

**EGMONT Institute**  
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**Round table with Ambassador Ishii: summary**

On 15th March, Ambassador Ishii, Director General of legal affairs at the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has agreed to present some prospective views on security issues in Asia. That presentation gave way to an interesting exchange of views with a group of experts.

Ambassador Ishii choose to address the future evolution of the Asian pacific region, stressing the necessity for Japan to adapt to a changing role and position in a moving environment.

To ensure a prosperous future while preserving his independence, Japan has to remain a center for technology excellence, to reinforce its self reliance and to engage with his neighbours. This implies a close relationship with the lone superpower and Ally, the USA, as well as good neighbourly relations with China, Korea and Russia.

To avoid any escalation of existing tensions, current bilateral and multilateral relations in the region have to be strengthened, in particular the unity of ASEAN, which plays a stabilizing role in South East Asia. Also the Trans Pacific Partnership and the East Asia Summit are good instruments of peace and security at regional level and there are some prospects to revive the East Asian Community project.

Regarding the Korean peninsula, as North Korea could face testing times due to its inability to adapt to globalization, he considers that all concerned countries have to better communicate in order to ensure a peaceful evolution and avoid further proliferation of ballistic missiles or any other unwelcome evolution.

The US "Asian pivot" is welcome and supported by Tokyo which sees it as an anchor for stability in the region. In that prospect, Japan could play a role in a triangular dialogue with China and the USA, while supporting other stabilizing influences in different parts of Asia, like India in South Asia and Australia in South East Asia and in the pacific region.

The main issue is China, which is facing serious new challenges, like ageing, environmental problems, trade and energy access. These are areas where common interests can be identified with Japan so as to trigger an comprehensive engagement of the country. Furthermore, cultural links exist which can ease the relationship.

It is also obvious that for a while more confidence building measures are needed among the countries of the region. These measures can be achieved partially through bilateral means but also through multilateral ones (accession of them all to UNCLOS would be a positive step forward). In the meantime some military build-up will go on in the region, but there is a growing perception among the players that this is not the way to go, an important evolution which could open the way to a more cooperative security environment.