that Japan cannot be trusted, and seventy-three percent of Japanese feel the same towards Korea, according to survey evidence of 2019. Eighty-seven percent of South Koreans feel that Japan has not shown enough remorse and needs to apologise for colonial injustices from 1910 to 1945. Eighty percent of the Japanese public feel "apology fatigue" and claim that their government has done enough to atone for its wartime past and additional apologies are not necessary (Yomiuri Shimbun 2019). In a similar poll in 2015, sixty percent of the South Koreans felt that Japan was a security threat to their nation second only to North Korea. Prime Minister Abe cited tensions with South Korea as a

supplementary factor to those with China and North Korea in justifying a higher level of military expenditure than 1% of the nation's GDP.

In order to understand the driving force behind identity politics in both countries, it is important to appreciate that esteem for one's nation and its moral status are powerful factors that shape group behaviour. Identity-driven needs are barriers to the perpetrator's acceptance of collective responsibility and the victims' willingness to reconcile. Threats to a group's identity and esteem occur when its collective morality and reputation are questioned (Branscombe et al. 1999, 35–38). Individuals who associate strongly with the identity of the ingroup attempt to protect the group's moral status by averting collective guilt and denying responsibility for the harms committed in the past (Sullivan et al. 2012).

As reconciliation studies reveal, victims need the perpetrator's genuine contrition for the two parties to reconcile. Since 2011, when the first comfort women memorial statue was unveiled in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, civil society groups in South Korea have erected comfort women memorial statues in more than fifty parks and public places in South Korea and Korean diaspora communities have done the same in the United States and Australia. The Japanese government considered that the 1965 treaty which established diplomatic relations and led to large-scale financial assistance to South Korea had already settled the historical issues. Abe tried to put the issue to rest in 2015 through an agreement struck with the Park Geun-hye administration. Tokyo offered to contribute 1 billion yen (\$8.3 million) to a foundation set up by South Korea to help former comfort women as part of a "final and irreversible resolution" of the controversy. Tokyo's proposal appeared insincere to the Koreans since it required the removal of the comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul and permanent silence on this issue by the Korean government. South Koreans continued to mistrust Abe because of his denials over the comfort women issue. In 2018, Moon Jae-in announced that his government would dissolve this foundation. Moon stated that the emotional damage sustained by victims cannot be resolved through a simple economic exchange between the two governments and that both countries must continue to make efforts to heal the victims' wounds. The Japanese public in turn regarded the South Korean government as untrustworthy for breaching a diplomatic agreement signed by the two countries.

In 2019, the South Korean Supreme Court ruled that two Japanese major corporations, Nippon Steel and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, exploited Korean laborers during Japan's colonization of Korea from 1910 to 45 and demanded that these companies offer reparations to the wartime forced labour victims. According to South Korea, Japan conscripted as many as 7.8 million Koreans into forced labour and sexual slavery. Again, Japan's unchanging posture is that all claims from that period, including individual claims, were resolved by the 1965 treaty. Frustrated by yet another demand from South Korea on an already resolved historical issue, Abe's government responded by passing export sanctions designed to hamstring the Korean semiconductor industry, citing national security concerns. It also demoted South Korea from a "white list" of countries that receive preferential treatment from Japan. This action was seen by the Koreans as an all-out declaration of economic war. The South Korean public responded by boycotting all Japanese goods. The dispute escalated further when in August 2019, Seoul announced its plan to scrap the General Security of Military Information

Agreement (GSOMIA) which was scheduled for renewal. Later Seoul withdrew this threat and decided to retain its intelligence-sharing pact with Japan. However, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 led to a further deterioration in relations over Japanese quarantines and travel bans. These episodes illustrate how mistrust generated by historical issues can lead to trade wars and security disagreements.

Building trust among nations in Northeast Asia is extremely challenging. If even fellow allies of the United States find it so hard to overcome the past, it is still harder for Japan and China, where historical memories are more strongly entangled with security competition. A determined approach to addressing the historical issues is needed to overcome the trust deficit and build better relationships in the region (Clements 2018; Kappmeier 2016).

It is difficult to believe that the peaceful management of these issues is impossible, given the long periods in the past when they have been allowed to lie quiescent. The states in East Asia have lived with territorial disputes for many years and have been at times willing to leave them to future generations to solve. The Korean and Taiwan issues represent perhaps the most dangerous threats in the region; the nuclear crisis in the former remains unresolved, but the progress made in the inter-Korean peace process suggests that it is in principle resolvable. The incompatibility between China's determination to reunify with Taiwan and US military commitment to the independence of the island could become severe in the coming decade, but again, there have been recent moves to reduce tensions and build bridges between Taiwan and China (Taylor 2019). Even these dangerous issues can be managed peacefully, with care and goodwill. "Wars begin in the minds of men", as the UNESCO Charter says. "It is in our minds that the defences of peace must be constructed." While minds are turned towards mistrust and suspicion, as they are at present in Northeast Asia, sustaining peace is a challenge. But minds are malleable, as neuroscience shows, and open to new approaches. The next part of the paper turns to the challenge of how to build trust, confidence, and security in this tense region, in the context of a changing world order and turbulent times.

The Role of Trust Entrepreneurs

A growing academic literature on trust has appeared in international relations. The essence of the problem of trust is how one establishes lasting expectations about the behaviour of others when there is an element of risk in doing so (Alon and Bar-Tal 2016).

A widespread view among realist writers is that trust between adversaries is not possible. Only states with common values and common interests are likely to trust one another. Rivals and potential rivals will tend to hold suspicious views of one another and will base their strategic calculations on potential threats. This readily leads to security dilemmas, when states regard their own defensive preparations as precautionary, but those of others as threatening. This approach is hard-wired into most states' military plans, which reflect the professional commitment of general staffs to prepare for the worst. Fear-based responses to security dilemmas thus predominate in international practice (Booth and Wheeler 2007). Mearsheimer states this view: there is "little room for trust among states" because intentions are difficult to discern and hence fear "can never be reduced to a trivial level" (Mearsheimer 1994, 11).

Rationalist scholars accept that states will act on the basis of calculations of interest and risk but are nevertheless open to the possibility of trust emerging in some international relationships. This is strategic trust, based on information about the interests of others, and prudential calculations of the costs and benefits of risking trust. Kydd (2000) argues that states can persuade other states that they are trustworthy if they send a costly signal, which entails costs to their own position. Exchange of signals over more than one round of interactions can then establish a basis for trust and co-operation.

A similar argument was made by Osgood (1962) who proposed that states could unilaterally make graduated reductions in international tension (GRIT), beginning with small steps which, if reciprocated, could lead to trust and cooperation. Exchange of confidence-building measures is one example of this process.

Hoffman makes a similar contribution in suggesting that a series of steps towards institutionalising relationships can lay a basis for trust (Hoffman 2002, 2006). Keohane (1984) based his theory of liberal institutionalism on the idea that states could replace fear by strategic trust on the basis of contingent cooperation. Setting up institutions would reinforce this cooperation and lay a basis for sustaining trust.

Constructivist scholars, in contrast, argue that states can fashion the relationships with each other through communication, gestures and discourse. Wendt argues convincingly that international anarchy is not a state of nature, but is what states make of it (Wendt 2012). States can construct relationships that are based on fear, exchange, or trust (Booth and Wheeler 2007). Trust is created and reinforced through a cycle of cooperation. As Rathbun puts it, “Trust-building might begin through a rationalist process of signalling and conveying information, but the process is more transformative, allowing for a redefinition of self and other from adversary to partner to friend” (Rathbun 2009, 355). This “leads to the conclusion that the possibilities for cooperation in international relations are far more profound than those foreseen by rationalism, with its focus on strategic trust” (Rathbun 2009, 356).

Wheeler, in an important recent contribution, argues that an essential first step is for state leaders to go beyond enemy images, and appreciate that they and their adversaries are in a security dilemma (Wheeler 2018). It is also necessary for them to be convinced that their negotiating partners have the personal, political and constitutional capacity to deliver on what they promise. The next step is to communicate peaceful intent, and while this may be done in incremental steps, the key step in Wheeler’s view is face-to-face interaction between leaders, which enables them to bond, overcome their identities as adversaries, and reach a state in which they trust each other sufficiently not to calculate the risks of betrayal. An example of this was the personal bonding between Gorbachev and Reagan in their “fireside chat” in Geneva in 1985. This gave Gorbachev sufficient confidence to take significant unilateral steps, including his declaration of a unilateral Soviet nuclear test ban. In this way, Gorbachev acted as a trust entrepreneur. Non-state actors (such as the Palme Commission) also played a role by preparing the ground for Gorbachev’s turn towards common security.

The step from enemy images to acknowledgement of a mutual security dilemma is an example of reframing, a key process in conflict resolution. How people frame their situation affects whether they can trust. Framing in turn is linked to social identity. Consider the classic case of the Prisoner’s Dilemma. The two prisoners face lengthy jail terms if they rat on one another, and an even longer prison term if one stays silent and the

other rats on him. If they frame their situation in terms of “what should I do”, then it is rational to defect. However, if they can come to think of themselves as a team, and frame their situation as “what should we do”, they can reap the benefits of cooperation even in a one-shot game (Miall 2007, 70–71). This change of social identity allows them to escape the dilemma.

A key step in the process is that the parties empathise with the position of the other and come to see how the situation looks from the other side.

Whereas Wheeler limits agency to the top leaders of the state, conflict resolution scholars argue that others besides top leaders can be trust entrepreneurs. For example, embedded third parties (like John Hume in the Northern Ireland peace process) and non-state organizations can assist parties in conflict to develop trusting relations through dialogue and problem-solving. Bringing parties in conflict together in safe settings, with trusted intermediaries, may lead to shifts of perspective and identity, as people move from seeing themselves as adversaries to people with a common predicament.

It is still important that this process should reach those with capacity to deliver results, but there are many cases where contacts between societies, NGOs, political parties, religious organizations and similar bodies have opened the way for peace agreements at official governmental level (Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2016).

The essence of the conflict resolution approach is to seek a turn from unpeaceful to peaceful relationships. Building a new relationship among adversaries requires being open to new possibilities, both in the adversary and in the situation. This starts from a position that positive change can never be excluded, even when things look bleak. Keeping an open mind in this way, the conflict resolution approach looks for feasible changes of position that respect the underlying needs of the people. This suggests adversaries be open to the possibility that relationships can change, that adversaries may not be as untrustworthy as they may seem, and that trust can be built over time.

Conflicts are transformed through changes in the positions, or interests, that the parties espouse, through changes in attitudes and changes in behaviour. All three of these elements are interconnected, so changes in trust are linked to changes in behaviour and goals. The context of the conflict is also crucial, and wider changes in the context of the conflict may be needed to trigger change.

Of course, initiatives based on trust are not guaranteed success. Trust may be broken, out of bad faith, because one side still clings to enemy images, for contextual reasons, or because of changes of leadership (Wheeler 2018). Trust involves risk.

Nevertheless, the benefit of trusting others, including adversaries, is that it may enable an advantageous improvement of relations while avoiding the costs of destructive conflict. The prudential argument is that, when the stakes are very high, as they are in North East Asia, the risks of trust are less costly than the risks of failing to trust.

Drawing together this literature suggests a sequence of steps in a process of trust-building.

First, as Wheeler argues, a trust entrepreneur needs to move from an enemy image of the adversary to an awareness that both are in a security dilemma. Developing empathy and seeing the situation from the other’s perspective is a key part of this process. This can be prepared by initiatives at the non-governmental level, but a trust entrepreneur must have sufficient capacity to deliver results.

Second, the trust entrepreneur sends signals, makes gestures or takes steps to demonstrate a non-hostile relationship and invites reciprocation.

Third, if the adversary does not respond, the trust entrepreneur continues to hold open the door, until dialogue becomes possible.

Fourth, the trust entrepreneur seeks meetings and dialogue to cement a mutual shift from thinking about the conflict in rivalrous terms, to “thinking as a team”.

Fifth, further steps can follow to entrench cooperation, institutionalise the relationship, and create incentives for further trust-building.

We now turn to consider how such an approach can be applied to Northeast Asia.

Confidence Building Measures in Northeast Asia

Imagine a US Secretary of State making the following statement:

In the first instance, we envision offering the regional parties our thinking about potential approaches to arms control, drawing upon a vast reservoir of experience stemming from attempts to regulate military competition in Europe and other regions.

From this base, the group might move forward to considering a set of confidence building or transparency measures covering notification of selected military activities and crisis prevention communications. The purpose would be to lessen the prospects for incidents and miscalculation that could lead to heightened competition or even conflict.

In our view, and again based on our experience with arms control, we believe such an approach offers the best chance of success.

These were the words used by Secretary of State James Baker, setting out an agenda for the Working Group on Arms Control and Regional Security at the outset of the Multilateral Peace Process Negotiations on the Middle East, in Moscow, on 28 January 1992 (Baker 1992). A similar approach might offer prospects for confidence-building in North East Asia.

It is widely agreed that nuclear risk reduction measures and crisis management measures are needed in the region. As Atanassova-Cornelis writes, “strategic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, exacerbated by unresolved historical issues and mutual distrust, underpin the power based competitive approach to the security order in North East Asia” (Atanassova-Cornelis 2014, 10). Confidence-building measures which have the objective of increasing transparency, building trust, enabling communication and encouraging collaboration, aim to deal with these issues (Holst 1983).

The tensions are highest along the Korean border. There, large forward-deployed forces on both sides are on high alert. The DPRK’s missile launches and nuclear tests have alarmed neighbouring countries, and US-ROK exercises have alarmed Pyongyang. Russia, China and North Korea are developing missiles designed to overcome the US THAAD defences based in South Korea. The need for hotlines, notification of tests and exercises, and exchange of information on nuclear systems is clear and would be an important first step to any subsequent denuclearisation. The risks of accidental or inadvertent escalation in a crisis also apply between the nuclear forces in the region of the United States, China and Russia.

Are confidence-building measures feasible in this area? Do they depend on prior trust or improved security relations? Should confidence-building measures for conventional weapons come before those for nuclear weapons, as they did in Europe?

Confidence-building measures in the security sphere include transparency measures, communications, agreed restrictions and verification. Transparency measures involve the sharing of information about, for example, size of armed forces, weapons systems, and military exercises. Communications channels are agreed measures to enhance consultation to avert tension during crises. Restrictions include agreements to avoid destabilising postures, such as no-first-use policies. Verification includes agreements to monitor and verify agreed restrictions.

As the name suggests, confidence-building measures are designed to build confidence, even when states are in adversarial relations and trust is low. They are less committing than other measures. In principle they offer stepping-stones for the states to find a way through treacherous ground. They are attractive as first steps because they can deal with some of the most immediate dangers that arise from strategic competition and from crises, miscalculations and accidents involving nuclear weapons. They match the preference of states in the region for step-by-step rather than more comprehensive agreements. They also fit with East Asian state norms concerning sovereignty and the principle of non-interference (Acharya 1997).

They are more likely to be acceptable to states in the region than other, more ambitious measures. Most of the relevant states in Northeast Asia already have some prior experience of confidence-building measures, and many of them either have a favourable view of confidence-building, or at least do not view it negatively.

Russia and China have previous experience of confidence-building through the Shanghai Cooperation Council. Their border monitoring arrangements include provisions for border security, transparency over exercises and military equipment, exchanges and study visits between military personnel and consultations to deal with “ambiguous situations”. According to Chinese scholars, China has “taken the lead” in CBMs in the Asia Pacific region (Acharya 1997, 32), and China experts have indicated that China supports CBMs in the Korean peninsula.

Japan and Russia made an agreement in 1993 to prevent incidents at sea and set up communication channels between their ships and aircraft. Similarly, Japan and South Korea exchanged “Letters on Contingent Incidents Between Military Aircraft” in 1995 to provide for notice if aircraft entered the Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) of the other state, and a hotline was established in 1997 (Iwamoto 2014).

Japan and China established a military communications channel to avert air and sea accidents in 2008 and agreed a memorandum of understanding for a hotline in 2012, but this was not implemented because of the crisis over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. Both scholars and NGOs have suggested CBMs should be developed as a response. Professor Jingdong Yuan has proposed that while the territorial issues remain in dispute, it would be pragmatic to introduce crisis management and confidence-building measures, that would be based on keeping open communication channels between the Chinese and Japanese militaries and maritime law enforcement agencies. He points out that international norms are available for handling such disputes, and the parties might draw on the international Code for Unplanned Encounters At Sea (Yuan 2015). The International Crisis Group suggested a hotline between the Japanese National Security Council and the

Chinese National Security Commission (International Crisis Group 2014, 39). In April 2014, China and Japan did agree to enter a multilateral agreement to regulate unplanned encounters at sea, a recognition on China's part following the crisis that unintended maritime clashes are dangerous and that confidence-building measures are potentially mutually beneficial and not merely to be seen as political means of exacting concessions. Before the crisis over the islands, there were high level talks between retired naval personnel on both sides, and agreement to set up a maritime code of communications, a hotline and dialogues between defence ministries, but this was shelved when the political environment became unpropitious (International Crisis Group 2014, 38). The fact that both sides have been willing to consider maritime confidence building measures suggests that collaboration on wider confidence building measures in the future may be possible, though this case does suggest that an improvement in the political environment may be a precondition.

On the Korean peninsula, a number of significant confidence-building measures were taken following the historic agreement in the Panmunjom Declaration of 2018. The DPRK agreed to freeze nuclear tests and missile testing and the United States and ROK later scaled back their joint military exercises. The inter-Korean agreement included measures to suspend live-fire artillery, naval and air force drills within 5 km of the DMZ and in designated sea areas and no-fly zones. A joint North-South-UN consultative body was set up to remove mines. An inter-Korean body was set up to provide for return of human remains. And there was provision for future military consultations in the future (Yoshida et al. 2019).

These measures created the hope that a winding down of the Korean conflict would be possible, accompanied by denuclearisation. In subsequent summits, however, progress between the United States and North Korea stalled, and North Korea resumed its missile launching while the United States maintained sanctions on North Korea. The disappointing outcome of the Hanoi summit seemed to underline the inadequately prepared basis for a US-DPRK agreement on denuclearisation embedded in a wider regional arrangement. The United States and North Korea remain far apart in their interpretation of the meaning of denuclearisation on the Korean peninsula.

Confidence-building measures can contribute to denuclearisation and are of value in their own right for risk reduction. Plant argues that information exchanges and consultation meetings on operational matters are an essential first step to build a basis for a step-by-step programme of denuclearisation (Plant 2018). He suggests a jointly staffed Monitoring Centre, using commercial satellite imagery, to enable both sides to detect military movements on either side of the DMZ. This could be coupled with, and strengthen confidence in, pre-notification of force movements, and a declaratory no-first use-of-force agreement. As initial steps, Plant suggests "information exchanges on radionuclide releases from nuclear sites; workshops on the application of IAEA nuclear accident provisions to nuclear sites; and working level talks on operational methods for exchanging information about sensitive sites North and South of the DMZ, noting that, while it may be too soon to discuss the characteristics and locations of those sites at present, if this process is to succeed in the longer run then this mechanism will need to be developed at some point. Contact between national Academies of Sciences could be usefully established if substantial progress towards verified capping is made, combined with a reciprocal but non-binding program of invited site tours for members of those

academies.” Plant concludes, “Properly designed and conceived CBMs do not just support *quid pro quo* deal making at high-stakes summits, but instead are integral to the resolution of ambiguities, doubt and suspicion that this process will inevitably generate. If Pyongyang and Washington are short on areas of agreement in the run up to the next summit – as seems highly likely – then progress in this area at least would be substantive and useful, leading us away from confrontation and towards meaningful restrictions and controls on activities of concern in the DPRK”⁵.

Equivalent measures have been suggested to provide corresponding assurances that the United States would not place nuclear weapons in South Korea. Yoshida and Paik suggest continued suspension of US-South Korean military exercises, and non-deployment of nuclear-capable US forces in the South Korea region and the sea around it (Yoshida et al. 2019).

Dialogue is clearly necessary to start a process of confidence-building, but mutual trust is not a precondition. Indeed, the point of confidence-building is that it opens possibilities when states are still mistrustful. In the case of the Stockholm Conference on Confidence and Security-Building Measures and Disarmament in Europe, these started in 1984 when trust was low in the context of the “second Cold War”. The talks on conventional forces preceded the dramatic proposals for reducing nuclear weapons stocks made by Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan in the late 1980s. The confidence-building measures came first, though a change of political will, notably on the Soviet side, was required to breathe life into what had become a moribund process. In the Korean case, too, conventional confidence-building measures have gone ahead of steps towards denuclearisation. In this case too, political commitment, principally on the South Korean side, was required. A political initiative is necessary to start the process of confidence-building, and this may involve a change from an enemy image to an acceptance that states are in a security dilemma. It does not, however, require high levels of trust between political leaders.

In general, then, confidence-building measures have a good name and a track record in the region and match the preferences of the region’s states for cautious steps. Confidence-building measures also have value as steps towards more ambitious trust-building and cooperative security measures.

Building Trust in Northeast Asia

Confidence building and crisis management measures would have great value in their own right and as steps towards building trust, but more than this will be needed to make a breakthrough in trust between societies in Northeast Asia. There is a need for imaginative initiatives by leaders, and for non-governmental initiatives to prepare the ground for them (Clements 2018).

Glosserman and Snyder propose an ambitious “grand bargain” to overcome the historical memory issues and identity clash between Japan and South Korea (Glosserman and Snyder 2015). The United States should facilitate an orchestrated process of apology and reconciliation by making a full acknowledgement, through a presidential statement, of the suffering imposed on Japanese civilians by the atomic

⁵For another extensive proposal, see Lachowski et al. (2007).

bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This should be linked to a renewed Japanese statement of state responsibility for the war crimes of the imperial government in Korea, restitution payments, and renunciation of Japanese claims to the Dokdo/Takeshima Islands. South Korea in turn would accept the Japanese apologies and agree on a cooperative way forward.

An even grander bargain is required to carry this process on to Japan and China. There is a basis for better relations, in the people-to-people exchanges that have taken place, at the level of students and tourists and language teachers. “Ping-pong diplomacy” has yielded results in the past.⁶ Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declined the opportunity, pressed on him at the time by European states, to include a reconciliatory gesture in his statement on the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, although he did make a deeply reconciliatory statement towards the United States. He did at least abstain from further visits to the Yasukuni Shrine. It would still be possible for a successor to take the opportunity to make a sweeping declaration on behalf of the state that could help to put the history issues to rest. As Angela Merkel pointed out, such gestures need orchestrating with acceptance by others. Germany’s rehabilitation would not have been possible, she said, without the “generous gestures” of Germany’s neighbours in accepting Germany’s effort to face its past. Another essential step is for Japan to address the issue of the history books since young Japanese people cannot be expected to come to terms with the past until they are properly informed about it. Nor will young Chinese people develop better images of Japan while the state-run patriotic education presents present-day Japan in the same light as the wartime Japanese government, leaving children with the impression that the war between Japan and China has never ended (Wang 2014). To get over these national stereotypes and enemy images, not only is better history teaching needed, but people in the region need to develop multiple identities, seeing themselves not only in national terms but also as Northeast Asians, Asians and world citizens. In the case of Franco-German reconciliation, meetings of historians, and contacts between Christian Democratic parties, laid a path for governmental initiatives.

Coming to terms with the past is necessary to build trust; failing to come to terms with it perpetuates distrust. This is bound to be a long process. However, steps forward could act as important signals in a trust-building process. Full steps towards dealing with the historical memory issues will also depend on a better security environment since geopolitical tensions poison the atmosphere for rebuilding trust. This suggests that an even grander bargain is required – one embracing historical memories and security issues.

Security-building in Northeast Asia

The most striking recent example of trust-building in North East Asia has been the “Trustpolitik” pursued by South Korea’s President Moon Jae-in. On his election in May 2017, President Moon launched an appeal for peace and dialogue, and set out a set of principles and strategies on which a peace process could be based. These included a peace

⁶Following the 1971 meeting of American and Chinese ping-pong players in Nagoya, Japan, which started the thaw in Sino-US relations, China, Japan and the two Koreas have used table tennis and other sports to improve relations. The two Koreas have fielded table tennis teams. When Chinese and Japanese officials were trying to arrange the famous handshake between President Xi and Prime Minister Abe, Li Xiaolin, the daughter of the former Chinese President Li Xiannian, met Abe at a performance by a Chinese dance troupe, on the theme of the crested ibis, a symbol of Sino-Japanese relationship (Fackler 2014)..

treaty, agreement on a Korean peninsula free of nuclear weapons, and a comprehensive, Korean-led peace process. The rationale for pursuing this, wrote Moon's adviser, Chung-in Moon, was based on "cost-benefit analysis" – "any conflict would be difficult to contain, and South Korea would have too much to lose to go to war" (Moon 2019).

Moon's initiative was met at first by a series of missile tests and a nuclear weapon test by North Korea. Nevertheless, Moon persisted and kept the door open. Having declared its nuclear force complete in 2017, and seeking to negotiate with the United States, Kim Jong-un sent a positive response to his overtures in 2018 along with the women's ice hockey team which played alongside its South Korean counterparts in the Winter Olympics. This paved the way for the historic meeting of Presidents Kim and Moon on the border line of the DMZ. They signed the Panmunjom Declaration of April 2018, which committed the two sides to "alleviate the acute military tension and practically eliminate the danger of war" and to cooperate in the process of "pursuing complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula". This was followed by the Pyongyang Declaration of September 2018, accompanied by the Military Domain Agreement, including the confidence-building measures described above.

Progress on the Moon initiative stalled in 2019, as the Trump-Kim summits failed to lead to any breakthrough on denuclearisation, and North Korea threatened to resume missile tests if sanctions were not removed.

The Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition (RECNA), a peace research institute in Nagasaki, Japan has made an imaginative proposal to follow up on the progress made to date in the Korean peace process (Yoshida et al. 2019). Yoshida and Paik, building on earlier work by Umebayashi et al. (2015), propose a Northeast Asia Nuclear Weapon Free Zone to cement peace on the Korean Peninsula. The proposal offers a comprehensive framework for a peace and regional security system in Northeast Asia. It starts from a peace treaty, ending the Korean War. This would be buttressed by a Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, aimed at achieving peace and reconciliation in Northeast Asia as a whole. The parties would include the ROK, the DPRK, Japan and the United States, with China, Russia and Mongolia encouraged to join too. The Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in Northeast Asia would cover the ROK, the DPRK and Japan, and would be a binding legal agreement that would remove all nuclear weapons from these countries, including those of nuclear weapons states outside the region. This would meet the demands of the DPRK for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and would also forbid the potential nuclearization of South Korea and Japan. The United States, Russia and China would be asked to give negative security assurances to the countries in the NWFZ. Nuclear weapons would be dismantled within 18 months of the treaty coming into force, and states would adopt conventional force postures that support denuclearisation. Nuclear risk reduction and confidence building measures are incorporated into the proposal, with "real-time military communications systems to support crisis avoidance, management and resolution". The proposal also calls for regional cooperation on energy. Abundant renewable energy in the region, with renewable energy trading, offers one alternative to the region's dangerous reliance on nuclear power and fossil fuels.

This radical proposal clearly has major implications for the structure of the regional order in Northeast Asia. It gives up reliance on extended nuclear deterrence from the United States, substituting cooperative security relations with the countries in the region. It would deepen and widen the initial approach to building trust.

The proposal in turn suggests a wider set of changes, which address the challenges of the current arms race, the breakdown in arms control, and the drift towards great power conflict. Instead of responding reactively to potential conflict with hard security policies, the participating countries in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation set up to follow the Korean Peace Treaty should instead act as trust entrepreneurs in a wider domain, and consider further reductions in armaments and altered force postures to improve stability and further build confidence.

China has a particularly key role to play if such a cooperative security future is to come into being. President Xi announced China's commitment to cooperative security principles in his New Asian Security concept of 2014. China is, in principle, supportive of the Nuclear Weapon Free Zone proposal set out above, Chinese policy experts have also expressed their interest in new regional frameworks, and the Chinese declaratory policy on nuclear weapons is one of minimum deterrence and no first use. However, if the strategic struggle between the United States and China deteriorates, this may impede the prospects for these confidence-building and security-building measures.

The US and Russian roles will also be critical. At present US policy is committed to the role of nuclear deterrence in the world order, and to extended nuclear deterrence in East Asia. But two former US Presidents and one former Soviet President have committed themselves to a nuclear-free world: Presidents Gorbachev and Reagan, in 1985, and President Obama, in 2009. It is therefore not inconceivable that this could happen again. Trust entrepreneurs will again be essential in this process.

Such a policy would fit well with a new approach to cooperation and human security, which the new challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic calls for. There is a stark choice between a fragmented, nationalist response to the pandemic and to the economic recession that is likely to follow, or a more cooperative approach which brings states together to invest in global health, development, and human security.

Of course, such a change raises huge challenges, not least overcoming the entrenched military industrial complexes and the mindsets associated with them.⁷ Lodgaard and others have explored this in their work on Stable Nuclear Zero (Lodgaard 2017). Nevertheless, the end of the Cold War demonstrates that enormous and surprising changes can happen. At the global level, a process of confidence, trust and security-building is required similar to that described at the regional level in this article. Regional nuclear free zones and security communities can act as building blocks. At the national level, political actions and social movements can bring about changes in national policies. At the individual level, commitment, vision, creativity, and the passion to build a better and safer world are vital constituents for global change.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that building trust is of fundamental importance for safeguarding the East Asian peace, through a process of confidence-building, de-linking historical memories from threat perceptions, and moving from rivalries to cooperative security relationships.

⁷On the former, see, for example, Miall (1987); on the latter, Hamwee, Miall, and Elworthy (1990)..

The new academic literature on trust suggests that it is possible to go beyond enemy images to develop security dilemma sensibility, and beyond that to build a process in which confidence-building, de-escalation and cooperative security arrangements can all play their part in building peace. Trust entrepreneurs are vital in this process, and persistence is needed since initiatives are often ignored and treated with suspicion in a climate of mistrust.

Developing better relationships is vital for this process, and the trust-building agenda can be prepared and assisted by nongovernmental initiatives, people-to-people exchanges and trusted intermediaries.

Confidence-building measures and crisis management mechanisms can be developed even when trust is low and have demonstrated their appeal in the past to states in the region. They can be a vital first step towards building a broader cooperative relationship. They offer a basis for further steps to tackle the historical legacy of mistrust, and to embed security cooperation.

The paper has outlined one possible sequence of steps in a widening process of building trust: from confidence-building measures, to a Korean peace process, to a Northeast Asian nuclear free zone, to a new regional order based on cooperative security rather than deterrence. Developing new relationships based on trust can be risky, but the risks and benefits for human security have to be weighed against the risks of continuing on the present course.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Toda Peace Institute, Tokyo.

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