Confidence and Confusion: National Identity and Security Alliances in Northeast Asia

By Brad Glosserman and
Scott Snyder

Issues & Insights
Vol. 8-No. 16

Honolulu, HI
September 2008

Pacific Forum CSIS

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

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

A big debt of gratitude goes to Allan Song for his support for this project (and numerous others), as well as the Korea Foundation, which provide financial backing. We want to thank all the folks who provided feedback on our work as it progressed: participants in our January 2008 Washington D.C. workshop, the May 2008 conference on national identity in Japan and the ROK, and other reviewers who corrected our thinking and kept us focused.

A very special thank you goes to all the individuals who took the time to fill our our surveys and took the time to meet with us in Seoul and Tokyo and discuss their views.

We also would like to thank Ed Reed, The Asia Foundation's Korea Representative, for his support, and to acknowledge the assistance of Program Officer Chun Sang Moon for his help in translating surveys into Korean and for interpreting at several of our interviews in Seoul, and the administrative support of Hyun Jung Lee from The Asia Foundation's Korea office, who set up many of our interviews in Seoul. Fan Li gets a big mahalo for helping organize the Tokyo interviews and translating those meetings.

At Pacific Forum, our Vasey Fellows – Shiuan-ju Chen, Jiyon Shin, Tomoko Tsunoda, and Shanshan Wang – did yeoman work translating surveys and tabulating results. Desiree Fernandez and Georgette Almeida were instrumental in getting surveys out and interviews transcribed. President Ralph Cossa provided invaluable editorial and intellectual guidance.

Executive Summary

Domestic political debates over national identity issues are increasingly affecting the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances. A new international security environment, evolving definitions and perceptions of threat, and changes in the structure of domestic politics in Japan and South Korea suggest the need for adjustments in the way the United States manages its alliance relationships in Northeast Asia.

Surveys and interviews of foreign policy elites in both countries provide insight into options for alliance management. Key findings for Japan include:

- Japan's preferred international role is "helping solve environmental problems." "Developing new technologies" was a distant second, followed by "developing and stabilizing the Asian economy" and "developing and stabilizing the global economy."
- "Strengthen relations with the U.S." is their top foreign policy priority; "strengthen relations with China" was a distant second, and "make more international contributions" was considerably further down the scale.
- China looms large in Japanese thinking. Slightly more than half believe China will be Japan's most important economic partner; 43 percent said the U.S. and China are equally important. Seventy-six percent of our respondents in Japan do not trust China to act responsibly in the world. Moreover, 58 percent identified China as the biggest threat to Japan. Forty-four percent said Japan and China are equally important *to the U.S.* The seeds of insecurity are deep in the U.S.-Japan relationship.
- The alliance is strong. Large majorities say the U.S. is Japan's most important security partner, relations between Japan and the U.S. are good or excellent; believe the alliance is vital to Japan's security, believe U.S. bases in Japan are important to the country's national security, and believe the U.S. should keep them.

Key findings for Korea include:

- When asked which country their values most resembled, over one-third picked the U.S., slightly less than one-third picked Japan, and one-fifth chose China.
- There are relatively cool feelings toward North Korea. More than two-thirds describe North Korea as the South's main enemy.
- Like the Japanese, views of China are conflicted, but Korean views show greater ambivalence about China's future path. Koreans consider China to be their most important economic partner and the U.S. their most important security partner. One-quarter identified China as the biggest threat to Korea.
- The state of the alliance is good. Over 90 percent agreed that the alliance is vital to Korea's security, that it should be maintained, and that U.S. military bases are important to regional stability. Sixty-five percent consider the alliance to be the most important contributor to Korea's security.
- Ninety-five percent believe the alliance should be maintained even if the Korean Peninsula is unified. More than half supported the maintenance of a residual U.S. force and bases after Korean reunification.

There is a relative convergence in views among elites within the U.S., Japan, and South Korea that can provide a basis for deepening and regionalizing security cooperation in Northeast Asia. There are overlapping threat perceptions stemming from unease about the future of China and North Korea. There are also significant obstacles to deepened trilateral security cooperation. Smoothing out those wrinkles will not be easy, but should not be insurmountable. Equally important is the need to ensure that the rationale for enhanced cooperation reflect the convergence of social and political interests and need not incite a negative Chinese reaction.

Values-based cooperation, properly cultivated, might overcome the emotional issues between South Korea and Japan. A convergence is underway among elites. It is unclear whether elites can provide the political leadership to push public opinion toward greater cooperation, or whether emotions will dominate these relationships.

The United States might want to reconsider its approach to alliance modernization in Northeast Asia. The consideration of global threats and configuration of a force to meet those needs may be best served by regionalization of its alliances in Asia. It might be more effective to pursue integration on a regional basis through an organic, bottom-up approach that responds to the local needs of Washington's respective allies and then broadens in ways that promote greater regional cooperation and support for global missions based on the collective interests of the three countries rather than a top-down approach that conforms to a global template. This process could provide a benchmark for security cooperation among like-minded allies beyond the three countries. Or it may serve to develop standards that can be used to deepen and broaden security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

The first step is getting leaders in the three countries to believe that trilateral cooperation is desirable and possible. A commitment to genuine trilateralism could undercut the appeal of nationalism. Second, the three countries need to establish and institutionalize trilateral discussions among various bureaucracies that have common and shared interests. Topics should include alliance interests, security cooperation, trade and economic concerns, financial stabilization, North Korea, and China, to start just a short list. Third, the Pacific Command's multilateral security exercises should serve as the basis for an initial consideration of opportunities for operational cooperation.

While the two alliances are strong, there is no room for complacency. Japanese and Koreans seek a more equitable sharing of burdens within their alliance and each wants to be treated as a more equal partner. As publics are less enthused about such cooperation than elites, greater efforts are needed to build public support.

The desire for equality is understandable, but it creates obligations for the partner. Real equality requires partners to develop a shared vision and recognize the obligations accompanying an ownership stake in the alliance. Most important is the need for political leaders who put long-term national interest above short-term political gains.

Confidence and Confusion: National Identity and Security Alliances in Northeast Asia

Domestic political debates over national identity issues are increasingly affecting the conduct and management of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances. These alliances were originally forged during the Cold War to meet common security needs. Traditionally, external threat perceptions have been decisive in shaping the context for understanding U.S. alliances with Japan and South Korea, while domestic political factors had considerably less influence on foreign policy formation related to alliance issues in Japan and South Korea. But times, threats, and thinking have changed. The international security environment has changed since the end of the Cold War and evolving definitions and perceptions of threat are shaping public opinion. Meanwhile, public opinion is increasingly important in the management of foreign policy in South Korea and Japan. Domestic actors are trying to mobilize support based on "hot-button" national identity issues often at the expense of alliance solidarity. In response, alliance management concepts are moving away from a focus on "threat" and toward a focus on "values." All these factors involve domestic politics in Japan and South Korea and require adjustments in the way the United States manages its alliance relationships in Northeast Asia.

Domestic politics play an expanding role in South Korean and Japanese foreign and security policies. In particular, political issues related to questions of national identity have emerged as irresistible tools for politicians to gain domestic political support, with the unfortunate side-effect that doing so may generate potential obstacles to the smooth management of alliance-related issues. The role of public opinion has grown either as a result of the deepening of democracy or because political leaders have found such issues useful in mobilizing political support to distract from poor domestic performance. Issues such as the territorial dispute between Japan and South Korea over Tokdo/Takeshima, the Japanese prime minister's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, or merely questioning whether political leaders have done every possible thing to defend the national interest vs. seeking compromise in international agreements over fishing rights or agricultural import measures become easy vehicles to defend – or attack – incumbent politicians and impugn their "nationalist" foreign policy credentials.

As public opinion has become more capable of influencing foreign and security policies, it is necessary to consider public perceptions in addition to capacities and threat assessments as influences on policy formation in Japan and South Korea. This rising influence of public opinion has resulted in new pressures that make managing the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan relationships more difficult, as a more pluralistic social and political context begins to affect definitions of security and to influence perceptions of the external security environment and the alliance relationships with the United States.

A highly specialized bureaucracy consisting of professional security personnel on both sides has traditionally managed alliance-related issues with little support or

interference from political leaders. Despite bureaucratic turnover, the main job of defense professionals was to keep the bureaucratic wheels well-oiled and to keep extraneous political issues from inhibiting security cooperation. J.J. Suh identifies institutional ties in the service of the alliance, which he refers to as "asset specificity," as a source of alliance longevity despite apparently diminished external threat perceptions with the end of the Cold War.[1] But those ties by themselves have proven insufficient to prevent new political challenges to alliance management: ties have also been weakened by the expanded role and influence of new stakeholders – public opinion and civil society actors – that increasingly influence foreign policy in both South Korea and Japan. Professional alliance managers are no longer insulated from politics; rather, specific sensitive issues in alliance management have become political, requiring buy-in from a broader range of stakeholders, many of whom are focused on the alliance as one among many other issues competing for attention.

This process has been facilitated by changes in the structure of domestic politics in both countries. In Japan, the long-standing dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) was challenged in the early 1990s. A more complex security environment has forced Japanese citizens to consider questions that had been set aside during the Cold War. A crisis of confidence in Japan's political leadership, increasing public awareness of changes in the international environment and fears that Japan's security may be affected by those changes, and the emergence of China as a possible regional and global leader raised uncomfortable questions in Japan regarding its identity and place in Northeast Asia and in the world. These questions reignited a long-dormant debate over identity issues as one focus of or theme in political discourse. Questions about whether Japan should consider itself a "pacifist nation" or a "normal" nation were a reformulation of debates over Japan's role in the world; historical national identity symbols including the Yasukuni Shrine became touchstones through which Japanese public opinion influenced Japan's international image, security posture, and foreign policy.

Likewise, South Korea's economic and political transformation, which coincided with the end of the Cold War, has had implications for South Korean self-perceptions and relationships with its neighbors, as well as for the role and influence of South Korea's public discourse on foreign policy. South Korea's economic development has given the country new options, expanded South Korea's capacity to play political and economic roles no longer directly dependent on U.S. foreign policy, and transformed the security relationship from a patron-client relationship into one in which South Korea desires to make contributions in the international political arena independent of the United States. A political transition from authoritarianism to democracy gave South Korea's public a voice on political and security issues that was simply not possible in an authoritarian government facing an existential security threat. South Korea's economic transformation provided the political confidence needed to set aside a long-standing competition for legitimacy with North Korea in order to pursue new political initiatives that would promote inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation. Here too, identity issues shaped the discussion as South Korea's leaders redefined North Koreans not as enemies but as

[1] Jae-jung Suh, *Power, Interest, and Identity in Military Alliances*, Palgrave, 2007.

long-lost brothers in need of assistance. This domestic political transformation had a direct impact on management of the U.S.-ROK security alliance.

Finally, the rationale for the U.S. security alliances with Japan and South Korea has undergone a transition from a rationale based on threats to a rationale based on shared values. This recasting of the rationale for the alliances is premised on the belief that the societies indeed share common social, economic, and political systems that emphasize similar values and social structures. It minimizes converging perceptions of threat, which may be transitory, and replaces it with shared institutional or system characteristics that ultimately have domestic rather than solely international origins.

Lord Palmerston's axiom is that "Nations have no permanent friends or allies; they only have permanent interests," but a focus on shared values of capitalism and democracy that result from common systems and institutions implies that those values will lead to a convergence of interests and thus provide the "glue" necessary to hold alliances together because common values will lead to common interests. A values-focused rationale for alliance cohesion thus relies implicitly on (previously untested) assumptions regarding the convergence of domestic political factors in addition to the international security environment as a basis for alliance cohesion.

About the Survey

To more fully understand how identity issues in South Korea and Japan influence foreign policy, the principal investigators used several methodologies. First, we conducted open-ended interviews during October-December 2007 with professors, media, elites, and foreign policy professionals to explore their perceptions of how South Korean and Japanese self-perceptions have changed and the extent to which those changes have influenced foreign policy formation in each country. Questions focused on how Japanese and South Korean policies and perceptions of immediate neighbors have changed in order to gain a sense of the trajectory of relationships within the region and to understand how Japanese and South Koreans view their own social and political development in a regional context.

We also conducted a poll of over 500 South Korean and over 500 Japanese elites drawn from Pacific Forum CSIS and Asia Foundation mailing lists in December 2007-April 2008. The South Korean and Japanese poll drew 150 and 133 responses, respectively. This survey should not be regarded as a scientific sampling, but captures elite opinion data comparable to more extensive public opinion surveys in both countries and utilizes many of the same questions so that our results can be placed into the context of views held by the broader public in each country. In addition, we conducted a review of relevant public opinion polls to identify questions and responses that reveal insight into South Korean and Japanese self-perceptions and perceptions of neighbors. This polling provides additional data points that are useful in interpreting our poll and the broader trend lines of South Korean and Japanese public opinion.

The rest of this paper interprets the data based on the survey and interview results. First, we explain the context and results of surveys and interviews in Japan and then do the same for Korea. Then, we closely analyze information about the Korea-Japan relationship based on survey results and elite interviews in both countries. Finally, we lay out implications for U.S. alliance strategies and additional conclusions based on our data.

Japan's identity crisis

The post-Cold War era has not been kind to Japan. The country has sustained several body blows that shook the pillars of Japan's post-World War II national identity. The first, and most debilitating, was the prolonged period of economic stagnation between 1991 and 2001 that became known as "the lost decade." During that time, Japan's average annual economic growth plunged to less than 1 percent, a stark contrast to the 4 percent average annual growth of the previous decade, resulting in "the deepest slump of any developed economy since the Great Depression."[2] This experience undermined Japanese self confidence, which rested on a belief that the country had developed a superior version of capitalism that overcome the tensions of the Anglo-American model and would result in "Japan as Number 1."

Economic stagnation produced other, equally painful, results. The contraction of the economy deprived the Japanese government of the funds it needed to finance its diplomacy. As they battled recession, businesses retreated and tax revenues slumped. This deprived Tokyo of the economic largesse – both in the form of overseas development assistance and its extensive overseas private-sector business networks – that it used to compensate for its refusal to use the military as an instrument of state power. Equally significant, the slump devalued the Japanese economic model in the eyes of other nations, especially those in Southeast Asia. This undermined Japan's "soft power" and diminished its political and diplomatic influence as a country once viewed as a beacon for its accomplishments became "just another nation."

Other core components of Japan's postwar identity eroded at the same time. At the end of the Cold War, Japanese were buoyed by the belief that international law was ascendant and that international institutions would be the arbiters of international disputes. The world's response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait confirmed that optimism, although it also exposed the limitations inherent in Japan's willingness to provide only economic and not military contributions in support of public goods necessary to maintain international order. Developments in East Asia would also burst that bubble. Two North Korean nuclear crises, a Taiwan Strait crisis, the 1998 Taepodong missile that flew over Japan, and other incidents convinced many Japanese that Northeast Asia is a dangerous neighborhood. The South Asia nuclear tests of 1998 and the failure of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) to deal with North Korea and the United Nations' inability to settle international crises damaged Japanese faith in international institutions. The promise of a post-Cold War world and a new world order evaporated. Meanwhile,

[2] "Japan's lost decade," *The Economist*, Sept. 26, 2002.

the rise of China shook a bedrock assumption that Japan would lead Asia and recalibrated the regional balance of power.[3]

At home, Japanese were shaken by the failure of their national security apparatus during the 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake and the sarin gas attack on Tokyo subways several months later. Both underscored vulnerabilities in Japan's response to emergencies and shook confidence in their leadership's ability to respond to crises. A series of mishaps in the nuclear industry and a string of product safety fiascoes demonstrated the shortcomings extended to the corporate sector as well.

The unease created by these developments manifests itself in social phenomena, such as falling birthrates, growing unemployment, homelessness, a rising suicide rate, and increasing crime.[4] Finally, the end of the Cold War undermined the consensus that stabilized Japanese politics throughout the Cold War. The end of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) rule in 1993 was one blow, and it ushered in a period of political instability and uncertainty – compounded by the inability to end the recession – that shook the nation's faith in its political system. At the same time, the Socialists' abandonment of bedrock positions – such as opposition to the Self- Defense Forces – to permit Murayama Tomoiichi to become prime minister discredited the left, and helped shift the center of Japan's political spectrum to the right. This, along with the rise to power of a younger generation of politicians with different thinking about Japan's international role, forced the nation to reopen debates about national identity and its place in the world.[5]

The conventional narrative argues that the end of the Cold War lifted many restraints on Japanese nationalism, which in turn yielded a more assertive foreign policy. Proponents of this view point to the gradual expansion of the role of Japan's Self-Defense Force (SDF), including its participation in overseas peacekeeping operations, the extension of Japanese responsibilities for regional security under its alliance with the U.S., and more aggressive diplomacy, evidenced by Tokyo's demand for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, its refusal to buckle under to Chinese and South Korean criticism for the behavior of its politicians, in particular the visits of former Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro to Yasukuni Shrine. Talk of constitutional revision to change Article 9, legislation to honor the national flag and anthem, ministry of education

[3] For a more complete summary of this process, see Ralph Cossa and Brad Glosserman, *U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation: has Japan become the Great Britain of Asia?* (Honolulu: Pacific Forum CSIS, *Issues & Insights*, Vol.3 No. 05), March 2005.

[4] Jeff Kingston provides a lengthy and depressing catalogue of woes in "Japan's Quiet Transformation: Social Change and Civil Society in the Twenty-First Century," Routledge/Curzon, 2004, pp.1-35. David Leheny documents the rise of "a vague anxiety" in "Think Global, Fear Local: Sex, Violence, and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan," Cornell University Press, 2006, pp. 27-47.

[5] While Japanese foreign policy was consistent throughout the Cold War era, there was no single view shared by all Japanese. As Richard Samuels makes clear, Japanese thinking about foreign policy and grand strategy has been a rich weave of divergent approaches and outlooks. The differences were largely muted and the direction steady, despite loud voices on either fringe, because of the success of the Yoshida doctrine and the conservative nature of Japanese society. See, Richard Samuels, "Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia," Cornell University Press, 2007, and Mike M. Mochizuki, "Neo-Revisionist History and Japan's Security Normalization," paper prepared for the OSC on-line discussion of Japanese nationalism, Jan. 28-Feb. 8, 2008.

approved textbooks that "whitewash history" and efforts to promote traditional values, the assertion of Japanese claims to disputed territories, and the erosion of taboos about the discussion of defense options such as nuclear weapons and offensive strike capabilities are all rolled out as proof that Japan is changing and becoming more nationalistic. An extreme variant of this view argues that the "The Japan that can say 'No'" as a harbinger of Japanese ambitions and worries that the reassertion of Japanese nationalism will lead the country back down the path of militarism and the mistakes that led to the Great Pacific War.

A more judicious approach argues that Japan has embraced "reluctant realism." These advocates see in Japan a slow and hesitant embrace of a more traditional approach to security policy, with Tokyo prodded by the U.S. to be a more active partner and shoulder a larger burden more befitting a country with its economic might and interests. For this school, Japan is to be applauded for breaking free of constraints that deprived it of chances to increase its international stature and deprived the world of the substantial contributions that Tokyo could have made.

For still others, Japan's future should be shaped by a considerably diminished set of expectations, one more suited to a "middle power" rather than one of the world's leading economies. This outlook obliges Tokyo to find common cause with other, like-minded states, searching for cooperative, multilateral solutions to international problems. The outlook is activist, liberal and constructivist. It is, in many ways, the antithesis of the first scenario outlined above.

Finally, a fourth group would like Japan to continue on its postwar trajectory, keeping its pacifist constitution, avoiding a high international profile, and focusing on its economic development. Its preference for a low profile means that this group sometimes finds common ground with the third school but some of its members prefer that Tokyo avoid all international engagement – typically viewed as entanglement – out of fear that it would unleash a militarist and hegemonic leadership. It is deeply anti-militarist (as can be members of the third group) and, concerned that Japan's democratic roots are not deep; it rejects all temptations that might push the country off its rails.

The tensions and contradictions in these positions have not been resolved. Japan's current political gridlock – the product of a divided Diet, with the opposition controlling the Upper House of Parliament for the first time in history – is both a symptom of the current situation as well as a contributing factor. The result, as one Foreign Ministry official explained, is a country "in crisis." Japanese are engaged in "soul searching" as they try to reach a consensus on answers to 21st century issues and concerns.[6] The debate over foreign policy – and Japan's contemplation of becoming a "normal" country – is part of this larger effort. For us, the vital question is whether and how debates over national identity issues provide clues to the ultimate resolution of these questions.

[6] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes are from author interviews in Tokyo in October and December 2007.

Understanding Japanese national identity

To better understand Japanese perceptions of themselves and their country's role in the world, we talked to a cross-section of Japanese and developed a survey that was distributed to Japanese security analysts and professionals.[7] The results provide some insight into the contours of the national debate about identity and foreign policy that is underway in Japan.

As a starting point, it is worth noting that attempts to get interviewees to "define" characteristics associated with Japan's national identity were abysmal failures. With just three exceptions, the people we talked to could not understand the question when we asked them to name key elements of Japanese national identity. Unlike our Korean interviewees – who without hesitation and without fail rattled off three characteristics they associated with Korea's national identity – Japanese required clarification to the point that we were forced to rephrase the question: it became, "how do you think other countries see Japan and its place in the world?" As one interviewee noted, "our identity is like the air we breathe, the earth we walk on. It is not something we are conscious of."

The three individuals who did "get" our question responded that Japanese identity rested on the country's postwar economic success and its democracy, a tradition of pacifism that emerged from the disaster of World War II, an insular and conservative culture that posits a fundamental difference between Japan and the rest of the world, and a pragmatic approach to policy that puts results above principle.

Japanese values

Identity crisis notwithstanding, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents (92 percent) are proud to be Japanese. This could reflect some sample bias: our respondents tended to be heavily weighted toward foreign policy professionals and internationalist scholars whose work encourages a sense of identification with their country (although they could be unhappy with government policies). By contrast, Cabinet Office surveys from 1980 to 2006 show a consistent "patriotic feeling" at about 50 percent, with slight variations. And comparative studies show Japanese exhibit the lowest sense of patriotism among Asian nations. According to Asia Barometer, 27 percent of Japanese are "proud of their own nationality," considerably less than the 46 percent of Chinese, 75 percent of Malays, and 93 percent of Thais. One interviewee suggested Japanese demonstrate "puchi" (small) nationalism, a "feel-good nationalism" characterized by flag waving at soccer games or sporting events. Another characterized it as a form of "cultural confidence." A university professor noted this tendency in his students: "they think we (Japanese) are cool enough."

[7] The survey was sent to Japanese recipients of the Pacific Forum CSIS's *PacNet* newsletter, a database of nearly 4,000 people worldwide who are interested in foreign policy and international relations, about 535 of whom are Japanese. In addition, surveys were given to Japanese individuals on the Asia Foundation's database, and Japanese individuals attending conferences or meetings, bringing the entire sample size to about 560. We received 133 responses. Clearly, the pool of respondents is not typical: this is a self-selected group of people who are very interested in foreign policy. In addition, several interviewees suggested that ordinary Japanese aren't interested in such issues.

There was disagreement about whether nationalism was on the rise. While a Tokyo University professor was reluctant to say the Japanese were less arrogant 15 years ago, the majority of our respondents felt the country was exhibiting more patriotic sentiment. Paradoxically, several of our interviewees attributed that tendency to the country's changing international status: as Japan's relative power diminished, its citizens compensate by boosting national sentiment. A left-leaning journalist blamed "rising frustration and dissatisfaction with our position in the world. There is an unhealthy victim sentiment – despite all our goodwill, our intentions and contributions, we are not appreciated."

There is a fear among Japan's neighbors – and even on the left within the country – that the rise to power of a younger generation with no direct experience of war and increasingly nationalist sentiment could produce a "normal" Japan that makes the same mistakes of the 1920s and '30s. None of our interviews substantiated that concern. All of them felt that rising nationalist sentiment in Japan was good for relations with the U.S. as it would spur Japan to be a better partner.

Sixty-three percent of our respondents have faith that Japan will be a better country in a decade; only 44 percent believe the global situation will be better in 10 years.

But what kind of country will Japan be? A decade ago, then Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro launched economic reforms that some – critics and supporters, both at home and abroad – said would transform Japan into a "more Western" economy and society. Prime Minister Koizumi made reform the cornerstone of his administration and even ran "assassins" against his own party in elections to defeat LDP stalwarts who opposed his plans to overhaul the postal insurance and finance system. That effort solidified his image as a leader who fights for principles, and the Japanese public seems to support the underlying rationale for that effort. In our survey, 75 percent agreed Japan ought to be a society where one can compete freely and wealth is distributed according to achievement.

But there is ambivalence. Our survey respondents confirmed their faith in egalitarianism – a traditional feature of Japanese society – by dividing 48-50 when asked if Japan ought to be a society were the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of one's achievement. The same inclination is evident in a national poll in which a clear majority (58.4 percent) expressed preference for "a Northern European-style welfare model"; the "U.S.-style competitive society model" garnered only 6.7 percent support.[8] And then there is rising concern about the impact of widening disparities. When Abe Shinzo took the prime minister's office in fall 2006, one opinion survey showed 80 percent of respondents considered a growing income gap a serious problem for Japan.[9] Facing the prospect of an increasingly diverse country, the image of a united,

[8] A national poll by Hokkaido University professor Yamaguchi Jiro, cited in "Japan Struggles with Decisions on Foreign Investment," OSC Analysis, April 7, 2008.
[9] "Abe's Job Jar: the Public's Priorities for a 'Beautiful' Japan," Department of State Office of Research, Opinion Analysis, Nov. 17, 2006, available from the Open Source Center.

homogeneous nation is increasingly appealing.[10] One interviewee explained that younger Japanese have come of age among turmoil and instability; as a result they seek security and seem increasingly conservative. As a former LDP politician explained, "reform has another face: traditional Japanese values."

The perception that Japan is an insular country may need adjustment. Ninety percent of respondents felt Japan should be open and flexible to foreign influence; indeed, two-thirds believe it already is. The outlook prevails even when asked about specific cases. For example, 87 percent think international marriage is good; 76 percent are prepared to welcome foreign investment as a rule (there is virtual unanimity when it is accepted on a case by case basis); and 67 percent believe immigration to Japan is good. Ninety percent of respondents agreed that globalization is mostly good for Japan.

When asked about the areas in which Japan excels, the answers provided few surprises. Our respondents identified the safeness of the society as number one. Its culture and arts were second, its economic power only just behind, and its science and technology were fourth. Since many surveys show Japanese think of themselves as "green" or having a special bond with nature, we expected the environment to figure more prominently in our survey. In fact, however, "nature and environment" ranked seventh out of the 12 choices provided. Our results echo those of surveys completed a decade ago. Then, Japanese rated "safety" as the number one feature in which their country excels (the only response that over 50 percent of respondents endorsed), followed by "the education system," "history and tradition," "culture and the arts," and science and technology." The survey analysis concluded that, when compared to other nations (China, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, India, the U.S., and other European nations), "Japan's loss of confidence stands out."[11]

Our respondents were asked to identify three top national priorities; a "first priority" got three points, second received two, and third one. The results showed "promoting economic growth" tied with "promoting regional security" for first, although "reforming the economy" was third, suggesting that our respondents put more emphasis on the economy.[12] Fourth, but considerably lower down the list in terms of emphasis, was "strengthening national security." "Revise the constitution" was fifth, and "assert international leadership" was sixth. This is one of the first indications of one of our key conclusions: there is little reason to worry about an increasingly assertive Japan.

Foreign and security policy

Japanese believe that they should be engaged in the world. Only one respondent said the country should not take an active part in world affairs. Several interviewees, however, expressed concern about "rising disinterest" in the outside world among

[10] See for example, "The Gap Society," by Christian Caryl and Akiko Kashiwagi, *Newsweek*, Nov. 12, 2007.
[11] Dentsu Institute of Human Studies, "Emerging Signs of Change: Comparative Analysis of Global Values 96-98, p. 2.
[12] This is consistent with the findings of the Department of State poll cited in note 9.

younger Japanese. One of our interviewees – the professor whose students were "cool enough" – suggested their cultural confidence was causing them to lose interest in the outside world. A journalist blamed "globalization fatigue" for encouraging them to focus inward.

Fears of entanglement aren't prominent among our respondents. When asked to rank priorities for that role, "helping solve environmental problems" was far and away the first choice. "Developing new technologies" was a distant second, followed by "developing and stabilizing the Asian economy" and "developing and stabilizing the global economy." Again, these findings are consistent with other research. Cabinet Office surveys show steady support for helping solve environmental problems at the top of the list of roles Japan should play.[13] A decade ago, the only international role that more than 50 percent of Japanese could agree on for their country was "contributions to the improvement of the global environment," (which 77 percent endorsed). In that survey, less than 40 percent backed the "arbitration of interests and opinions in the region," 28 percent supported "arbitration of interests and opinions of the international society," and still less – 26 percent – felt Japan should contribute to solving international conflicts. All three numbers represented declines from a survey done two years earlier.[14]

Our respondents made "strengthen relations with the U.S." their top foreign policy priority; "strengthen relations with China" was a distant second, and "make more international contributions" was considerably further down the scale.

But again, our data shows little support for the idea that Japan is becoming more assertive in international affairs. Eight-nine percent say Japan should assert its interests, but an even higher number – 92 percent – believe Japan should be sensitive to other countries' feelings. Not surprisingly, 71 percent of respondents believe that the Japanese prime minister should not visit Yasukuni Shrine if other countries object. Only 62 percent agreed that "there can be no compromise in territorial disputes with other nations."

The Japanese truly are "reluctant" realists. When asked about national policy priorities, "assert international leadership" was ranked sixth of nine choices. Interviewees blamed Japan's weak self-image for the reluctance to step forward or a disposition toward modesty. Another argued that the problem was cultural: "Japanese are not aware of national power, not taught to think in those terms. National security has been given to us." Japanese are, in the memorable phrase of one analyst, "*Asahi*-reading realists."

When asked about roles Japan should play in the world, "arbitrating interest and opinions of international society" ranked seven of ten; "help solve international disputes" was eighth. Among foreign policy priorities, "get a seat on the United Nations Security Council" was named fifth in a list of 12, but "establish leadership in Asia" was eighth, just behind "get more international status and credit" – which could explain the priority

[13] Public Opinion Survey on Diplomacy by the Cabinet Office of Japan (abridged), Dec. 11, 2006, at the Mansfield Asian Opinion Poll Database.
[14] Dentsu Institute of Human Studies, "The Era of Competition: The Fourth Comparative Analysis of Global Values," March 2000, p. 8.

attached to the UNSC seat – and "promote economic development." Interviewees explained that Japan seeks to be a responsible stakeholder, not a power broker. Indeed, the bid for a Security Council seat is not the result of a desire for power, but for credit: having provided nearly one-fifth of the UN budget, Japan demands recognition for its largesse. No taxation without representation.

As could be expected from our group, there was overwhelming support (90 percent) for making the Japan Defense Agency a ministry. Yet only 65 percent agreed that the 1 percent limit on defense spending should be lifted. Our respondents believe Japan should maintain its nonnuclear status. A little more than 80 percent oppose development of a nuclear weapons capability. In contrast, 44 percent agreed that the country should develop an offensive strike capability.

For many, the bellwether of change in Japan is the debate over revising the constitution. Long a target of nationalist resentment for being imposed by the U.S. in the aftermath of defeat in World War II and depriving Japan of one of the essential attributes of statehood, a majority of public opinion in Japan appears to positively assess Article 9.[15] In the early 1990s, as the country grappled with the implications of a post-Cold War world, then LDP Secretary General Ozawa Ichiro proposed that Japan become a "normal nation," which required a reconsideration of the restraints imposed by the constitution.[16] While there seems to be growing sentiment that backs constitutional revision, it is premature to assert that change is coming. First, there does not yet appear to be a majority that favors revision; in fact, support for amending the charter seems to have peaked. Second, results often depend on the poll, its sponsor, and the particular questions it asks. Finally, it is important to recognize that many Japanese favor changing the charter for reasons that have nothing do with Article 9 – a desire to protect human rights, to change the role of the imperial family, to prevent environmental destruction, etc. In an October 2006 Department of State survey of Japanese opinion, revising Article 9 was only fifth in a list of reasons why people would back constitutional change, mustering a 59 percent support rate (a 7 percentage point increase from July 2002). Topping the list was strengthen environmental protection (94 percent in favor), direct election of the prime minister (71 percent), strengthen individual privacy rights (67 percent), and more power to regional authorities (61 percent).

Seventy-five percent of our respondents felt Article 9 should be revised, but just 39 percent said that it should be rewritten entirely. Forty-four percent endorsed keeping

[15] The official translation of Article 9 reads: "ARTICLE 9. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes. (2) In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

[16] This is a dense and complex topic. When Ozawa argued for "normalcy," he was focused on politics: the alternation of power that would result from a two-party system. The "security" component of this evolution was secondary. Moreover, the degree to which the constitution has actually constrained Japanese security policy is unclear. A host of politicians, Cabinet interpretations, and court decisions have suggested throughout the postwar era that Japan could do considerably more than it does; the constitution's constraints have proven quite flexible.

the first paragraph – which renounces the use of force as a means of settling international disputes – and merely changing the second paragraph, a move that would, in essence, legalize the SDF. Other surveys show greater opposition to constitutional amendment, but those that show (relatively) high support for revision echo our results. For example, an April 2008 *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll found that just 42.5 percent of respondents said it would be better to amend the constitution, while 43.1 percent were opposed. Nearly 82 percent of respondents opposed changing the first paragraph, while 54 percent opposed changing the second; 36.8 percent supported that revision.[17]

Our interviewees explained that the call for constitutional revision was a way to make Japan a more reliable security partner for the U.S. and the region. Several complained that changing the interpretation of the Constitution, as was done by Japanese administrations to permit Japanese contributions to international peacekeeping and security efforts, undermined Tokyo's international credibility and the legitimacy of the constitution itself. But they also recognized that a changing security environment demanded more of Japan and a failure to act would have been equally damaging to Japan's international standing. In other words, for them, constitutional revision was not intended to provide a blank check, but would provide a more robust and stable framework for contributing to international efforts to provide security.

China in Japanese eyes

China looms large in Japanese thinking. In many respects, China is everything Japan isn't: large, dynamic, confident, possessed of a nuclear arsenal, a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and prepared – if not anxious – to assume a leading role in the region and the world. Japanese frequently see China as a rival both within the region and for American affections. Japanese feelings about China are complex, for not only is it a rival – and for some a threat – but it is also a partner. In July 2008, Japan's exports to China overtook those going to the U.S., making China its number one export partner.[18] When asked which country would be Japan's most important economic partner in the next 5-10 years, slightly more than half (53 percent) pointed to China; the U.S. was second.[19] (This is part of a larger trend: 78 percent believe there will be greater economic integration among Asian countries; 56 percent anticipate creation of an East Asia free trade area that includes Japan, China, and South Korea.) When asked "which country was more important to Japan – the U.S. or China?", 43 percent said "both are equally important."

[17] "Poll on Japan's Constitution," *Yomiuri Shimbun*, April 8, 2008.
[18] "Japan's exports rebound, China becomes No. 1 customer," by Toru Fujioka, *Bloomberg News*, Aug. 21, 2008.
[19] Another poll offers slightly different conclusions. In a national survey in November 2007, a similar overwhelming majority (81 percent) identified the U.S. as Japan's closest security and diplomatic/political partner and a plurality (40 percent) said the U.S. was the most important economic partner. That still bests China (36 percent), but the gap is closing: 56 percent of respondents identified the U.S. as the most important economic partner a year earlier. "Security Issues Losing Traction with the Japanese Public?", Department of State Office of Research, Opinion Analysis, Dec. 13, 2007, p. 3.

Curiously, despite a long history of social and cultural interaction, only two Japanese respondents said Chinese values were most similar to those of Japan. And when asked to gauge the "warmth" of feelings toward China, the overall rating was 44.66 (out of 100) – and 50 was "not warm or cold." Our respondents are evenly split on whether China's role in Asia will be positive or negative; consistent with that view, respondents gave China an average score of 5.06 (out of 10) when asked how much influence they would like China to have in the world. The 2008 CCGA poll shows 62 percent of Japanese respondents view China as having a "very positive" or "somewhat positive" influence in Asia. However, only 55 percent of Japanese think that China will be the leader of Asia (compared to 68 percent of Americans and 78 percent of South Koreans. And only 10 percent of Japanese are "comfortable" with China being the leader of Asia.[20]

Despite widespread agreement that the Japan-China relationship is improving – a reflection of the shift that occurred when Prime Minister Koizumi left office and his successors abjured visits to Yasukuni Shrine – 76 percent of our respondents do not trust China to act responsibly in the world. Moreover, 58 percent identified China as the biggest threat to Japan. The 2008 Japan Defense White Paper notes "Japan is apprehensive about how the military power of China will influence the regional state of affairs and the security of Japan." Our findings are consistent with other surveys. For example, the Pew Global Attitudes Project found in 2006 that only 28 percent of Japanese have a favorable view of China, down from 55 percent in 2002; 39 percent picked China as Japan's biggest threat, 35 percent consider it an "adversary," and 53 percent call it a "serious problem."[21] In a 2006 Department of State survey of elites, 70 percent of respondents believe that China's actions and policies "increase tensions and instability in the region rather than contribute to peace and stability.[22] Slightly more than half (54 percent) of respondents think China is likely to be "an adversary and competitor" on economic issues, while 44 percent see it as an "ally and partner." When the focus is diplomatic and political issues, the three-quarters of elites see China as an adversary and competitor; curiously, politicians are divided on this question. Those views of China as a competitor and adversary are matched by those of the general public.[23]

What is potentially more troubling is the fact that 44 percent of our respondents said Japan and China are equally important *to the U.S.* – while only 32 percent picked Japan as more important. The seeds of insecurity are deep in the U.S.-Japan relationship and U.S. policy makers must be attuned to Japanese fears of "Japan passing."[24]

[20] Chicago Council on Global Affairs, "Soft Power in East Asia," Comparative Topline Reports, June 2008.
[21] "Publics of Asian Powers Hold Negative Views of One Another: China's neighbors worry about its growing military Strength," Pew Global Attitudes Project, Sept. 21, 2006.
[22] "Views of Japanese Influentials on Japan's Relations with China, the Koreas," Department of State Office of Research, Jan. 24, 2006, p. 5.
[23] Ibid, p. 7.
[24] See for example, Brad Glosserman, "Japan-U.S. Security Relations: Alliance under Strain: A conference report," Pacific Forum CSIS, *Issue & Insights*, Vol. 8, No. 13, March 2008, p. 5.

Relations with the U.S.

While China is seen as Japan's most important economic partner, 91 percent identified the U.S. as Japan's most important security partner over the same 5-10 year period.[25] That could reflect the belief that Japanese *values* are most similar to those of the U.S. (34 percent agreed; South Korea was named second with 32 percent) or the belief that Japanese *interests* are most similar to those of the U.S. (56 percent; nobody else comes close on this question). When asked which country was most important to Japan, 55 percent said the U.S., while 42 percent identified China.

In addition to – or perhaps because of – the convergence of ideas and values mentioned earlier, Japanese have the warmest feelings for the U.S. when compared to all other countries: 81.11 (out of 100) vs. 71.77 for the United Kingdom, 69.96 for Australia, and 68.12 for Southeast Asia. (These results also suggest a strong identification with the West, at least among elite respondents to our survey.) Eighty-nine percent of respondents felt the U.S. would have a positive role in dealing with the problems of Asia (curiously, a higher rating than that given to Japan). Yet nearly two-thirds (63 percent) believe U.S. influence in Asia has declined over the last decade. When asked how much influence in the world they would like the U.S. to have, the average was 8.06 out of 10, again even more than that afforded Japan **(**which scored 7.34). That echoes the view of the 84 percent of respondents who trust the U.S. either "somewhat" or "a great deal."

Seventy-six percent of our respondents characterize relations between Japan and the U.S. as good or excellent. Yet 62 percent believe the relationship should be stronger; 32 percent think the relationship is OK as is.

Japanese harbor mixed feelings about their alliance with the U.S. The alliance provides Japan with security, allows Tokyo to "cheap ride" and devote more resources to economic development, and it provides cover for Japan's growing regional security role: the alliance reassures regional governments that Japan's assumption of new responsibilities does not represent the first steps toward remilitarization. But the unbalanced relationship serves as a constant reminder of Japan's defeat in World War II, Tokyo's subordinate status, and the limitations on Japanese sovereignty embodied in Article 9 of the U.S.-imposed constitution. Little wonder then that the alliance has been both the cornerstone of Japan's postwar security and a lightning rod for criticism from the left – who decry an alliance with the capitalist and militarist United States that undermines the country's pacifism – and the right, which complains that Japan's independence is compromised and its status diminished. And both appeal to core components of Japanese identity as they do so.

Our survey shows that support for the U.S.-Japan alliance is strong. Ninety-six percent believe the alliance is vital to Japan's security. Sixty-two percent of respondents said the alliance with the U.S. is the most important contributor to Japan's security, a number almost twice as high as those who put Japan's own efforts as most important; only three respondents were prepared to put their faith in the U.N. and other international

[25] This is consistent with other polls; see note 18 *op cit*.

organizations. Eighty-eight percent believe U.S. bases in Japan are important to the country's national security, and 82 percent believe the U.S. should keep them there. Seventy-eight percent credit those bases with increasing stability in East Asia; 94 percent believe the U.S.-Japan alliance is a force for regional stability and security.[26]

Yet in the fall of 2007, Ozawa Ichiro, head of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), Japan's leading opposition party, campaigned against extension of the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law (ASL) that permitted Japan to be part of the international coalition that was fighting in Afghanistan. (Japan was providing fuel for coalition vessels in the Indian Ocean.) Ozawa was using the legislation to embarrass the government and force an election that would, he hoped, capitalize on the opposition victory in the July 2007 Upper House elections and bring the DPJ to power. For some, that tactic suggested that Ozawa – a long-time supporter of the security alliance and the architect of Japanese efforts to break out of the strait-jacket imposed by the Peace Constitution during the first Persian Gulf War – believed the alliance was diminishing in importance for Japan. His readiness to back it for partisan political purposes implied as much.[27] Others saw his strategy as an appeal to Japan's national identity as embodied in the Constitution. Whatever the calculations, Ozawa's gambit failed. The legislation was renewed and the LDP remains in power.[28]

Our survey results predicted the outcome of that debate: 86 percent of respondents backed extension of the Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law. Their readiness to do that – and the government's ability to do so – could explain why just 16 percent of respondents felt Japan should be able to dispatch the SDF overseas only after constitutional revision; they concluded that the constitution wasn't a bar to such action. On the other hand, 27 percent said that dispatch could occur anytime, while another 27 percent demanded approval by the UN or some other multilateral institution or institution. Only 2 respondents said a U.S. request should be sufficient justification for dispatch.

---

[26] This too is consistent with other surveys of the broader public vs. elites. In a December 2007 poll, 64 percent of respondents believed the U.S. military presence in East Asia helps regional stability; 62 percent credited the bases in Japan for playing that role. Sixty-seven percent say U.S. forces in Japan are important for Japan's defense, just below the record 71 percent that agreed with that statement in 2006. See, *op cit*. note 18, p. 1.

[27] Ozawa's thinking remains unclear, his article in *Sekai* on Japan's security policy notwithstanding. In the midst of the debate, we were told that even his close associates in the DPJ didn't know what he was thinking; most argued the approach was tactical. Several individuals suggested that Ozawa calculated that the alliance could sustain any damage he inflicted and he would devote efforts to undoing the harm once he was in power.

[28] There is one other national identity-related twist to this episode. As Ozawa's challenge unfolded, the government initially said it was reluctant to use its supermajority in the Lower House to implement the ASL. (The Lower House is the more powerful of the two chambers and a supermajority can pass legislation even if the Upper House rejects it.) This course was based on an appeal to Japanese values – the aversion to "governing by numbers." (This argument asserts that Japanese culture prefers compromise and consensus over brute strength when it comes to legislation.) Ironically, there were also indications that the LDP would play politics with the alliance: it was prepared to see the legislation held up if the DPJ was painted as obstructionist and ready to harm the alliance for political purposes. Eventually, the LDP used its super-majority to pass the bill. One interviewee described the entire incident as "a very sad thing. It is part of the long process of us learning to be responsible."

While Japanese recognize the importance of the alliance, that doesn't mean they accept it as is or that Washington has a blank check when it comes to alliance policy. Japanese have had "sticker shock" when considering the cost of realigning U.S. forces in Japan. A survey showed 72 percent of respondents agreed it is important to strengthen U.S.-Japan security cooperation but 69 percent think Japan should pay less than its Y700 billion share.[29] Moreover, more than half (56 percent) think local interests should take priority over national interests – think NIMBY ("Not In My Backyard"); only 36 percent put national interests first.[30] This makes readjustment and realignment problematic.

While almost all our interviewees thought Japan should be more self-reliant and better able to assert its interests within the alliance, they all agreed that this stronger Japan is best served by the alliance. "Japan wants to be able to say no, but we don't want to fight with the U.S.," explained a young security analyst. "We want more equality within the alliance." As one former LDP official elaborated, the security alliance is leverage for Japan.

There are reasons for concern, however. More than a quarter of respondents (25.56 percent) disagree with the statement that "the U.S. respects Japan." That is a fairly high number for a group of foreign policy specialists who otherwise demonstrate a predisposition toward the alliance. If they feel "dissed," that sentiment may be even more widespread among the general public. As one journalist explained, "there is a fatigue with U.S. annoyance."

In recent months, there have been grumblings in Tokyo about U.S. reliability as the negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program have proceeded. Japanese officials and observers complain that chief U.S. negotiator Christopher Hill is moving forward with a deal despite a lack of progress in bilateral Japan-North Korea dialogue. In strategic discussions at the unofficial level, Japanese participants ask whether the U.S. is ignoring Japanese interests. At the same time, Japanese note Washington's readiness to work with Beijing on issues such as the Six-Party Talks, the fight against terrorism, and "capping" Taiwan's independence ambitions, and worry that it might portend some diminution in the U.S. commitment to defend Japan. Our survey suggests those fears are unfounded. Sixty-two percent say that the U.S. is either "very reliable" or "reliable" when it comes to defending Japan; when "somewhat reliable" is added, the total reaches 93 percent.

South Korea's growing confidence

The end of the Cold War coincided with equally powerful changes in South Korea. The country's democratic transition and its economic emergence as a global power occurred at the same time that the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union collapsed. But the end of the superpower competition did not end the longstanding political confrontation on the Korean Peninsula. After Seoul hosted the 1988 Olympics, South Korea's diplomatic horizons expanded as a result of normalization agreements

[29] "Alliance Transformation and Public Opinion in Japan," Department of State, Office of Research Opinion Analysis, June 19, 2006.
[30] Ibid.

with the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries, and eventually the People's Republic of China in 1992. South Korean President Kim Young Sam pursued a policy of *segyehwa*, or globalization, and South Korea entered the ranks of the Organization of European Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996, successfully breaking into the ranks of the industrialized nations despite the setbacks of the Asian financial crisis in 1998-1999.

In the wake of the crisis, South Korea experienced its first democratic political transition from the ruling to the opposition party with the election of Kim Dae Jung, who successfully managed South Korea's economic and financial recovery while ending South Korean policies of containment toward the North in favor of his Sunshine Policy, which promoted inter-Korean engagement and cooperation. The cornerstone of this policy was a growing sense, in the wake of South Korean economic and political success, that North Korea was a competitor and that the dangers associated with the North emanated more from its weakness rather than from its strength. This policy yielded apparent success in the landmark inter-Korean summit on June 15, 2000, that catalyzed a range of inter-Korean social and cultural exchanges, transformed South Korean attitudes about inter-Korean relations, and had profound implications for relations in Northeast Asia. South Korea's co-hosting (with Japan) of the 2002 World Cup and the unprecedented performance of its soccer team – it reached the semi-finals – gave South Koreans additional confidence regarding their country's capacities and its regional and global roles. Shortly after the World Cup, Kim Dae Jung announced that South Korea should aspire to join the ranks of the top four economies in the world.

South Korean identity had long been shaped by anti-Communism, anti-colonialism, or anti-hegemonism, but the summit raised hopes among progressives that a long-cherished "unified" Korea might finally be attainable. But the inter-Korean summit deepened internal divisions within South Korea over how to deal with the North, with skeptics of prospects for inter-Korean relations labeled "anti-reunification," while optimists insisted that tighter inter-Korean ties would strengthen the capacity and role of a reunified Korea to promote regional peace and prosperity. To this end, the South Korean government actively promoted South Korea as a hub for promotion of regional cooperation in East Asia.

The rise in South Korean self-confidence that accompanied the 2000 inter-Korean summit and Korea's better-than-expected performance in the 2002 World Cup created new questions about South Korea's foreign policy. These questions were further fueled by massive South Korean candlelight demonstrations against U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK)'s handling of the court-martial of two soldiers responsible for driving an Army vehicle that accidentally hit and killed two Korean middle-school girls on a highway north of Seoul in June 2002. The incident and its handling hit a nerve among Koreans who felt that USFK handled the case with high-handedness and impunity, especially given that under South Korean law the driver would have been held responsible for the accident regardless of intent.

The size of the demonstrations and the drop in Korean favorable attitudes toward the United States were interpreted as anti-Americanism in the Korean media, and the incident had a direct impact on the 2002 South Korean presidential election. As an outsider, Roh Moo Hyun had greater credibility as a candidate who might stand up to the United States, while conservative GNP candidate Lee Hoi Chang had sought and gained a high-level audience in Washington with Vice President Richard Cheney. Changes in South Korean public opinion and its influence on South Korean foreign policy appeared to be turning South Korea away from the United States. At the same time, some U.S analysts argued that South Korea would inevitably side with China as its natural ally, forsaking the alliance with the United States. These trends, which served to heighten tensions and erode traditional conceptions of the alliance, were connected to the question of whether South Korea's sense of self was changing in ways that would force significant adjustments in South Korea's foreign policy and its regional role in Northeast Asia. At the same time, Roh seemed quick to exploit tensions with Japan – drawing on historical animosities – whenever his domestic popularity sagged. Tokyo was an easy target for pent up frustration, and few Koreans were prepared to defend relations with Japan – despite the many seemingly compelling reasons for the two neighbors to cooperate.

In response to rising tensions between China and Japan in early 2005, President Roh promoted the notion of South Korea as a "balancer." Roh's National Security Council articulated several principles that reveal its thinking about South Korea's role vis-à-vis larger regional powers, including that Korea is a) "major actor, not a subordinate variable" in Asia, b) that Korea can be trusted in the region since it has no history of hegemonism, c) as a "balancer for peace," Korea can play the roles of mediator, harmonizer, facilitator, and initiator, and d) through "hard power plus soft power" Korea can maintain existing alliances while also promoting establishment of regional cooperative security institutions.[31] The former chairman of the Presidential Committee on Northeast Asian Cooperation, Moon Chung-in, explained that "the essence of the idea of a balancer role is to mediate the chronic feuds and dissonance that have plagued this region through open diplomacy, and to establish there a new order of cooperation and integration."[32] The "balancer" theory was based on a sense of Korean nationalism that recognizes itself as an actor, no longer as an object, and attempts to utilize promotion of regional cooperation as the vehicle by which to serve national interests.

In response, opposition conservatives called for continued reliance on the alliance with the United States as the key to balancing and stabilizing Sino-Japanese rivalry. A *JoongAng Ilbo* editorial expressed the critique as follows: "The notion of being a regional balancer is unrealistic, given our current military capabilities. That is why we have been putting so much emphasis on the alliance with the United States."[33] Others

[31] Secretariat of the National Security Council, "Theory on Balancer in Northeast Asia: A Strategy to Become a Respected State in International Cooperation," April 27, 2005. Accessed through Open Source Center, Doc #: KPP20050428000225.
[32] Chung-in Moon, "Theory of Balancing Role in Northeast Asia," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 12, 2005 (Accessed through Open Source Center, Doc #: KPP20050412000011, April 20, 2006).
[33] "A Military Isn't A 'Balancer'", *JoongAng Ilbo*, April 9, 2005.

lamented tensions in the U.S.-ROK security relationship and used the "balancer" theory as an opportunity to blame President Roh for a weakened relationship with the United States. Conservatives generally emphasized the pursuit of neutrality as a means to avoid possible negative effects of Sino-Japanese tensions. This perspective was expressed by Kim Soung Chol of the Sejong Institute in the following way: "Strengthening our alliance with the United States and having a neutral diplomatic strategy are not contradictory to each other. In that respect, Korea maintaining an alliance with the United States while refusing to participate in any Northeast Asian disputes is an example of proclaiming diplomatic neutrality."[34] Although the "balancer" concept has been subsequently discredited and the conservative Lee Myung Bak administration has re-emphasized the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance as a foundation for regional engagement in Northeast Asia, the question of how South Korea should position itself vis-à-vis its neighbors – and allies – remains a contested aspect of domestic political debate underlying discussions on foreign policy.

While Koreans were quick to rattle off in interviews three components of national identity – political and economic success, and a resulting confidence – our conversations revealed a fourth, equally powerful, yet unstated issue: a profound sense of vulnerability. Despite being the 13th largest economy in the world, many Koreans continue to think of themselves as a small country surrounded by larger powers and subject to geopolitical constraints. Korea remains "a shrimp among whales." Despite the understandable expressions of pride and self confidence, there is also a powerful current of doubt and vulnerability in South Korea.

South Korea and national identity

Our poll of over 550 South Korean elites drawn from Pacific Forum CSIS and Asia Foundation mailing lists in December 2007-April 2008 drew 150 responses. In combination with directed interviews and a review of relevant public opinion polls, we identified questions and responses that shed light on South Korean self-perceptions and perceptions of neighbors. This polling provides additional data points that are useful in interpreting our survey and the broader trend lines of South Korean public opinion.

Our survey shows generally warm attitudes among South Koreans toward Americans (77.8) and Japanese (63.1). This is warmer than the results of a 2008 poll conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs (CCGA) and East Asia Institute (EAI), which registered Korean warmth toward the United States at 61 (it was 58 in 2006) and toward Japan at 49.7 (compared to 39 in 2006), while South Korean feelings toward China fell from 57 to 50. Likewise, a global poll conducted by the Pew Global Attitudes project shows a 12-point increase in favorable South Korean views of the United States in 2008 compared to 2007.[35] Attitudes toward other countries surveyed in our poll were consistent with data from the CCGA poll. This suggests that the self-

[34] Soung-chul Kim, "(OUTLOOK): Forge Alliance with U.S., China," *JoongAng Ilbo*, March 18, 2005 (accessed via Open Source Center Doc#: KPP20050317000198, April 17, 2006).
[35] "Global Economic Gloom – China and India Notable Exceptions," Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 12, 2008; http://pewresearch.org/pubs/867/global-economic-gloom, accessed Aug. 25, 2008.

selected sample of elite Koreans who have associations with the Pacific Forum CSIS (and are therefore in the database) may be more pro-U.S. and pro-Japanese than the general public in South Korea. Or it may suggest that late 2007 and early 2008 represented a relatively positive period in terms of Korean perceptions of the United States and Japan.

South Korean self-perceptions

Both interviews with South Koreans and the survey data collected show that South Korean perceptions of themselves are overwhelmingly positive and optimistic about the future. This sense of satisfaction derives from the perceived success of South Korea's economic and political development over the past two decades. Notably, interviews suggested that this sense of accomplishment transcends Korean ideological divisions between conservatives and progressives. These accomplishments are perceived to have positioned the country well to play a greater role in regional and international affairs. South Korean interviewees responded that South Korean economic and political development "has given many Koreans a sense of unique pride," "confiden[ce]," and "success." One scholar even worried about public "over-confidence about our national capability." Our survey data suggest that concern may be warranted: 95 percent of respondents agreed strongly or somewhat that they are "proud to be Korean" and that Korea will be better off in 10 years than today. Although such optimism also colors expectations about the global situation, the response was somewhat tempered, with 74 percent of Koreans agreeing that the global situation will improve over the next decade.

South Koreans believe that their country should be actively involved in international affairs and should be open to the international community. Almost four-fifths of those surveyed welcomed foreign investment and foreign influence in South Korea. Over 95 percent think that South Korea should take an active part in world affairs.

That outlook reflects an increasingly international Korean public. During our interviews, a specialist on the political attitudes of younger generation Koreans said that people in their 20s "feel we are now one of the main members in the global economy so we can walk or act or play in world terms." The Institute of International Education reports that 58,847 South Korean students enrolled in universities during the 2005-2006 academic year, a 10.3 percent increase over the previous year (an increase from 49,046 Korean students in the United States during 2002). Over 93,000 Korean students at all levels are reported to be in the United States, and demand for a U.S. education is rising based on demand by Korean students to take the TOEFL.[36] Korean students now represent the third largest foreign student group in the United States, trailing only India and China.[37] Over 57,000 South Koreans students were in China in 2006.[38]

---

[36] Su-hyun Lee, "South Koreans Jostle to Take an English Test," *New York Times*, May 17, 2007, p. 12.
[37] Institute of International Education, "Open Doors Online Report 2006," http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/file_depot/0-10000000/0-10000/3390/folder/50084/Open+Doors+2006_FastFacts_FINAL.pdf accessed August 16, 2007.
[38] Scott Snyder, "Teenage Angst: Fifteenth Anniversary of Sino-ROK Diplomatic Normalization," in Brad Glosserman and Carl Baker, Jr., eds, *Comparative Connections*, Volume 9, No. 3, accessed at http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/0703qchina_korea.pdf, on November 26, 2007.

Not surprisingly, our survey shows that South Koreans believe their country excels in the level of education and Korea's economic power, and science and technology. Only three respondents out of 150 said Korea excelled in international political leadership and seven said Korea excelled in military strength. Most Koreans support an international role for Korea that promotes Asian economic development, develops new technologies, and serves as a bridge between East and West.

Eighty percent of respondents to our survey think that Korea is open and flexible to foreign influence, while 88 percent agreed with the idea that international marriage is good and 86 percent agreed that immigration to South Korea is good. These attitudes are playing themselves out as international marriage in Korea has increased to 10 percent of all marriages, catalyzing new social changes and demands for social services among a non-Korean language speaking population. But change only goes so far: we found a significant polarization of opinion when asked whether Korea ought to be a society where the gap between rich and poor is small regardless of one's achievement: 47 percent of respondents agree and 52 percent dissent.

Korean respondents also showed a high degree of satisfaction with how politics works. Twenty-seven percent believe that politics is responsive to the popular will, with 55 percent saying that it is reflected a little bit. The highest rates of dissatisfaction with Korean politics were shown among Koreans in their 20s, 40 percent of whom believe that national politics hardly reflected the people's will. In contrast, the 2008 CCGA/EAI survey showed high levels of dissatisfaction among South Korean politics, with 89 percent of respondents saying that they are "not very proud" or "not at all proud" of their political system.

While South Koreans are proud of their economic and political accomplishments, the younger generation has come of age in an industrialized democracy, unlike their parents, who grew up in a poorer, less-developed, and even war-torn South Korea. Reflecting these harsher experiences, some older Koreans we interviewed argued that the younger generation does not appreciate the freedoms they enjoy. Younger South Koreans don't appear to have the chip on their shoulder that came from perceived historical injustices that their elders had cultivated. This generation appears to have little use for ideology or other "legacies of the past. They don't have any sense of burden to the U.S. or other countries . . . they don't have any negative attitude toward Japan."

While the experience of Gwangju that shaped the political activism and anti-authoritarian mobilization of Korea's "386" generation (now in their 40s and 50s), the defining event for Korea's 20s and 30s generation was the Asian financial crisis, during which they saw their parents and other family members lose their jobs and tighten their belts. As a result, "they are naturally very practical. Many university students are interested in how to make money." But the financial crisis does not appear to have triggered a fear of globalization in Korea's younger generation; instead they embrace a dynamic Korea that is going out into the world, not a defensive, protectionist outlook. Consistent with that view, 79 percent of survey respondents believe that their country should be open to foreign influences (80 percent think it already is), and there was virtual

unanimity that Korea should either be open to foreign investment as a rule (78 percent) or on a case-by case basis (21 percent).

When asked which country their values most resembled, slightly over one-third (35 percent) said their values are most similar to those of the United States while slightly less than one-third of those surveyed picked Japan and one-fifth chose China. When the CCGA asked in 2006 to what extent Korea "shares similar values and a way of life" with China, Japan, and the United States, 56 percent (China) and 58 percent (Japan) responded that they shared similar values and a way of life "to a great extent or to some extent," while only 14 percent said that they shared similar values and a way of life "to a great extent or to some extent" with the United States.

Attitudes toward North Korea

The 2000 inter-Korean summit marked a dramatic turning point in South Korean public attitudes toward North Korea, showing that Kim Jong Il was human after all. The summit also launched a deep conflict within Korea between conservatives and progressives, who responded in different ways to the meeting. While conservatives criticized Kim Dae Jung for naivete and a failure to gain reciprocity from the North, progressives made emotional arguments for a Korean nationalism defined by reunification and argued that the end of inter-Korean conflict would bring a 'peace dividend' as well as lay the foundation for economic cooperation that would benefit both Koreas.

The *nam-nam kaltung*, or "South-South conflict," was often cast in political terms. It pivoted on whether South Korea should side with North Korea or the United States, given the long-term security implications of the levels of trust that would be necessary to carry out rapprochement. The domestic political implications of inter-Korean reconciliation also had deep social ramifications for educational policy regarding North Korea, budgeting for inter-Korean economic cooperation projects, and for perceptions of the longer-term U.S. role in South Korea, given the fact that the rationale for the U.S. presence was directly tied to deterrence against a North Korean threat. Inter-Korean rapprochement had significant implications for South Korean identity, especially in relationship to the North.

Prior to the summit, over 34 percent of Koreans surveyed viewed Kim Jong Il as a dictator; that figured dropped to less than 10 percent immediately after the summit, and over 97 percent indicated that they would welcome a visit by Kim Jong Il to Seoul.[39] Korean expectations for reunification also rose as a result of the summit, with over 71 percent of Korean students expressing optimism about the possibility of unification when polled in July 2001 compared to only 59 percent a year earlier.[40] Public opinion polls from the end of 2000 show that almost 80 percent of the public supported a policy of

[39] *Donga Ilbo*, May 31; June 15, as cited in Lee Geun, "Political and Economic Consequences of the Inter-Korean Summit," presented at the 2001 KAIS International Conference, June 22-23, 2001, p. 11.
[40] Han Mann Gil, "Role of Education in National Unification," *Korea Focus*, Vol. 9, No. 2, March-April 2001, p. 134.

cooperation and reconciliation with North Korea; the public gradually turned skeptical of Kim Dae Jung's generous approach to the North, however.[41] One year following the summit, a June 11, 2001 *Chosun Ilbo* poll showed that 50.1 percent of those surveyed believed that North Korea has not changed much and that 43.9 percent thought that the Kim Dae Jung government was not managing policy toward the North well, compared to 33.9 percent who believed that the government was doing well.[42]

Under the Roh Moo Hyun administration, public concerns regarding security shifted away from North Korea and toward the United States, especially in the initial phase of the second North Korean nuclear crisis. A 2006 *KBS* poll showed that 43 percent of respondents blamed the United States for North Korea's nuclear test while 37 percent blamed North Korea and 13.9 percent blamed the Roh administration. An often-cited 2005 *Chosun Ilbo* poll reported that almost two-thirds of South Koreans between the ages of 16 and 25 said that they would side with North Korea in the event of military conflict between North Korea and the United States.[43] However, as frustrations with the North built up, the South Korean public grew irritated with the lack of reciprocity in the inter-Korean relationship and less patient with North Korean intransigence on human rights and governance issues.

Interviews conducted in October 2007 suggested that South Koreans want to help the North, but South Korean feelings of superiority vis-à-vis the North have led to a diminished view of the North Korean military threat and the country's capabilities. South Korean elite descriptions of their relationship with the North underscore the extent to which North Korea is no longer seen as an object or source of competition. South Koreans described the relationship with the North as one in which South Korea is the "elder brother," feeling a "sense of superiority as well as a sense of threat."

Our survey showed relatively cool feelings toward North Korea, with an average of 46.67, the lowest rating among countries listed in this survey. Sixty-nine percent of respondents described North Korea as the South's main enemy, and only 40 percent were confident in South Korea's ability to defeat aggression from North Korea by itself. Half our respondents supported the idea that South Korea should develop an offensive military strike capability. The 2008 CCGA/EAI poll showed that 78 percent of Korean respondents were very or somewhat worried that North Korea could become a military threat.

Others have noted the extent to which North Korea, especially under the administration of Lee Myung Bak (who, in contrast to his immediate predecessors, barely

---

[41] Yi Tong-hyon, "Reporter's note: North Korea Policy Should Stick to Principles," *JoongAng Ilbo* (Internet version in Korean), Jan. 2, 2001, FBIS Document No. KPP20010102000094. Gallup Poll Survey on Political Support, Dec. 26, 2000.

[42] *Donga Ilbo*, May 31; June 15, as cited in Lee Geun, "Political and Economic Consequences of the Inter-Korean Summit," presented at the 2001 KAIS International Conference, June 22-23, 2001, p. 11.

[43] Referenced in Sheila Miyoshi Jager, "Time To End the Korean War: The Korean Nuclear Crisis in the Era of Unification," Nautilus Institute Policy Forum Online 06-93A, Nov. 2, 2006. Accessed at http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0693MiyoshiJager.html, on Sept. 12, 2008. The KBS poll was published in OhmyNews on Oct. 17, 2008.

mentioned North Korea in his inauguration speech) appears to be more of an afterthought, as most Koreans focus closer to home on what is necessary to assure status and economic success within their own society. Our survey, however, showed that "normalizing relations with North Korea" was the second most important priority for Korean respondents, ranking only behind "strengthening relations with the United States."

There is a widespread belief that generational change is transforming Korean views of the North. For example, it is asserted that elder South Koreans accept North Koreans "emotionally" as part of the nation, while younger generation Koreans see North Koreans "rationally" as part of the nation**.** The lack of direct experience with division and lack of contacts with North Korea has attenuated the emotional attachment of younger Koreans to a unified Peninsula. South Koreans who participate in the Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders program frequently note that their generation is not prepared to pay a high price for unification. They prefer a two-state status quo, or peaceful co-existence, that does not have a negative impact on their economic prospects. (That same logic undercuts a hardline policy that risks destabilizing North Korea and could spread across the border: that thinking, among other things, helps explain the hostility to the tough approach to North Korea adopted by the Bush administration when it first took office.)

Our survey data does not show any great division among age cohorts (four groups defined as 10-year spans) – with one exception: the "30 somethings." Each group made "improving relations with North Korea" its second foreign policy priority (although the 30-somethings made it a much "closer" second than any other group). North Korea was the country all groups felt "least" favorable toward (the "thermometer reading") – except the 30 somethings, who gave it the most "favorable" rating (50.8 out of 100) of the groups. All groups identified North Korea as the biggest threat to Korea by a large margin (usually three or four times greater than the next country) – except the 30 somethings, who named China as number one, just ahead of North Korea. And finally, all age groups agreed (either "strongly" or "somewhat") that North Korea is South Korea's main enemy – except the 30 somethings, among which 54 percent disagreed with that statement.

South Korean views of China

Like Japan, South Korean views of China are conflicted. Like the Japanese they consider China to be their most important economic partner (67 percent) and the United States as their most important security partner (90 percent).[44] Fifty-five percent of our respondents identified the U.S. as the country most important to Korea, while 42 percent picked China. However, over 43 percent of our respondents said Korea's interests were most compatible with those of the United States, while 23 percent indicated that their country's interests are most closely compatible with those of Japan; only 10 percent chose China. Sixty-three percent of those surveyed believe China plays a positive role in solving the key problems facing Asia. But when asked how much influence Koreans

[44] Again, this matches other polls. See, for example, "INR Poll: South Koreans' Contrasting Views of China, Japan," Department of State Office of Research, Opinion Analysis, Nov. 1, 2005, p. 1.

want various countries to have in the world, the United States scored a 7.35 out of 10, while China scored a 5.43.

South Korean attitudes toward China have been greatly affected by a range of issues such as tainted products, treatment of North Korean refugees, and economic competition. But, domestic identity issues have also been important, primarily in the context of South Korea's response to China's "Northeast Asia Project," which became a full-scale confrontation in the summer of 2004. This issue emerged as a result of Chinese efforts to promote historical research that would support the "incorporation" of ethnic minority histories into the broader Chinese national narrative. For China, it was an attempt to cut off possible irredentist claims by Koreans to Chinese territory; Koreans viewed it as an attempt to annex a slice of their own history. While there is little threat of Korean separatism in China today, the ambiguous history of Korean ethnic activity inside their borders makes Chinese anxious. They worry that the existence of an autonomous ethnic minority area on the border of a unified Korea might constitute a pretext for a broader Korean territorial claim.[45]

The dispute has deeply influenced South Korean public and elite opinions toward China. An April 2004 poll by *Donga Ilbo* showed that the majority of National Assembly members of the ruling Uri party believed that South Korea "should focus more on China than the U.S. in our foreign policy of the future, and that 84 percent of the public agreed that it was important to give "serious consideration of China."[46] However, a Jan. 1, 2005 *Chosun Ilbo* survey showed only 40 percent-favorable attitudes toward China, revealing the extent of political damage to China's image that occurred as a result of the Koguryo issue.[47] Chinese "claims" on the ancient Koguryo kingdom hit a nerve with South Koreans that seemed well out of proportion to the immediate cause of the furor; on the other hand, the issue received little publicity in China and hardly registered among the Chinese public. Yonsei University professor Kim Woo Jun told the *New York Times* in August 2004 that "The anti-U.S., pro-China atmosphere has changed recently as we saw the hegemonic side of China."[48]

Economic concerns about a rising China are growing in South Korea. There is increasing wariness of China's economic and political influence, especially as it challenges South Korean competitiveness. This competition and China's improving trade balance with South Korea have heightened South Korean concern about the future, but not enough to put a brake on South Korean interests in the present. The shift in South

[45] These concerns are not unfounded: a small number of Koreans do make that type of claim. It is highly unlikely that such issues would gain traction in Korea as a matter of government policy – unless the Chinese create grounds for Korean suspicion of interference on the peninsula itself. There is a "Kando" claim that Korea has apparently given up that includes some Chinese territory; when China gets too heavy-handed there are temptations on the part of South Korean scholars to recommend revival of that claim

[46] "Public Polls About China," *Donga Ilbo*, May 4, 2004, accessed via www.opensource.gov, Open Source Center, Doc. #: KPP20040503000103.

[47] Chung Jae-ho, "Dragon in the Eyes of South Korea: Analyzing Korean Perceptions of China," in Jonathan D. Pollack, ed., *Korea: The East Asian Pivot*, Naval War College Press, Newport, RI, 2004, pp. 253-267.

[48] James Brooke, "Seeking Peace in a Once and Future Kingdom," *New York Times*, Aug. 25, 2004, p. 3.

Korean opinion toward China is recorded in Pew surveys from spring of 2007 and 2008, which showed 52 percent and 48 percent of respondents had positive views of China, respectively, compared with the summer of 2002, when 66 percent of South Koreans had a positive view of China.[49] One-quarter of our respondents identified China as the biggest threat to Korea.

One South Korean analyst described a rising China in the following terms: "China is behind the tree of North Korea in South Korean eyes; that's why the Chinese military threat is invisible to us because we have an immediate threat from the North, but we have varying threat perception of China." That will change. If today Koreans are overconfident when thinking about China, the relationship will shift to one characterized by "gradual competition" which will become "a China problem" and then "a China threat." This view was shared by another South Korean analyst, who argued that economic cooperation has helped obscure the differences between the two countries. "We should accommodate the increasing economic relationship with China, but …China is not a democracy and is very different from the South Korean identity as a democracy and market economy – it is very different from us."

Attitudes toward the U.S.-ROK alliance

The U.S.-ROK alliance has had a rough time in recent years. South Koreans were troubled by the Bush administration's hardline policies toward North Korea, in particular President Bush's 2002 State of the Union address which identified North Korea as part of the "Axis of Evil." The accidental killing of two Korean schoolgirls by the U.S. military in June 2002 and the failure of a military court to convict the drivers triggered a wave of anti-U.S. sentiment in the form of huge candlelight demonstrations and marked the low point in Korean attitudes toward the United States. Gallup Korea recorded a 34 percent favorable opinion toward the United States in late February of 2002 and a 37 percent favorable opinion in mid-December of 2002. By May 2003, Korean attitudes had improved to 46 percent[50] and they have been clawing their way up ever since.

Among our more security-oriented respondents, however, the state of the alliance is good. Over 90 percent agreed that the alliance is vital to Korea's security, that it should be maintained, and that U.S. military bases are important to regional stability. Two-thirds of respondents are comfortable with the current level of U.S. forces in South Korea, and over 80 percent considered the United States to be reliable in defending South Korea. Sixty-five percent of respondents considered the alliance with the United States to be the most important contributor to Korea's security, while only 26 percent indicated that Korea's own efforts played a leading role in contributing to security on the peninsula.

[49] Pew Global Attitudes Project, http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf, p. 92.
[50] Eric V. Larson, "An Analysis of the September 2003 JoongAng Ilbo-CSIS Polls of South Korean Attitudes Toward the U.S.," in Derek Mitchell ed., *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004.

Our results are consistent with other polls. The Pew Global Attitudes project showed a marked increase in positive Korean attitudes toward the United States in the 2007 and 2008 polls, jumping from 58 to 70 percent positive. The polls and interviews conducted in late 2007 suggest that the alliance is no longer a politically polarizing issue in Korean domestic politics. South Korean progressives recognize the alliance's contributions to national and regional security, but still sought adjustments in the relationship. In a remark that many other U.S. allies would likely agree with, a Korean analyst argued that "The main source of contention as the alliance is concerned is how the U.S. defines the target of the alliance; I mean the military alliance is to target something; [if it is] China or North Korea, then I think we have something to discuss. . . I think consultation is important and a lot of South Koreans think that the United States is not treating South Korea as an equal partner."

Ninety-five percent of our respondents believed that the alliance should be maintained even if the Korean Peninsula is unified. A little more than a quarter (28 percent) thought the U.S. should withdraw its forces in the event of unification but even they endorsed continuation of the alliance. More than half (53 percent) of respondents supported the maintenance of a residual U.S. force and bases even after Korean reunification. Two-thirds of respondents believed that U.S. military influence should be maintained at the current level, while 9 percent thought it should be increased and 17 percent thought it should be decreased. Over 78 percent of respondents supported the U.S.-ROK agreement on "strategic flexibility" for USFK, while 17 percent saw the agreement as dangerous or as an infringement on Korean prerogatives. Again, these findings are consistent with other surveys. The 2008 CCGA/EAI poll shows over 72 percent of Koreans think that the U.S. military presence increases stability in Asia. In our survey, 22 percent of respondents agreed with the statement that Korea should develop a nuclear weapons capability, while 76 percent disagreed. However, one-half of respondents agree that Korea should develop an offensive military "strike capability."

Japan-ROK relations

Given the durability of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances, most Americans see Japan and South Korea as complementary components of a framework that has guaranteed stability and prosperity in Asia since World War II. The inclination to see the two alliances as part of whole makes even more sense given the roughly similar paths by which Japan and South Korea pursued economic modernization and the fact that both countries have democratic systems that have become deeply rooted in their societies. As the ally of both countries, the U.S. also benefits directly from cooperation between Japan and South Korea: coordination is efficient and maximizes the value of each country's contribution to regional security.

There are equally powerful rationales for enhanced Japan-ROK cooperation. As democracies, they share common values and should have a compelling interest in balancing an authoritarian China. Japan and South Korea have deep economic ties that are born of geographic proximity, similar economic models, and the role Japanese technology and investment played in jump-starting some of the industries in which South

Korea now boasts of having globally competitive products. Both are trading nations that rely on commerce to keep their economies going. They have similar interests in open markets, fair competition, and safe and secure sea lanes of communication. Japan's security imperatives also dictate a special interest in maintaining a positive relationship with South Korea to forestall the emergence of forces on the peninsula that might be hostile to Japan's security. Grassroots cultural interactions through tourist visits, common cultural tastes, and a curiosity about the culture of the other have contributed to the erosion of longstanding historical animosity.

At the outset of his administration, Kim Dae Jung sought a breakthrough in relations with Japan during his initial visit to Tokyo in October 1998. In light of South Korea's experience with Japan's imperialist aggression, Kim's decision to set aside the past and create a foundation for positive relations was a real effort to address longstanding unresolved divisions within Asia that resulted from Japan's failed attempts to come to terms with its historical legacy. The Japan-Korea joint statement established a framework through which it was possible to promote coordination of issues in Japan-Korea relations. But Prime Minister Koizumi's election in Japan, in combination with the policies of the new Bush administration, changed the international context surrounding the Korean Peninsula, and the United States and Japan were set to take a harsher approach toward North Korea. The emergence of history, textbook, and territorial issues during Prime Minister Koizumi's tenure unraveled that once promising framework for ROK-Japan cooperation.

The weakness of the Japan-ROK political relationship – the byproduct of a painful history and ongoing territorial conflicts – is one of several constraints that have prevented the two alliances from developing into a collective security framework similar to NATO in Europe. South Korea and Japan occupy different geographical and geostrategic positions. As a result, they have different priorities when each country weighs its own security interests. Nonetheless, their ties with the United States also provide a focal point and common perspective through which to consider regional stability. The United States naturally has a special interest in mitigating animosity between two alliance partners and in promoting deeper security cooperation between Japan and South Korea. Moreover, if deeper integration on the basis of common values can lay the foundation for collective security cooperation in Northeast Asia, such a vision will require good Japan-ROK relations, or at least the capacity to set aside the emotional and historical prejudices that are revived by feelings of national pride. At a minimum, the alliances with the United States have provided an institutional structure that can serve as indirect support for an improved Japan-ROK relationship.

The obstacles to better Japan-ROK relations are well known. The most important of them are the ugly period of colonialism that has been burned deep into the Korean psyche[51] and the Korean sense that their country is "a shrimp among whales," the fourth of the pillars of modern South Korean national identity. The two combine to render many Koreans antagonistic toward or deeply suspicious of Japan, resentful, sometimes jealous

[51] It is tempting to say "consciousness," but the reflexive attitude of many Koreans toward Japan and Japanese goes beyond actual thinking.

but ever aware of Japan's standing and status. There is no avoiding a feeling of condescension among some Japanese toward Koreans – a weariness over the constant reference to the past, a refusal to move beyond history, and a sense that Koreans are always looking for reasons to take offense.

Japanese views of the ROK

In fact, our survey shows that there is a foundation in Japan for better Japan-ROK ties. Indeed, "we have to co-exist," insisted one former LDP politician. When asked what country Japanese values were most similar to, South Korea was the second most popular choice (33 percent), trailing only the U.S. Similarly, while a distant second, South Korea was the second choice (trailing the U.S.) when Japanese were asked what country had interests most similar to Japan. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65 percent) felt South Korea is playing a positive role in resolving key problems in Asia. More than half (57 percent) trusted South Korea "to act responsibly in the world"; 40 percent responded either "not very much" or "not at all."

Three-quarters of our Japanese respondents agreed that Japan and South Korea should be allies; 70 percent thought an alliance was a good idea even after unification. (Japanese think that wouldn't be Seoul's best move though: 46 percent said the U.S. would be a unified Korea's best ally, while 30 percent thought China would play that role. Only 19 percent said Japan would be Korea's best ally.)

On the other hand, South Korea did not register as Japan's most important security or economic partner in the next 5-10 years, and "strengthen relations with South Korea" ranked ninth of 12 Japanese foreign policy priorities. Feelings toward South Korea were lukewarm – 59.96 on our thermometer – below Southeast Asia, but well above China. Consistent with that, South Korea scored 4.26 (out of 10) when Japanese were asked how much influence they wanted that country to have in the world. None of our respondents identified South Korea as a threat to Japan (while three were prepared to finger the U.S.), but 68 percent of Japanese favored the continued presence of U.S. forces in South Korea – whether to deter a North Korean attack or as a "cap in the South Korean bottle" isn't clear.

Eighty-four percent of our respondents characterized themselves as friendly toward South Korea; 83 percent agreed that "Japan is friendly toward South Korea." Sixty-three percent disagreed with the statement that South Korea is friendly toward Japan. When asked why, 47 percent blamed history, 7 percent pointed to territorial disputes, and 3 percent said it was the fault of politicians' visits to Yasukuni Shrine. Ominously, 40 percent blamed "South Korean ill will toward Japan." Our interviewees pointed to an education system that inculcates anti-Japan sentiment and a culture that makes it politically correct – if not required – to demonize Japan. Several noted that Japanese politicians would never be allowed to say the things about Korea that their Korean counterparts say about Japan. That could explain why Japanese interviewees felt "disappointed" by the ROK.

Several of our interviewees conceded that Japan, too, was to blame. One Japanese accused his countrymen of looking down on the ROK and another university professor admitted that Japan "is not ready to sincerely listen to ROK claims." While there is ample blame to be laid on both parties, it is clear that neither country is prepared to truly understand the other's thinking.

Korean views of Japan

Among Koreans, our research also showed surprisingly positive feelings toward Japan. Virtually all the Korean elites interviewed in October 2007 acknowledged that political differences over history, comfort women, and textbooks may be inevitable and recurring, but should not be allowed to poison the rest of the relationship. Among survey respondents, Korean elite feelings toward Japan registered 63.17, slightly warmer than Southeast Asia (61 rating) but cooler than Great Britain (67.55). Sixty-five percent of respondents said Japan played a positive role in solving key problems in Asia. This finding is slightly warmer than the 2008 CCGA/EAI poll of Korean public attitudes, which showed a thermometer rating among Koreans toward Japan of 49.7, and 54 percent of respondents assessed Japan's role in solving Asian problems in positive or very positive terms.

Over 80 percent of Korean respondents in our survey indicated that they consider themselves personally friendly toward Japan. But assessments of the state-to-state relationship were split, with 49 percent of South Koreans agreeing that the countries are friendly toward each other and 51 percent disagreeing. Seventy-three percent of Korean respondents identified history as the biggest problem in the relationship, with 15 percent pointing to territorial disputes, but this was prior to renewed tensions over Tokdo/Takeshima in the summer of 2008.

Despite these differences, our survey supports the proposition that there is a reservoir of support for an improved Korea-Japan relationship, with 87 percent of respondents indicating that South Korea and Japan should be allies and 89 percent responding in favor of an alliance relationship with Japan post Korean-reunification. This sentiment might be explained in part by apparent generational changes in Korea over perceptions of Japan. A majority of our 20-something survey respondents picked Japan as the country to which Korean values were most similar (30-somethings pointed to China, and those 40 and older picked the U.S.). One interviewee explained, "[Younger Koreans] don't have a sense of inferiority to Japan, but Japan is the easiest target to cause nationalistic sentiment. We can't do without Japan; Japanese can't do without us, it will cause much trouble. We are neighboring countries economically and socially we are connected too much."

Implications for alliance management

During the 1990s, strategists and policy makers recognized that their alliances needed to be re-evaluated in a new geopolitical environment. The result was a series of studies that provided ample justification for the continuation of the Cold War hub-and-

spoke security architecture.[52] But the end of the Cold War coincided with and triggered changes within those societies. Prominent among the internal changes were debates about national place and purpose in the international system. In Japan, much of this debate was triggered by a debilitating decade that challenged fundamental tenets of national identity. In South Korea, political and economic success bred confidence that forced a reconsideration of longstanding relationships.

This rise of identity politics in Korea and Japan has created new challenges for alliance management in the United States. Increasing public participation and the growing influence of public opinion on security and foreign policy have forced alliance managers to accommodate a broader range of stakeholders. We find that Japanese and South Korean public opinion have been shaped both by changes in perceived external threats and by new thinking about perceptions of identity and values (what type of country Korea/Japan is and should be), but that the focal points and implications of debates over identity-related issues and trends in public opinion in Japan and South Korea are on divergent tracks, reflecting the peculiarities of each country's political and strategic situation.

For example, there is that "insecurity" in South Korea that we identify as the "fourth pillar" of that country's national identity. This manifests in a variety of ways, but one of the most powerful expressions of this is the competition between the ROK and Japan for U.S. attention. A South Korean progressive explained in an interview: "In devising its Northeast Asia policy, the United States needs to assure South Koreans that the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance is not at the cost of the U.S.-Korea alliance; otherwise, public opinion within Korea could be unstable on this issue and could result in a loss of the balance of power within Northeast Asia." Many South Koreans do not desire to distance themselves from the U.S. to get closer to China. Rather, they are frustrated with the U.S.: in their eyes, Washington does not value the alliance with South Korea to the same extent that it values the alliance with Japan.

The United States has crafted a response to the challenges posed by this evolving security environment and the transformations occurring in the domestic politics of its allies. The process began in the U.S.-Japan relationship in the mid-1990s, with the Joint Declaration signed by President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto, which was followed by the 1997 revision of Defense Guidelines that governed bilateral security cooperation. Both countries felt those changes helped right an alliance that was undergoing serious strain and they provided confidence and stability. But the pace of

[52] Studies of the U.S.-Japan alliance include: "Restructuring the U.S.-Japan Alliance: Toward a More Equal Partnership," edited by Ralph Cossa, CSIS Significant Issues series, October 1997; "Toward a True Alliance: Restructuring U.S.-Japan Security Relations," edited by Mike Mochizuki, Brookings Institution Press, 1997; "The U.S.-Japan Alliance, Past, Present and Future," edited by Michael Green and Patrick Cronin, A Council on Foreign Relations Book, 1999; "The Japan -U.S. Alliance: New Challenges for the 21st Century," edited by Nishihara Masashi, Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000; and "New Perspectives on U.S.-Japan Relations," edited by Gerald Curtis, Japan Center for International Exchange, 2000. There was considerably less work on the U.S.-ROK alliance. See for example, "A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of U.S.-Korean Security Cooperation," by Jonathan D. Pollack, Young Koo Cha, Changsu Kim, the Rand Corporation, 1995.

change accelerated after the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 and the two countries have continued to respond, both unilaterally and bilaterally.[53]

Although an alliance reaffirmation process similar to that in the U.S.-Japan alliance was envisioned for the U.S.-ROK alliance in the mid-1990s, it was not carried out. Instead, in response to the spike in perceived anti-U.S. sentiment among Koreans in 2002-2003, the United States and South Korea initiated a round of talks on the Future of the Alliance (FOTA) that was designed to support the reconfiguration of the U.S. footprint on the Korean Peninsula, consolidate U.S. bases, and return bases no longer needed by the U.S. to the control of the ROK government. That set of talks was followed by the Security Policy Initiative (SPI) which began in 2005 and attempted to establish a joint vision for the alliance and to negotiate a change in command and control arrangements from a combined command to one in which the ROK government would play a leading role and U.S. forces would play a supporting role in the defense of the peninsula. The SPI negotiations continue as preparations are made for the transition to the new command structure by April 2012.

Plainly, both alliances are undergoing revision and renovation. But it is unclear to what extent alliance adjustments take into account the trends in identity politics that we have identified here. These trends present challenges for alliance management, but if properly understood and accommodated, they could open the door to new options and opportunities. We consider and evaluate the following six options:

Regionalization of alliances: In this scenario, the United States would bind together Japan and South Korea as the core of a multilateral security alliance that would play a stabilizing and socializing role in Asia similar to that of NATO in Europe. A new security environment – that encompasses new threats, new capabilities, and new domestic political realities – requires more than a piecemeal response. The U.S.-led alliance structure, with its 50 years of success maintaining the peace, is a ready-made framework for a broader multilateral effort. It has already helped build confidence among partners, facilitated the integration of militaries, and stimulated habits of cooperation among allies. It seems like common sense to put this history, experience, and familiarity to work.

This option requires sufficient common interests, threat perceptions, or sense of shared values, to motivate the three governments to act in concert. Our data shows a convergence in thinking about threats, interests, and values. Japan and South Korea, like the U.S., see North Korea as a threat and worry about China's rising power. Both countries believe their national interests most closely align with those of the U.S.; there is similar agreement when it comes to values, but those numbers are not as high.

That convergence would explain the congruity of policy statements from Japanese, South Korean, and U.S. leaders. President Bush has spoken of the need for

[53] A summary of this response is provided in Cossa and Glosserman, *op cit*, note 3 and in the chapters on U.S.-Japan relations in *Comparative Connections*, the Pacific Forum's quarterly electronic journal of bilateral relations.

democracies to work more closely together[54], a view that was echoed by Abe Shinzo[55] during his brief stint as prime minister and Aso Taro[56] while he served as foreign minister in that Cabinet. Those initiatives died with the end of the Abe administration, but the ideas continue to circulate within the policy community and may yet re-emerge. During his April 2008 visit to the United States, Lee Myung Bak hit a similar note, saying "… The days of ideology are over. The politicization of alliance relations shall be behind us. We shall not let ideology and politics blind us from common interests, values, and norms."[57] The failure of previous attempts to promote values within each nation's foreign policy should not be read as discomfort with those values; rather, there are concerns about making them the foundation of the country's foreign policy. As one Japanese university professor explained, the Japanese are deeply split about the feasibility of a foreign policy strategy that is based on values.[58]

Significantly, our survey and interviews show an understanding among both Japanese and Koreans on the need to cooperate. The data and interviews show that security and foreign policy specialists seek closer ties between the two countries, In fact, the two countries' security policies are already linked in many ways. The UN Command arrangements for implementing the armistice still designate certain U.S. bases in Japan as UN-flagged, and Japanese security perceptions clearly perceive the stability and diplomatic orientation of the Korean Peninsula as a critical variable that influences Japan's security.

But obstacles to enhanced and institutionalized cooperation are strong. The first of course is the constitutional restrictions imposed on Japan by its constitution. Article 9 would likely pose a considerable restraint on Japanese options. Second, despite data that makes a case for Japan-ROK cooperation, powerful undercurrents work against stronger ties between those two countries. The readiness of Korean politicians to play "the Japan card" and the ease with which they can whip up nationalist sentiment against Japan suggests that there is something deeply embedded in Korean feeling and thinking – and perhaps even identity – that militates against cooperation.

Finally, such a move would trigger Chinese objections. While the Chinese seem less likely to object to U.S.-led alliances as "Cold War relics" – the thinking persists but the objections are softer – there is no indication that they are prepared to embrace or endorse a multilateral framework that starts from those alliances. Chinese insist that multilateral institutions – especially security initiatives – should be inclusive and aimed at no specific country. Moreover, the mere prospect of Chinese objections is sufficient to

[54] See for example, "President Discusses Freedom and Democracy in Kyoto," White House Office of the Press Secretary, Nov. 16, 2005.
[55] See for example, George Nishiyama, "Japan Omits China, Asks Asian Democracies to Unite," *Reuters*, Aug. 22, 2007.
[56] Aso Taro, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity: Japan's Expanding Diplomatic Horizons," Nov. 30. 2006.
[57] Lee Myung Bak, speech to the Korea Society Annual Dinner, April 15 2008.
[58] Other observers note that Japan may not want to make this a standard by which to evaluate behavior – it may not measure up. David Fouse, "Japan's New Values-Oriented Diplomacy: A Double-Edged Sword," *PacNet*, 12A, March 16, 2007.

get other countries to back away from such efforts. No country wants to be forced to take sides in a division of the Asia Pacific region.

De facto trilateral alliance: In this option, the United States would continue to manage alliances with Japan and South Korea bilaterally, but will encourage greater cooperation and consultation between and among them to stimulate greater mutual understanding of the core objectives of security cooperation in a regional context. This scenario sidesteps the constitutional objections to alliance regionalization, and minimizes domestic political objections in both countries by playing down formal linkages among the three countries – especially among Seoul and Tokyo.

This option might seem desirable – it is desirable to promote greater security cooperation and integration among the three countries to the extent possible –but it would probably take a much more active commitment on the part of the United States to facilitate closer South Korea-Japan relations and to encourage the resolution – or at least the submergence – of ongoing disputes over territory and history. It is not clear that the United States would want to take on such role, especially since the odds are high that either Seoul or Tokyo would consider U.S. mediation as less than "even handed" when it did not get the outcome it sought. Moreover, as Victor Cha has argued, an active U.S. role relieves the pressure on the two countries to make their bilateral relationship work themselves.[59]

Status quo (transformation) or "passive delinking": In this case, the United States would continue to focus on its own needs in the context of global security trends and work with alliance partners in Asia as needed to maintain maximum flexibility to respond to both conventional and non-conventional threats. In this option, alliance cooperation would be based on the assets and support alliance partners can offer, but little concern is given to the extent to which alliances work together and little coordination is necessary to promote cooperation among alliance partners. This option allows the United States to avoid entanglement in the difficult South Korea-Japan relationship because the focus is on making the two alliances work. This approach is the result of the application of a template that attempts to respond to a multitude of global threats with little regard for the particulars of the local context in which it is applied. This is the default option.

Focus on U.S.-Japan alliance; accept inevitability of South Korean alignment with China: The U.S. alliance with Japan holds real strategic value for U.S. long-term interests, but the end of the Cold War has diminished the geostrategic value of the Korean Peninsula in Asia. This approach argues that U.S. efforts should focus on ensuring that the U.S.-Japan security alliance remains the bulwark for ensuring Asian stability; little effort is given to maintain the alliance with Korea given the likelihood that pressure from China will decrease Korean incentives for strategic cooperation with the United States in the long-term.

[59] Victor Cha, "Alignment Despite Antagonism: the U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle," Stanford University Press, 1999.

There are three problems with this approach. The first is that by all indications, Korea remains committed to the alliance with the U.S. There may be periodic spikes of anti-U.S. sentiment in Korea, but there is a large reservoir of goodwill that supports the alliance and sees it as serving their country's national interest and promoting regional security. Second, this approach undervalues the significance of the Korean Peninsula in Japanese security. When the U.S. decided to reduce troop levels on the Korean Peninsula in June 2004, Japanese were alarmed. An *Asahi Shimbun* editorial noted that the realignment of U.S. forces in Korea "directly affects Japan's security and military base issues." On the other side of the political spectrum, the *Sankei Shimbun* agreed: "There is no doubt that a change in the U.S. forces in South Korea will have an impact on the security of Japan and East Asia."[60] The prospect of a China-South Korean alignment, which would allow China to dominate the Korean Peninsula, would likely raise Japanese insecurities to acute levels – especially if the U.S. was seen as acquiescing to such a development. Finally, any U.S. withdrawal of forces from the region, and especially given the uncertainties on the Korean Peninsula, would raise questions about the U.S. commitment to providing regional security more generally.

Alliance commitments without troop presence: If the costs to local communities that serve as hosts for U.S. troops were thought to be too high, the regional threat environment were to be seen as relatively benign, or if U.S. local presence were to become disadvantageous to U.S. national interests, it is possible to imagine the United States maintaining a residual or symbolic commitment to political and security cooperation with South Korea and/or Japan, through the maintenance of bases or other facilities necessary to equip forces in the event they were forward deployed, while limiting or eliminating the need for a semi-permanent U.S. troop presence. Such bases would also allow for the stationing of U.S. troops as necessary in response to ad hoc crises, but would not presume the permanent use of such facilities for the purpose of maintaining forward-deployed forces. This option is already in practice elsewhere: the United States maintains alliance relationships with Australia, the Philippines and Thailand, but does not maintain a permanent troop presence in any of them.

While this option would diminish frictions with local communities, eliminating a source of opposition to the alliances, there are real downsides. The first and most important is the degree to which such a move would be seen not as a rationalization of alliances to make them more durable and enduring, but as a wavering in the U.S. commitment to regional security and each country's defense. Concern about the credibility of the U.S. commitment could encourage Seoul and/or Tokyo to take self-help measures that might be destabilizing. Other governments might be tempted to exploit this shift, alter the regional balance of power to their advantage, or test the U.S. commitment to regional security or that of its allies. Finally, while arrangements would be made to ensure U.S. access to local facilities in the event of an emergency, there is no guarantee that in fact that access would be available: there is a big difference in locally deployed forces responding and U.S. forces moving into or through local positions in a crisis. In short, uncertainty about the U.S. response in a crisis would be greatly magnified.

[60] From "Highlights: Japanese Editorials on U.S. decision to reduce troops in ROK 9 June 04," FBIS Report JPP20040609000012 Japan, June 9, 2004.

Independence/autonomy: This option is the result of two phenomena: technological advances that provide new capabilities and encourage flexibility in force deployments, and U.S. frustrations created by domestic politics in allied nations that limit the use of U.S. forces deployed there, that compromise the strength of the relationships, and that oblige the U.S. to spend disproportionate amounts of time responding to local issues. In short, this view sees a reduced need for institutionalized relationships and views alliances as a drag on U.S. freedom of action to pursue its national interests. Instead, "coalitions of the willing," in which countries join the United States based on perceived self-interest rather than through alliance commitments, will assure support for the U.S. on critical issues. Likewise, autonomy for former alliance partners reduces security burdens on the United States and eliminates "free riding." This option suggests the end of U.S. alliances in Asia and is unlikely for the foreseeable future.

A variant of this scenario is the development of a multilateral security mechanism that replaces U.S.-led alliances as the main force for stability in East Asia. Given the rapid development of China-led economic interdependence in East Asia, the constructivist case has already been made that such economic interconnections could become the source of regional stability, thereby replacing the alliances. However, such a structure would have to prove itself reliable and capable of addressing regional security challenges before alliance partners would be willing to dissolve the longstanding bilateral security arrangements that have provided the foundation for stability and prosperity in recent decades.

Evaluation of the six options: How the situation is likely to evolve will in part depend on how each country responds to regional security challenges. Any of the above outcomes might be plausible, depending on how the security situation in Asia develops. However, our data suggests that there is a relative convergence in views among elites within the United States, Japan, and South Korea, and this may provide a basis for deepening and regionalizing security cooperation in Northeast Asia. There is also evidence that the United States, South Korea, and Japan have overlapping threat perceptions stemming from unease about the future of China and North Korea. This does not mean that the fundamental basis for their enhanced cooperation would have to stem from a shared threat, but that what they share can also be a binding force sufficient to motivate coordinated actions in service of common interests.

Our analysis also suggests that there are significant practical obstacles, particularly in managing the Japan-ROK relationship, that must be addressed before it would be possible to deepen trilateral security cooperation among these countries. Even if threat perceptions coincide, priorities and preferred responses may not. Smoothing out those wrinkles will not be easy, but should not prove insurmountable. Equally important is the need to ensure that such cooperation avoids inciting a negative Chinese reaction or is not "misread" as an attempt to "contain" China or cast China as a threat.

Additional conclusions follow from the premise that the United States, Japan, and South Korea are moving in the same direction as a result of the convergence of perceptions and expanded willingness to cooperate with each other. First, values-based

cooperation, if properly cultivated, might eventually overcome the emotional issues that beset the relationship between South Korea and Japan. Recognition of common values would move South Korea and Japan together; our survey data suggests that such a convergence is underway among elites, even if it is not yet sufficiently acknowledged at the public level. One challenge is whether elites can provide the political leadership needed to push public opinion toward greater cooperation in each country, or whether politics will continue to be dominated by emotions and extreme views within each public.

A second conclusion is that the United States might want to reconsider its approach to alliance modernization in Northeast Asia. The consideration of global threats and configuration of a force necessary to meet those needs has introduced a set of objectives that is best served by regionalization of alliances in Asia. However, the Global Posture Review (GPR) was implemented through parallel bilateral processes that interacted in ways that created – rather than eliminated – obstacles to implementation of reconfiguration, especially as each of America's allies looked over its shoulder at the other as part of its judgment about how to manage its own modernization process. Given a continuing convergence in perspectives, it might be more effective to pursue integration on a regional basis by using an organic, bottom-up approach that responds to the local needs of Washington's respective allies and then broadens in ways that promote greater regional cooperation and support for global missions based on the collective interests of the three countries.

Third, the deepening of trilateral cooperation and regionalization of the alliances in an organic fashion provides a benchmark for expansion of security cooperation among like-minded allies beyond the three countries. Or it may serve to develop standards that can be used to deepen and broaden security cooperation in Northeast Asia. This would set a high requirement for like-mindedness as a basis for strengthening the effectiveness of collective action against regional threats. Such cooperation would challenge others to consider, respect, and perhaps eventually adopt, like-mindedness based on converging values, reinforced by strong coordination in the service of collective security in Northeast Asia.

Making such cooperation work will take time and patience. While we are optimistic about the potential for trilateral cooperation, we are well aware of the very considerable obstacles. Thus the first step is the inculcation of a mindset in leaders in the three countries that trilateral cooperation is both desirable and possible. Even when there is recognition that trilateral cooperation would serve all three countries' national interests, the first response is to retreat in the face of those obstacles. A commitment to genuine trilateralism would make it harder for self-serving and blatantly political appeals to find traction. If such statements were quickly dismissed, they might not occur as often as they do. In other words, a commitment to trilateralism could undercut the appeal of narrow-minded nationalism.

Second, the three countries need to establish and institutionalize trilateral discussions among various bureaucracies that have common and shared interests. The Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), which helped coordinate positions

among the three governments on North Korea, is an example of such a dialogue – and proof of both its potential and the need to insulate it from partisan politics. But trilateral discussions should be much inclusive, involving a wider range of institutional interests and addressing a much broader agenda. Topics should include alliance interests, security cooperation, nontraditional security threats, trade and economic concerns, financial stabilization, North Korea, and China, to start just a short list.

Third, the Pacific Command's multilateral security exercises should serve as the basis for an initial consideration of opportunities for operational cooperation. There should be a careful examination of what the three militaries are doing and what more they can do together to combat specific regional threats. Another focus is out of area cooperation that would explore ways to enhance cooperation and maximize the efficient use of assets.

Conclusions

The end of the Cold War had a profound impact on the security environment in Northeast Asia and shifted the thinking of security and foreign policy professionals and the public in Japan and South Korea. The end of a bipolar world order created opportunities for those countries to build new relationships and transformed economic, political, and security dynamics, which reinforced the evolution(s) underway within those two societies.

This process has led to profound and wrenching political debates in Japan and South Korea that have centered on national identity-related issues. The emergence of these debates coincided with the end of the Cold War, but was also stimulated by changes in domestic politics in South Korea and Japan (resulting from the deepening of democracy or the renewal of public concerns regarding regional security issues). We are not prepared to say that the end of the Cold War *caused* those debates, but it is clear that many of the certainties that provided a foundation for domestic and foreign policies in both countries have eroded since the collapse of Soviet Union.[61] Japanese confidence has been sapped and its international position eroded. At the same time, South Korea's emergence as a post-modern society and a global economic powerhouse has coincided with the post-Cold War era.

Today, Japan and South Korea are trying to identify the political principles that can promote social and political cohesion and can be used as the foundation for effective governance and policy making. A changing international environment invites debate over foreign and security policy and both sides appeal to notions of "identity," as they define it, to prevail. This reinforces the salience of national identity questions as both societies must define who they are to figure out what policy best suits them. This domestic

[61] For example, it is unclear to what degree Japan's economic troubles – which triggered much of the angst in that country – are the result of or have been intensified by the transformation of the global economy that occurred at the end of the Cold War, when billions of people entered the labor force, IT technologies transformed production models, and whole new markets were created.

political turbulence provides opportunities for leaders who can draw on these core values and inclinations.

Our study provides some surprising conclusions. First, the two alliances with the U.S. are strong. Despite the changes in the external environment and the periodic troubles in each country's relations with the U.S., large majorities in Japan and South see their alliance with the U.S. as being in their country's national interest and essential to regional security and prosperity. That does not mean that there is room for complacency, however. Japanese and Koreans seek a more equitable sharing of burdens within their alliance and each wants to be treated with more respect and as a more equal partner. Since general publics are less enthused than security elites, greater public awareness efforts are needed if public support is to be sustained.

This desire is understandable, but it also creates obligations for the alliance partner. Real equality requires partners to step up, to help define the alliance purpose and its vision. Both sides have to work to make sure that that vision is realized. Assuming those responsibilities requires each government to have its own national security strategy, an understanding of how its alliance with the U.S. fits into that strategy, and a vision for the alliance. In other words, it requires both Seoul and Tokyo to have a better sense of national purpose and the means to secure its national interests. That, in turn, requires both governments to understand the national consensus about power and purpose. In short, we return again to national identity.

As leaders in Seoul and Tokyo take on that challenge, our data provides some interesting guidelines. Bread and butter issues – economic concerns – dominate thinking about national priorities. Both governments should focus on providing their citizens better lives and ensuring future prosperity. Both countries seek international engagement and want to play a larger role in the world. At the same time, however, neither country seeks a higher international profile on issues of peace and security. Both societies think their contributions can best be made in the fields of economic development, technology, and in the case of Japan, environmental protection. There is little inclination in either country for a militarist or overly assertive or aggressive foreign policy.

A second key conclusion is we see considerable overlap in the thinking in Japan and South Korea. For all the frictions in their bilateral relationship, the two countries seem to view the world through similar lenses. There is a strong foundation for bilateral cooperation. This will require political leaders who put long-term national interest above short-term political gains. History shows such leaders are rare – not only in Korea and Japan, but around the world. While the primary burden for building this relationship belongs on Japanese and South Koreans, Americans can and should help. But if Japanese and South Koreans take a long hard look at themselves, our data suggests they will see more in common than that which differentiates them.

About the Authors

Brad Glosserman is Executive Director for the Pacific Forum CSIS in Honolulu, co-editor of *Comparative Connections*, and a contributing editor to *The Japan Times*, where he writes extensively on policy issues and international affairs. Mr. Glosserman holds a J.D. from The George Washington University and an M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University, both in Washington, D.C.

Scott Snyder is a Senior Associate in the International Relations program of The Asia Foundation and Pacific Forum CSIS, and is based in Washington, DC. He lived in Seoul, South Korea as Korea Representative of The Asia Foundation during 2000-2004. Previously, he served as a Program Officer in the Research and Studies Program of the U.S. Institute of Peace, and as Acting Director of The Asia Society's Contemporary Affairs Program. His latest monograph, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Economics, Politics, Security,* will be published by Lynne Rienner in 2009. His publications include *Paved With Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea* (2003), co-edited with L. Gordon Flake and *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (1999). Snyder received his B.A. from Rice University and an M.A. from the Regional Studies East Asia Program at Harvard University. He was the recipient of a Pantech Visiting Fellowship at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center during 2005-2006, received an Abe Fellowship, administered by the Social Sciences Research Council, in 1998-99, and was a Thomas G. Watson Fellow at Yonsei University in South Korea in 1987-88.