



Research Summary

Japan's foreign policy on regional cooperation in East Asia has been affected by several key events from 2010 to 2011 during the period of this research grant. One of them was the proposal and pursuit of an East Asian Community by the former Prime Minister, Hatoyama Yukio that brought about uncertainties in Japan's approach to regionalism in the region as the premier sought to build closer ties with China to resolve historical disputes that date back to the Cold War period. While the intentions were good, Japan's southern neighbors were not too keen.

The second event was the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami that brought unprecedented fatalities and probable long term scarring on domestic health and the environment, which in some ways deflected efforts that have been taken in previous years to sustain its leadership role and position its interest through the East Asia Summit in region building. Not only that Tokyo had to grapple with the issue of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, there was a new development in the area of regional economic cooperation that required the attention of Tokyo. The United States was pushing for the realization of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement and Tokyo was eager to get on board.

The introduction and subsequent pursuit of the TPP as an alternative model of economic architecture for East Asia meant that Japan would have to reevaluate its foreign economic position on free trade agreements and its domestic economic policies primarily on those pertaining to the agricultural sector. Thus, the middle of 2011 saw intense debates in Japan about the pros and cons of the TPP and how this new development could be accommodated within its larger economic interest. Initial results indicate that the desire to participate in the TPP and the lack of readiness to do so is due to two major factors, namely the lack of a strong government to overcome domestic challenges and the untimely event of 3.11 calling for critical response and ultimate priority.

With the assistance of the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) as host, I have been able to carry out a significant amount of research in Japan by interviewing key officials in several ministries and agencies, and discussing with important scholars and researchers well known in the area of Japanese foreign policy and regionalism. The engagements have provided me with valuable insights and further enriched my analysis of a contemporary issue that is not only complex but continues to evolve. Similarly, conferences and seminars that I have had the occasion to attend during the grant period have also enhanced my understanding of the research subject.

The opportunity provided by Sumitomo Foundation through this grant has allowed me to further my research on a subject that is important and timely. I like to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to Sumitomo Foundation for the generosity and for making this research a reality.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

“Japan and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP): Current Issues and Challenges,” 3rd Conference of the Japanese Studies Association of ASEAN (JSA-ASEAN), Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, 22-23 February 2012.

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Newspaper article:

“Key to ‘East Asian’ health,” *The Japan Times* (Op-Ed), 8 July 2011,
[<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/ea20110708a1.html>].

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

-