

‘Escaping ASEAN soil: The case of Japan-Korea-China trilateral cooperation’

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Abstract

Japan, Republic of Korea (thereafter Korea), and China have for long been portrayed as rivals – or at the very least competitors – in the region of East Asia. Their competition for political initiative has been exercised in regional arrangements, and notably ASEAN Plus Three (APT). Yet it is precisely APT that spurred development of Japan-Korea-China summits, which since 2008 have been convened independently from ASEAN. The tension between *competition* in APT and emergence of closer *cooperation* in Northeast Asia prompts us to inquire into the rationale behind development of this trilateral framework. By taking into account China’s rise and Japanese and Korean reaction to it, this research is likely to elucidate a major research puzzle: why Japan, Korea and China ‘escaped’ ASEAN soil to pursue cooperation in a separate format.