



U.S.-Japan-ROK Relations for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



edited by  
Brad Glosserman

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## Pacific Forum CSIS

Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum CSIS ([www.pacforum.org](http://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 arenas. 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.

The Young Leaders Program invites young professionals and graduate students to join Pacific Forum policy dialogues and conferences. The program fosters education in the practical aspects of policy-making, generates an exchange of views between young and seasoned professionals, promotes interaction among younger professionals, and enriches dialogues with generational perspectives for all attendees. Fellows must have a strong background in the area covered by the conference they are attending and an endorsement from respected experts in their field. Supplemental programs in conference host cities and mentoring sessions with senior officials and specialists add to the Young Leader experience. The Young Leaders Program is currently supported by the Freeman Foundation, the Luce Foundation, and the Yuchengco Group, with a growing number of universities, institutes, and organizations also helping to sponsor individual participants. For more details, see the Pacific Forum CSIS website, [www.pacforum.org](http://www.pacforum.org), or contact Brad Glosserman, director of the Young Leaders Program at [bradgpf@hawaii.rr.com](mailto:bradgpf@hawaii.rr.com).

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## Introduction

A decade ago, security analysts postulated the birth of a “virtual alliance” between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Today, those discussions are viewed with considerable nostalgia as changes in Japan and the Republic of Korea, combined with force modernization in the United States subject the two U.S. alliances to new, and sometimes, unprecedented strains. Meanwhile, a younger generation of politicians in both Seoul and Tokyo has exacerbated longstanding tensions in the ROK-Japan relationship. It is ironic that as the mutual exposure has never been higher –credit visa-less travel, Kimpo-Haneda shuttles, and media products that bring the other country (literally) into the living room – frictions appear to be on the rise as well.

The generational transitions in Japan and South Korea highlight the importance of the Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders program. Dialogue among this next generation of analysts and security specialists takes on new urgency amid sweeping changes in Northeast Asia.

The 21 Young Leaders who joined the Pacific Forum CSIS conference on “U.S.-Japan-ROK Strategic Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” favored intensified trilateral cooperation, even as they acknowledged the obstacles to such efforts. The biggest debate was over the appropriate form of trilateralism should take. Japan’s constitution is the most obvious barrier to structural cooperation, but that is not the only constraint. Indeed, the most powerful hindrance is attitudes in South Korea and Japan toward each other. While our Young Leaders felt that the two countries needed a strong working relationship, they also admitted that they were probably not representative of their country’s thinking. They bemoaned the readiness of leaders to play the nationalist card for political gain. While anti-Japan sentiment in South Korea is especially virulent, there was acknowledgement that all three governments could do considerably more to explain to their publics the value of alliance and cooperation. All Young Leaders urged their leaders to depoliticize history and to focus on developing the positive aspects of their bilateral relations. There was unanimity on the need to look forward, rather than back. Young Leaders from Southeast were especially vocal in urging Japanese and South Korean to work together for the good of the region.

There was considerable discussion of the value of a Japan-ROK security declaration, like that issued earlier in the year by Japan and Australia. Young Leaders from both countries supported the idea, while admitting it would be difficult. All agreed that an alliance is not feasible, but a “partnership” has considerable appeal. Cooperation, said one American Young Leader, “would amplify both countries’ voices.” There was also agreement that this new relationship should be nestled within broader multilateral frameworks, to both provide more opportunities for collaboration – Young Leaders noted that the type of cooperation that is envisioned should determine what type of relationship is most appropriate – as well as soften other countries’ perceptions.

The most important “other country” is China. (Curiously, there was virtually no discussion of the North Korean reaction to such cooperation; our Korean Young Leaders appeared to subordinate inter-Korean issues to South Korea’s relations with Japan and the U.S.) There was considerable sensitivity among *all* Young Leaders to the need to avoid deliberately antagonizing Beijing. That does not mean China should have a veto over trilateral decisions, but they recognized that China’s cooperation – either working with each country individually or as a group – would be needed to accomplish national objectives. A U.S. Young Leader pointed out that each country would have more leverage when dealing with China if it was working with a partner in the region. A Chinese Young Leader urged the three countries to work with China, “to help Beijing make the right choices.”

Young Leaders, like the senior experts, were perplexed by South Korean strategic thinking. There was discussion at the conference and in the Young Leader session about the claim that Seoul could be a “strategic balancer.” While American and Japanese Young Leaders were confused by the concept, most Koreans dismissed it as meaningless. Most of the South Korean Young Leaders argued that “balancing” only made sense if the ROK was firmly nestled in its alliance with the U.S.

As at other meetings, the post-conference discussions were only a part of the Young Leader program. Prior to the meeting, the group was hosted at the Pacific Command for a briefing that laid out the U.S. military’s perspective on Northeast Asian issues. The briefers took an hour of questions from the Young Leaders on issues ranging from Korean Peninsula contingencies to disaster relief operations.

During the conference, the Young Leaders also had private meetings with Dr. Yoon Young-kwan, former ROK foreign minister, James Kelly, former assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Dr. Narushige Michishita, assistant professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies and a former advisor to Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro. All three gave their perspectives on the issues under discussion and provided rare insight into how policy is made and carried out.

The final component of the Young Leader program is writing papers. Young Leaders are given readings prior to each meeting and assigned short papers before each meeting to focus their thinking on the discussion topics. They must revise those papers after the meeting to reflect what they have learned in the program. Recently, those final papers have changed: rather than individual assignments, Young Leaders now produce group papers, to encourage dialogue and discussion after the conference concludes. At this meeting, they were divided into groups and asked to envision, from their country’s perspective, the ideal form of trilateral cooperation in 20 years.

The papers that follow provide those views. As was evident from their discussion, all favored enhanced trilateral relations. They all acknowledged this would be hard, however. The Japanese paper notes that “economic mutual dependency is key to a positive relationship” among the three countries, “forcing them to cooperate on a larger scale. They focus on the centrality of the Korean Peninsula to the future of regional



security relations and believe that judicious diplomacy would allow Japan to assume a larger security role without antagonizing neighbors and partners.

The South Korean group also focused on the Korean Peninsula and the North Korean nuclear crisis. Their paper examines two scenarios: the first assumes that North Korea makes the strategic decision to give up its nuclear arsenal and cooperate to end its isolation. The second assumes that Pyongyang stalls and attempts to divide the other five parties in the multilateral negotiations. In each case, a set of policy recommendations are provided. In both cases, the ROK Young Leaders agree that close and coordinated trilateral cooperation is essential to successfully managing the situation.

The size of the U.S. contingent meant that we could divide them into two groups. Interestingly, both focused on trilateral cooperation to tackle new security threats. They believe that these challenges provide new opportunities for cooperation among the three countries, as well as other regional partners.

Finally, two Southeast Asian Young Leaders urged the three countries to work together. They explained that “Southeast Asia is pointed to take advantage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – ‘the Asian century’ – but it will need help of ‘traditional’ leader in the region ....” They see their subregion as a direct beneficiary of trilateral cooperation in almost every field. They urged the U.S. to continue to work with the region – and to deepen and broaden its engagement, warning that a failure to rise to the challenge will force other governments to turn to China. They encouraged military cooperation both to promote communications but also to prepare for new, nontraditional threats. Southeast Asian Young Leaders, like the others, see this as fertile ground for trilateral cooperation.

This publication also includes several of the Young Leader papers that were submitted before the conference. The authors revised them after the meeting and we felt they helped illuminate the issues discussed and Young Leader thinking about them.

As always, we encourage your thoughts and comments about this publication and the Young Leader program.



# U.S.-Japan-Korea Relations in the Future

By Tetsuo Kotani, Kuniko Nakamura, and Ryo Sahashi\*

When we envision the future balance of power in Northeast Asia in one or two decades, we come up with many different scenarios due to the uncertainty of issues which the region has to resolve. For Japan's policy planners, the challenges posed by the rising power of China seemingly preoccupy them so much that they have not contemplated the impact of the unification of the Korean Peninsula. The peaceful transition of Taiwan into China's sphere of influence, with Taiwan's decreasing defense capability and reliable commitments from Washington, also creates significant problems for Japan's strategic planning but is not receiving sufficient attention. Since China's military will not catch up with the United States in the foreseeable future, Japan's experts should focus on the two "unification" issues in their long-term visions.

This paper will focus on the Korean Peninsula's future and discuss its impact on Northeast Asian countries, including the United States. It is imaginable and perhaps likely that the United States would shift its diplomatic and defense stance vis-à-vis China to containment and encirclement, even before China catches up with the U.S., should China cause serious concern through the use of force even in its domestic affairs. Resolution of the Taiwan question might create a new territorial map for Asia. But this paper does not address such scenarios nor does it discuss the possibility of a power transition between the U.S. and China, and will solely focus on the Korean Peninsula.

## **The Korean Peninsula and East Asia in 2020**

At this moment, the nuclear ambitions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and progress in the Six-Party Talks are uncertain, and nobody can predict when (or if) Pyongyang will decide on complete denuclearization. However, long-term analysis enables us to envision the situation and suggest a totally different landscape from what we see now. The style of reunification and management of the northern part of the Korean Peninsula is one of the most important security and economic factors shaping Northeast Asia's landscape. "The inevitable transition to a unified Korea will reshape the strategic balance in Northeast Asia. There is a high probability that this process will reach fruition by 2020." [Armitage and Nye, 2007, p.7]

These are our assumptions or expectations for the Korean Peninsula in 10 years: first, since without lifting sanctions and providing huge amounts of monetary and food assistance the DPRK economy would not be able to feed its people and sustain the legitimacy of the Pyongyang government, the DPRK will decide to open its society to international assistance and cooperation within a decade, with or without domestic turmoil or coups. This scenario does not take the position of the second Armitage-Nye report which states "our conclusion is that the Kim regime would prefer to muddle

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\* The views and opinions expressed in this paper does not reflect or represent the views, opinions or analysis of institutions to which the authors belong to.

through, despite the dim future for 21 million North Koreans, than to take the risk of opening up a la Deng Xiaoping.” Second, it is very likely that the DPRK’s current authoritative and suppressive style of political management will be transformed into one favoring compromise with the United States and its neighbors. Third, with a weak central government and large amounts of outside assistance, people residing in North Korea might be more open to and accepting of neighbors and nationalism may relatively weaken.

A totally different scenario would be painted if the Republic of Korea (ROK) maintained and increased its huge assistance to the DPRK regardless of its nuclear and missile buildups. This worst-case scenario would drain a lot of resources from the South to the North. In these circumstances, it is also very likely that Washington and Tokyo would not rely on Seoul and would dilute security relations with Seoul. Beijing’s stance might be more complicated since it wants to maintain influence in Pyongyang and Seoul but it does not want to damage its great power relationship with Washington. Also, China will increase aid to the DPRK and to its people due to China’s fear of turmoil in the border areas.

In these two scenarios, we predict that the Korean unification is likely to occur in the former, since consent from neighboring governments and a stable environment are easier to achieve with a “wait and see” approach. Also, from Japan’s perspective, the former scenario is more desirable, because an isolated but unified Korea would be difficult to handle and might become a threat to Japan. It is in Japan’s interests that a unified Korea keeps its military and political-economical ties with the United States, so that Washington would be able to exert influence. In this regard, strong nationalism in a unified Korea might also hinder stable U.S.-Korea relations.

In one decade, China’s rise in terms of economy and military would not have reached a serious level. China’s economy as a whole could surpass Japan’s, but China’s per capita GDP will still be that of a developing country. The factor that could cause tension will probably be Beijing’s diplomacy to obtain energy sources and to enlarge its sphere of influence in Southeast Asia and the Third World. However, we could expect more difficulty in terms of the triangular relationship among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo in sharing perceptions of threats, not only regarding the DPRK but also in terms of a rising China. Uncertainty about the willingness of the ROK to share this threat perception with the other two countries will perhaps damage triangular or prospective bilateral ties.

Regarding the future balance of power in Northeast Asia, it is fashionable to envision a regional architecture in East Asia that would coordinate bilateral alliances and multilateral security frameworks. Thus far, regional arrangements in East Asia include:

- U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea bilateral alliances and TCOG to bridge the two;
- Six-Party Talks on the Korean Peninsula;
- China-Korea-Japan functional cooperation;
- ASEAN+3 and East Asia summit (EAS), and ARF process;
- APEC.

Many people expect the Six-Party Talks to evolve into a regional security architecture, and we believe that this framework could address broader security issues concerning the Korean Peninsula, including the reunification process. At the same time, the bilateral alliance with the United States should be coordinated like a web, and Japan, ROK, and even Australia should be united to cope with changes in the regional balance, those especially caused by the DPRK. It is doubtful that other regional mechanisms will get directly involved in Korean unification matters. Again, the ROK's firm stance with the U.S.-led alliance system is the key to maintaining regional architecture to dissuade a potential challenge to regional stability. Weakening ties between Washington and Seoul, or between the White House and the Blue House, have not disadvantaged Japan's diplomacy, since Japan is often regarded as a more reliable ally whose relations with Washington are more easily managed. However, aside from such diplomatic merits, from a national security perspective it is better to keep strong ties between the ROK and the U.S. to sustain credible deterrence on the Korean Peninsula.

Japan's more assertive security policies as well as the rising power of China will also shape Northeast Asia in the next decade. In 10 years, it is likely that Japan will send its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) overseas more frequently as UN peacekeeping missions or as part of American-led multinational forces if the United States keeps its internationalist stance in foreign policy. It is also possible that the Japanese Constitution would be revised with majority support from a referendum, but it is more likely that the Japanese government will change its interpretation of the constitution. Will the increasing interoperability of Japan's SDF with U.S. forces and humanitarian missions overseas harm Japan's international reputation? Will changing Japan's Constitution in regard to Article 9 cause serious fear in Korea and China?

We are not pessimistic about the results of these changes. As long as Japan keeps its defense procurement and other policies exclusively defense-oriented, and as long as the United States restrains Tokyo's actions through its alliance with Japan, assertive moves in Japan's defense policy would not threaten China nor Korea. The Taiwan question is still the most uncertain factor between Washington and Beijing, and Beijing might be concerned about the role of the U.S.-Japan alliance in this regard. For the foreseeable future, however, China will not have any incentives to annex Taiwan without international consent and Taiwan might take more conciliatory policies toward mainland China; even though the Taiwanese people are raising their consciousness of a Taiwan identity, they are realistic enough to realize the de facto integration of the two economies is more important.

## Ways to Get Our Future

How can we reach the desirable future described above? It is necessary that the three countries – Japan, the ROK, and the United States – to share perceptions of regional security challenges and ways to shape the future. To foster closer ties between Japan and the ROK, a stronger trilateral relationship is essential.

Deep-rooted anti-Japanese and anti-American sentiment in the ROK and the potential gap between Japan and the United States, however, might hinder the sharing of threat perceptions or promoting trilateral cooperation. Historical issues will continue to matter between Japan and the ROK. South Koreans have pride in their economy and strength will be more dissatisfied with asymmetrical, unequal relations with the United States and with U.S. troops on their soil. Moreover, the DPRK's nuclear and missile tests clearly reveal different threat perceptions among the three capitals. While Tokyo and Washington agree that they are serious challenges to their countries' security, Seoul has given up its hostile policy toward the DPRK and now seems to pursue stability through engaging the DPRK and cares more about the resurgence of militarism in Japan and American unilateralism than a neighbor with nuclear arms.

The threat perception gap between Tokyo and Washington also has the potential to deteriorate the Japan-U.S. alliance. DPRK nuclear and missile development poses a direct security challenge to Japan, and many Japanese pay close attention to the abduction issue. Yet probably because North Korean missiles cannot reach the U.S. mainland at this moment, many policy planners in Washington are focused on the proliferation of nuclear materials and delivery measures from the DPRK. In fact, looking closely at recent developments between Washington and Pyongyang, many in Japan feel that a deal is being made over Japan's head.

In order to deal with the DPRK nuclear and missile development, the three countries need to promote trilateral security cooperation. Japan and the ROK are the two major hosts of U.S. troops in the region as well as two major U.S. allies, and the Japan-U.S. alliance and the ROK-U.S. alliance complement each other. As both countries are playing more active roles within those alliances, it is necessary for Japan and the ROK to promote military cooperation for example in search and rescue and maritime interdiction operations. To this end, Tokyo and Seoul could issue a joint statement on security cooperation in humanitarian/disaster relief and counter-proliferation.

Also, ROK participation in Japan-U.S. missile defense cooperation should be encouraged as the ROK will have three *Aegis* destroyers by 2012. Some Koreans have expressed concern over Japan-U.S. missile defense cooperation, as such cooperation will provoke China. South Korea is building up its naval power “in a bid to keep up with the naval powers of Japan and China.” Since the ROK is going to base an *Aegis* destroyer in Jeju, there should be cooperative framework between the Japanese and U.S. navies and the ROK navy to promote missile defense and to avoid naval arms race.

At the same time, given the social changes in host communities, it is getting more difficult to maintain the U.S. presence throughout the region. Japan and the ROK need to jointly take initiatives to promote “host region support.” For example, Japan and the ROK could host in rotation a U.S. forward presence in rotation. Or, they could rotate training sites for U.S. troops. In addition, as the strategic significance of Guam is increasing, Japan and the ROK could contribute to the development of Guam.

We do not recommend enhancing economic sanctions upon the DPRK but instead claim that it is desirable for Japan’s government and neighbors to stay united vis-à-vis Pyongyang to encourage the DPRK to open its borders economically, and to denuclearize the Peninsula. The afflicted parties should share an understanding of the merits of an (economic and social) engagement policy and of the necessity to unite to change the DPRK. To stabilize the regional balance and to restrain Japan’s nuclear ambitions, unification should happen without the new Korean regime having nuclear weapons. In that case, Japan and the United States will not oppose unification of the Korean Peninsula, and they would be able to generate strong domestic support for providing North Korea with official aid. An important footnote is that both Japan and the United States should never be perceived as opposing reunification of the Korean Peninsula, considering the nationalism of the Korean people. This is a prerequisite to good U.S.-ROK good relations and to avoid a Sino-Korean entente.

One of the most serious stumbling blocks for trilateralism is, however, the differing interpretation of history between Japan and the ROK. The Japanese government has extended numerous apologies about the atrocities committed during the Second World War. Most recently on April 22, 2005 at the Asia Africa summit in Bandung, Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro stated that “with feelings of deep remorse and heartfelt apology always engraved in mind”, due to Japan’s colonial rule and aggression, causing tremendous damage and suffering, Japan has committed to contributing to the peace and prosperity of the world. This statement is in concert with the statement issued by former Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the war’s end, on Aug. 15, 1995. We are concerned that the South Korean government fails to accept the Japanese government’s official stance since the current administration has egregiously politicize the issue to get support from the Korean public. In this situation, further apologies from the Japanese side would not solve the issue; to the contrary, more and more Japanese are tempted to take a hard stance on the history issue.

History should be separated from politicization. Some call for the Japanese Emperor’s role in settling historical issues by making an apology for all war crimes or by admitting his Korean heritage, but the Emperor’s involvement will have negative effects. The Emperor of Japan is not a political figure and ancient history or legend should not be brought into politics. In order to review the interpretation of historical issues from an academic standpoint, a track-two approach with Japan-ROK historical interpretation study groups is a positive move. The Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation published a report on their findings, discussing much-debated subjects in a relatively objective manner without politicizing them. These efforts should not be used to establish a unified historical interpretation, which cannot be reached with full consent from both parties, but

to deeply understand respective interpretations and the gaps between the two. Also, the Japanese leadership should be more prudent in its historical stance, and take measures to prevent any statement or movement by Cabinet members that contradicts to or revises the government official stance on history. For that purpose too, what we need is not provocations but a calm and less sensational approach to the history between two countries. In short, political leaders should be determined not to use history for their own purposes.

The history issue should remain a bilateral topic for Japan and Korea. Seoul can easily use history as a diplomatic card against Japan, while expecting support from U.S. human rights advocates. Washington has wisely detached itself from the historical issues, but those human rights advocates as well as Korean- and Chinese-Americans may continue to bring the historical issues to Capitol Hill. The Japanese government does not appreciate U.S. involvement in what Japan sees as either a domestic or a bilateral issue between Japan and Korea. The U.S. should remain low-key on any historical interpretation issue. Any form of U.S. government involvement is viewed as taking sides and would create distrust toward the U.S. and may even lead to backlash about U.S. policy in armed engagements past or present.

To forge trilateralism, another effective measure is to concentrate on economic, cultural and global issues. The establishment of a Free Trade Agreement framework, or an Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and Korea should be pursued. The FTA is being discussed and negotiated between these two governments, but it has been halted for the past few years. Meanwhile, the U.S. and Korea signed an FTA, which would hopefully strengthen their economic ties. The free flow of people, goods and services will generate mutual dependency, recognition of shared values in the global market, and cultural understanding through people to people exchanges. Hence, an FTA between Japan and Korea, and between Japan and the U.S. would benefit the regional market and become the first step toward regional cooperation.

As economic inter-dependencies grow between Japan, the U.S., and Korea and as these nations continue to play a larger economic role in the region, they need to share the burden to protect the market. Military means will not be the only way to achieve security and stability in the region, but bilateral or trilateral regional coordination to combat natural disaster, environmental hazards, spread of communicable diseases, or other threats. Japan and Korea, using their regional proximity, could work together in the field of technical cooperation and development assistance for third countries. The Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Korea International Cooperation Agency should look into joint-task forces to share expertise or complement each other in issues such as protection against avian flu, water sanitation, disaster relief and other matters of global concern.

On the grassroots people to people exchange, the visa waiver program for Korean tourists that came to effect in March 2007 has generated a free flow of people between Japan and Korea. Young Korean tourists can be spotted in cultural tourist sites of Japan as well as in fashionable parts of Tokyo. Korean youth are able to experience



and familiarize themselves with Japan that is different from their preconceived negative notions. This was made possible through the ratification of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) by Japan and the ROK last year, which quenched Japanese anxiety about unwelcome criminal groups entering Japan en masse. The visa waiver program and the ratification of the MLAT show how building a legal framework will be the first step in improving overall relations; they can then rely on the invisible hand of the peoples of the respective countries. People to people exchanges between Japan and the U.S. already have long established programs, such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching program, visa waiver programs and a working holiday scheme upon which the two countries can and need to build stronger ties.

Economic mutual dependency is key to a positive relationship between Japan, the U.S. and Korea, forcing them to cooperate on a larger scale. People to people exchanges through a visa waiver program facilitates cross-cultural understanding, with the MLAT presenting a safe and cooperative environment against crime and judicial matters. Establishing legal frameworks or partnership schemes foreseeing the next 20 years would create the foundations for positive bilateral relationships as well as a strong trilateral relationship.

To promote strategic cooperation among Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington, the three need to base their behavior on shared interests while deepening mutual understanding. Many challenges lie ahead, and leadership can make a difference. Leaders in the three countries should take initiatives to understand the difference in priorities and threat perceptions. Frequent meetings of leaders from the three countries should be encouraged. And people who understand the significance of trilateralism in the security, economic, and socio-cultural spheres should support this leadership.



# Evolution of the ROK-Japan-U.S. Trilateral Partnership in 2020

By In-Seung Kay, Julia Joo-A Lee, Junbeom Pyon, and Dae-yeob Yoon

The Republic of Korea, Japan, and the United States have successfully worked together in Northeast Asia to counter communist threats during the Cold War and to deal with North Korea's nuclear brinkmanship in the 1990s. However, creaking sounds have been heard in the past few years. ROK's pursuit of a more independent policy toward the DPRK has caused tension in the triangular relationship, due to its lack of reciprocity over the North's provocative nuclear weapons program. ROK-Japan relations have deteriorated, as populist nationalism over identity and history has grown in both countries. As Washington and Tokyo strengthen their bilateral alliance and as Australia emerges as another major security partner for the U.S. and Japan, the relevance of trilateral relations is called into question.

How can ROK-Japan-U.S. relations continue to be relevant in 2020? We focus on emerging challenges in Northeast Asia. In 2020, the region will still face numerous security problems – both traditional military threats and nontraditional concerns.

Certainly, the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula will remain the central focus of the trilateral partnership from the ROK perspective. If North Korea demands that the five parties first provide compensation, i.e., a permanent peace treaty, the possibility of diplomatic failure is high, causing regional tensions to rise. Even if North Korea is denuclearized through the Six-Party Talks, a number of issues concerning financial aid and human rights conditions will remain.

The rise of China also causes great concern. Although there are different points of views in understanding China's rise, the realist school argues that a stronger China is bound to challenge the current world order led by the U.S. This causes a great debate in all countries as China's rise also translates into business opportunities. Thus, how to deal and cope with China's growing power will preoccupy policy and decision makers in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington.

Japan's normalization presents a double-edged sword for the trilateral partnership as well. From the ROK's perspective, Japan's transformation into a normal state causes great concern as the two countries have a long history of animosity and distrust. From the U.S. perspective, however, Japan's transformation into a normal state could mean increased burden-sharing by Japan in maintaining peace and stability in the region. This would also give more mobility to U.S. forces in Korea and Japan.

Shifting U.S. priorities are another concern. Its commitment in the Middle East has proven to be far more difficult than first assumed; the U.S. military is overstretched. This presents a problem as a diminished U.S. presence in Asia may result in a competition between Japan and China for leadership of the region.

Nontraditional security threats also get more attention. China's industrialization raises the issues of environmental degradation and sustainable development at a regional level: pollution, yellow sand, and global warming may rise on the policy agenda. Depending on how the DPRK's future unfolds, displaced people, small arms smuggling, and unguarded nuclear materials may be added to worries about the country. Resource competition could create explicit disputes; tension between China and Japan regarding rights to explore underwater oil reserves in the East China Sea is one example. In other words, the regional security environment will be complex, and well-coordinated responses will be necessary.

From the ROK's perspective, trilateral cooperation is a good basis for a regional problem-solving mechanism in 2020. Considering the scope and the gravity of security concerns, South Korea needs close partnership to deal with those challenges. Trilateral coordination may be expanded and new roles developed. Ultimately, we agree that the trilateral partnership should seek to establish a multilateral institution that grows out of the Six-Party Talks.

South Korea, Japan, and the United States are in an advantageous position to cultivate cooperation. First, all three countries have a shared stake in preventing serious threats from emerging in the region. Second, the three countries have developed highly sophisticated channels of communications through their bilateral alliance relationships. Third, a mitigating role for the U.S. could reduce conflict and competition between South Korea and Japan. Finally, all three countries are members of the Six-Party Talks. Now, the task is to define problems and agree on common ways to solve them.

### **North Korea: It still matters in 2020**

Amid mounting problems and new concerns in Northeast Asia, we agree that the DPRK will continue to be a major security threat: North Korea is not only an immediate security threat to South Korea but it may also be the source of multiple problems that are not limited to conventional attacks. Although the three countries have not always agreed upon threat perceptions on North Korea, efforts to prepare for future North Korea inspired problems provide new ground for upgraded trilateral cooperation.

At this time, the major concern regarding the DPRK is its nuclear program. The ultimate weapons are assumed to play a role in restoring the balance of military power as well as to be tightly linked to the North's survival strategy. Pyongyang could extort external aid through a threat to go nuclear or by offering to give up its arsenals. Pyongyang also cements internal control by generating fear from outside attacks and economic sanctions. Given that the DPRK's nuclear blackmail is interwoven with its regime security, it is reasonable to assume the DPRK's decision on the nuclear program will be as a key indicator of the direction it will head. If the DPRK decides to give up its nuclear capabilities, it could mean that the country is preparing for comprehensive reform of its economy and foreign relations. If it continues to buy time and proceed with nuclear development, we may face a nuclear pariah state in 2020. Thus, depending on how the nuclear crisis is resolved, different security concerns may emerge.

The ROK group, therefore, examined different paths the DPRK might take, contemplate the challenges it could pose to trilateral relations, and provide policy recommendations. Assuming that the Six-Party Talks is a starting point, we begin with considerations of the outcomes of the negotiations.

### **Optimism vs. Pessimism: does it matter?**

On Feb 13, 2007, delegates to the fifth round of the Six-Party Talks agreed on Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement of September 19, 2005. The agreement raised high hopes for the denuclearization of North Korea. A closer look at the agreement, however, reveals that the agreement was an initial step, and that North Korea can draw out each process to buy time and avoid denuclearization. We focused on two different scenarios, making different assumptions about North Korea's strategic decisions.

The first scenario is optimistic. We assume that North Korea has made a strategic decision to give up its nuclear program and gradually liberalize its socio-economic system. This scenario focuses on problems that may rise in the aftermath of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and consider how to assist North Korea in its transition to a responsible regional actor. The second scenario is based on pessimistic assumptions. Although North Korea has disabled Yongbyon nuclear facility, it assumes maintenance of the current regime and minimal changes in governance. North Korea would not forsake its nuclear option, for it shores up the Military-First system. Concessions from the North will be of marginal value, and aim only at buying time to find ways to survive. This scenario will require neighbouring countries, especially South Korea, Japan, and the U.S., to be prepared for the North's threats and the possibilities of an unpredictable transition caused by internal changes.

#### **Scenario 1**

The first scenario includes following assumptions. The DPRK invites IAEA inspectors back into the country and shuts down the Yongbyon facility. In compliance with the Feb. 13 agreement, the ROK sends its promised 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to Pyongyang. The five countries – the ROK, the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia – persuade the DPRK to fully declare its nuclear program and to allow the IAEA inspectors into the country to effectively monitor previously used nuclear facilities as well as other suspected sites with an ultimate goal of completely dismantling the regime's nuclear weapons if found. Seoul and Washington discuss the prospects of normalizing relations with Pyongyang and signing a permanent peace treaty with the DPRK and China.

The Six-Party Talks are considered a great success. Establishment of a regional framework that will grow out of the Six-Party Talks is discussed as cooperation with China, Russia, and other states has proven to be critical in solving regional disputes. As a result, there are diminished threat perceptions in the ROK, the U.S., and Japan in the absence of North Korea's nuclear weapons.

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula will open the doors to nontraditional security problems. The most significant challenge is how North Korea can revitalize its economy. How and who would make what contributions as promised in the Feb. 13 Agreement will remain a key issue. Coordinated efforts to reintegrate North Korea into the international financial system, e.g., membership in the International Monetary Fund (IMF), International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), or Asian Development Bank (ADB) will be required.

Second, despite the success of the Feb. 13 Agreement in halting North Korea's nuclear programs, the Six-Party Talks have not dealt with North Korea's conventional weapons targeting Seoul.

Third, the DPRK's economic and political situation may add complexity to the denuclearization process, while making it difficult to improve the living conditions of North Koreans. Even if we assume that Kim Jong-il puts an end to the DPRK's nuclear activities, how far the DPRK could go is still a matter of concern. Given its totalitarian political system and the rigid 'Songun' (Military-First) ideology, the DPRK would be likely to keep foreign influence on and access to its system to a minimum. Worse, the DPRK leadership may feel threatened and retreat to isolation in the middle of the denuclearization process. Kim Jong-il may not allow foreign monitoring of the distribution of necessities to its population, for fear of information about the outside world being spread inland. Human rights violations may continue. The DPRK's economic situation reveals a similar dilemma. The DPRK's public distribution system has largely been dysfunctional since the severe famine in the mid-1990s, and therefore, its economy has been decentralizing. Black markets are now rampant, so is corruption among low-level bureaucrats. Under such circumstances, economic aid stipulated in the Feb 13 agreement could be diverted by the leadership to reinforce its economic control or squandered without helping people in need.

Finally, once denuclearized and in the process of negotiating a permanent peace treaty, the DPRK may challenge the U.S.-ROK alliance. Since North Korea has consistently claimed that a permanent peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula requires a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula, the prospects and the implications of a peace agreement for the ROK-U.S. alliance and U.S. forces in Japan will need to be carefully examined.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The ROK group recommends the following policy prescriptions to deal with potential problems that may exist in 2020:

#### *Planning North Korean Development*

- ? With respect to economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance to North Korea stated in the Feb. 13 agreement, the ROK, Japan, and the U.S. should co-ordinate from the outset.

- ? Three countries are advised to create a long-term development program in the event that North Korea completes denuclearization and begins economic reform.
- ? The plan should stipulate monitoring to assess North Korea's basic needs as a condition for assistance.
- ? In an early phase, even if implementation of initial actions is confirmed, hard currency should be provided at the minimal level possible to prevent diversion.

#### *Peace Treaty and Managing the Alliance*

- ? Seoul and Washington should start discussing the prospects for the realization of a permanent peace agreement at the highest possible level and ahead of discussions with Pyongyang to ensure the survivability of the ROK-U.S. alliance after a permanent peace agreement;
- ? The ROK-U.S. alliance should clarify objectives that include preparations for a broader range of military and nontraditional security threats in an urgent manner.
- ? The three governments should set up a vision group to outline the stabilizing roles that a unified Korea could play in the region.

#### *Conventional and nonconventional weapons*

- The ROK, Japan, and the U.S. must get the DPRK to sign and ratify non-proliferation regimes such as the NPT, CTBT, BWC, and CWC prior to signing a permanent peace agreement.
- In due course, additional working group(s) should be established within the Six-Party Talks. Both military and nonmilitary confidence building measures (CBMs) will need to be discussed in these working group(s);
- ? Reduction of conventional and nonconventional weapons should be a prerequisite to discussions on the prospects for a permanent peace agreement. A permanent peace agreement cannot be realized with the current amount of heavy artillery aimed at Seoul, and USFK.

#### *Regional Security Framework*

- ? The three governments, in cooperation with Russia, China, and the DPRK, should establish a regional security framework that builds on the Six-Party Talks to address traditional and nontraditional security issues in the region.
- ? Establishment of such a framework requires reduction of arms on the Korean Peninsula; reconciliation of the two Koreas; and replacement of the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty.
- ? Normalization of diplomatic relations between Pyongyang, and Washington and Tokyo should also be established in order to better facilitate diplomacy among the member states.

## Scenario 2:

The second scenario is based on pessimistic assumptions. After successful implementation of the first phase of the Feb. 13 Agreement, hopes for a permanent peace treaty on the Peninsula and the normalization of diplomatic relations between the U.S. the DPRK, and Japan are high. The Six-Party Talks, however, once again reach an impasse. The DPRK demands that the five parties lift sanctions, provide light-water reactors (LWRs), and that Washington sign a permanent peace treaty prior to its abandonment of nuclear weapons. The U.S. however, is firm that a permanent peace treaty will only be realized after a complete denuclearization of the DPRK and that the LWRs will not be provided until after Pyongyang dismantles its weapons. While negotiations stall, human rights abuses and illicit activities by the DPRK are criticized by the international community.

Unfortunately, the impasse is met with new challenges; the changes of leadership in Seoul in January 2008, and Washington in January 2009. The possibility of a new leadership in Japan is high due to the LDP's loss in the July Upper House election in 2007. New leaderships in the three countries result in an uncoordinated mechanism for negotiating with the North. Months plod by without significant achievements in implementing the second phase of the Feb. 13 Agreement. As a consequence, the DPRK blames the five parties for the impasse and begins to test a series of inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) capable of reaching the continental U.S.

Debates on military options take place in Washington and at the United Nations. Both South Korea and China adopts hard-line policies toward the DPRK to satiate the U.S. but neither government is ready to fully implement a complete containment posture or economic sanctions against Pyongyang. Not surprisingly, the ROK and China are strongly against any military actions against the DPRK as any war on the Korean Peninsula will affect regional stability. Finally, by 2020, with no progress in the Six-Party Talks and with no effective mechanisms to deal with Pyongyang's abuse of international norms, the DPRK is considered to be a nuclear-armed state.

In the pessimistic scenario, threat perceptions in the ROK, the U.S., and Japan are strong. However, with differing national interests, the ROK may drift away from the trilateral partnership. Even worse, were the U.S. to consider military options, it is highly possible that the ROK will temporarily seek to pacify the U.S. through China, causing additional damages to the trilateral partnership. Thus, the ROK group identifies four potential challenges that may arise as an outcome of the failure of the Six-Party Talks and provides policy recommendations accordingly.

The first and foremost issue is the DPRK's status as a nuclear state in 2020. The failure of the Six-Party Talks and the trilateral partnership in preventing the DPRK from becoming a nuclear state will have a range of negative impacts around the globe. Nuclear-capable states such as Japan, and South Korea, the two members of the trilateral partnership, may wish to develop their own nuclear weapons or demand that the U.S. redeploy tactical nuclear weapons on their soil. The U.S. refusal of their requests may



undermine the trilateral partnership. Furthermore, ineffective handling of the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula may encourage other states such as Iran to follow North Korea, seriously undermining the nonproliferation regime.

Second, with more nuclear weapons and improved delivery methods in the hands of the DPRK, no military options may be available to the ROK, the U.S. and Japan in 2020. As a result, the three countries may be forced to live with a nuclear DPRK even if none are willing to recognize the DPRK as a nuclear weapons state.

Third, regional instability is very likely. The tightening of economic sanctions and export control measures on the DPRK will cause even greater famine in the North and cause a large number of deaths, as well as an increased number of North Korean refugees crossing into China. Further conflicts between DPRK and ROK at sea are expected as the ROK toughens its position on DPRK proliferation by implementing strict export control laws.

Fourth, the international community will be more concerned with the DPRK's transfer of nuclear weapons and materials. If the DPRK escalate tensions by transferring nuclear technology or weapons to third parties, for example, Iran, it would force the U.S. to consider a military option against Pyongyang. Were Japan to join the U.S., the possibility of Seoul repositioning itself with China and Russia is high. South Koreans will continue to view any outbreak of a war on the Peninsula as self-destructive.

### **Policy Recommendations**

The ROK group recommends the following policy prescriptions:

Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo should establish a ministerial-level dialogue, annual or biannual, to discuss options to dismantle Pyongyang' nuclear weapons if the Six-Party Talks fail. DPRK behavior suggests it is unlikely that Pyongyang will remain dormant during the SPT stalemate. Instead, it is highly possible that Pyongyang, after observing a slow progress in the six party's dialogue, will decide to develop and improve its delivery tools such as ICBMs or hold a second or a third nuclear test. Worse, once the DPRK has achieved both a solid nuclear and delivery capabilities, there may be no options but to acknowledge the DPRK as a nuclear state. Thus, it is urgent is to prevent such things from happening.

Second, the U.S. must reassure the ROK and Japan that their security interests can best be met without nuclear weapons. This may require the deployment of nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, 5<sup>th</sup> generation F-22 and F-35 stealth fighter jets, and future stealth bombers to the Korean Peninsula, Japan, Guam and Hawaii. Failure to do so may undermine the alliance and the U.S. position in the international community.

Third, the ROK and Japan need to strengthen their bilateral partnership. This may be possible through a formal alliance treaty, assuming that Japan has changes Article 9 of the Constitution allowing the country to form formal alliances, or through a joint security

declaration. A strengthened partnership will not only boost the defense capabilities of both countries but will also reduce suspicions and tensions among the two states.

Fourth, the three countries need to better communicate with China. China has the most leverage over the DPRK and thus can shape Pyongyang's decision-making process and policies. For example, China could establish a humanitarian camp near its border with the DPRK. This will not only improve China's image as a responsible stakeholder, but also encourage more North Korean refugees to cross into China, bringing about an organic change in the North Korean leadership and/or regime.

Fifth, South Korea's economic assistance to North Korea must be based upon the principles of reciprocity and effective monitoring. Unilateral economic aid to Pyongyang without anything in return will cause further divergence from the U.S. and Japan. The U.S. should also increase the level of intelligence sharing with the ROK government, especially in matters dealing with military options.

### **The future of the trilateral partnership**

The importance of the trilateral partnership in managing the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula cannot be overstated. The trilateral partnership not only provides South Korea an improved deterrent capability over North Korea, but it also provides Seoul with leverage in negotiating with Pyongyang. In either case, the most important issue for the future of the trilateral partnership will be the Korean nuclear crisis as the outcome of the crisis will shape the nature of the partnership.

After examining the two contrasting scenarios, the ROK group concluded that the nature of the North Korean threat is evolving and will continue to evolve, from conventional to unconventional and from traditional to nontraditional security threats. These findings are important as nontraditional threats are as equally challenging as traditional threats. A long list of problems includes assisting the DPRK with humanitarian and financial aid to rebuild its economy; the abuse of human rights; a large outflow of refugees from North Korea; normalization of diplomatic relations between the North, and the U.S. and Japan; reconciliation of the two Koreas; and replacing the 1953 Armistice Agreement with a permanent peace treaty. The trilateral partnership not only needs to be maintained but also needs to be improved to deal with this wide range of issues.

We believe that the trilateral partnership should evolve as well and that a strong regional framework built upon the Six-Party Talks is the best mechanism to address both military and nontraditional security concerns caused by the DPRK. Close coordination is the key, and therefore, each country is advised to maintain good working relations with each other, keep communications channels open, and consult on DPRK matters. A regional framework could also better address nontraditional security threats as many of the issues involve other actors in the region. Given the expertise, experience, and rationale for the relationship, the ROK-Japan-U.S. partnership will be crucial in dealing with the DPRK until 2020.

# The U.S.-Japan-ROK Trilateral Relationship in 2020: Cooperation toward New Threats

By Joni Caminos, Jordan Dover, and Ana Villavicencio

The emergence of nontraditional security threats is evident and increasing. Issues such as climate change, global warming, and terrorism were nearly absent 20 years ago. Today programs to understand and solve global warming and climate change have taken a transnational form, ushering in a period of cooperation on issues that have traditionally been domestic.

These threats offer additional avenues for alliances and security cooperation. In this connection, we developed a scenario for the U.S.-Japan-ROK relationship that emphasizes these new threats to facilitate greater cooperation among the three nations.

By 2020 failure to develop international policies to protect the environment will have detrimental consequences. Extreme climate change will have caused catastrophe throughout the region forcing environmental refugees from China, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific Islands to neighboring countries including Japan and South Korea due to air pollution, the spread of diseases and rising sea levels with the increase of global warming. Immigrants have died as they try to reach safe havens including Japan, the ROK, and the U.S. In addition, pressure has mounted on the developed world over the depletion of natural resources, pandemic diseases, and the extinction of wildlife. In addition to environmental refugees, political refugees, especially those from North Korea, are moving across borders escaping political and economic hardships.

Infectious diseases have become resistant to available medicines. A stronger strain of the bird flu has hit Asia killing thousands in Southeast Asia as well as China. Tourism and trade have declined in the region. Japan, the U.S. and South Korea have been successful in containing the epidemic but there is a constant threat of this disease reaching their territories.

To make matters worse, human, drug, and arms smuggling have increased. The illegal cartels have created routes throughout East Asia causing international crime to become a serious international focus. These groups become more organized and form transnational networks. The numbers of Chinese illegal immigrants have doubled as groups get paid thousands of dollars to smuggle immigrants across Asia into the U.S, Japan and the ROK. Drugs and arms remain lucrative products in the black market. The movements of weapons across borders pose serious threats to the national security of these countries as well as general international security since now there is an increased chance of smuggling weapons of mass destruction and fissile material.

Furthermore, there has been a rise of insurgencies throughout Asia. Terrorism has spread to parts of East Asia. Terrorist groups from the Middle East and South Asia have been successful in influencing insurgent movements in Southeast Asia resulting in a dozen terrorist attempts and attacks in the region and in the U.S. The Iraqi war is now a

regional war with no end in sight, the U.S. continues to try to eliminate insurgents in Afghanistan. The war on terrorism does not seem to go away; instead there are more terrorist cells.

### **Obstacles and Opportunities**

As described in this scenario, globalization has made the world increasingly connected and complex. International policy makers and global leaders will now face transnational threats. How will globalization impact the trilateral relationship between US-Japan-ROK in 2020?

In the future, there will be little room for nationalism; instead there will be a rise in regionalism. Transnational security challenges are emerging as the dark and violent side of globalization. Rapid economic, technological and social changes have brought an unprecedented era of international trade, migration, and communication throughout the world. But these changes have also spawned a much more sinister by-product: international crime, terrorism, human smuggling, arms trafficking, environmental degradation and infectious disease. Many countries are recognizing that transnational security issues are their top security challenges.

Building on a foundation of mutual trust and a shared vision of the future for Northeast Asia, the U.S., Japan, and the ROK will develop a strong trilateral relationship. This vital relationship best serves all three countries and promotes stability and prosperity throughout the region through international economic development, and sharing technology (educational and environmental reform). A strong trilateral relationship facilitates the handling of regional problems, including North Korea's nuclear program. Although there will not be a formal trilateral security alliance between the three countries, the U.S. alliances with South Korea and Japan will remain strong as these countries face these transnational challenges. Japan and South Korea will sign security cooperation agreements as a result of these developments.

A key factor in the trilateral relationship is the changes in leadership in the U.S., Japan and South Korea. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Washington DC in 2007 helped solidify positive relations between the two countries. As Prime Minister Abe realized the benefits of healthy diplomatic relations with the ROK, he kept the diplomatic peace with South Korea and did not visit Yasukuni Shrine. The new ROK president also recognized the benefits of close ties with the U.S. and Japan, and has been more inclined to cooperate and mitigate false expectations. Finally, the new U.S. president has also had a positive impact in the trilateral relationship as he put Asia as a main focus of his international agenda and put a strong emphasis on strengthening the relationship among its Northeast Asia allies.

The U.S. and its regional allies face complex strategic challenges. Therefore, the desire to avoid policy miscalculations also influenced trilateral relations. Miscalculations can be produced by false expectations or ambiguous communications about each ally's national security interests. U.S. alliances with key regional allies (such as Japan and

South Korea) are designed to realize key U.S. regional security objectives. In the post-9/11 security environment, the U.S. has encouraged its allies to contribute more to their own and the region's security.

Even though the near future seems bright for relations between the U.S., Japan and the ROK, one obstacle will continue to cause friction. South Korea and Japan's fight over history issues is a lingering problem for all 3 countries. The politics of national identity between Japan and South Korea have led the two nations back to contentious historical events. The large gap in Japan and South Korea's mutual understanding of the past will complicate trilateral relations.

Why is there still an identity crisis in Northeast Asia? To move forward, regional actors must either reconcile with the past or simply try to put history aside and move forward. How can Asia deal with disputes about distortions of history? The ability of Japan and South Korea to realize their full potential hinges on the willingness of political leaders and their constituencies to either confront the past or move past it to deal with present and future issues. If these two countries decide to move past history, they will need to shift their focus to shared values, interests, and goals such as a terrorist-free region and world and a nuclear-free Northeast Asia. They should realize that there are a more advantages to cooperating than in dwelling on the past.

The United States should help mediate historical complications between Japan and South Korea. In the past the U.S. has kept silent in relation to the two allies and has stayed away from sensitive issues such as history textbooks or Dokdo/Takashima. This strategy cannot continue. The U.S. will have to address each of the areas of conflict as facilitator and arbitrator. If the United States can maintain a non-partisan view and mitigate the tension between Japan and South Korea, a stronger trilateral relationship will result. This might be possible as a new government steps in the ROK and the U.S. Specifically, the U.S. will work to support the ROK within the history dispute while urging Seoul to support Japan in significant ways such as an energy pipeline from Siberia to Japan, territory disputes with China, or a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Additionally, the U.S. can begin to develop venues for sensitive, but mostly emotional, issues to be discussed and foster a positive dialogue and reduce antagonistic rhetoric. The U.S. will have to be proactive in its involvement in relevant disputes.

The Asia-Pacific region is witnessing almost catastrophic destruction of the environment. In the near future, we will face a more serious global environmental crisis. Air, water, and land pollution are rife and the trend in most countries is worsening. Urgent environmental challenges in the region include poor water quality, food insecurity, marine pollution, depletion of fish resources, deforestation, acid rain (and trans-boundary pollution), and global climate change. It is crucial for these three countries to treat environmental degradation as a national and international security threat. Environmental issues have traditionally been excluded from the realm of traditional security issues. As environmental problems worsen, however, that perception is changing. A strong trilateral relationship will facilitate sharing energy efficient technology could help manage the effects of extreme climate change. In addition, the

trilateral relationship could support the creation of new international environmental treaties that are more effective than, for example, the Kyoto Protocol and also new international regimes that can better deal with transnational challenges such as refugees, international crimes, and world health. The U.S., Japan, and South Korea lead these efforts.

Global poverty and poor quality of life will further increase these transnational threats in the region. As wealthy nations the U.S., Japan and South Korea need to work together to try alleviate poverty. Even though poverty is usually a national problem, it is made more acute by the unequal distribution of wealth that globalization creates and it becomes an international problem as poor people try to move to other regions and/or join insurgent movements with the hope of a better future. Although the three governments are giving aid and support to poor nations in Asia to combat poverty, they should do more.

In addition to global climate change and poverty, the global war on terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will continue to be issues in 2020. International terrorism can strike at any Asian or American city, and is precipitating extensive adjustments in the homeland security policies. Proliferating weapons of mass destruction, combined with modern delivery systems, can hit American targets from great distances within or beyond Asia. The U.S. can no longer make unilateral strategic decisions like it did at the beginning of the Iraq war. Military forces are exhausted from the problems in the Middle East and the U.S. will choose to focus more on diplomatic efforts. This is an opportunity for the U.S. to reach to Japan and the ROK for support.

The U.S. needs to acknowledge the importance of building partnership and enhancing the capabilities of partners to work together, allowing the United States to act indirectly through others and “shifting from conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves.” Working with partners who poses “greater local knowledge” could help counter terrorist actions and, at the operational and strategic level, be more effective.

## **Regional Impact**

Security cooperation will continue to focus on the threat of weapons and militaries. This traditional understanding of security will not soon be discarded in favor placing a so-called non-traditional threat as the greatest danger to U.S. security. However, as non-traditional threats become increasingly transnational, they will directly affect military capabilities. The U.S., Japan, and Korea will have similar national interests in continuing to oppose nuclear proliferation and, more specifically, North Korea. But it is not the North Korean threat, nor the traditional security threat, that will increase cooperation and draw the three into a trilateral relationship. Indeed, after 50 years living next to a hostile North Korea, Japan and the ROK have been unable to form a durable relationship and we have seen serious cracks in the U.S.-Japan and the U.S.-ROK alliances as well. New transnational threats, coupled with existing shared interests

among traditional threats, will force the U.S., Japan, and the ROK to find real cooperation.

Resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis will have a profound impact on trilateral relations. Although we do not see a quick resolution, or even the complete denuclearization of the peninsula by 2020, we have increased optimism about a solution when the trilateral framework is realized. There is little chance of finding a solution when three key players have different demands. Once there is cooperation from the U.S., Japan, and the ROK, substantial progress toward resolving the North Korean nuclear issue will be possible. Specifically, the trilateral group will be able to focus on the most important issue of denuclearization while not discounting Tokyo's concern over abduction issues and Seoul's fear of preemptive engagement.

Moreover, discussions on the future unification of the peninsula will be well served in the trilateral setting, allowing both the U.S. and Japan to describe their concerns and hopes regarding the structure of unification. Putting it another way, without a trilateral agreement South Korea will find a smooth and peaceful unification extremely difficult. The monetary and military support that can be provided from the U.S. and Japan for a strong unified Korea can be established first through understanding in the trilateral framework. Again, because of the greater regional impact of issues such as unification, the Six-Party Talks will have to be the primary venue for such discussions, but a unified position from the three will be essential.

A new security arrangement will be able to emerge from and work within the evolving Six-Party Talks. As this body continues to meet and take on issues related to regional security, the U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral body will be able to initiate and lead action against environmental degradation, human rights violations, and health issues. This will also foster cooperation from those outside the trilateral group; specifically China. China already faces a tough battle with the effects of climate change and its impact on their economic growth. It is extremely important to engage China as these three countries build a strong relationship and try to solve transnational security problems. China is part of the problem as the region's biggest pollutant, the country with the biggest population and rising economy, but China because of its growing economic power and rising international status needs to be included in this relationship, ideally turning a trilateral relationship into a quadrilateral. China should not be isolated from the international community. Furthermore, when it comes to the North Korean nuclear crisis, China must be intimately involved.

## **Conclusion**

It may be somewhat surprising for us to suggest that the old-school conception of security is diminishing in favor of non-traditional threats and historically domestic issues, but that is our clear understanding of how the world is changing. By the year 2020, the international community will be forced to take non-traditional security challenges more seriously. The challenge in dealing with these problems is finding a solution that does not limit or reduce one's economic, military, and political strength. It is a challenging future

that awaits the region and the U.S., Japan, and South Korea will be forced to form a stronger relationship to tackle these transnational security issues. In this way, the trilateral group can rely on each other, as they have for military and economic security, to help solve these emerging threats.



## A Vision Worth Striving for: The ROK, Japan, U.S. Trilateral Relationship in 20 Years By Dianna Hummel, Justin Bishop, Kevin Shepard

Those who attempt to describe a vision of what the future may hold 20 or even 10 years down the road are often accused of “crystal ball politics,” that is, trying to predict the unpredictable. While there is no doubt that we share a common vision of what Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States triangular relationship will be like in 20 years, it is from practicing “crystal ball politics.” We strive to put forth a version of the future based on the possibilities within our grasp and hope to provide a vision of the future that is both worthy of efforts to achieve it and is attainable. While focusing on a wide range of issues, we hope to highlight the many possibilities for cooperation that exist while downplaying the negative aspects of the relationship that have plagued these countries for many years and still seem difficult to overcome.

It is often heard that, “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it.” Far from trying to break the mold, we are trying to reshape and bend it so that it doesn’t become brittle and more likely to break as the security environment shifts. The United States, Japan, and South Korea must create more diverse foundation for their relationship. There are several reasons for this needed change;

- the current foundation of military alliances will decay and be seen as unnecessary as the three nations’ conceptions of their national security interests diverge.
- there is a growing need to justify to the public of each country the reasons for continued close ties. In an age where great power wars are seen as all but over and militaries are searching for new missions, relationships that are grounded in military protection need to be retooled and reshaped.
- Cooperation between Japan and South Korea is difficult at the best of times. Basing a trilateral relationship on nontraditional security and trade values, will make it is easier to find areas of agreement and makes the decision to enter into agreements more acceptable to each country’s public.

In many ways, the changes we envision formalize relationships already existing between the three countries. Over the years, however, there will be a growing need to highlight these issues to justify a close trilateral relationship.

Economic growth in the United States, Japan, and ROK is interdependent. The benefits of increased trade outweigh negative factors. Technology and the manner in which trade is conducted in the 21<sup>st</sup> century have made it significantly easier to facilitate trade, but the 21<sup>st</sup> century has also shown an increased threat to trade security.

Secure trade involves customs cooperation, information sharing, and joint inspections of cargo. However, secure trade must not end there. Law enforcement agencies, intelligence agencies, and militaries all have essential roles to play to ensure goods and cargo move quickly, fairly, and securely between countries.

For trade to move between nations securely, all three nations must have high standards of domestic trade security, ensuring that goods and cargo are safe at home before they begin to move abroad, where complications become much more serious. While some suggest that current domestic standards are sufficient to prevent most goods and cargo in all three countries from being tampered with, this will not be the case in 2020. Domestic standards must be agreed upon between the U.S., Japan, and ROK, and need to be enforced in such a way that they evolve into a secure trade framework.

Communication and information sharing between Japanese, South Korean, and U.S. domestic, foreign, and military resources are an integral part to maintaining trade standards and ensuring trade security. Currently, many U.S. agencies, as well as the military, have been depleted of resources by two wars in the Middle East, but Japanese and South Korean services can and must be upgraded to fill gaps that can develop.

## **STAR**

Secure Trade in the APEC Region (STAR), founded by APEC in 2002, is a comprehensive international program that focuses on secure trade. STAR has a wide variety of programs to help countries in APEC counter threats. This includes: BEST program, a project mainly used to ensure the legitimacy of goods and cargo throughout supply chains between Thailand and the United States; Australia's Advanced Passenger Processing program (which is similar to the U.S. program) ensure the safety and identity of traveling passengers; Indonesia has engaged in several initiatives to ensure trade remains safe and secure.

However, much has changed since STAR was founded. The threat posed by terrorism and corruption has increased significantly. STAR countries must send police and agreed customs executives to the places where trade can and is most likely be interfered with. This means joint Coast Guard and police operations with ASEAN countries, ensuring trade continues throughout the Straits of Macao. While official rates of piracy are decreasing, some experts argue that unreported attacks may be increasing, and may be twice as high as reported attacks. The U.S., ROK and Japan should work with STAR and ASEAN countries to increase the tempo of joint exercises. Bringing the navies, coast guards, and naval police forces of these countries which are best situated to respond to pirate attacks in the Southern Philippines and the Straits of Macao, up to speed will benefit trade throughout APEC. With so much trade moving through the Straits of Macao, it is imperative that STAR nations, and in particular, the U.S., Japan, and ROK, play a leading role in providing security for the ships that travel through this region.

Customs integration between the U.S., Japan, and ROK must also move ahead – all three countries need to increase exchanges between customs agents to create new guidelines that anticipate and counter threats to secure trade as they arise. The private sector can play a large role in providing transparency for its methods of moving trade through international boundaries. These should be adapted to work with governmental organizations. All methods must be constantly tested by customs organizations.

Domestic and international criminal organizations also interfere with secure trade, and will continue to be a problem. The U.S., Japan, and ROK must battle them at home. Intelligence sharing at the federal, state or province, and local levels between all three countries can be very effective. Increased cooperation and training between all three countries should increase considerably by 2020. The recent influx of the Russian Mafia into the U.S., Japan, ROK, since “the exodus” after President Putin’s rise to power in 2001, may prove the single most significant change to all three countries in terms of organized crime syndicates, but domestic threats still remain. In Japan, the Yakuza still wields significant influence. Korea has its own domestic syndicates, as well as Chinese triad influence. America has a wide variety of gangs and criminal organizations. As minor as they may seem alone, when looked at as a whole, these organizations can cause a significant impact on trade between the U.S., Japan, and ROK.

Terrorism is another major threat to secure trade. All countries must respond to the problems that breed terrorism at their source. Here too, cooperation at all levels between the US, Japan, and ROK will enhance by 2020, cooperation between the U.S. and Japan, and the U.S. and ROK at military levels is already exemplary; cooperation between intelligence and police organizations will increase. However, all three countries must not risk complacency. Anti-terrorism cooperation can work through the various U.S. alliance mechanisms in the region.

### **Sea Lanes and International Maritime Law**

According to the 1994 United Nations’ Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)<sup>1</sup>, territorial waters extend 12 nautical miles and exclusive economic zones run 200 nautical miles from shore. This leaves almost no ‘international’ water in East Asia, and overlapping economic claims in many areas. Due to each nation’s differing conformity to international law, as well as unique national maritime regulations, there are a number of transnational navigational issues that demands cooperative efforts, and offer the United States, Japan, and South Korea an opportunity to build a basis for multilateral dispute resolution as well as avenues for information sharing and joint training for and enforcement of maritime law in order to ensure secure trade and efficient transport.

Much of international maritime law is ambiguous, leaving interpretation to individual nations when enforcing laws in their own waters. While the U.S., Japan, and South Korea have agreed to uphold international maritime law, they do not agree on what that means. Interpretations of “innocent passage” differ in ways that has Japan restricting the transport of nuclear material, South Korea declaring that the Cheju Strait is not an acceptable sea lane, and the U.S. loosely defining ‘threat’ to give wide berth to its Proliferation Security Initiative and war on terror.

The United States Coast Guard, the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency, and the South Korean National Maritime Police Agency are responsible for maritime law enforcement, search-and-rescue operations, maritime environmental protection, navigational schemes, and the general safety of commercial maritime traffic. The United

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<sup>1</sup> UNCLOS and related agreements can be found at [www.un.org/Depts/los/intex.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/intex.htm).

States is far behind Japan and the ROK in the number of UN<sup>2</sup> and International Maritime Organization (IMO) conventions it has signed and Tokyo and Seoul are party to only half the conventions. Protection of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) is vital, but just as important is the standardization and cooperation necessary to make transit in the region efficient as well as safe.

Cooperation between these three agencies on a practical and functional level gives Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo the opportunity to avoid military concerns, which would limit Japan's options and raise many concerns for South Korea. This could also cool tensions over 'Exclusive Economic Zones' designated by UNCLOS, which are currently a point of contention between South Korea and Japan. This offers an opportunity to reduce the mistrust and misunderstanding that prevents resolution of economic and military issues. Resolution of these issues is vital on two levels; First, tensions between Tokyo and Seoul concerning EEZs and the Dokto/Takashima Islands have resulted in police action, and a military confrontation is not unimaginable. Communication and cooperation is necessary not only to cease the wasting of resources, but to prevent a conflict that would set back Japan-ROK relations considerably. Coordination and standardization of maritime law can reduce these tensions by increasing understanding and lowering mistrust.

Secondly, the U.S., ROK and Japan should cooperate on enforcement of international rules; specifically, they would benefit from the establishment of contingency plans for joint response to emergencies and accidents (both shipping and environmental), suppression of piracy (both at sea and in ports), sharing information on ships and flag states, and standardized interpretations of navigation and shipping regulations.

Maritime law is important to the export economies and homeland security of the U.S., South Korea, and Japan. As South Korea and Japan continue to gain influence, and the U.S. role in the region is moving toward more cooperative leadership, maritime law and joint protection of shipping lanes are areas in which there is much room for cooperation between the three countries, and this cooperation will lead to improved security, economies, and relationships.

### **Policy Recommendations**

We see a future in which cooperation between the ROK, Japan, and the U.S. is increased not as a means to shut out or compete against any third party, but rather to benefit the citizens of each country, and in many cases the global community. Three of the major economies in the world that share political and cultural power adapting to a global environment and overcoming differences is desirable. And, in our vision this cooperation would be taking place within a wider framework of regional cooperation that

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<sup>2</sup> South Korea and Japan have ratified UNCLOS, but the U.S. has refused, stating that the inclusion of 'Exclusive Economic Zones' is "inconsistent with internationally recognized high seas freedoms of navigation and over-flight." For more, see Noer, John H., and Gregory, David, *Chokepoints: Maritime Economic Concerns in Southeast Asia*, National Defense University Press, October 1996.

would include all of the countries of Northeast Asia. To help this future come about, we have compiled policy recommendations.

### **Policy Recommendations**

- study a trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK FTA
- study a trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK security declaration similar to the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation;
- relax travel and working visa regulations among the three countries;
- encourage increased public and private funding for language education;
- secure trade is not as controversial as other forms of security cooperation, but still needs high-level support, political will/motivation; leaders provide positive symbolic push;
- link customs agencies; standardizing rules and protocols; increasing info sharing, safety; coordinating traffic regulations, inspections, law enforcement;
- encourage the private sector to adopt higher standards of supply chain security;
- technology exchange on baggage and container screening;
- common international standard on passenger information and screening;
- harmonize export controls
  - Study current models of trilateral and multilateral trade, population migration agreement, and maritime security agreements; apply best practices;
  - Don't let history become an issue.
  - Don't make trilateral cooperation exclusive. Beware that other nations may view trilateral cooperation as a threat. Leave the door open for other participants after initial phases and problem solving efforts are worked out.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Policy recommendations were developed with the cooperation of Leif Eric-Easley.



# The Future of U.S.-Japan-ROK Relations from the Perspective of Southeast Asia

By Shirley L. Flores and Adrienne Li-Tan

It is in the interest of countries in Southeast Asia to see stronger, more comprehensive trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Southeast Asia is poised to take advantage of the 21<sup>st</sup> century –“the Asian Century” – but it will need the help of “traditional” leaders in the region to pursue policies – political, security, economic, and even cultural – that will help Asia adapt to the changing global order and respond to new challenges. The leadership and active involvement of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea are imperative for prosperity and stability to carry on for 10 years or more.

Already, Japan and South Korea are the region’s major dialogue partners, involved in the ASEAN + 3 (with China’s participation) and East Asia Community (with China, India, Australia and New Zealand) building projects.

The U.S., however, is missing. It has not gone past the rhetoric that it considers Southeast Asia an important partner. The region has yet to see more aggressive, more active engagement by the U.S. with ASEAN.

Aside from the denuclearization of North Korea and international terrorism, Southeast Asian countries are securitizing issues such as energy and climate change. The region would like to see a more active role to be played by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea in these emerging nontraditional security issues.

If Japan and South Korea continue to be so burdened by historical differences that cooperation in the region is imperiled, Southeast Asia will have no choice but to look to China and other emerging economic and pacifist powers to lead initiatives that the region deems important.

If the U.S. continues to ignore Southeast Asia due to its preoccupation with Iraq and North Korea, the region, again, will have no choice but to turn to interested and willing partners such as China.

However, if Japan and South Korea agree to set aside if not necessarily resolve their differences, and avoid further worsening of tensions (by exercising mutual restraint), the two will be able to lead initiatives concerning new and emerging threats in the region.

If the U.S. will start taking Southeast Asia seriously – through its bilateral and trilateral relationships with Japan and South Korea and maximize ASEAN’s multilateral

cooperation with Tokyo and Seoul – it not only ensures itself a huge market, it guarantees itself an ally and partner in the numerous issues that it is promoting in the global arena.

This paper will look at the security issues, including that of technology exchange, energy issues, and trade. As the paper will illustrate, these three states play a vital role for their Southeast Asian counterparts.

### **Globalization and New Security Challenges**

The new security challenges that the region faces today are largely due to globalization. “Globalization ... is not an ‘event’, but a gradual and ongoing expansion of interaction processes, forms of organization, and forms of cooperation outside the traditional spaces defined by sovereignty.”<sup>4</sup> Globalization does not happen overnight or over a specific period of time; it really is a continuous process of change. Globalization has resulted in a world it is no longer sufficient to think about and within sovereign boundaries; considerations now need to go beyond the state. The statement also highlights the importance of interacting beyond the state, implying the need for more permeable boundaries in order for a state to progress.

Since global events are now affecting individual states more than ever before, the Asia-Pacific region is concerned about new security challenges. A simple example can come from new transnational and globalized threats, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) which affected the security of states in the region. This spread to many countries because of the inter-connectedness of states. It also affected the state when the economy began to suffer and the citizens lived in paranoia. In a sense, therefore, it is accurate to say that “...the nation-state does not end; it is just less in control.”<sup>5</sup> Globalization has deemed individual events non-specific – it does not matter whether it is meant for a state or is an international issue; the state is less able to anticipate what might occur or in what direction events will move. This could be the reason why many may perceive that the state is disintegrating, or that borders are no longer important.

Thus security encompasses more than a state alone. And as with other decisions, security policies can have greater international repercussions than before. Additionally, security becomes an issue that is *both* bound by the state’s borders and extend beyond its borders. Along with globalization, security issues have become more diverse to include transnational crime, nontraditional threats, terrorism and weapons proliferation.

This means that there is a higher need for cooperation, information, and knowledge sharing to deal with the new security arena. This conference covered ways where these concerns are addressed. Most of these thankfully look pass the historical issues that plague Northeast Asia. Additionally, there have been many occasions where peace-keeping operations are required in the past few years. These are areas in which

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<sup>4</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Globalization and the Study of International Security," *Journal of Peace Research* 37, no. 3 (2000) p. 392.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*,



manpower and technology is needed to aid disaster-struck areas. The more competent participants in these operations, the better. The U.S., Japan and Korea are prime candidates for contributing to maintaining security of the region. It is about time these three states consider working together on security issues.

### **Exchanges in Military Technology and Cooperation**

While the conference title referred to the trilateral relations between the U.S., Japan and Korea, it was difficult for participants to bring up cooperation in this same manner. There are security agreements and bilateral alliances. One of the issues is military technology sharing. Interoperability is a concern for most states; and while some states have more advanced technologies than others, if there is no interoperability, there is not much room for cooperation. There are many reasons why technology is not shared as it should be. Japan, for instance, faces domestic opportunities to a higher military profile.

There are a number of military exercises in the region. The U.S. could promote more multilateral, peace-keeping exercises. Invitations to both Japan and Korea for these exercises would improve communications between all militaries involved, and see them play a more integrated role in regional security. Maritime security issues that deal with piracy, arms trafficking, human trafficking and the like are also important. The major SLOCs run through this vicinity and littoral states are very much engaged in maintaining security especially. The “Eyes in the Skies” program - started by Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore - has been working well and has seen a reduction in piracy in the region. If this could see further and more active participation from states such as the U.S., Japan, and Korea, the program could become much more effective.

The conference was a good start to thinking about these issues trilaterally. For Southeast Asia, this would be a good thing.

### **Energy Security and Climate Change**

Energy security is perhaps the most pressing nontraditional issue of the 21<sup>st</sup> century where cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea is crucial. Tied to this issue is climate change which is gaining international attention and requiring more concerted action among the world’s more prosperous, more technologically advanced countries.

Two of the world’s superpowers and heavy consumers of energy; are taking the lead in jumpstarting global action to ensure energy security, reliability, and affordability through efficiency, diversity of supply, and technology. The two countries are also advancing clean energy technology as well as renewable energy and alternative fuels and are seeking help from international partners to pursue these projects.

This bilateral cooperation on energy security, clean development, and climate change signals to the international community that the U.S. and Japan are also concerned

with non-traditional security issues whose effects could be far worse than the failed democratization in Iraq or North Korea's nuclear program. With its technological skills and capacity, there is a room for South Korea to join this partnership.

There was no discussion in the conference on energy security or climate change as a venue for future cooperation among the three states. Track-Two diplomacy could help in organizing seminars or workshops to bring together experts in the field of energy technology from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to determine how and in which areas the three countries could collaborate.

Successful trilateral cooperation on energy security could spill over in Southeast Asia where Japan and South Korea have willing dialogue partners to further the energy security project. Energy ministers of the ASEAN Plus Three countries have started holding meetings since 2006 to address the increase in oil prices through alternative sources of energy. In the second East Asia Summit (EAS) held in Cebu in January, the leaders of 16 nations (East Asia and Oceania) which account for half of the world's population put energy security on top of their agenda. There is cause for alarm. In the 2006 Energy and Supply Outlook of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, of the top 10 net energy importers in the Asia-Pacific, half are EAS countries (Singapore, South Korea, Japan, Thailand and Philippines). By 2030, the forecast is for more countries to increase imports considerably (with the exception of Australia and Brunei). Moreover, the Asia-Pacific region accounted for the two-thirds of the rise in oil consumption since 2005.<sup>6</sup>

Any initiative to address energy security and climate change into Southeast Asia and in the bigger Asia-Pacific region would undoubtedly require the leadership of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea.

## **Trade**

To date, only the U.S. and South Korea have forged a free trade agreement. Despite being long-time allies, the U.S. and Japan have not actively pursued a bilateral free trade pact and the recently concluded US-ROK free trade agreement (FTA) has renewed calls for two of the world's economic giants to jumpstart discussions. During Prime Minister Abe's visit to the White House this month, the two leaders only went as far as agreeing to exchange information on existing FTAs the two countries have inked with other states but observers say this could pave the way for serious discussions. Meanwhile, bogged down by political and historical tensions, a Japan-South Korea FTA is also not likely to be on the drawing board in the near future.

A trilateral FTA among Japan, South Korea, and China has been proposed and this should be cause for concern, especially for the United States. While the proposed trilateral pact may not be feasible at the moment due to the preference of South Korea

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<sup>6</sup>Pablo Bustelo, "The East Asia Summit and Energy Security," Real Instituto Cencano (February 2007).

and China to conclude bilateral pacts first, it is not impossible. The three East Asian countries have been cooperating on softer issues under the ASEAN Plus Three and East Asia Summit venues and these could lead to an eventual economic partnership. Moreover, Japan has put forward a proposal for a 16-country FTA. With the continued lack of attention the U.S. is giving Asia and Southeast Asia, these proposals should alarm the U.S. These initiatives would create huge markets with the combined populations of these countries and that would translate to Asia becoming more independent of the U.S. in terms of trade and investments. If the U.S. does not initiate a trilateral FTA pact with Japan and South Korea, and if it does not increase economic engagement with Southeast Asia, it may find itself left out of the Asian economic boom in 10 to 20.

What would a U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral free trade agreement do? It would create the largest free trade area in the world and pre-empt an impending Japan-ROK-China or an East Asia-wide FTA. It would demonstrate substantial U.S. engagement and commitment to East Asia as well as ensure the U.S. of a huge market in the Asian region.

## **Conclusion**

U.S.-Japan-ROK relations play a vital part in the future of the Southeast Asian region. The nature of international relations has changed very much in the past few decades. Globalization has made security challenges much more complex, and states have to consider both sovereignty and issues beyond the border. Security is no longer about protecting what is within the boundaries of the state, and therefore requires closer cooperation among all with stakes involved.

Technology exchange and military cooperation especially in the areas of nation-building and peace-keeping are especially important in this era and the speed of recovery is more important than ever. Experienced cooperation would heighten the success of recovery and speed up the process of the rebuilding. Technology exchanges would allow for more states to share in the benefits of useful technology and provide a more secure environment for the region. This would also increase the number of states able to contribute to new security challenges.

With the increasing rate of energy and fuel depletion, states have to consider closer relations with other nations as to discuss options for alleviating the situation. As it has been illustrated, the U.S., Japan, and ROK should be leaders in cooperation for energy security.

A U.S.-Japan-ROK FTA is not far-fetched. If realized, volumes of trade would be within the Asia-Pacific region, and it would thus be beneficial for Southeast Asian countries. Other developing states would also benefit from the booming economy.

There must be engagement and cooperation between the three states both among and beyond themselves. With the benefits that would spill over beyond Northeast Asia, these states are naturally drivers for stability throughout the region.



# Future Considerations on U.S.-Japan-ROK Relations

By Justin Bishop

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is considered to be the “Century of Asia.” Globally, a strategic shift of finances, military power, and technological advancement will occur. The world will become much more focused on Asia as the world’s global economic center. Already, technology firms, financial, and military institutions are moving their focus Europe toward Asia, a trend that will continue. Opportunities and challenges abound that threaten security frameworks throughout Asia.

Three of the most powerful nations in the Pacific, the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea have become economic and militarily intertwined through an array of economic and security arrangements. For the most part, their relations have been quite good. However, a new century brings old challenges and new obstacles which must be overcome for harmony between these three nations to continue. All three nations need to take note of, and attempt to find ways to deal with several obstacles may hinder their own separate and combined interests: U.S. unilateralism, ultra nationalism in Japan, and a Republic of Korea lack a long-term strategic vision. All of these obstacles can plague and poison, security and economic arrangements that are necessary for each nation’s continued advancement.

## **U.S. unilateralism**

The recent unilateralism shown by the United States, specifically in prosecuting its anti-terror campaigns has caused a rift with many of its allies. America’s Asian partners, Japan and the Republic of Korea are not to be excluded. The ability of an insurgent force to bog down the world’s most powerful military has endangered the image of U.S. military dominance world wide. Not only have perceptions regarding U.S. military capability in a conventional conflict been significantly reduced, but multiple campaigns in the Middle East forced the U.S. to reduce the military equipment and personnel in North East Asia. This weakness encourages nations that are hostile to the U.S., Japan and ROK. These nations can and will become emboldened and this partly explains the recent nuclear weapons test by the Democratic Republic of Korea.

Attempting to link support for the war on terror campaigns and the situation with the DPRK and other regional issues has failed. ROK President Roh Moo-hyun tried to do that as he sent ROK forces to Iraq in a logistical support role, only to eventually withdraw them as the U.S. campaign took a turn for the worse.<sup>1</sup> Japan’s attempt to create more international visibility by attaching its own JSDF troops to a reconstruction role, caused a stir. Something Japan’s Asian neighbors still look at with intense concern.<sup>2</sup> Such issues will need to be addressed if military cooperation is to continue into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Kim, Sung-han, “Realigning Expectations for the U.S.-ROK relationship: Are we ignoring a glass more than half full? 2 April 2007 < [http://www.mansfielddn.org/programs/program\\_pdfs/rok\\_us\\_kim.pdf](http://www.mansfielddn.org/programs/program_pdfs/rok_us_kim.pdf)>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

## **Japanese ultra-nationalism**

The nationalism exhibited by Japan is a gift and a curse. While it's necessary for the public of any modern nation-state to have a sense of pride in their respective country, the hard liners of the conservative LDP party are a significant obstacle to development of Japanese – ROK relations. Their save-face mentality, and refusal to admit to the horrible atrocities committed by their country during World War II, creates problems with the Asian neighbors they occupied throughout World War II. This situation was exacerbated by Junichiro Koizumi, the former prime minister of Japan, and his visits to the Yasakuni shrine, 14 class A war criminals are enshrined.<sup>3</sup> This was done to appease the hard-liners of his ruling LDP party in the Japanese Diet.

The current prime minister, Shinzo Abe, tried to improve relations with the Republic of Korea, and the People's Republic of China by not publicly visiting the shrine, or causing unnecessary attention to the divisive issues. However, in recent weeks, in an apparent attempt to secure his base ahead of July upper house Diet elections, Abe firmly denied that the military was involved in forcing the “comfort women” committed during World War II. The public and the media in both the PRC and ROK ravished Abe's remarks.<sup>4</sup> This is still a problem with the Japanese national education system: as most textbooks gloss over or omit Japanese atrocities. If a Japanese prime minister can't consolidate his domestic base without denying Japan's World War II atrocities, then the relationship Japan so desires with its neighbors and the international recognition it wants, can not be achieved. For successful Japanese – ROK relations, Japan must learn how to silence its conservative hard-liners.

## **Lack of long-term strategic vision – ROK**

The lack of a long term strategic vision in the ROK is also an obstacle to good relations between Japan, the U.S. and the ROK. Historically, the Korean Peninsula has been a battleground between Japan and China, and at times, Korea has been a vassal state under the dominion of both. The Korean Peninsula is a strategic juncture in the water ways between Japan and mainland Asia, and is a valuable strategic asset to any nation with influence, or dominance of the Peninsula.

Since the end of World War II, the United States has filled the role as a security guarantor for the Korean Republic, maintaining a force of approximately 30,000 troops in South Korea, and providing a strategic nuclear deterrent for the ROK, all while paying the majority of the cost.<sup>5</sup> The ROK does buy the majority of its advanced military equipment from the United States; however, they do not receive the most advanced

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<sup>3</sup> Rozman, Gilbert and Lee Shin-Wha, “Unraveling the Japan-South Korea ‘Virtual Alliance’: Populism and Historical Revisionism in the Face of Conflicting Regional Strategies” *April 3, 2007, Asian Survey*, September/October 2006, Vol. 46, No.5, Pages 761-784

<sup>4</sup> “Scarcely an Aberration”, *The Economist*, 10 March 2007, p. 37

<sup>5</sup> Levin, Norman – Rand Corporation. “Do the Ties Still Bind?The U.S. - ROK Security Relationship After 9/11,” April 3, 2007, < [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND\\_MG115.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2004/RAND_MG115.pdf)>

equipment the United States has for export.<sup>6</sup> This causes a belief in many ROK military and political circles that the ROK is a “second tier” strategic partner to the United States, and deserves more respect as a strategic partner.

At the same time many in the ROK believe their future lies allied to the P.R.C. This is complicated since it's partially based upon recent Japanese atrocities committed during World War II and such strong U.S. support for a security alliance with Japan. Despite strong dislike for the Japanese, the people advocating a strategic relationship with China have overlooked the domination of Korea by the Chinese, which lasted almost 1,000 years, and they focus only on the benefits of China and other historically positive examples of cultural, political, economic, and military influence. Korea needs its political, military, and economic complexes to come together and develop a unified vision on how to deal with its future.

### **Potentially positive U.S. actions**

The United States is in the best position to be able to positively develop the U.S Japan ROK relationship. Following the recently signed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the ROK, the United States should entice Japan into signing their own FTA, and begin pushing both the ROK and Japan into their own FTA. By creating economic interdependency between all three nations, economic priorities will align, bringing all three nations closer together.

The United States needs to urge the ROK to take a more active role in its own defense, by forcing the ROK to pay for its own defense, or threatening to withdraw a proportional amount of U.S. troops from the Peninsula. Also, allowing the ROK to buy top tier U.S. military technology will understate that the United States doesn't see the ROK as a second tier military force which requires U.S. military intervention. Allowing, or enticing the ROK to buy a share in the Joint Strike Fighter program is an example. Continued use of established political and military forums can also serve as an integration and dialogue framework.

Democrats on Capitol Hill are beginning to pressure Japan about the “comfort women” atrocities; this needs to continue. Maybe by sponsoring a bilateral academic commission into both Japanese and U.S. atrocities during World War II, the United States can help Japan and itself come to grips with the grim realities of the past. This humbling, highly publicized (using the technological media and advertising advances of the 21<sup>st</sup> century), academic finding will increase international visibility in a positive light for the Japanese, and increase pressure on LDP hard-liners. Since the United States is responsible for a large portion of both ROK and Japanese officer training, adapting these findings into U.S. training regimens will decrease the possibility of these atrocities being committed again.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

## **Conclusion**

Challenges and shortcoming will continue as Asia continues to develop throughout the century. It is with only political fortitude, as well as uniting to focus concentrated effort on economic and military necessities can U.S.-ROK Japan relations overcome the difficulties and obstacles they will face. The United States needs to take a more pro-active role in North East Asia in uniting two of its greatest allies against their common threats, and eventually develop its respective security alliances with both countries into a single trilateral security alliance.



# The Future of the U.S.-Japan-ROK Relationship: From Bilateral to Multilateral

By Jordan Dover

Time has proven the importance and durability of alliances in Northeast Asia. The U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK relationships each boast over a half-century of mutual support and have been able to adjust to changing leadership and their subsequent foreign policies and have endured major shifts in the post-Cold War and 9/11 eras. Yet, there has been a lack of cooperation between Korea and Japan despite the prominence and influence of alliances in the region and that they are U.S. ally. This has been a mild source of contention causing the U.S. to play peacekeeper between two allies sparring over of historical legacies and territorial disputes.

The challenge the U.S. faces in this arena is to highlight the many shared interests the three countries have in security, economics, and political development while downplaying or ignoring contentious arguments over the past. However, the current structure of the relationship will not be able to endure the increasing challenges of a nuclear North Korea and “rising China” without improvement to the ROK-Japan side of the alliance triangle. The future of the U.S.-Japan-ROK relationship requires the transformation of two bilateral alliances into a multilateral alliance that articulates the common interests and goals of the partners and works to achieve those goals through close cooperation.

## **Challenges for a trilateral alliance**

U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances will face continued strains in the near and long-term future but their success will come from increased ROK-Japan cooperation. Major obstacles in achieving ROK-Japan cooperation stem from disputes over the Dokdo/Takashima islands and historical legacies of Imperial Japan.

The matter of historical legacies and Japanese wartime atrocities such as the comfort women issue or the Yasukuni Shrine is a debate over restitution. More specifically, the ROK, along with China, have condemned the lack of information of Japanese wartime atrocities in secondary education textbooks. This issue is not superficial like the frequent calls for a Japanese apology and there is room for compromise that can provide closure for a majority in both countries. Indeed, initial steps have already been taken with the establishment of the Japan-Korea Collaborative History Research Committee. Yet, because of the emotional nature of this issue, any compromise will take time and persistence.

The territorial dispute is an equally sensitive and even more complex issue that raises questions of sovereignty. Unlike the textbook problem, this conflict offers little room for maneuvering and has the potential to quickly develop into a serious confrontation. Moreover, the ROK again finds alignment with China in this conflict as

the PRC has had a similar territory dispute with Japan in the East China Sea. Because the ROK continues to occupy the disputed territory, aside from a Japanese concession, this issue will most likely not be resolved in the next 10 years.

Dealing with these problems, and collaborating on a number of other regional issues, within the context of the U.S.-Japan-ROK relationship, poses challenges for leaders and policy makers of the three countries.

Upcoming changes in U.S. and ROK presidents as well as a newly elected Abe, will play an important role in building a trilateral framework. Although it is unlikely that we will see anything like a Bush-Koizumi type relationship, it is also unlikely that we would see another Roh-type president in the ROK. This will provide a fresh start to alliance interaction and the possibility of an inclusive discourse between all three partners. With three newly elected leaders the setting will be ideal for producing a strong trilateral relationship. Therefore, the challenge to the leaders will be the first impression.

Policy makers in each country will need to take a fresh look at their alliance (s) before finding and prioritizing the interests of the respective members. Specifically, the emergence of one position in relation to North Korea is essential. After all, the North Korean threat is the *raison d'etre* for the alliance since the end of the Cold War. Interests between the countries are not difficult to find but the challenge will be to formulate complimenting strategies that work in cooperation with both partners.

### **Achieving multilateral cooperation**

To develop the two bilateral relationships into a trilateral alliance, the ROK and Japan will have to reprioritize issues and place common interests above areas of conflict. This does not mean that contentious subjects are to be ignored. Rather, by lowering the priority of issues such as the textbook debate, the normally high levels of rhetoric will be discouraged and a more open discussion can be held. For example, a visit by Prime Minister Abe to the Yasukuni Shrine should not preclude ROK-Japan diplomatic exchanges. Such action only widens the divide between the two countries and inhibits opportunities to for cooperation and compromise on the very same issue.

The U.S. role in a multilateral framework in the region will occur through the process of solving ROK-Japan disputes. In the past the U.S. has taken a peacekeeper position in relation to the two allies and has managed to stay away from sensitive issues such as history textbooks or Dokdo/Takashima. This strategy cannot be continued. The U.S. will have to address each of the areas of conflict as facilitator and arbitrator.

Specifically, the U.S. should work to support the ROK within the territory dispute while urging Seoul to support Japan in significant ways such as an energy pipeline from Siberia to Japan, territory disputes with China, or a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. Additionally, the U.S. can begin to develop venues for sensitive, but mostly emotional, issues to be discussed, thereby fostering a positive dialogue and reducing

antagonistic rhetoric. For the U.S. to effectively face the great challenges of a cooperative ROK-Japan they will have to be proactive in the relevant disputes.



## Strong Trilateral Relations for a Secure Future

By Chris Gin\*

With roughly 50 percent of the world's population residing in the Asia-Pacific, it is essential for relations between regional powers to continue on paths of peace and stability. While U.S.-Japan-ROK relations have warmed, thanks to burgeoning democratic systems and economic success, the near term (10 years) remains uncertain. The U.S.-Japan security alliance is arguably America's most important security arrangement in the Asia Pacific. Hostilities that could arise in flashpoints such as the Taiwan Strait or on the Korean Peninsula make America's alliance with Japan essential. U.S.-ROK relations are also of utmost importance for ensuring peace in the region. As a security ally, the ROK continues to support the U.S. mission in the Middle East with ground troops, and continues to allow the presence of forward-deployed troops on South Korean soil. U.S. troops have been in place on the Korean Peninsula since the start of the Korean War and will continue to have a strong presence there in the near future, despite force realignments. As China continues rising and the North Korean regime insists on testing the limits of international order, U.S.-Japan-ROK relations should advance to prepare for an uncertain future.

Much of the discussion of security focuses on the military relationships between actors in Northeast Asia. The relationship between the United States and Japanese militaries has grown significantly from the framework set by the 1960 Bilateral Security Treaty – for example, by the review of U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines in September 1997. This review established a framework for bilateral cooperation in times of armed attack against Japan or in response to “situations in areas surrounding Japan.” More recently, following the 9/11 attacks the Japanese Diet passed counter-terrorism legislation to allow the Japanese Self-Defense Forces to assist the U.S. in the Global War on Terror.

The Security Consultative Committee (“2+2”) talks have had a significant effect on military relations. Areas of focus resulting from the 2005 talks include close and continuous policy and operational coordination, advancing bilateral contingency planning, information and intelligence cooperation, improving interoperability, and expanding training opportunities.

Recently, the Japan Defense Agency was upgraded to the Ministry of Defense as an equal partner in the Japanese Cabinet, which indicates movement toward a more mature and independent armed forces structure. Although Northeast Asia in general resents what appears to be the remilitarization of Japan, the United States has continued its close alliance with the Land of the Rising Sun. As Japanese and U.S. regional stability goals become more intertwined, I do not see these security arrangements disappearing in

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\* The opinions expressed in this piece reflect the author's views and should in no way be construed to reflect upon his employer.

the near future. If anything, the U.S. will support gradual military advances by Japan in response to the support and responsible actions Japan has made and will continue to show on missions the U.S. views as essential to the war on terror.

The side effects of increased relations will be an unfair outcry from Seoul and possibly a defensive reaction by Beijing, since both countries hold strongly to historical resentments and will oppose Japan in many aspects of security, including its bid for a permanent U.N. Security Council seat. The U.S., for its part, should be concerned with Japan's perceptions of our commitments to them, since they take the brunt of criticism from neighboring countries. While political leaders often tend to play the nationalist card, the U.S. can promote better relations by showing how our friendship and teamwork through this alliance turned perhaps the two worst enemies in modern times into friendly, cooperative nations that contribute a vast amount to the international arena.

The U.S.-ROK relationship is also very important for continued stability in Northeast Asia and should not be taken for granted by either side. While the U.S. and the ROK have cooperated for many years under a security alliance, South Koreans often feel that they are the neglected ally, especially vis-à-vis Japan. While the U.S. remains committed to deterring North Korean advances in the region, South Koreans under the leadership of President Roh Moo-hyun have wavered in their support of the U.S. military presence at times. Particularly, the U.S. base at Yongsan in the heart of Seoul occupies a large chunk of land and is the focus of many nationalistic South Koreans who oppose the U.S. presence on the peninsula; it is finally being returned to the ROK. Although force realignments are occurring throughout the peninsula and more responsibility is being handed over to the ROK armed forces, the U.S. has not and should not send the wrong message in terms of its commitment to South Korea and the region.

With regards to China and Japan, the U.S.-ROK relationship is important both strategically and operationally for maintaining a stable security environment. I was a firsthand witness to anti-American and anti-South Korean sentiments while stationed near the DMZ. Unfortunately, misconceptions of each other are far more prevalent than could be hoped for and the United States can address these issues better, especially in terms of convincing Korea of its important role as our ally in the global war on terror. To do so, ROK forces deserve more control over their own defense, but they must also show a readiness and willingness to commit funds, training, and time to further develop their capabilities. U.S. and ROK political and military leaders understand the importance of the alliance and committed to seeing it continue to deal with challenges such as reunification and perceived external threats (namely China and, to a lesser extent, Japan).

# Rebooting the Virtual Alliance

## Toward a U.S.-Japan-ROK Security Partnership

By Leif-Eric Easley

With new leadership on the horizon, it is time to revisit the idea of a “virtual alliance” among the United States, Japan and South Korea.<sup>1</sup> Existing studies have well articulated the benefits of greater U.S.-Japan-ROK cooperation and have addressed why South Korea-Japan relations retain elements of antagonism despite shared strategic interests.<sup>2</sup> The United States is clearly focused on upgrading its alliance relations with both Japan and South Korea, but must also look to realize the potential of trilateral cooperation. Obstacles to such cooperation can be overcome with the management of historical issues between Japan and South Korea, and mutually reinforcing upgrades of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK security partnerships with coordination of policy on North Korea. This paper addresses challenges and opportunities in these areas and concludes with specific recommendations for building trilateral cooperation.

### Overcoming history<sup>3</sup>

The South Korea-Japan relationship is strained by historical issues including textbook coverage of war and colonization, official apologies to comfort women who suffered under sexual servitude during the war, competing claims to the Dokdo/Takashima islets, and high-level visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine honoring Japan’s war dead. The U.S. has generally steered clear of involvement in these issues, instead stressing the importance of good relations. Washington cannot force historical reconciliation between Seoul and Tokyo and the U.S. government should not attempt to give history lessons in East Asia.<sup>4</sup> But American civil society and former U.S. officials can advocate more moderate and productive approaches to history.

Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Japan was a country that built a military for regional domination. This military engaged in unspeakable atrocities across East Asia, also

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<sup>1</sup> See Ralph A. Cossa, ed., *U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations: Building toward a "Virtual Alliance"*, CSIS, 1999; Tae-hyo Kim and Brad Glosserman, *The Future of U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations*, CSIS, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> James L. Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism: Improving U.S.-Japan-Korea Cooperation to Manage Complex Contingencies*, Potomac Books, 2005; Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: the United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle*, Stanford University Press, 2000; Gilbert Rozman and Shin-wha Lee, "Unraveling the Japan-South Korea 'Virtual Alliance': Populism and Historical Revisionism in the Face of Conflicting Regional Strategies," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 46, No. 5 (October 2006), pp. 761-784.

<sup>3</sup> This section draws from Leif-Eric Easley, "Steps Toward the Future Instead of the Past: Improving Relations between Japan and South Korea," *JoongAng Daily* (with *International Herald Tribune*), Sept. 8, 2006, p. 7; and Leif-Eric Easley, "Devils in the Details: Effective policy, not disputed history, should be focus of national leaders," *JoongAng Daily* (with *International Herald Tribune*), April 9, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> For examples why, consider the strain on U.S.-Japan relations caused by the U.S. House of Representatives resolution on the “comfort women” issue. Putting aside the normative question of whether Japan deserves such censure or whether such signaling from the U.S. Congress is appropriate, in pragmatic terms the pending resolution has produced negative interaction effects but no positive steps for reconciliation.

bringing suffering upon the Japanese people. Such history cannot and should not be forgotten. But it should be recognized that for 60 years Japan has been a peaceful and generous nation, focused militarily on self-defense and regional stability while providing the impetus and foreign aid for regional economic development. Japan today looks nothing like it did in the 1930s; it poses no threat of invasion to its neighbors and is a responsible and contributing member of the international community.

South Korea overcame the terrible legacies of war to achieve its hard-earned democracy and economic prosperity. Americans can encourage Tokyo to respect South Korea's importance and fully appreciate the shared values of Japanese and Korean societies. At the same time, Seoul can be encouraged to base government legitimacy on the consolidation of democracy and further economic development, rather than on ethnic nationalism and a regional history of suffering and resentment. A successful country by numerous global measures, South Korea no longer needs a victim's national narrative. A rivalry with Japan over semiconductors or on the soccer field is healthy, but overemphasis on a tragic past is not. For its part, Japan needs to demonstrate it deserves South Korea's trust. Tokyo must be sensitive to historical issues and clarify the path of Japan's normalization and assertive diplomacy.

The U.S. government could help Seoul and Tokyo rise above historical disputes by facilitating an agreement between the next South Korean president and the Japanese prime minister along the lines of that between Kim Dae-Jung and Keizo Obuchi.<sup>5</sup> Disputed historical details (degree of coercion of comfort women, extent of Korean collaboration with Japanese imperialism, etc.) would be left to joint historical studies by civil society groups. The governments of Japan and South Korea would pledge to stay above the fray on these issues in the interest of bilateral cooperation and successful transformation of alliances with the United States.

### **Alliance transformation and coordination on North Korea<sup>6</sup>**

Rather than being overwhelmingly focused on North Korea and the Soviet Union respectively, the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances are in a process of transformation to address new challenges for regional stability and global security.<sup>7</sup> Washington must continue to consult closely with Seoul and Tokyo on how U.S. leaders conceptualize the alliances within a global strategy, carefully considering the roles and missions South Korean and Japanese leaders envision for their own countries. As both alliances continue

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<sup>5</sup> See the Japan-ROK Joint Declaration "A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-first Century," Oct. 8, 1998, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/joint9810.html>.

<sup>6</sup> The sections that follow draw from, Leif-Eric Easley, "Securing Tokyo's Positive Role in North-South Reconciliation: The Need for a Strong U.S.-ROK Alliance to Reassure Japan," *KEI Academic Paper Series*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (February, 2007), pp. 1-11.

<sup>7</sup> For reference on the alliance transformation process, see Norman D. Levin, *Do the Ties Still Bind? The U.S.-ROK Security Relationship After 9/11*, RAND, 2004; Charles M. Perry, et. al., *Alliance Diversification and the Future of the U.S.-Korean Security Relationship*, Brassey's, 2004; "The United States and South Korea: Reinvigorating the Partnership," *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, Vol. 14, 2004, available at <http://www.keia.org>; Bruce A. Wright and Mark O. Hague, "The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Sustaining the Transformation," *Joint Force Quarterly*, No. 44, Winter 2007.



to support and are supported by the forward deployment of U.S. forces, essential adjustments to burdensharing and basing arrangements will require sustained attention and efforts by leaders on all sides.

The U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances are linked by geography and history such that comparisons are inevitable as both alliances are upgraded. Those comparisons need not be negative. Instead, the alliances can learn from each other on the key transformational issues of roles and missions, burdensharing, and basing. The more security coordination among the three countries, the more efficient and effective the alliances will be. An immediate and essential policy area for such coordination is vis-à-vis North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

The on-again, off-again Six-Party Talks recently produced an action plan for the early stages of North Korean denuclearization.<sup>8</sup> The Feb. 13 statement was welcomed by Seoul and marked the resumption of South Korean economic and humanitarian aid to the North. Japan appears skeptical of the agreement. Tokyo has made clear it will not lift sanctions on North Korea or extend economic assistance until Pyongyang takes further steps, including accounting for abducted Japanese citizens.

One need go back little more than a decade to recall a time when Seoul worried that Washington's engagement of Pyongyang was getting out in front of its own. For Japan, one need go back less than six years to when Prime Minister Koizumi looked to make a breakthrough in normalization talks by visiting Pyongyang. Nowadays, China and South Korea's policies on North Korea are frequently labeled "soft" while the United States and Japan are considered to be pursuing a harder line. Beijing's stiff response to North Korea's nuclear test and Washington's flexibility in reaching the Feb. 13 agreement challenge that conventional wisdom about national approaches to North Korea. What remains unchanged is the significant overlap in national interests shared by South Korea, Japan, and the United States vis-à-vis North Korea.

Five-party solidarity is necessary to pursue North Korean nuclear dismantlement and U.S.-Japan-ROK policy coordination is the essential building block for meaningful and productive Six-Party Talks.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, Tokyo and Seoul do not fully recognize their cooperative potential or adequately consider the concerns of the other. As the central actor in the Six-Party Talks<sup>10</sup> and the mutual ally of Japan and South Korea, the

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<sup>8</sup> See the "Initial Actions for the Implementation of the Joint Statement," Feb. 13, 2007, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/february/80479.htm> and "Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks," Sept. 19, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/53490.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Leif-Eric Easley, "Changing North Korea's Nuclear Game Plan: five parties should pressure Pyongyang, then give it face to disarm," *JoongAng Daily* (with *International Herald Tribune*), Nov. 10, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Washington has been accused of "outsourcing" its North Korea policy to Beijing in the Six-Party Talks. This is inaccurate: the U.S. is still the actor each of the other parties is most concerned with consulting. While the talks have yet to achieve tangible steps toward disarmament and there was North Korea's nuclear test, the involvement of all North Korea's neighbors, the heightened transparency of their North Korea policies, the increasingly constructive role of China, and the demonstration of five-party leverage are all positive developments.

U.S. has the responsibility of improving policy coordination on North Korea. To realize this goal, what obstacles must Washington overcome?

First, Seoul needs to be convinced that North Korea is a legitimate security concern for Japan. Moreover, it is important that Seoul persuade Tokyo that the South's engagement of the North will not ignore Japan's security concerns. Diplomatically engaging rather than strategically isolating Japan will allow Seoul to reassure Tokyo that anti-Japanese ideology will not be used to bring North and South Koreans together. Tokyo can then be more politically and financially supportive of Seoul's vision for Korean reconciliation as Japanese strategic planners become confident that a unified Korea will not be antagonistic toward Japan or fall into the Chinese sphere of influence.

Second, Washington should impress upon Tokyo that it also has a responsibility for reassuring South Korea. Tokyo should credibly convey what "normalizing" means for its military doctrine and focus on building trust with South Korea by overcoming irritants in the relationship. Japan can make clear that effective trilateral coordination would make consideration of a unilateral deterrent unnecessary. Meanwhile, Washington should encourage Tokyo to stake out a position on the abduction issue that is not so uncompromising that it complicates incremental progress and feeds misperceptions that Japan is becoming diplomatically isolated in the six-party process.

Finally, Washington should press for resumption of regular meetings of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) or an equivalent mechanism. Enhanced three-way communication on security issues would have the immediate task of coordinating incentives for North Korean nuclear dismantlement and credible consequences for Pyongyang's non-compliance. South Korea and Japan could also work together with the U.S. to revise and harmonize contingency plans concerning a possible North Korean collapse, incident at sea, or missile attack.

### **Building trilateral cooperation**

TCOG, or its successor, should not only focus on North Korea policy. The trilateral mechanism should be charged with broadening the foundation of U.S.-Japan-ROK cooperation, within the region and globally, concerning both traditional and nontraditional security issues. Key areas of trilateral coordination can include:

- ? Build mutual understanding about Japanese military normalization, the internationalization of the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances, regional integration efforts, engagement of China, U.S. global posture transformation, and South Korea's future vision for the Peninsula.
- ? Integrate efforts on deterring and dissuading terrorism, minimizing vulnerabilities of populations and key infrastructure, and addressing root causes.

- ? Combined training for natural disasters in the region, leading to coordinated deployments and emergency relief efforts in the event of a catastrophic earthquake or tsunami.
- ? Coordinate on base restructuring, plans for flow of forces, and civilian evacuation procedures.
- ? Study complementarities of U.S., ROK, and Japanese forces for deployment in peacekeeping operations.
- ? Develop a trilateral strategy for international aid and investment for the development of the North Korean economy.
- ? Cooperate on standards and implementation for export controls and transportation security.
- ? Study a trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK security declaration similar to the recent Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.<sup>11</sup>

Progress in these areas will require the attention of Washington as the U.S. and its partners upgrade the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances. Washington will also need to facilitate Tokyo and Seoul acting on a broad base of shared values and interests. While Japan still has ground to cover to respect South Korea as a security partner and earn its trust, Seoul needs to welcome Tokyo's indispensable role in promoting peaceful and economically feasible North-South Korean integration. Then not only will the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances continue to provide for stability in the region, U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral cooperation can make further contributions to security beyond East Asia.

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<sup>11</sup> Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/australia/joint0703.html>.



# Change and More of the Same: U.S., Japan, and Republic of Korea Relations in 10 Years

By Dianna Hummel

The U.S. enjoys strong bilateral relationships with Japan and the ROK while the ROK and Japan relationship is relatively weak. Given the circumstances in the region and in the world, as well as domestic politics in both countries that call for a more equal partnership in foreign affairs, it will be difficult for these relationships to continue in their current form. In 10 years U.S-ROK-Japan relations will still be strong, but altered to fit an emerging regional order that will see a warming between Japan and the ROK and a more balanced regional political system.

## **Changing regional order**

Many say that Northeast Asia in 10 years will be a bipolar system with China and the U.S. on the two poles. In this view Japan is expected to continue a close relationship with the U.S. while the ROK will continue a close relationship with the U.S. but lean slightly toward China in some matters. Such opinions overlook the great global and regional influence of the ROK and Japan, and the growing demand from these countries that their voices be heard within the international and regional community. In addition, the ROK and Japan are both experiencing a change in domestic politics in and younger generations are questioning rules and assumptions that have guided relations for each country over the last 50+ years. Instead of seeing a world order patterned after WWII and Cold War victories, these generations see that their countries rank among the world's top economies in addition to having considerable soft power and would like to see a regional and global role that is more in line with that status. America too is changing its outlook as it realizes that it can not stand alone in the global political system, that alliances and containment are not a viable solution to foreign policy conundrums, and that focusing on one area of the world or on one country can create losses in other areas.

Such changes will not result in a bipolar system within the region, but a system of balance and power sharing. U.S. bilateral relationships will still be strong, but the ROK and Japan will be seen as more equal partners. ROK-Japan relations will still be laced with sentiments from the past, but these sentiments will not dominate the relationship.

## **Overcoming difficulties**

The path to such a system is strewn with many difficulties. One is the U.S. habit of losing sight on long-term goals and the tendency to focus on one issue at a time. Washington has a very bad habit of focusing on the here and now; officials are more interested in short-term goals that can be achieved in a single term rather than thinking ahead. The U.S. public support such tendencies by demanding visible results in short periods. Instead of being proactive in their foreign policy America is reactive, usually choosing to deal with an issue only after it becomes a problem. And when the issue

becomes important to the U.S., that seems to be all Washington can focus on. For example the war on terror after 9/11 became the focal point of foreign and national security policy, but it has led to trouble as the U.S. has seemed to forget about other regions and issues, leaving allies in Asia feeling that the U.S. is undependable and disconnected. America must overcome these habits and focus on broader, longer term foreign policy goals.

Korea and Japan must overcome their disagreement over historical issues and nationalist rhetoric. It is true that Japan committed war crimes during WWII and the occupation of Korea. Japan must become more aware that a hard-line nationalist approach does not work in the current international order. Such an approach is more likely to draw criticism and rebukes, and Japan as unwilling to learn from its past. This is the case of the comfort women issue recently played out after Prime Minister Abe's careless remarks last month. Korea must realize that pushing Japan on historical issues only makes the problem worse. Younger generations in Japan feel that apologies have been made enough times about its wartime past. An over focus on the ROK's part instills resentment and mistrust among Japanese who feel that they should not be punished for something they had no part in.

All three countries must realize that domestic politics are increasingly part of foreign policy. Opinions and slogans used on the campaign trail to gain votes are broadcast around the world. Such rhetoric is not good for national images or perceptions in other countries.

### **What America can do?**

Because of fears of favoritism and interference in domestic matters from both the ROK and Japan, America can do little to help solve problems relating to Japan's wartime aggression. The U.S. helps facilitate people to people, military to military, and government to government contacts between the ROK and Japan. Such measures are helpful and should be continued. But, it is up to the two parties directly involved to make a decision to solve the dispute, however.

The U.S. can change itself. America must return to setting long-term foreign policy goals, should not demonize those it sees as threats (such as Iran or North Korea), and focus on multilateral, not military approaches, to problems. It should stop referring to its enemies as madmen or evil. If the world's leading nation cannot stop name calling and demonizing those it sees as a threat it cannot encourage others to do likewise.

### **Conclusion**

The forecast for Japan-ROK-U.S. relations includes strong relations into the near future only within a new and emerging regional power structure. There are difficulties that need to be overcome such as America's tunnel vision and disagreements over historical issues between Japan and the ROK. However with the political and social will these difficulties can be overcome.

## Toward “Host Region Support”: An Example of Japan-ROK-U.S. Strategic Cooperation

By Tetsuo Kotani

What will trilateral relations among Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States look like in 10 years? Given the deep-rooted anti-Japanese and anti-American sentiment in the ROK, no drastic improvement can be anticipated. Historical issues will still matter between Japan and South Korea in 10 years. South Koreans will continue to be dissatisfied with their “unequal” relations with the United States, as well U.S. troops on their soil. On the other hand, Japan and the United States remain close, based on their “shared values” approach to relations. Needless to say, trilateral relations are important for peace and stability not only on the Korean Peninsula but also in the region, but they will remain complicated and difficult to manage, which has been the case for decades. It is important to see the big picture without swinging between optimism and pessimism by short-term developments in trilateral relations.

What should trilateral relations look like in 10 years? The three countries need to promote strategic cooperation vis-à-vis challenges from the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), the rise of China, and other regional issues. Japan and ROK are the two major allies of the United States and the two major hosts of U.S. troops in the region. As they are trying to realize more active roles within their alliances with the United States, it is necessary for Japan and ROK to promote military cooperation at least in search and rescue missions and maritime interdiction operations. At the same time, given social changes in host communities, it is getting more difficult to maintain a U.S. presence throughout the region. Japan and the ROK need to jointly take initiatives to promote “host region support,” as Akihisa Nagashima calls for.<sup>1</sup> For example, Japan and the ROK could host a U.S. forward presence in rotation. Or they could rotate training sites for U.S. troops. In addition, as the strategic significance of Guam is increasing, Japan and ROK could contribute to the development of Guam.

What has prevented trilateral strategic cooperation? While Japan, ROK, and the United States are members of the Six-Party Talks, the difference in priorities among them is preventing a coordinated approach to the DPRK. These three countries have a shared interest in the denuclearization of DPRK, but Tokyo is also paying much attention to abduction issue. Washington is currently paying attention to nonproliferation and other regional issues such as Iranian nuclear development and Iraqi stabilization. Seoul is giving top priority to stability on the Peninsula.

The difference in priorities among the three countries reflects different threat perceptions. During the Cold War, both Tokyo and Washington regarded instability on the Korean Peninsula as a threat, while Seoul regarded the North as the “enemy.” For

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<sup>1</sup> For the concept of “host region support,” see Akihisa Nagashima, *Nichibei Domei no Atarashii Sekkeizu: Henbosuru Ajia no Beigun o Misuete (A New Blueprint for the Japan-U.S. Alliance: Staring at U.S. Forces in the Changing Asia)*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Tokyo: Nippon Hyoron Sha, 2002)

Tokyo and Washington, political instability in the South was also a grave concern. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the missile and nuclear development by the DPRK, threat perceptions have changed. North Korean missile and nuclear development poses a direct threat to Japan, while North Korean missiles cannot reach U.S. soil (so far). So Washington is concerned about instability on the Peninsula as well as WMD proliferation by the DPRK. Seoul does not regard the North as an “enemy” any more and instead regards instability on the Peninsula as a threat. Seoul is also concerned about Japanese “militarism,” which might lead to an arms race.

The historical issue has also prevented trilateral cooperation. Issues such as this Japanese prime minister’s visits to the Yasukuni Shrine and the so-called “comfort women” were politicized, attracting the attention of the people in Japan, the ROK, and the United States. History matters in Japan-ROK relations not only because Japan colonized Korea but also because Japan used ancient history to justify colonization.<sup>2</sup> Seoul can easily use the history card to stack the cards against Japan, while expecting support from American human rights advocates. Washington has wisely detached itself from historical issues, but those human rights advocates as well as Korean- and Chinese-Americans may continue to bring historical issues into Capitol Hill.<sup>3</sup> However, U.S. involvement in the historical issues will produce adverse effects, stimulating nationalism in the three countries.

In sum, there are several challenges for trilateral strategic cooperation among Japan, ROK, and the United States and the “host region support” for U.S. troops. In order to overcome these challenges, Tokyo, Seoul and Washington need to base their actions on shared interests while deepening mutual understanding with prudence. The most important factor is leadership. The leaders in the three countries should take initiatives to understand the difference in priorities and threat perceptions, and historical interpretations. Frequent meetings of leaders from the three countries should be encouraged to that end. Also, history should be separated from politics. Some call for the Japanese Emperor to play a role in settling the historical issues by making an apology for war crimes or by admitting his Korean heritage,<sup>4</sup> but the emperor’s involvement will have negative effects on trilateral relations. The emperor of Japan is not a political figure and ancient history or legends should not be brought into politics. History is complicated enough; let historians discuss it.

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<sup>2</sup> For details, see Chong-sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), especially Chapter 6.

<sup>3</sup> Some people recommend this to persuade the U.S. to play a “more active role” in the controversy over history. See Junbeom Pyon and Qinghong Wang, “Silence is Golden,” *PacNet*, 18A. April 10, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> For example, “Paging the emperor: As Japan Struggles to Come to Grips with Wartime Atrocities, Its Monarch Could Lead the Way,” *The Los Angeles Times* (March 7, 2007), editorial; and Junbeom Pyon and Yuka Tsukagoshi, “Turn Japan-South Korean Ties into a Real Partnership,” *The Japan Times* (March 26, 2007).



# Two's Company, Three's a Crowd?

## South Korea's Drift from Trilateral Relations

By Julia Joo-A Lee and In-Seung Kay

Trilateral relations between South Korea, Japan, and the United States have been beneficial for all parties. While South Korea and Japan cooperate as a “virtual alliance,” the U.S. has enjoyed strong alliances with South Korea and Japan. Through the alignment, South Korea and Japan have made great efforts to deter North Korea. The United States exercised its stabilizing influence over Northeast Asia and positioned itself as a dominant regional actor. In a broad regional context, both South Korea and Japan have been assured as to how they should respond to a rising China. Moreover, the United States helped reduce the security dilemma between its allies by having Japan tone down remarks on history and maintain a low-key military posture, while nudging South Korea to establish cooperative relations with Japan.

This nice picture may no longer capture the reality of Northeast Asia. Given the absence of multilateral institutions, the strength of the triangular relations is subject to policy shifts in individual states. Indeed, all three countries witnessed changes in strategic thinking in recent years, and this transformation in security perceptions and practice appeared to herald a new security dynamic where the relevance of the trilateral relationship may be tested.

Each country had different motivations for change, and the changes in strategic behavior have had different impacts on the region. All three countries embraced a nationalistic (or patriotic) mood to a greater extent, rendering themselves less sensitive to other's concerns. The United States is anxious about rogue states with WMD, including North Korea. Japan is worried about North Korea and a rising China. The U.S. and Japan, with growing wishes for a greater international role, saw opportunities in a closer alignment. Japan's unreserved support “global war on terror” symbolized what the strong bilateral ties could provide. Yet as, the United States and Japan managed to find solid common strategic interests, South Korea has been out of tune, due to a power shift at home. As South Korea failed to embrace strategic thinking underlying close U.S.-Japan ties, different policy priorities and the nationalism of South Korea began widening the perception gap with the U.S. and Japan. This was the point at which trilateral relations went off the rail.

### **South Korea adrift: populism and miscalculation**

Not surprisingly, the most noticeable challenges to trilateral relations originated in South Korea. What came as surprise, however, were the depth of mistrust and the tone of rhetoric that were presented to Washington and Tokyo.

For the past few years, instead of cultivating shared interests, South Korea has openly taken a confrontational stance toward the U.S. and Japan over sensitive issues

such as the transfer of operational command and the North Korean nuclear problem. This reflected deep-rooted skepticism among the new power elites about intentions of the U.S. and Japan. They held a negative view of the U.S. as a supporter of previous military regimes. America's new strategic embrace of pre-emption added the fear that South Korea could be drawn into unwanted conflict with North Korea or even China. Furthermore, the anxieties revealed themselves in crude and astonishing public claims such as "self-reliant" defense, "a balancer in Northeast Asia," or "taking back operational command" as a sovereign right. Since the Dokdo islet dispute with Japan was rekindled in February 2005, Seoul's rhetoric over both territory and history escalated to the point of belligerence (culminating in a "diplomatic war" remark on March 23, 2005). Together with former PM Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine and controversies over history, South Korea-Japan relations entered into a downward spiral.

By making public differences with the U.S. and Japan, the Roh administration seemed to have two goals: political backing at home and seizing moral high ground abroad. In reality, confrontational rhetoric with little reference to strategic considerations did South Korea more harm than good.

First, it generally impaired South Korea's reliability and competence as a security partner, as delivering unfiltered statements without prior coordination caused wildly different signals. For instance, President Roh stirred controversy in Los Angeles on Nov. 12, 2004, by saying that North Korea's maintaining nuclear weapons is "understandable." It turned out that there had been strong opposition to that word choice within the government. His shocking remarks of a "diplomatic war" with Japan were publicized directly in the form of an open letter rather than an official statement coordinated among government agencies.

Second, frequent condemnation of the U.S. undercut the credibility of the U.S.-Korea alliance, while the U.S.-Japan alliance had become stronger than ever. This, in turn, provoked South Korea's suspicion of Japan, building a sense of insecurity that may lead to competition. In other words, the classic security dilemma came into play. If the U.S., which had played a mitigating role between the two, visibly put more weight on the alliance with Japan, South Korea-Japan relations could go sour. This is particularly true of bilateral relations because Koreans still hold grudges about the colonial period, but Japan has not fully atoned for its past.

### **Squeezed and sidelined?**

Seoul's boast to play an independent and central actor in Northeast Asia has had troubling results. This leads to South Korea's isolation from major regional security developments. Diplomatic maneuvers surrounding the recent nuclear deal with North Korea on Feb. 13, 2007 clearly illustrated South Korea's decline in strategic significance.

South Korea has been determined to improve its relations with Pyongyang. Seoul has also refused to employ any tough measures, such as economic sanctions, and full participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative. However, it became evident that

North Korea did not consider its “southern brethren” as a partner, in spite of generous aid packages. The targeted effects of assistance on North Korea are still in doubt because Pyongyang has successfully separated politico-military issues from economic benefits. For North Korea, it was rational behavior, given that a free and prosperous South Korea is an existential threat, looming along the border with shared language and blood ties. When it comes to diplomacy, therefore, Pyongyang had consistently demanded bilateral talks with the United States, not South Korea. That said, only the Roh administration has assumed that South Korean economic aid would function as leverage over Pyongyang. The real damage is that while Seoul single-mindedly focused on appeasing North Korea, it failed to see major actors with new cooperative arrangements in Northeast Asia.

The policy shift of the U.S. was particularly impressive. Until it struck a deal with North Korea, the U.S. had shown an unprecedented stance over the Korean Peninsula. President Bush announced last November that he would be willing to declare the end of the Korean War with Kim Jong-il if Pyongyang dismantled its nuclear program. While U.S. flexibility was remarkable, it was also remarkable that few reports indicated that Bush’s comments were the outcome of close consultations with South Korea, even though a peace treaty with North Korea would be the single most important event after the Korean War. The U.S. also secured the nuclear deal through bilateral talks with the North and cooperation with China, which arguably exercised strong influence over Pyongyang. The progress could be interpreted in light of U.S. flexibility or expediency to allocate more resources to Iraq. Still, it might also demonstrate that South Korea was being sidelined when the U.S. made a decision on issues about the Korean Peninsula.

In the meantime, Japan has successfully upgraded its alliance partnership with the U.S., and extended security arrangements with Australia. It is expected that Japan would eventually form a quadruple dialogue with Australia, Taiwan, and the U.S. As Seoul has been suspicious of the U.S. and Japan, the recently published Armitage-Nye report, “The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020,” claims that Seoul’s threat assessment aligns more with that of China than that of the U.S. and Japan. However, considering that South Korea is also concerned with China’s growing power, this perception further supports the idea that Seoul could easily be marginalized between the sea power alignment (Japan, Australia, and the U.S.) and China.

## **Recommendations**

Despite our critical assessment of South Korea’s diplomatic moves, Seoul has recently struck a free-trade deal with Washington and shows an increasingly pragmatic attitude toward the U.S.-Korea alliance. However, it is also true that South Korea has struggled to position itself in the trilateral relationship, and made mistakes. Since Korea’s drift was damaging and visible, Seoul’s effort to repair and upgrade those relations would be most important for the trilateral relationship in the next 10 years. We suggest:

- ? The U.S.-South Korea alliance should be fixed to revitalize cooperative trilateral relations: As seen in the dynamics of U.S.-Korea-Japan relations, only the United States could mitigate distrust between Seoul and Tokyo, thereby providing stability in the region. South Korea’s strategic drift has created discord in

relations with the United States. However, given the U.S. policy shift at both the regional and global levels, the U.S.-South Korea security cooperation should be based on new common strategic interests. The U.S. seems to move on to managing the North Korean nuclear problem with assistance with China, while placing more emphasis on regional stability in Northeast Asia through a strong U.S.-Japan alliance and coordination with China. As South Korea does not fit nicely into these considerations, it must start discuss about shared interests with the U.S. to sustain a positive relationship. The candid questions of “how could South Korea fit into a new strategic map of the U.S.?” and “what could the U.S. provide in return?” must be asked and discussed as the first step.

- ? We advise that South Korea and Japan handle the history issue seriously to build confidence that enables more sustainable bilateral ties. Without the U.S. role, bilateral relations are still precarious in the security realm, for unresolved history continues to be a source of mutual suspicion. Indeed, history issues have derailed numerous initiatives and destroyed years of patient diplomacy. The problem is, as the recent comfort women issue signified there exists no lowest common understanding about history between the two countries. Although different historical perspectives are inevitable and healthy to some degree, the gap between denial and exaggeration is too wide, and open to divergent interpretation. For this reason, it is recommended to deal with the issue head-on, rather than indirectly.
- ? Domestic efforts: The ROK must ensure that each government office’s efforts are fully coordinated and do not conflict. It is important to ensure that individual agencies share information with each other and with their counterparts in other countries. Recent disputes over rice aid for North Korea demonstrated a lack of policy coordination between two major agencies. The Ministry of Unification said that it will send 400,000 tons of rice to Pyongyang even if North Korea does not shut down nuclear facilities in Yongbyon by April 14, the deadline stipulated in the Feb. 13, 2007 agreement. Vice Minister Shin Un-sang told reporters that this is the government official position, but it was soon contradicted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. If the Roh administration keeps failing to successfully handle the North Korean issue, it will damage the nation's credibility in making a coordinated response.

# The Key Burden is Japan's

By Adrienne Li-Tan

Relations between the U.S., Japan, and the ROK will remain largely unchanged in the next 10 years. This opinion is derived from the fact that there are not enough conducive elements in the strategic environment for drastic changes. This does not mean that relations would deteriorate, but perhaps similar to those that exist today. That said, there could be small steps toward better relations between Japan and the ROK or a more independent relationship from the U.S. for Japan. These steps would most probably create a more integrated East Asia, and see more cooperative efforts between states in the region. As analysts note, Japan and Korea are able to work together and this partnership would become more beneficial to the region.

During Koizumi's premiership, Japan's relations with the U.S. were distinctively close. Personal relations between the two leaders were friendly and made the link between the two states much more pronounced. PM Abe Shinzo may not be able to match his predecessor. Also, the next president of the U.S. could be a very different person from Mr. Bush. While it is too early to say whether they will be able to forge a similar relationship between the two states, relations should remain close due to historical reasons and strategic considerations.

Japan and Korea share similarities such as culture and customs. Although both societies are distinctive, the essence of their cultures remains very much linked. Many areas of Japanese and Korean history are defined simply because of their geographical proximity. If these two countries can work together, they can better guarantee a safe security environment for the region. There would be less mistrust and suspicion and more cooperation and mutual agreements. This scenario is an attractive one.

Why then is it so difficult to move toward this scenario? The reasons lie behind the types of obstacles the region faces. First, strategic concerns cause the U.S. to consider keeping Japan as a check against a rising China and North Korea. Similarly, a militarily stronger Japan causes the ROK to be concerned while Japan feels the need to protect itself against new transnational threats, and the possible challenge from China. Military build-ups add to the uncertainty and suspicions in the region, making the situation much less conducive for cooperation.

Second, Northeast Asia is rife with historical baggage, largely from Japanese wartime atrocities during World War II. History cannot and should not be erased, and it should serve as a tool for a better understanding of today's society and nationalism in Northeast Asia. But history has become a barrier instead of an educating tool, and this makes it difficult for cooperation in other aspects besides economic interests.

Nationalism is also an obstacle that needs to be worked upon. As history creates national identity, states such as China and the ROK are unable to detach themselves from historical experiences that they deem "humiliating." Nationalism becomes an obstacle

when the local populations are more concerned about protecting national pride than reaching for the overall good.

Territorial issues are also problematic. While we are seeing the globalization of international relations and security, territory is still important. Just as history creates identity, territory defines what a nation is. Additionally, territory can mean sources of energy and resources. Although better relations in the region does not mean that territorial issues will be resolved, they would reduce tension over disputed areas.

These obstacles have existed for long periods, and are woven into the region's historical experiences. They are therefore very difficult to overcome.

Is there anything that these countries can do? Japan needs to continue forging closer diplomatic and economical ties with its neighbors. Japan has to re-engage East Asia. One of the problems in not being able to envision an East Asian identity is that most are unable to identify Japan as an East Asian state. This is largely due to Japan's relationship with the United States – an important player of the region, but one that is not Asian. It is important that Japan continues to work on the soft power it has created and use it to build more confidence. As one small action can destroy what has been built over a long time, Japan's leaders should be cautious as consequences may be regional.

One of the ways Japan can progress in relations with the ROK could be promotion of no-necktie summits between the Japanese and ROK governments. These would encourage more interactions between the leaders of both countries, and pave the way for better relations. The idea of acknowledging Japan's royal lineage to Korea has been broached. Although this is an interesting idea, it is a difficult and demanding step. Perhaps this could be done in smaller doses, such as introducing to the younger generations the positive parts of history where the two parties are on good terms. This could help educate future generations and enable them to have a more understanding outlook toward their neighbors.

Japan remains a vital player in keeping the U.S. in the region. This is important even though Japan must begin acting more independently in its foreign relations and security issues. Japan should continue to engage the U.S. in all aspects and, at the appropriate time, look into building a triangular relationship with the ROK as well.

Because history is intricately linked to this triangular relationship, it is important to consider the consequences whenever a decision is made, even if it is a focused action. Japan and the ROK have had conjoined histories. The U.S. and Japan also share a long history of friendship. These suggests that it is possible to envision a tri-party relationship among them, and this could be led by Japan. The road to positive cooperation is long and tedious but if effort is put in by every state, it is reachable.

# Trilateral Relations as the Cornerstone of Northeast Asian Security

By Kuniko Nakamura

In a decade, the unpredictable can happen. Who was to predict 9/11 and the consequent war against terror that changed the entire security spectrum around the globe? What will happen to the North Korean government in 10 years, what will be the outcome of the Six-Party Talks, the presidential election in ROK? Will the Korean Peninsula be reunited? What will happen to China's communist regime, China's economy, and its people? Will China-Taiwan relations remain stable? Would Japan have revised the constitution or changed the interpretation of collective defense? Would the U.S. government have a Republican or a Democratic administration?

Even without a drastic disruption on the scale of 9/11, seeing where the trilateral relationship is heading is difficult. Current obstacles may in 10 years be obsolete, due to unforeseen, more acute problems. With all that in mind, I can project an ideal situation in U.S.-Japan-ROK relations from a personal and Japanese perspective: what the author sees as current obstacles that need to be overcome and how Japan can overcome them. For that matter, ideal trilateral relations consist of the following: a strong respective security alliance between Japan and the U.S., a stable and reunited Korea and the U.S., and strong trilateral economic ties based on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the ROK and the U.S, as well as Japan and the ROK.

Current obstacles in fostering stronger ties between these three countries are threefold: the imbalance within trilateral relations and a heavier emphasis on Japan-U.S. relations, keeping the ROK relatively in the background. Japan has historical issues with the ROK that need to be overcome, and the U.S.-ROK alliance appears underrated by the U.S. in terms of alliance management. Northeast Asia presents security risks, with the Korean Peninsula situation among one of the imminent problems, but prospects for China are a more long-term one.

In order to establish a stronger trilateral relationship, fostering closer ties between Japan and the ROK would be the first step. The interpretation of history is difficult to overcome, since the Japanese government has extended numerous apologies, without sufficient acknowledgement by the Korean side. From the Japanese perspective, the lack of acceptance and acknowledgement stems from politicization of the issue on the Korean part, to which further apology on the Japanese side would not solve anything. A track-two approach by forming Japan-ROK historical interpretation study groups is a positive move, such as the report produced two years ago or the initiative of the Japan-Korea Cultural Foundation.

If the historic interpretation issue is difficult to resolve, a forward-leaning attitude should be taken by establishing stronger economic and cross-cultural relations. An effective measure is to establish a Free Trade Agreement framework or at least an Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and Korea, which is being discussed

and negotiated. The free flow of people through economic means will generate mutual dependency, recognition of shared values as business partners, and cultural understanding through people-to-people exchange.

The visa waiver program for Korean tourists that came into effect last month has generated a free flow of people between Japan and Korea. Young Korean tourists can be spotted in cultural tourist spots in Japan as well as in the fashionable modern part of Tokyo. Korean youth are able to experience and familiarize themselves with a Japan that is different from their preconceived negative notion. This measure was made possible through ratification of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) by Japan and the ROK last year, which quenched Japanese anxiety about unwelcome criminal groups entering Japan en masse. The visa waiver program and the ratification of the MLAT show how building a legal framework will be the first step in improving overall relations, then relying on the invisible hands of the people of the two countries.

On the peace and security of the Northeast Asian region, it is important that the ROK does not decide to align with China. China is a huge unpredictable risk in the coming years. While the U.S. and Japan wish for a democratic China with shared values, a democratic China may not necessarily be a problem-free China and it is in Japan's interest to contain China through the bilateral security alliance between Japan and the U.S., as well as the ROK and the U.S. Whatever the situation in the Korean Peninsula in 10 years, both Japan and the U.S. need to keep engaging the ROK.

A decade from now, Japan will still maintain its policy of exclusive defense, while engagement in collective self-defense would be an added factor in its defense policy. Japan would not have changed its policy maintaining the Japan-U.S. mutual security treaty as a pillar and would not disrupt the power balance in the region by engaging with another nation in a security relationship. The security landscape may change at any time in a manner that cannot be foreseen, but the alliance between the U.S. and the ROK should remain strong to gain a foothold for a secure and stable Northeast Asian region. Japan should maintain its passive-aggressive attitude as not to obstruct any positive developments between the U.S. and the ROK. At the same time, after establishing strong respective mutual security alliance, trilateral joint-training and other strategic cooperation with Japan, the U.S. and ROK would enhance their security partnership in the region.

Economic mutual dependency is key to building a positive relationship between Japan, the U.S. and ROK. People to people exchange through a visa waiver program facilitates cross-cultural understanding, with the MLAT providing a safe and cooperative environment against crime. In 10 years, I hope to see greater security cooperation based on a strong alliance between the U.S. and the ROK, as well as between Japan and the U.S. to enable a positive partnership to build a stable region. In 10 years, the trilateral relationship will be the most important relationship for Northeast Asia as well as for the Asia-Pacific region.



# The ROK-U.S.-Japan Partnership in 2017

By Junbeom Pyon

The trilateral partnership in 2017 will look drastically different from that of today. The reasons vary. The leaderships in Seoul and Washington will be replaced by new administrations in the next two years. The LDP-Komeito alliance may be hurt in the upcoming July Upper House election and a leadership change in Japan may occur. Furthermore, the planned constitutional change in Seoul may result in 8 consecutive years of one administration from 2008 to 2016. Whether Japan-U.S. friendly or China-friendly, an administration, once elected, is likely to maintain the same foreign policy for the next decade. Constitutional change in Japan is also an important factor that will change the nature of the Japanese role in the trilateral partnership. The revision of Article 9 will result in an increased presence of Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) in peacekeeping operations. Although welcome in Washington, this change will raise great concern in Seoul.

Exogenous factors also vary. The growing concern over China's reemergence in the region will draw the ROK and Japan closer together. But growing conservatism in Japan and uncertainties about how the new administration in Seoul will handle relations with Japan pose a great challenge to future ROK-Japan relations, and thus the future shape of the trilateral partnership. If ineffectively managed by the U.S., and the leadership in both countries, Seoul may attempt to do two things: it may attempt to diminish cooperation with Japan while strengthening ties with the U.S., thus relying on the U.S. to counterbalance China; or it will depart from the trilateral partnership and play the balance of power game by improving China-Korea relations while strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance. Neither outcome is desirable for Korea. Neither outcome is desirable for the U.S. or Japan either. But if Japan continues to behave irresponsibly and if Washington's silence over the Japanese conservatives' call for changes in Japan continues, Korea will change its strategy.

Second, the U.S.-ROK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) reached in early April, if ratified by both congresses, will strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance. This will inevitably lead to the rebalancing of the U.S.-ROK and the U.S.-Japan alliances.

Third, the changes in the U.S. approach to the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and Japan's continued focus on the abductees issue will trigger a split in the U.S.-Japan alliance. Although it won't cause an immediate or a visible damage to the alliance, policy and decision makers in Tokyo will reduce Japan's reliance on the U.S. and adopt a more independent foreign policy.

Fourth, the changing circumstances of the nuclear crisis combined with leadership changes in Washington and Seoul in the near future will produce great uncertainty about the security environment in Northeast Asia. More importantly, uncertainties about Pyongyang's readiness to abide by the Feb. 13 agreement will produce even greater uncertainties in the region.

If the Feb. 13 agreement is successfully carried out and the involved parties sign a permanent peace agreement, the Korean Peninsula will remain divided and interesting changes will occur: the U.S. and Japan will normalize relations with the DPRK; Pyongyang will play a unique role in America's hedging strategy against China; and the ROK's importance will diminish in the long-run. But the trilateral partnership among the U.S., ROK, and Japan will remain strong as doubts over Pyongyang's intentions will remain in Washington and Tokyo.

If Pyongyang violates the agreement and refuses to shut down its nuclear facilities, the U.S. will readopt hawkish policies and the nuclear crisis will get worse. As Seoul will not be able to convince its people and the international community why it should continue to aid Pyongyang, the nullification of the Feb. 13 agreement will unite Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo against Pyongyang. But Tokyo's worries over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons will increase and nuclear debates in Japan will concern both Seoul and Washington.

Finally, the shift of U.S. priorities in global affairs and its preoccupation with the Middle East will demand that the three militaries cooperate and respond more effectively to any unwelcome outcomes in the region. This change in U.S. priorities will also require that the ROK and Japan take a more proactive burden-sharing role in the region and increase their military budgets and activities. Most important, U.S. priorities in the Middle East will require that Seoul and Tokyo increase government-to-government and military-to-military cooperation.

The most desirable outcome in the next decade is a strengthened trilateral partnership supported by a firm 'ROK-Japan' leg of the triangle. But achieving that depends on many indigenous and exogenous factors.

From a Korean perspective, the greatest concern is Japan's wavering position on historical issues. Although the Japanese public is tired of Korea's complaints, the Seoul government cannot convince its people to remain calm when Japan's political leaders such as its prime minister, make statements that contradict Japan's past apologies. Korea's current handling of Abe's controversial statement on 'comfort women' suggests that Seoul is no longer as immature and ready to play the anti-Japan card. This is not to say that the future leaders in Korea will not use nationalism for domestic purposes. But it suggests that at least for now, Japan has an opportunity to improve its relations with the ROK and to restore itself as a responsible country in the region.

Japan, if it wishes to achieve the ideal outcome in the trilateral partnership, must ensure that its leadership does not question historical truth, as it will not help improve Japan-ROK relations. The Tokyo government must also work closely with Washington and communicate with Seoul to ensure that political leaders in Korea do not use the anti-Japan card for domestic purposes.

For the U.S., the key in turning the virtual ROK-Japan leg of the triangle into a real partnership is its careful management of ROK-Japan relations. While it is important

to help Japan correct behavior that raises concerns in the region and in the international community, it is also important that Washington does not damage Japanese pride. U.S. intervention may be seen as a violation of Japanese sovereignty. That said, it is also important, however, to assure the ROK that the U.S. is not going to remain silent if Tokyo misbehaves. After all, Japanese leaders' visits to Yasukuni Shrine, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's controversial statement on 'comfort women,' and Foreign Minister Taro Aso's "if (you have) blue eyes and blond hair, it's probably no good" statement should concern the U.S., the country that stopped Japanese imperialism in 1945, the most.



# U.S. Foreign Policy Goals in a New World

By Kevin Shepard

The basic tenets of U.S. foreign policy<sup>1</sup> have not wavered significantly since the beginning of World War II. Instead, a series of historically significant events have shaped and reshaped strategies through which these policies have been pursued during and since the Cold War. The end of the Cold War and the growing influence of China and India now challenge U.S. strategies just as much as challenges such as the development of nuclear programs by “rogue” states and the growing influence of non-state actors – not just the challenges related to the U.S.’ war on terror, but including bodies such as NGOs and MNCs with budgets larger than some states.

U.S. foreign policy has become less multilateral, but has not reverted to isolationism such as was seen post-WWI. The U.S. government is not at risk of withdrawing into the safety of our borders. Calls today for a less unilateral approach to global security are seen by some as a call for isolationism – a step back from the proactive, interventionist policies of the current administration. A return from unilateralism is long overdue, as the current administration has moved so far into the unilateral realm that it has redefined isolationism; it has managed to isolate the U.S. in more than a few influential circles around the globe while still engaging in international politics.<sup>2</sup>

U.S. foreign policy goals have consistently focused on the support for and spread of democratic and liberal ideals fostering free and representative governments supporting market economies. Cold War, post-Cold War, and post 9/11 eras have all redefined the parameters in which these goals are pursued and therefore demanded reinterpretation of environments and revaluations of strategies. The recent election of a Democratic Congress can be said to be an indicator of yet another shift in the perception of the desired role of the U.S. in global politics, but not necessarily a change in U.S. foreign policy goals. 9/11 changed the way we view the world, and the way we define our role in that world. In the current and near future administrations, fighting nonstate terrorism will remain a priority of foreign policy. This will affect foreign policy strategies in East Asia, where it will blend with a number of other important factors that are undergoing significant change and reshaping not only U.S. priorities and goals in the region, but also the tools to pursue them.

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<sup>1</sup> The U.S. has promoted free trade, open capital markets, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and general peace and prosperity around the world for the last six decades. For more on changing strategies in pursuit of these goals, see Drezner, Daniel W., “The New New World Order,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Isolationism can be defined as a policy of declining to enter into alliances, international agreements, etc. seeking to devote the entire efforts of one’s country to its own advancement. I suggest that a government can isolate itself not only by ‘closing its doors’, but by acting in a manner that results in its former allies ‘slamming their doors in its face.’

In 10-20 years, how will U.S. foreign policy look? What will U.S. strategy reflect? It is safe to say that the ideals guiding foreign policy will not fade. But how will the environment in which the U.S. – both domestically and internationally- pursues these ideals change? The current administration has focused on the “War on Terror.” However, following dubious results in Afghanistan, situations in Iraq triggering thoughts of Vietnam, and no significant improvement in domestic security, and worsening relations with allies around the globe, growing mistrust in U.S. politics from publics and governments overseas, and a loss of respect and cooperation, the Bush administration has recently softened some policies and appears more open to policies of engagement, even with states previously labeled as members of the “Axis of Evil.” Regaining the trust of allies and the cooperation and willingness to negotiate from those states with which the U.S. had differences will be vital to continuing U.S. policies of expansion of and support for free markets, governments, and publics.

This future direction of a return to ‘soft’ diplomacy and policies of engagement will be especially important in East Asia. As China pursues breakneck economic growth, accompanied by appropriately growing investment in military modernization, Washington faces a new challenge from this “strategic competitor.” China is offering South Korea and other partners of the U.S. a new choice – a strong regional hegemon and trade partner. In addition, China is taking full advantage of its unique partnership with North Korea to host six-party talks on the North’s nuclear programs, and is pushing its extension into a regional security forum.

While China is emerging as an alternative to the U.S. presence in the region, growing nationalism in both South Korea and Japan offer a glimpse at what may be a weakened U.S. military presence in Asia. While South Korea is pushing for a reduction of U.S. forces and return of war-time operational control of ROK troops, USFK are pulling back from the DMZ and planning for a more supportive, intelligence/operations role in its military alliance with Seoul. While nationalism in Japan is currently playing into the hands of USFJ, with Washington encouraging the rearmament of Japanese defense forces and expanded roles for these forces in support of U.S. operations in other theaters, USFJ is stationed in Japan at the convenience of Tokyo, and calls for the expulsion, or at least reduction, of the U.S. military “footprint” should be expected. While China will likely not encourage the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the region out of concern over the possibility of nationalist-propelled nuclear arms race, Beijing is still at odds with Washington over North Korea and Taiwan, and a reduced U.S. presence is in Beijing’s best interest.

Much of what shapes diplomatic relations in Northeast Asia over the next 20 years will revolve around the emergence of China and how South Korea, Japan, and the United States respond. All three need to engage China both diplomatically and economically, while at the same time ensuring that national interests are not damaged by the sheer enormity of the Chinese presence.

While China’s development will monopolize the concerns of many U.S. policy makers, it is through strengthened relations with Japan and South Korea that Washington

will answer the challenge of Beijing's dominance. This will need to be carefully negotiated as growing democracy in both Japan and South Korea will pose difficulties to U.S. security planners. In order to successfully maintain U.S. interests in Asia while pursuing traditional foreign policy goals and protecting our domestic economic and security issues, our alliances with Asian neighbors must shift away from patron-client frameworks and toward mutually beneficial economic partnerships.

South Korea and Japan have a number of historical and modern-day issues that are preventing closer relations between two neighbors that otherwise have many common interests; both governments pursue rectification for past wrongs only when the security environment allows for such. Their alliances with the U.S. will anchor their relationship in the next decade as both governments will be able to answer criticism of moves toward reconciliation based on the need to have a comparatively better relationship with Washington. As both continue to write their own ticket in international diplomatic circles, both are also reliant on their relationship with the U.S., and Washington should take advantage of this rivalry to maintain a presence in the region while downsizing its military footprint. By shifting to a more mutually engaging, 'soft' diplomatic approach to allies in the East, and remaining engaged in a supporting role as virtual allies hash out historical animosities, the U.S. can ensure its presence in Asia while boosting South Korean and Japanese diplomatic strength in an environment of relative safety and security.





## About the Authors

**Mr. Justin BISHOP** is a development intern at Pacific Forum CSIS and a Media Research Analyst at Cubic Defense Applications. He is pursuing his B.S. in Diplomacy and Military Studies at Hawaii Pacific University.

**Ms. Joni CAMINOS** is a development assistant at Pacific Forum CSIS. She received her B.S. in Cultural Anthropology and Minor in Geography from Southern Oregon University. She participated in projects for the Center for Sustainable Development in Atenas, Costa Rica.

**Mr. Jordan DOVER** is a Korean Flagship Fellow at the University of Hawaii. His research focus is East Asian security and U.S.-Asian alliances. In 2006 he completed an MA at the Graduate School for International Studies at Korea University and was an undergraduate in political science at Seattle Pacific University.

**Mr. Leif-Eric EASLEY** is a Ph.D. candidate at Harvard University's Department of Government. His dissertation examines national identity, bilateral trust and security cooperation among Japan, South Korea, China and the U.S. Leif has served as a teaching fellow for Asian International Relations and American Foreign Policy at Harvard and is currently a Visiting Scholar at the UCLA Department of Political Science.

**Ms. Shirley FLORES** is a journalist for the Manila bureau of *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* (NIKKEI), covering political, business and economic news in the Philippines as well as regional events. She is finishing her masters in International Studies at the University of the Philippines and has done papers on Asian regional integration, globalization, and security issues.

**1Lt. Christopher M. GIN** is a U.S. Army officer pursuing a Master's Degree in Asian Studies at the University of Hawaii. His focus of study is on cross-Strait relations, particularly U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. In addition to attending classes, he interns during the week as a China Desk Officer at the United States' Pacific Command Headquarters at Camp Smith. Upon degree completion, Chris will return to the field Army with duty at Schofield Barracks on Oahu. He received his bachelor degree in English from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 2005 and has been with the Young Leaders program since 2006.

**Ms. Dianna HUMMEL** obtained her bachelors degree in Political Science from Brigham Young University Hawaii. She is currently attending Hawaii Pacific University as a masters candidate in the Diplomacy and Military Studies program and works as a research assistant intern at the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies. Her research interests include China Japan Relations and Northeast Asia Security.

**Mr. In-Seung KAY** received his M.A. in Security Studies from Georgetown University and a M.A. and a B.A. in Political Science from Korea University in Seoul, Korea. He

has also interned at The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation, and Ilmin International Relations Institute.

**Mr. KOTANI Tetsuo** is a PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at Doshisha University, and is currently a Visiting Fellow at the Center for U.S.-Japan Studies and Cooperation at Vanderbilt University. His dissertation focus is on the home porting of the USS midway at Yokosuka and implications for regional security. His other research interests include American diplomatic history, U.S.-Japan relations and international relations in the Asia-Pacific region. His articles include a co-authored chapter, with Dr. James Auer, on “Reaffirming the Taiwan Clause: Japan’s National Interest in the Taiwan Strait and the US-Japan Alliance” for a project at the National Bureau of Asian Research. He received the MA degree from the Graduate School of American Studies at Doshisha University and the BA degree from Osaka Kyoiku University

**Ms. Adrienne LI-TAN** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies. She graduated from the National University of Singapore in 2003 with a BA (Pass with Merit). Her concentration was in Political Science and European Studies and was also part of the University Scholar's Program. After graduation, Adrienne went on to pursue her lifelong interest in security and military studies, and matriculated into the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies (IDSS) in 2004. She graduated the next year with an MSc (Strategic Studies). Since then, she has served a year as an analyst in the Singapore Armed Forces and subsequently went on to pursue her PhD at IDSS in 2006. Her core research interest includes the Revolution in Military Affaires, force transformation and technology, as well as East Asian military relations.

**Ms. Julia Joo-A LEE** is special assistant for Foreign Policy for the Office of Assemblyman Park Jin, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea. She was a research associate at the International Crisis Group, and an intern in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC. Her background includes: extensive committee coverage works for the Foreign Affairs and Trade Committee and Intelligence Committee; research/analysis/fieldwork on the topic of North Korean refugees. Ms. Lee received her B.A. in political science from Korea University in 2006 and also attended Harvard University with a concentration in Government in 2004-2005.

**Ms. NAKAMURA Kuniko** is a vice consul at the Japanese Consulate General in Honolulu, Hawaii.

**Mr. Junbeom PYON**, 2006-2007 Vasey Fellow, is from Seoul, Korea. He did graduate studies in international relations at Waseda University in Tokyo and received his M.A. in Government and a B.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins University. As an undergraduate, he was awarded the Ripon William F. Clinger Fellowship. Mr. Pyon has interned in the Office of the Under Secretary General at the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, where he prepared briefs on the Korean Peninsula and Iranian nuclear issues and compiled *Disarmament Digest*. He has also interned at the Brookings

Institution, the Korean Embassy in Washington, D.C., and the Seoul-based Korea Institute for Defense Analyses.

**Mr. SAHASHI Ryo** is a PhD candidate at the Graduate school of Law and Politics at the University of Tokyo. He has worked as a Research Fellow of the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, as a Research Assistant for the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and as a Research Assistant for the Social Science Institute at the International Christian University. Ryo received his Masters of Law and Political Science from the Graduate School of Law and Politics at the University of Tokyo and his B.A. in International Relations from the College of Liberal Arts at the International Christian University in Japan. His research experience includes research contributions to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry on East Asian integration, the Japan Defense Agency on trends of international security and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Chinese military affairs.

**Mr. Kevin SHEPARD** is a Korean Flagship Fellow at the University of Hawaii. He is a PhD candidate in DPRK Politics/Unification Studies at the Graduate School of North Korean Studies, Kyungnam University and a researcher for the Institute for Far Eastern Studies. His interests include DPRK economics and international cooperation for DPRK development, NE Asian cooperative security schemes, and US interests and positions in NE Asian political and economic realms.

**Ms. Ana VILLAVICENCIO** is the program officer at Pacific Forum CSIS. She received her dual B.A. in Environmental Studies and International Relations from Hawaii Pacific University and an M.A. in Political Science from University of Hawaii. She participated in organizing a workshop on energy projects to help alleviate poverty in Africa at the UNEP – Risø Center in Denmark in 2004 and completed an internship working with projects involving sustainable energy in Mali. She became an East West Center Alumni after joining the East West Center Education Department as a Student Affiliate in 2004.

**Mr. Dae-Yeob YOON** is senior program officer of the East Asia Foundation where he is responsible for planning and operating various academic programs such as Council on East Asia Affairs (CEAA), *Global Asia*, and EAF Research Grant Program. He received his B.A. and M.A. from the Yonsei University in the field of international political economy. He have published several articles and book chapters about globalization and security policy in East Asia, trade policy after the Cold War, and comparative analysis of institutional change after the financial crisis between Korea and Japan.