



Seeking and Forging Common Ground

**A conference report of the
ROK-US Security Seminar**

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Pacific Forum CSIS

Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS (www.pacforum.org) operates as the autonomous Asia-Pacific arm of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, business, and oceans policy issues through analysis and dialogue undertaken with the region's leaders in the academic, government, and corporate areas. Founded in 1975, it collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to opinion leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region.

Korea Foundation

Established in 1991, the Korea Foundation aims to enhance the image of Korea in the world and promote academic and cultural exchange programs. It is an independent organization affiliated with the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its mission is to promote better understanding of Korea within the international community and to increase friendship and goodwill between Korea and the rest of the world through various exchange programs.

Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, Honolulu

The Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Honolulu was among the first five overseas missions that were set up with the establishment of the Korean Government in 1948. The jurisdiction of the Consulate includes the State of Hawaii and American Samoa.

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Acknowledgements

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Conference Report

Pacific Forum CSIS and the Korea Foundation co-hosted an ROK-US Security Seminar, with the Republic of Korea Consulate General in Honolulu as a co-organizer, on Nov. 7, 2014 in Honolulu. Some 25 officials and experts, along with Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders, all participating in their private capacities, joined in a robust assessment of the current security environment in Northeast Asia and initiatives to promote cooperation in the region and facilitate unification on the Korean Peninsula. Discussion throughout the day was open and candid and highlighted the close relationship between the two countries and the deep level of trust that has developed between the allies over the past decades. In the end, participants acknowledged that the seminar provided a prism for a better understanding of both US and ROK foreign and security policies.

Session 1: Perspectives on Regional Security

In session one, a US presenter offered an assessment of the regional security environment in Northeast Asia. Highlighting the important role the US rebalance policy has played in shaping the security discourse in Northeast Asia, the presenter argued that it was important to recognize that this focus has masked several unexpected events in the region that actually shaped security perceptions: 1) the disagreement between the US and China in Copenhagen on climate change, 2) the deterioration of ROK-Japan relations, 3) the unexpected provocations by North Korea, 4) the failure to improve US trade relations in the region.

Part of the problem with the pivot strategy is that it has from the beginning been characterized by some, especially in China, as a containment of China strategy. While many countries in Asia have welcomed the US commitment to maintaining a robust presence in the region, there is an increasing sense that the US and China seem to be competing in a wide range of issues and each is seeking to legitimate itself in the eyes of the region. As a result, the US has found itself in the position of having to substantiate its commitment to the rebalance strategy while demonstrating a commitment to promoting cooperation with China. Meanwhile, this legitimacy competition has put increasing pressure on the ROK as it is often caught in the middle, with some arguing that it is being drawn into the “Chinese orbit,” while others argue that the rise of China makes it imperative for the ROK to improve relations with Japan to consolidate the US-Japan-ROK relationship. However, as the US-Japan-ROK relationship consolidates, Chinese resistance to this development will also increase. South Korea must prepare for these unintended consequences in its relationships, and the US must acknowledge these complex interactions and the pressures that will be faced by Seoul.

Three themes emerged in the discussion period. First, there was some debate, especially among the US participants, about the origins of the pivot or rebalance strategy. While it was generally agreed that the strategy had its roots in the Bush administration and before, the fact that it had been articulated as a defined policy by Secretary of State Clinton led many in Asia, especially in China, to see it as being intimately associated with the Obama administration and directly focused on containing China.

This led to a second theme: the perception that the ROK is drifting toward China. Partly driven by the dispute with Japan over history and the growing economic partnership between China and the ROK, this perception has put South Korea in a difficult position. It has felt pressure to improve relations with Japan in the interest of strengthening its alliance with the US even though Japan has taken steps to whitewash its past. Meanwhile, the US has put increasing pressure on the ROK to accept the Terminal High Altitude Air Defense (THAAD) system as a solution to its missile defense requirements, which has drawn criticism from China. This forces the ROK to balance the need to demonstrate loyalty to the alliance while trying to avoid creating animosity with China. Several ROK participants recognized that China would continue to push South Korea to align with Chinese interests against Japan and use their common history to create distance between the ROK and the US in the process.

A third issue raised was perception in Asia of the US rebalance. There was general agreement that China certainly saw the rebalance in terms of a US containment policy, but others welcomed what was generally perceived as a US commitment to stay engaged in the region. However, it was also made clear that the US would have to demonstrate some success – completing the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade agreement was highlighted. In some ways, this need for reassurance is a recurring theme for the US in Asia, which is likely to intensify as China continues to push for architecture that emphasizes “Asian solutions for Asian problems.”

Session 2: Trustpolitik and President Park’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative

The second session focused on “Trustpolitik” and President Park Geun-hye’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI). A South Korean participant began by explaining the meaning and evolution of “Trustpolitik” and then laid out Park’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative, explaining its logic, purpose, and status. Its fundamental objective is to overcome obstacles in regional cooperation and develop a sense of trust and build habits of cooperation. The broad vision is to build trust on the peninsula through inter-Korean dialogue, promote regional cooperation through NAPCI, and promote global cooperation through the South Korea’s middle power initiative. In this context the ROK seeks to be a facilitator rather than a leader. By including the big powers (US, China, Russia, and Japan) as well as smaller countries (Mongolia), the ROK believes NAPCI would facilitate sharing of responsibility and minimizing zero-sum thinking. That was also provided as the rationale for initially excluding North Korea from the group since it would likely seek to take advantage of its inclusion.

The initiative would focus on five “soft security” issues in an effort to build trust among participating countries. The five specific proposals are:

- 1) Conference on Security and Confidence-Building in Northeast Asia to promote political-military trust-building and improved transparency.
- 2) Nuclear Safety Council in Northeast Asia as a response to the Fukushima incident, given the increased interest by Northeast Asian regional states in managing a potential nuclear safety crisis.

- 3) Northeast Asia Blue Sky Project to address the annual yellow dust (polluted smog) that requires regional attention.
- 4) Northeast Asia Safety Network to promote regional response to natural disasters including earthquake, tsunami, and typhoon.
- 5) Regional Public Health in Northeast Asia to build a network for controlling pandemics in the region.

To promote the initiative, the ROK has provided detailed explanations to China and the US, both of which have expressed some reservations based on uncertainty about how it would be integrated into other regional initiatives such as the Six-Party Talks and ASEAN-based multilateral processes. The US has also expressed concern about how these would initiatives fit in the US rebalance to Asia. Another problematic issue is the current bilateral tension between the ROK and Japan.

The general reaction by US participants to “Trustpolitik” and NAPCI was generally favorable, although several comments suggested that the initiatives may have been rushed and were not fully thought through before being introduced. However, the major focus of the discussion in session 2 was the ROK-Japan dispute. The dilemma is this: how can the ROK and Japan cooperate on these initiatives if they cannot reconcile their differences? As the discussion developed, it became clear that the major stumbling block is the sex slave (comfort woman) issue.

Overall, US participants were eager to have Korean and Japanese leadership meet to take the relationship to the next level, but Korean participants expressed deep distrust in Japan and feared the repercussions a bilateral meeting may have on domestic politics and the incumbent government. Both the ROK and Japan have significant trust deficits with the other over motivations behind keeping this issue at the center of the relationship and each believes the other must act first to create the conditions necessary to move forward. The concern on the part of the Japanese is a concern over unlimited liability and that it sees South Korea “moving the goal posts” even though it has issued numerous apologies and provided monetary compensation. The concern on the part of South Koreans is that the lack of sincerity by Japanese leaders, especially Prime Minister Abe. Essentially, Japan wants a “final solution” that eliminates the risk of continuing legal liability while South Korea wants a genuine recognition of responsibility. While both US and ROK participants acknowledged that ROK-Japan cooperation was necessary to move the Park administration’s forward, they were also concerned that the focus on history could distract from better regional security cooperation.

Luncheon Speaker

The luncheon speaker, Lt. Gen. Anthony Crutchfield, currently the deputy commander at US Pacific Command, shared his thoughts on security relations on the Korean Peninsula. He noted that while Northeast Asia was more stable today than in past decades, there was an urgent need for all countries in the region to see themselves as contributors to security rather than consumers of security. North Korea, with its

provocations and efforts to develop a nuclear weapon capability, remains an outlier in this process. Despite relative stability in the region, he noted that there is always a concern that a tactical miscalculation could lead to a larger conflagration. This was especially true in the context of the maritime territorial disputes. Therefore, it is important to adopt international codes of conduct and develop clear and unambiguous rules of the road. Accordingly, the US will continue to work closely with the ROK and seek to strengthen all of its alliances and security partnerships. The ROK-US alliance must be retained and stand as the foundation of deterrence on peninsula. While problems among security partners are understandable and even expected, we have to get beyond differences to continue to be security contributors in the region. That is why Japan must redefine its role in collective self-defense.

Session 3: The Future of North Korea and the Unification Initiative

A Korean participant began the session by briefly summarizing President Park's vision for unification policy as set forth in the "Dresden Declaration." The vision is based on the three pillars of humanity, co-prosperity, and integration. Park is focusing her outreach to North Korea on the areas of humanitarian problems such as family reunions, young children, and mothers; welfare infrastructure; and civilian-level cooperation in areas such as history, financial issues, training, and education.

A US participant summarized the current state of affairs in Washington with respect to North Korea policy. He felt that the US has grown weary of the recurring cycle of North Korea's provocations and charm offensives and argued that the US should follow President Park's lead on North Korea issues since the US posture is one of strategic patience. North Korea, for its part, has already seen most of what the US can do and has determined that US presidents cannot guarantee that any agreement between the two countries will be honored. This means that it is difficult for the US to get North Korea's attention. Third-party involvement and international efforts such as the one underway at the UN to highlight human rights abuses in North Korea will be a key factor in making progress.

Another US participant observed that too often US interlocutors begin by saying they don't know enough about North Korea and stop there. His experience, however, has been that direct discussions with North Koreans, although sometimes unpleasant, can be productive.

One prominent topic of discussion was North Korea's recent active diplomacy, from engagement with the UN to the sudden high-level meetings with South Korean officials during the recent Asian Games in Incheon. A Korean participant posited that North Korea's charm offensive is motivated by the desire to influence the still-pending UN General Assembly resolution on North Korea's human rights. There was general agreement that the international community has finally found an issue – human rights – that hits the North Korean leadership at its core. The language in this resolution about the leadership and the possible referral of the issue to the International Criminal Court (ICC) is particularly sensitive. At the same time, North Korea continues to have a double standard about provocation and harsh rhetoric, criticizing US and South Korean military exercises while engaging in its own.

There was extended discussion about the background of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the DPRK (COI) report, with participants disagreeing on the exact reasons for North Korea's strong response to the document. One US view was that the COI process resembled that of Burma, where one of the factors that contributed to the military junta leaders' decision to reform was fear of being brought before the ICC to testify against each other. The participant suggested that this process may provide an opening for various people to approach North Korea with concern about its public image problem and offer short-term solutions. Another participant noted the irony of the ICC's involvement considering that the US has been so opposed to this body. All speakers agreed that the fact that the COI process is centered on the UN rather than the US is important to North Korea.

There was an interesting exchange between US and Korean participants about the North Korean interpretation of President Park's Dresden speech. When a US participant pointed out that North Korea sees Dresden as an absorption policy, a Korean countered that the policy set forth in Dresden is absolutely genuine and that Park is committed to seeking dialogue. The Korean said that his government has tried all sorts of ideas from the "Sunshine Policy" to military threats, and none has worked so far. North Korea just doesn't follow the rules.

On the nuclear issue, it was suggested that much to the chagrin of the speaker and others, perhaps the time will come when Washington's strategy will be to merely contain North Korea's nuclear weapons, acknowledging the DPRK as a de facto nuclear state. As usual, there was disagreement regarding the extent of the DPRK's weapons capabilities, with varying assessments of the effectiveness of technologies such as submarine-launched ballistic missiles, guidance systems, and effective ranges. Aside from all the attention given to nuclear weapons, it was noted that there is not much discussion of the fact that North Korea can deploy almost anything it desires in the US or anywhere else through its extensive shipping networks.

Drug-resistant tuberculosis was cited by many participants as a problem in North Korea. There was general agreement that coordination between the US and South Korea on this issue would be necessary, and that the spread of the disease could pose a major regional health threat.

Several US participants cited recent research by John Park that questioned the effectiveness of sanctions and suggested that further study of this topic would be productive. One of Park's conclusions is that sanctions have prompted a substantial number of DPRK elites to relocate to and set up businesses in China, where they are doing quite well and earning profits for the North Korean leadership.

Session 4: ROK-US Cooperation and the Korean Peninsula

A Korean presenter assessed that the alliance with the US is generally in good shape. The 2009 "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America" continues to serve as an excellent basis for the relationship. However, he did note that the push by the US for the ROK to accept deployment of the THAAD and the difficulties with concluding the US-ROK Civil Nuclear Agreement have

presented some tension in Seoul. He also conveyed some Koreans' doubts about the US following through with its pivot to Asia and said that Koreans need "a little more confidence in US foreign policy." On the Japan issue, he believes that most Koreans support some kind of cooperation with Japan in the long run, but the timing is very sensitive. South Korea has its own security agenda in the region that extends beyond cooperation with the US.

A US presenter agreed that ROK-US cooperation on the Korean Peninsula remains a fundamental part of US policy in Asia. In this context, it is crucial for the US to support a South Korean leadership role in dealing with North Korea. Coordination between the two is critical to ensure China gets the same message and to make sure that no one moves too far too fast. Although five-party unity in response to North Korea is critical, the fact is that no matter what the topic in the context of the Six-Party Talks, the division always breaks into three (US,ROK, Japan) on three (North Korea, China, Russia). Therefore, trilateral cooperation is critical to progress. As there have been some regrets that past efforts have been too focused on the nuclear issue, there is renewed realization of the need for a more comprehensive approach to security issues on the peninsula.

The discussion began with a US participant arguing that while it is important to continue working with China on North Korea, the Chinese have different ideas of what is important on the Korean Peninsula. The consensus among Chinese officials remains that stability is more important than denuclearization. Accordingly, the Chinese believe that the US created an excessively high threshold for North Korea to rejoin the Six-Party Talks. However, it was noted that the high degree of mockery of Kim Jong Il after his death on Chinese social media suggests growing Chinese disdain for their North Korean ally. Chinese studying abroad are increasingly uncomfortable when asked why their government supports North Korea.

Participants generally agreed on the importance of bilateral coordination on North Korea policy. A US participant praised President Park's "initiative, discipline, and principled approach" and expressed support for her engagement with North Korea. He regretted that periods in the past when the US and ROK were not in sync have blocked progress on the North Korea issue. Another countered that he felt the Six-Party Talks were much more five-on-one (with North Korea as the odd one out) in their early years.

There was some discussion about what exactly the ROK wants the US to do to prove its commitment to the pivot to Asia. Over the past few decades, many have thought that the US would leave Korea, but US troops are still there. A Korean trying to explain the attitude of the ROK government and people about the US said that the Obama administration has shown some weak stances and Koreans want action, not just talk. He questioned whether the US will take a strong stance in Asia regarding China's increasing assertiveness.

On the sanctions issue, a participant cited interesting research by Stanford that uses satellite imagery of light in North Korea. The conclusion was that over a period of time, the intensity of light under a decade of sanctions has dimmed in rural areas and increased in urban areas. Military installations, meanwhile, are unaffected. This

information was characterized as being “compelling and concerning at the political level.”

A US participant raised the provocative question of whether some in the ROK secretly do not wish to pursue denuclearization because the DPRK’s nuclear inventory would come under ROK control after unification. Most Korean speakers were reluctant to give a clear response on this topic other than to deny that this was true. However, one Korean said that China could certainly not handle a nuclear unified Korea, while another brushed off the US concern by saying that he has heard this view only from students and not from “any responsible or official Korean leaders.”

In concluding remarks, it was generally agreed that both the US and the ROK remain fully committed to a denuclearized North Korea. Without it, there can be no unification and North Korea cannot be effectively integrated into the regional security architecture. Several also noted that China would also have difficulty accepting a nuclear North Korea, which should nevertheless present opportunities for collaboration to seek a change of policy in Pyongyang. The discussion concluded with a broad consensus that while cultural or historical sensitivities should be addressed they must be left behind to move forward with security cooperation in the region.

US participants expressed their appreciation to the Korean participants for helping them to better understand the policies of the Park administration. Dr. Yu Hun-seok concluded the meeting by thanking all the participants for their candid feedback on these policies and the stimulating discussion on issues that are central to sustaining a long and successful relationship between the ROK and the US.



APPENDIX A

*Republic of Korea
Consulate General
In Honolulu*



ROK-US Security Seminar Dialogue Hyatt Waikiki, Honolulu | November 7, 2014

AGENDA

Nov. 7, 2014

8:30AM Continental Breakfast for all participants

9:00AM Introductions
Opening Speech: Dr. Hyun-seok Yu, President, The Korea Foundation

9:15AM **Session 1: Perspectives on Regional Security**
US Presenter: Dr. Victor Cha, DS Song-KF Chair, Georgetown University, and Senior Adviser and Korea Chair for CSIS

This session examines each country's assessment of the regional security environment. How does each country characterize the security environment? What are the chief security threats and challenges? What are the key trends and what is their impact on regional security? How do security planners in each country perceive the regional balance of power? What are the implications of that balance? What factors impact that balance? Do perceptions and priorities align?

10:45AM Coffee break

11:00AM **Session 2: Trustpolitik and President Park's Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative**
ROK Presenter: Dr. Sukhee Han, Professor, Graduate School of International Studies, Yonsei University

In this session, an ROK presenter will explain the meaning and evolution of "Trustpolitik" and then lay out President Park Geun-hye's Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative, explaining its logic, purpose, and status. The group will attempt to assess its prospects and ways that the two countries can address the problems it seeks to remedy. How can our two countries achieve the aims of the initiative? What hinders its realization? How does it align with other Northeast

or East Asian initiatives? What concrete steps should be taken to ensure its success?

12:30PM Lunch (Keynote: LTG Anthony Crutchfield, Deputy Commander, US Pacific Command)

2:00PM **Session 3: The Future of North Korea and the Unification Initiative**

ROK Presenter: Dr. Jung-Hoon Lee, ROK Ambassador for Human Rights

US Presenter: Mr. Keith Luse, Executive Director, National Committee on North Korea

In this session, the two countries compare assessments of North Korea. How does each country assess developments in North Korea? What are the prospects for the Pyongyang leadership? What forces are at work on that country? What are the two countries' desired outcomes for North Korea in the short, medium and long-term? The ROK speaker will also explain the Dresden Declaration, its logic, reception and prospects.

3:30PM Coffee break

3:45PM **Session 4: ROK-US Cooperation and the Korean Peninsula**

US Presenter: Amb. Sung Kim, Special Representative for North Korea Policy, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Korea and Japan, and former US Ambassador to ROK, US Department of State

ROK Presenter: Dr. Sang Hyun Lee, Director, Security Strategy Studies, The Sejong Institute

This session examines the two countries' assessments of prospects for ROK-US cooperation to deal with North Korea and related peninsula issues. How can and should Seoul and Washington coordinate policy to ensure the right outcomes in North Korea? How can the ROK, the US, and other countries shape the DPRK's choices? How should the two governments engage other regional actors, such as China and Japan? What are the key obstacles to cooperation? What can be done to overcome those obstacles?

6:30PM Dinner hosted by KF President Hyun-seok Yu



APPENDIX B

*Republic of Korea
Consulate General
In Honolulu*



ROK-US Security Seminar Dialogue Hyatt Waikiki, Honolulu | November 7, 2014

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ROK Consulate General in Honolulu
8. **CPT Yong-mo YANG**
MIL Attache Navy
ROK Consulate General in Honolulu

9. **Dr. Hyun-seok YU**
President
Korea Foundation

US

10. **Mr. Carl BAKER**
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12. **Dr. Ralph A. COSSA**
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US Pacific Command
14. **Mr. Justin HIGGINS**
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Former US Assistant Secretary of
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16. Amb. Sung KIM

Special Representative for North
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Secretary for Korea and Japan
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17. Mr. Keith LUSE

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