

HATOYAMA'S EAST ASIAN COMMUNITY AND SINO-JAPANESE RELATION

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Executive Summary

1. One of the most heatedly debated elements of the foreign policy of Japan's Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama is his proposal of an East Asia Community (EAC).
2. Many media reports based their interpretation on an op-ed article, "A New Path for Japan", published in *New York Times* which is in turn translated from a Japanese article by Hatoyama.
3. Many of Hatoyama's original points were, however, lost in translation since the media in both China and US had chosen to focus on separate topics, hence providing a very confusing picture of Hatoyama's foreign policy.
4. The Chinese media originally speculated that Hatoyama might pursue a policy of "leaving the US and return to Asia", attributed partially to the general Chinese expectation that the DPJ will pursue a much more pro-Chinese foreign policy than its Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) predecessor.
5. The US media had focused on the "equal relationship" portion of the article and questioned if Japan will seek to revise the US-Japan relationship.
6. Hatoyama in fact has formulated an elaborate balance of power plan to counter both China and US in the interest of Japan. This will include countering the rise of the Chinese military with a military alliance with the US and countering the US-led laissez faire economy with the economic integration of East Asia. While Japan bandwagons on China's economic growth to jumpstart its own economy, it will also enlist the help of ASEAN to regulate China's economic activities.
7. Hatoyama's EAC was criticised for its lack of details such as being unclear if the EAC will be a 10+3 or 10+6 grouping. However, Hatoyama is more

concerned with the contents of the EAC than its structure and framework. Instead of determining the membership of the EAC at a premature stage, he prefers to list the areas of cooperation. The EAC is an end product of concrete cooperation rather than a means or platform to allow cooperation.

8. Hatoyama hopes that the EAC can curb rising nationalism among youths, along with other measures such as the prudent handling of historical and territorial issues, and improve Japan's relations with its neighbours fundamentally.
9. The DPJ government seems to be willing to adopt a low profile in handling historical issues and territorial disputes. Hatoyama promised not to visit the Yasukuni Shrine and suggested turning the disputed East Sea into a "Sea of Fraternity".
10. It is uncertain if Hatoyama's plan can be successful or even executed fully. However, based on his two recent visits to the US and China, he has generally received positive feedbacks from his counterparts.