

ADDRESSING WEAKNESSES IN THE TRILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

A YOUNG LEADERS CONFERENCE
REPORT OF THE US-ROK-JAPAN
TRILATERAL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE

Edited by
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Pacific Forum CSIS

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Introduction

By Shelley Brandt

In June 2017, Young Leaders were invited to observe and participate in the US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue held in Maui, Hawaii. The dialogue was hosted by the Pacific Forum CSIS, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the US Air Force Academy Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts on Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (AFA PASCC). Forty officials and experts from the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), along with 20 Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders, attended in their private capacity. During the two-day dialogue, participants played out a tabletop exercise (TTX) to explore each countries' thinking about regional security, US extended deterrence, and ways to strengthen trilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the Young Leaders were divided into teams to critically analyze the TTX discussion and responses, answering four questions:

Did the TTX realistically capture the potential dynamics of a conflict on the peninsula (and if not, why not?)?

Are there particular capabilities for defense, offense, or deterrence that were either missing or could have been put to better use?

Was there a particular diplomatic or political action or reaction that your group would have done differently? What was it, and what would you have done instead?

What should policymakers be doing now to reduce the risk that such a conflict might occur?

In their responses, all groups highlighted the difference in threat perceptions from each country. The US opted for a preemptive strike to defend its homeland, believing this would not escalate the situation with a limited strike. The ROK was afraid of entrapment, and Japan was concerned with abandonment if the US is more interested in defending itself than its allies. The Young Leaders were acutely aware of the impact domestic politics would play in a real conflict although they did not play into the TTX. Group 4 suggests that it is important to design a consistent, robust approach to North Korea that can stand the test of domestic leadership changes.

All of the groups also pointed out the need for greater expertise in cyber issues. Group 1 explained that proportionality needs to be clearly defined in cyber/cross-domain deterrence. Three of the five pieces also mentioned the need for more trilateral cooperation for non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO), HA/DR, and intelligence sharing. Groups 1 and 2 also placed emphasis on the need for closer coordination with China. Despite differences in thinking on how to handle the crisis, Group 3 stressed the importance of maintaining a united front against Pyongyang. To maintain peace and stability in East Asia, the trilateral alliance must address the weaknesses in their relationships exposed by scenarios like the one in this TTX.

Group 1:
Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, Masashi Murano,
Crystal Pryor, and Daekwon Son

In June 2017, Pacific Forum CSIS hosted the annual US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue. The main event of this dialogue was a two move tabletop exercise (TTX) focused on a North Korea scenario. This dialogue and TTX focused on the implications of North Korea's ICBM on the credibility of extended deterrence in this region. The TTX highlighted several key issues in future trilateral cooperation, including divergent opinions on escalation risk and DPRK use of force, a shift in entrapment concerns from Washington to Seoul, perception gaps between the three capitals on different DPRK threats, and coordination problems in non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO).

The TTX began Move 1 with a suspected DPRK inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) on a launch pad in Sohae, a wide-ranging suspected DPRK cyber attack and possible DPRK attack on a building in South Korea. After a symbolic US strike on Kim Il-sung's statue in Pyongyang, in Move 2 the DPRK confirmed the ICBM had a nuclear payload and was aimed at the US homeland. Furthermore, North Korea attacked a ROK-held island, killing ROK soldiers; continued cyber attacks also killed people in South Korea and Japan; and a suspected DPRK drone was found to have flown over South Korea, appearing to have chemical weapons capability. The United States decided to only strike the ICBM on the launch pad and attempt to stop the ongoing cyber attacks.

Throughout both moves, the United States expected its South Korean and Japanese allies to call for strong kinetic action to bolster deterrence credibility and assure US commitment, driving US decisions for strikes in Moves 1 and 2. However, allies had divergent views of the costs and benefits of such strikes, based largely on different assessments of the DPRK's use of force and perceived escalation risks. The ROK expressed concern with entrapment and a desire for restraint – a change compared with the TTX of past years, when the US team often found itself restraining ROK action. The ROK found this year's scenario qualitatively different from last year's and perceived more room for de-escalation, making it reluctant to take more active, if not aggressive, action. Japan, conversely, pressed the United States for greater action and expressed more concern with abandonment than entrapment. One core difference in this year's scenario that likely, if not fully, explains this shift is that past years have focused on DPRK kinetic action against the ROK, while this year the biggest threat was a nuclear attack against the US homeland – removing the immediate threat to the ROK.

The US decision for a kinetic strike in response to Move 1's DPRK cyber attack was the lack of symmetrically proportional response options available against DPRK cyber capabilities. The challenge of cyber proportionality between advanced networked nations and poor un-networked nations like North Korea (the catalyst for the Kim regime's asymmetrical military strategy), coupled with the totality of DPRK actions, led the United States to decide that simply targeting DPRK Internet infrastructure was not

enough due to the “paralyzing” nature of the cyber attacks in the allied nations. The decision to respond with kinetic force, which has not been taken against the DPRK since the Korean War, was not viewed as dangerously escalatory by the US team because they chose symbolic targets that did not threaten the leadership or suggest regime change. However, white cell extrapolation of the strike caused confusion by selecting the Kim Il-Sung statue in Pyongyang, which was viewed by the ROK team as highly provocative for its importance to the regime’s ideology and thus likely to lead to an escalatory DPRK response.

One important lesson was learned: the United States must be sensitive to the different interpretations that its allies and the DPRK may have of US strike targets in the DPRK. In fact, the ROK team claimed the strike against the DPRK in response to the cyber attack violated international law and could be deemed a preemptive strike by Pyongyang and a serious provocation by the international community. Some US participants also suggested that the US team should not have acted kinetically based on the totality of DPRK action, but instead should delink the cyber and ICBM issues to deal with each separately. Delinking the two may have given less reason for a kinetic response and better chance to avoid escalation.

Greater debate was over the US decision to strike the ICBM on the launch pad in Move 2. The US team believed that it had to destroy the missile on the launch pad because it was a “clear and present danger” to the US homeland, and the best chance of success was a strike before it was launched, instead of relying on imperfect missile defense. Despite calls from the ROK and Japan for consultations, the US team forcefully explained that allies cannot veto the US defending itself and that it would support similar action by its allies for their own self defense. Moreover, the US believed that if it did not defend itself, it would be harder to assure allies that it was committed to their defense and extended deterrence. The US believed that by only striking the ICBM and not attacking DPRK missiles or its WMD program, it would leave the DPRK’s deterrent intact. Such an action would limit escalation and was unlikely to lead to a DPRK response. The ROK and Japan believed that any strike on the ICBM was likely to lead to a strong DPRK response and possibly the outbreak of general war on the Peninsula. The ROK and Japan, however, had different, alternative solutions. The ROK wanted the US not to strike the ICBM because it knew the heaviest costs of the next Korean War would fall on South Korea. Japan, on the other hand, suggested the US should take out as many DPRK missiles as possible, since this would limit the DPRK’s capability to inflict damage to Japan in a response strike.

Evaluating the TTX

The TTX realistically captured the potential dynamics of a conflict on the Peninsula because gray zone and cyber crises are likely to become more prevalent as a means of attack in the future. The TTX also expressed the stability/instability paradox, in which North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons may embolden it to conduct lower-level aggression. It is important to prevent North Korea from making the miscalculation that obtaining an ICBM is a “game changer” – especially given the

DPRK's first successful test of an ICBM on July 4, 2017. Also, the definition of "game changer" will change as North Korea makes technological progress. In this TTX, North Korea's ICBM was fixed (and probably using liquid fuel), making it vulnerable to preemptive strike. However, assuming a slightly longer time line, if the DPRK has a sufficient number of road-mobile ICBMs, such as the SS-27 "Topol-M" (showcased in a military parade April 2017), we believe that this would be a "game changer."

If North Korea has a reliable second strike capability, the United States will hesitate to take even limited strikes, increasing the probability that the stability/instability paradox will surface. As North Korea already has a regional strike capability equivalent to the SS-20, the United States and its allies in the region will face the classic decoupling problem that the United States and NATO experienced in the 1970s. We will need to carefully assess if and how the characteristics of low-end provocations and the strategic stability are related. Conventional limited strikes with obvious attribution (such as the bombardment of Yongpyeongdo in 2010) may be caused by the stability/instability paradox.

Also apparent from this exercise was the difficulty of attribution with cyber attacks and the potential for a "fog of war" to muddy thinking on the best response. For example, the cyber attacks may not have been conducted by North Korea, but the timing with the potential ICBM launch (which may or may not have been an actual ICBM, and it may not have truly been nuclear-tipped) quickly escalated the US response to a kinetic attack, which in turn could lead to all out warfare on the Korean Peninsula. In any case, given the difficulty of attribution and rapid response, cyber attacks may occur regardless of North Korea possessing reliable ICBM capabilities.

The exercise also highlighted space between the ROK and Japan in terms of their abandonment and entrapment concerns, where the ROK was more concerned about entrapment and Japan was more concerned that if United States only targeted the ICBM aimed at the United States, the DPRK would retaliate against Japan with short/medium-range missiles. There are gaps between the United States, Japan, and South Korea in their perception of the ICBM threat, estimates of North Korean retaliation, and beliefs about the time-sensitivity of the situation. For example, the Japan team thought that it was difficult to conclude the conflict without escalation after attacking the ICBM because the ICBM is directly linked to North Korea's regime stability. The US team believed a limited strike could potentially lead to escalation, but would not necessarily destabilize the regime. The ROK team, like Japan, thought striking the ICBM would be escalatory, and therefore wanted to leave more time for de-escalation before taking provocative action.

One question we were left with was whether the ROK would have taken a unilateral response to DPRK, thereby forcing the United States' hand. The US team didn't discuss this option, nor did the South Korean team. A reason the ROK team did not bring up this option is likely that no one considered unilateral action prior to consultation with the United States.

Defense, offense, and deterrence capabilities

Depending on the extent of our military cyber capabilities, perhaps the three countries would have been able to better respond to DPRK provocations in a non-kinetic manner. The cyber option warrants more consideration as it is technically possible for us to retaliate in cyber realm against DPRK cyber attacks. Yet whether a cyber attack against North Korea, which is less networked than the other countries, is a proportional response is unclear. Also, if we deter the DPRK in the cyber realm, we may need to reveal our actions, making attribution clear. The importance of a visible response in the cyber field is similar to the US Air Force using non-stealth bombers instead of B-2s as a flexible deterrent option. Although non-kinetic retaliation may be technically possible, it will be necessary to carefully consider whether we can actually deter North Korea's further provocation in the cyber field, or only conduct countermeasures.

Diplomatic and political actions

As far as a particular diplomatic or political action or reaction that our group would have done differently, we believe we should have brought China in on the discussion. Rather than starting from a place of suspicion or assumed enmity, we should understand that China has similar interests in mitigating a crisis on the Peninsula. China has 900,000 people in the ROK who would have to be evacuated in the event of a contingency on the Peninsula. We also did not discuss the role of the UN Security Council, but having China's support in a DPRK crisis is essential for the UNSC to have an effective response.

We also should have gathered more information about the cyber and other attacks before taking kinetic action, which may have inadvertently caused an escalation trap. The United States should not have targeted Kim Il Sung's statue – we could have addressed the cyber threat by going after a less symbolic target. Overall, there were missed opportunities in not discussing greater objectives such as developing avenues for more cooperation with China, reunification of the Korean Peninsula, or eliminating WMD from Northeast Asia.

Future steps to prevent conflict

Policymakers can take several steps to reduce the risk of a conflict such as the one presented in the TTX. Although there are those within the ROK who favor Seoul developing its own nuclear capability to alleviate abandonment and entrapment concerns as a US ally, South Korea's revitalization of its nuclear efforts would ultimately cost the South more than it would gain and thus is not a viable policy prescription. We need to develop quick cyber responses and define proportionality in cyber / cross-domain deterrence. In particular, we need to address whether conflict in different domains, especially cyber, should be linked or separated. We need more discussions on how to handle chemical/biological weapons if used in conflict. Finally, we would benefit from further discussions on Non-combatant evacuation operations, so we can coordinate across not only the US, ROK, and Japan, but also China.

Group 2:
Hyo Joon Chang, Akira Igata,
Edward Schwarck, and Alison Szalwinski

Evaluating the TTX

The TTX realistically captured the dynamics of a conflict on the Korean Peninsula as the US, Japan, and ROK displayed different threat perceptions, strategic goals, and calculations. All three sides had different assumptions about the given scenario in Move Two, leading to varying strategic goals and expectations about what others would do. This showed the difficulties of alliance management during crises.

One factor that the TTX failed to capture was the impact of domestic politics. Although this was beyond the scope of TTX, it is still important to consider how much of the decision-making can be insulated from domestic politics. Given increasing fluctuations of domestic politics in all three countries, it would have been more realistic to consider how domestic political dynamics affect crisis management of the three countries individually and trilaterally.

Additionally, China's role would likely be far greater in all three actors' discussions in reality compared to the TTX. The role China plays in any conflict, its goals, and ability to act as a messenger will all be important considerations. While the US side did discuss how to signal its intent to China and how to utilize China as a messenger, the actual involvement of China in a crisis situation would be more complex and potentially fraught with danger.

Defense, offense, and deterrence capabilities

The Japan team did a better job utilizing various capabilities at hand compared to previous years, most notably its cyber capabilities. While the effect of using malware against North Korea's networks would have been limited to more of a nuisance rather than having a crippling effect due to their low reliance on internet connectivity, the proposal to cut the underwater cables to North Korea in order to prevent further cyberattacks against Japan would have likely been an effective defensive measure. One area where further discussion would have had merit is cyber capabilities used for deterrence. Cyber capabilities could be a tool to consider along with other conventional and nuclear means to deter North Korea. Cross-domain deterrence is an area that not just Japan, but all three countries should explore.

The Korean side did not discuss much about North Korea's cyberattacks. During the first scenario, the Korean government could have initiated counter-measures to prevent further intrusions into national infrastructure information systems or financial institutions while condemning Pyongyang for its cyber activities as a grave security threat to ROK. As the crisis escalated with military exchanges between the ROK and DPRK, the Korean government could have again stepped up its measures to defend national infrastructure information systems while considering an option of cyber counter-attacks

to deter North Korea's further attempts. One of the important issues in increasing cyber capabilities is how to effectively develop trilateral coordination among the three sides to maximize cyber capabilities against North Korea's cyber threats.

In hindsight, given the South Korean concern over the US decision to engage in a preemptive strike, the US could have more carefully considered the option to use homeland missile defense systems in Alaska and California to shoot down the ICBM. The risk in doing so raised in discussion is that if the interceptors miss, the consequences would be catastrophic for both deterrence and human life. However, utilizing homeland missile defense systems could have been considered for the following reasons: (1) the homeland defense system has a much higher rate of success than regional defense systems; (2) this would have been an important and reassuring signal from the US to its allies on extended nuclear deterrence; and (3) by waiting until the ICBM was fired, the US would ensure that it was not the aggressor in the situation. It is worth noting, however, that there were opposing views within our group on the point of US signaling.

Diplomatic and political actions

In retrospect, the United Nations was conspicuously absent from the Japan and the US team's diplomatic toolboxes during the discussions on both steps of the simulation. Perhaps the rapidly deteriorating situation laid out in the simulation caused participants to deem any actions through the General Assembly or the Security Council to be too slow. It is also possible that condemning North Korea through the General Assembly or tightening sanctions through the Security Council were implicitly assumed to have taken place. However, North Korea is becoming an increasing concern for countries outside of the Asia-Pacific region, such as our European counterparts, due to the improvement of North Korea's ICBM, which now has the potential to reach the European Continent. Given that parties outside of the region have important stakes in how a North Korean contingency will play out, discussions on when and how to use the United Nations and for what purposes should have taken place during the deliberations.

The Korean team, particularly after the second move, expressed concerns about the US team's intentions and motivations for launching a preemptive strike. While the US team made a point to note that it would have taken the same action had the threat been a SRBM or IRBM on a launch pad aimed at Japan or the ROK, it chose to take military action when its homeland was threatened. The US team needed to strengthen its signaling to clarify that its decision to launch a preemptive strike was not based on the missile's range, but rather its payload and North Korea's stated intent.

Future steps to prevent conflict

Each of the three governments have begun to focus more closely on the cyber domain. However, more should be done during peacetime to discuss how cyber capabilities could be utilized for defense, offense, and deterrence. The following questions should be addressed: (1) What kind of cyber capabilities are available to the three countries? (2) What type of cyber capabilities can be used against what types of

attacks so that it would be deemed a proportional response? (3) How could the three countries better coordinate with each other so that their cyber defense, offense, and deterrence can be effective?

At this TTX, much of the expertise was oriented toward nuclear capabilities, deterrence theory, and military strategy. Since cyber capabilities were raised in the exercise and would play a role in a potential crisis, senior experts with greater cyber expertise and background should be included in such discussions so that realistic solutions and assessment of cyber risks are included in the scenario. This extends to current policymaking as well, which as noted, has begun to focus more on the cyber domain. It is critical that cyber experts are part of any discussion these nations' policymakers are having about escalation and deterrence with North Korea.

Additionally, the three nations can, should, and likely will continue strengthening missile defense. The United States can consider giving Aegis Ashore to Korea, continue to hold and elevate trilateral missile defense exercises from the tracking exercises at *Pacific Dragon* to potential trilateral live-fire drills, and strengthen both regional missile defense and its own homeland defense systems. It is also crucial for the US to strive to maintain credible reassurance for Japan and Korea. Joint exercises on NEO or HA/DR, which are still politically sensitive but necessary given our current strategic environment, are another area of potential cooperation.

Group 3:

**Eric Feinberg, Julia Jungmin Oh,
Hana Rudolph, and Kyung Suk Lee**

In June 2017, Pacific Forum CSIS hosted a trilateral strategic dialogue in Maui, inviting experts from the US, Japan, and South Korea to game out potential scenarios related to the ongoing tensions with North Korea and develop insights into the differing perspectives of each country.

Evaluating the TTX

The dialogue captured the lack of consensus among the three countries about which types of DPRK provocations are most threatening and unacceptable, and demonstrated the continued inability of the South Koreans and Japanese to fully integrate as allies rather than relying on the US to play the role of middleman. Other aspects of the TTXs, we agreed, were less realistic. On the US side, there appeared to be an overconfidence in the ability of the allied militaries to calibrate strikes on North Korea to avoid escalation, such as a surgical strike on a statue or a missile without prompting retaliation – an issue noted by the Japanese delegation. There was a similar overconfidence among all parties in the ability of political leadership on all sides to make strategic calculations without undue consideration of domestic political pressures. Among the South Koreans, from the US and Japanese perspective, there seemed to be a perilous level of appeasement in response to North Korean provocations, which could be understandable given the level of carnage expected on the Peninsula if a war broke out, but also potentially problematic in terms of strategic messaging to Kim Jong Un.

Defense, offense, and deterrence capabilities

The TTX's also lacked emphasis on certain capabilities that would likely play a major role in any conflict on the peninsula. For instance, there was minimal discussion of the role of the cyber dimensions of a North Korea contingency other than the TTX's preamble, which featured the sorts of cyberattacks that have become expected in recent years. There was a similar lack of emphasis on space, advances in North Korean missile technologies and special operations, and developments in allied missile defense such as the deployment of THAAD and the recent successful test of US interceptors in May. The presence of more experts from these fields would have contributed valuable context to TTX discussions instead of participants relying on wavelap-level analyses derived from press reporting.

Diplomatic and political actions

In retrospect, members of our group determined several political and diplomatic actions that we would have done differently from the assembled experts, but did not all agree. Some advocated a more aggressive posture towards North Korea, reminiscent of the Japanese delegation, which argued that escalation was inevitable and efforts to

ameliorate North Korean demands were fundamentally misguided. For instance, some advocated placing nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula or adopting a diplomatic redline that a certain level of nuclear and/or missile development would prompt an immediate military response. Others went in the opposite direction, arguing that the US and Japanese delegations were too aggressive, an assertive response risked war, and diplomatic overtures such as reopening the Kaesong Industrial Complex or initiating Track 2 dialogues might facilitate a defusing of tensions. These disagreements are unresolved within our group, just as they remained unresolved among the experts.

Future steps to prevent conflict

Finally, our group generated some recommendations that real-world policymakers should implement today to reduce the risk of conflict. Greater preparation, integration, and coordination between the three countries is essential. The glaring incongruities about what the rules of engagement should be; what the redlines for a kinetic response should be; how decisions would be made during a crisis and who would make them, all contributed to an atmosphere of confusion in exactly the moment that clarity and synchrony among our leaders and military commanders would be most vital. The reliability of US military and extended deterrence assurances has suffered in recent times, largely due to the reckless rhetoric of the new US administration. Restoring confidence in US leadership and trustworthiness is critical. A key indicator of this was growing rhetoric among the South Korean delegation about the potential desirability for Seoul to develop its own nuclear deterrent, which drove home the real-world consequences of President Trump's campaign rhetoric demanding greater fealty from security partners and even scrapping age-old alliances if he perceived them to be financially or militarily 'imbalanced.' One of the panel experts noted that he prayed every night for the good health of Defense Secretary James Mattis, as his sober style of leadership was the only counterbalance to President Trump's more rambunctious and unpredictable approach. The sentiment – seconded by many of the other experts – reminded us all of the importance of stability and maturity in maintaining a united front against Pyongyang.

Overall, there was a general consensus that the TTX helped flesh out many of the dynamics affecting the current strategic landscape vis-à-vis North Korea and the dynamics among the US, South Korea, and Japan that will likely determine the effectiveness of our response in a potential future contingency. The launch of a North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile reported in July reaffirmed the real-world necessity of taking these issues and recommendations seriously, and not allowing policy to be driven by fear, infighting, or passions but by carefully considered and coordinated plans. If the cooperation between Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul at the government level was as cordial, respectful, and productive as that which we observed during this Maui dialogue, there is reason for all of us to be optimistic that a positive – or at least minimally negative – outcome is still possible in northeast Asia.

Group 4:

Jieun Choi, Josh Kim, Tom Le, and Motoki Nishio

The US-led hub-and-spoke model has served as a foundation for East Asia security since the end of WWII. The US-ROK and US-Japan alliances have held steadfast against the Soviet threat and have managed the rise of China and belligerent North Korea. New threats such as cyberterrorism and nuclear development bring to light the weaknesses of the old alliance structure and may signal the need to further enhance trilateral cooperation. These developments may not be “game changers,” but the players have learned new moves and acquired new tools. Now more than ever, the coveted trilateral alliance may be necessary to deal with threats in a rapidly changing world. Resource sharing, coordination, and intelligence gathering will be critical to East Asian security in the coming decades.

Evaluating the TTX

There are two dimensions to the TTX: the conflict and the alliance. The TTX brought about realistic inter-relational dynamics among the US, ROK, and Japan. Each side routinely sought to send positive signals to other stakeholders, to such a degree that one could see a “game of the game.” The US, in particular, sought to reassure its allies that it would be dependable in times of crisis. Simultaneously, the US sought to control each rung of the escalation ladder, a difficult task for allies concerned with entrapment and escalation on the Korean peninsula. What was unrealistic about alliance dynamics was that the players were not the usual suspects that one would find in a real conflict situation. Each side lacked the equivalent player on the other teams, making it difficult to coordinate tasks. Additionally, the scenario may have forced players to take more drastic actions because of the low stakes of a TTX, thus exacerbating alliance strengths and weaknesses.

The conflict itself was rather unrealistic as North Korea has yet to show such belligerence in the past. More importantly, Move Two forced the hand of the allies as it began with a US strike on North Korean territory. The TTX was very static, forcing the players to act without intelligence or live information. Finally, the TTX’s portrayal of a cyber attack was limited because of the lack of detail. Neither the North Koreans nor the allies seemed to have a specific plan for a cyber attack. This was epitomized by the use of the word “cyber” as a verb, noun, and adjective without much discussion on what the actual cyber attack would be.

Defense, offense, and deterrence capabilities

North Korean conventional forces and capabilities, especially artillery, were discussed much less frequently than the ICBM and nuclear options. For Seoul, the immediate and more lethal threats are an all-out war and North Korean bombardment. While a preemptive artillery strike by North Korea would expose the individual batteries to counterstrike, the damage dealt to Seoul and other targets would be catastrophic.

Additionally, cyber security options were limited. We spoke about cyber attack options in very broad terms, but nothing in particular about realistic options. It seemed that for what we wanted to accomplish, we lacked the tools. Otherwise, such tools would have been used in the real world to prevent the continued development of North Korea's nuclear and ICBM programs. More fundamentally, there was a limited discussion about the breadth, depth, and nature of cyber attacks. The damage caused by the cyber attack in the scenario was unclear, thus players had to extrapolate costs from personal knowledge. The cyber threat is very real. There have been over 2,000 attacks within the last year alone. Anti-virus, firewall, and UTM options can defend against 80 percent of cyber attacks, but 20 percent of attacks can bypass such defenses.

Preventing cyber attacks may be the most effective strategy. For example, the US government has FedRAMP. It is standard for cloud system works in government. It has five functions before an infection: identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover. The most difficult point of cyber attack is detecting the attacker. Because common networks are too weak for migrating host IP address using VPN, TOR or original network, the best strategy is to focus on how to defend from cyberattacks first.

The discussion of deterrence was also limited as there seemed to be confusion regarding the utility of preemptive strike against a nuclear state with an overwhelming conventional deterrence capability.

Diplomatic and political actions

Considerations for engaging with the international society fell short in terms of diplomatic or political action/reaction. Despite being included in the scenario, approaches involving the United Nations Security Council were barely discussed, while drawing support from states outside the region was entirely absent. Such actions become increasingly relevant as North Korea's preparation to use a nuclear-armed ICBM transformed the problem from a regional one – involving only South Korea, the US, and Japan – into an international one. Concerted efforts to diplomatically/politically pressure North Korea can be simultaneously carried out with military options. In the case of South Korea, an open communication channel with Pyongyang can be established for North Korea to have an option to de-escalate from tight political and military pressure. Furthermore, South Korea did not view the threat to be as imminent and considered longer-term solutions. On the other hand, both the US and Japan viewed the threat to be imminent, and sought immediate solutions. While preparing for all contingencies is important, the three countries should have been on the same page in understanding the threat for there to have been a more productive conversation.

We would not have been so willing to use kinetic action. Most of the attacks were not attributed to North Korea, and the second move showed that a kinetic action against symbolic targets would quickly lead to escalation. Additionally, we would not have moved up the escalation ladder as North Korea was signaling that they just wanted to maintain their deterrent capability. Each of the attacks that may have come from North

Korea would not have warranted kinetic action individually, and combining them to justify an attack is not common practice. Many of the players used justifying language, adding details and playing up the magnitude of damage caused by the cyber attacks that were not actually in the scenario. More tailored retaliation options should have been pursued. Japan, for example, has specific answers for cyber activities.

Future steps to prevent conflict

Policymakers in South Korea, US, and Japan need to rethink foreign policy goals regarding North Korea. Denuclearization of the peninsula is an admirable end goal, but few actions and events in the three countries' diplomatic history logically align with the goal of denuclearization. There needs to be a consistent, robust approach to North Korea that can stand the test of domestic leadership changes and public opinion swings. More importantly, there has to be at least a rudimentary outline of steps between where we stand right now with North Korea and the end goal of denuclearization. Currently, we have a goal and steps that not only fail to align with one another but also cause hostility by North Korea and other countries with vested interests in the region.

There needs to be a much better understanding of cyber security and we need to build more robust security measures. Beyond what a cyber attack can do, policymakers need to learn how attacks own a system and why attacks can own a system - technically and strategically. Cyber security experts argue that North Korea does not have the technical capabilities for such attacks. One can conclude that such attacks may be outsourced, for political or economic reasons.

Finally, there needs to be more trilateral cooperation for non-military operations as well, such as NEO, intelligence gathering and sharing, and cyber security. The relations and partnerships among our three countries have stood the test of time, watershed historical moments, and regime changes because we are more than just military mutual defense partners. Cooperating in areas outside of the usual military operations in countering the North Korean threat will reduce the chances of miscommunication and disorganization, such as unilateral escalation, which could have lethal consequences in a region as volatile as Northeast Asia.

Group 5:

Hannah Falvey, Yusuke Saito, and Min Jung Lee

Evaluating the TTX

The TTX captured the potential dynamics of a real conflict as each team's decision reflected a country specific assessment, in terms of capacity and domestic legality, within the context of the broader security environment. The aspiration of all three countries was conflict reduction on the peninsula, and the denuclearization of North Korea (NK) in alignment with the NPT. However, to acknowledge the individual objectives of each state, the TTX broke into country specific teams to formulate a strategy with objectives in line with their respective country's restrictions, immediate goals, and perceived threats. It also granted time to independently estimate the responses of the other teams. The resulting division in strategies demonstrates the real challenge of addressing the North Korean conflict, while simultaneously collectively affirming the trilateral alliance.

Despite the purposeful negation of dialogue between countries, the complete omission of communication made the TTX inconsistent with actual dynamics. Considering South Korea and Japan comprise two of the seven United States Collective Defense Agreements, the TTX should have incorporated these major communication channels. In addition, the TTX did not include time specific details including when each missile, cyber-attack, and hotel fire occurred. These misunderstandings of the timeline led to different interpretations of the situation. There was also a gap in knowledge between the academic, military, and diplomatic members of each group, especially regarding military capabilities and options for cyber and military responses. Providing specific statistics with country specific capabilities and percentages of success within the TTX would allow for more discussion on what specific action(s) to take. Finally, citizen and media reactions to the conflict were not presented; which in reality carry influence in the decisions of political leaders.

Defense, offense, and deterrence capabilities

The Japan team requested that the US team eradicate all of NK's ballistic missile facilities, based on the presumption that the US team would conduct a preemptive strike on all NK offensive military capabilities. This is the best option from a risk management perspective, considering the heightened risk of a NK counter attack on Japan, ROK, and the United States utilizing any remaining offense capabilities. When dealing with NK, decisions should be made with the worst-case scenario as the baseline. From this perspective, Japan has two options: request that the United States eradicate all offensive weapons, or ask them not to strike at all. In turn, the single ICBM strike decision by the US team is a catalyst for NK staging total war, and thus Japan must request that the United States completely destroy all of NK's offensive military capabilities.

The US team sought a contained tacit action to deal with the immediate ICBM challenge. The US team decided to perform a single kinetic strike of the loaded and

nuclearized ICBM (according to NK) pointed at the US. Considering that it is exponentially more difficult to shoot down an ICBM once it is launched, striking the loaded ICBM while it is on the ground provides the highest probability of a successful strike, and avoidance of greater civilian casualties. This also sends the message to NK that if they value the regime, they should not escalate the situation, as it will come with tangible consequences. However, before conducting the strike, more time should have been spent diplomatically and militarily sharing sources and discussing the projected timeframe for the NK launch among the allies.

Diplomatic and political actions

The ROK team implemented a dual-track response of negotiation with NK while continuing joint military exercises and trilateral preparations. However, the Korean team did not specifically discuss nor present a reaction to Korean casualties because of their misperception that the other teams would assume the immediate implementation of the ROK's automatic military retaliation. Only during the team's Q&A session, a senior Korean participant explained this ROK rule of engagement in the event of a direct attack on ROK citizens. Thus, to mitigate the misperception of the ROK team's acceptance of the NK missile attack and resulting ROK casualties, the automatic retaliation response should have been clearly articulated in the ROK presentation. While the Korean team's conclusions aligned with the nation's interest in preventing an escalation of the situation, further exploration into the specifics of a tacit response to the South Korean casualties is necessary.

Our group agreed that it is essential to integrate the international community into the formulation of strategy. The support of the international community should be sought to ensure that the involved countries are not isolated, and to remind the international community that this is a global security problem. The scenario also did not discuss a long-term strategy to deescalate the situation following the strike of the loaded ICBM. Thus, there is a need to expand current sanctions, and push for tension reduction talks following a NK agreement to freeze their nuclear program, to demonstrate a commitment to de-escalation on the peninsula beyond the immediate threat.

Future steps to prevent conflict

We propose four immediate actions for the United States, ROK, and Japan. First, expand and follow up on the enforcement of sanctions, especially on coal and illicit North Korean financial activities. Second, consider discussing the addition of Japan as a full or partial member of the existing United States-ROK common operational plan (OPLAN) toward NK. Third, given that NK believes its nuclear program is vital for regime survival, we should seek a freeze on ICBM and nuclear capabilities instead of the elimination of the program. After advancement in relations with NK, we should move forward toward achieving the long-term objective of the NPT through tension reduction talks. Fourth, beyond the military threats we must address and expand international efforts on NK's human rights abuses. Human rights organizations, including volunteer groups working on poverty issues should seek to expand their role through continuous

negotiations and interaction with NK. These suggestions are in addition to strengthening existing sanctions, especially on international companies that engage in or facilitate NK's exportation of forced labor.

The long-term objective is to have sanctions gradually replaced by a strategy of economic integration with the international community. It should be stressed that the time for replacing sanctions with integration should not arise from a concession, such as the elimination of legal joint military exercises for the end of NK's illicit nuclear development. Rather, economic integration should serve as a reward for NK abiding by international law. ROK should host peace talks, lead the meetings of separated families, and look into the reopening of Kaesong Industrial Complex under new conditions. To prevent the NK government and military from taking advantage of food and other aid to expand their nuclear program, the ROK government should set out specific conditions and process to make sure aid is properly provided to NK's citizens.

APPENDIX A

About the Authors



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APPENDIX B

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

Sponsored by the
US DEFENSE THREAT REDUCTION AGENCY
Royal Lahaina Resort ♦ Maui ♦ June 19-21, 2017

Agenda

Monday, June 19, 2017

6:30 PM **Opening Dinner**

Tuesday, June 20, 2017

9:00 AM **Introductory remarks**

9:15 AM **Session 1: Assessing the North Korean threat**

How does each country assess the North Korean threat? Be as specific as possible, differentiating between conventional, biological, chemical, nuclear, and cyber threats. How is each threat changing? How does your government prioritize those threats and the best responses to them? Against which threats is trilateral cooperation most effective? What more needs to be done to make defense or deterrence stronger against each threat? Our Korean speaker and participants should also address whether these assessments have been or are likely to change with the new government in Seoul.

ROK presenter: Jina Kim

US presenter: Kevin Shepard

Japan presenter: Hideshi Tokuchi

11:00 AM **Coffee break**

11:15 AM **Session 2: “A strategic game-changer”?**

A North Korean nuclear warhead successfully miniaturized and capable of being mounted on an ICBM is frequently referred to as “a strategic game-changer.” What do we mean by that phrase? Is that the proper characterization of this capability? Why or why not? How long will it be until Pyongyang has this capability? How does this capability fit into the North Korean strategic tool kit? What can we do individually, as alliances and as a trilateral group, to minimize the impact of this capability? How can or will China react?

US Presenter: Elaine Bunn

- 12:30 PM **Boxed Lunch in breakout rooms: Tabletop exercise: Groups get exercise, prepare answers to questions**
- 2:30 PM **Round One Assessment**
Plenary reconvenes to provide answers to questions and how each group reached those conclusions. After each presentation, the group is questioned by others on process and outcome.
- 5:00 PM **Session adjourns**
- 6:30 PM **Dinner**

Wednesday, June 21, 2017

- 8:30 AM **Tabletop Exercise: Round Two**
Reconvene in plenary to receive scenario and then disperse to breakout rooms.
- 10:30 AM **Coffee Break**
- 10:45 AM **Round Two Assessment**
- 12:30 PM **Lunch – Royal Ocean Terrace Restaurant**
- 2:00 PM **Session 3: Assessing the TTX**
This session critically examines the outcomes of the TTX, focusing on expectations among all players, especially as identified in Session 2. What divergences among countries were revealed? How did responses differ from expectations? What are the key lessons learned from this exercise? What differences are there between this year's TTX and last year's?
- 4:00 PM **Session 4: Next Steps**
What should be done to close those gaps, to move trilateral cooperation forward, as well as next steps for Pacific Forum and this DTRA process.
- 5:30 PM **Meeting adjourns**
- Dinner at leisure**

APPENDIX C

US-Japan-ROK Extended Deterrence Dialogue Maui, Hawaii, June 20-21, 2017 Crisis Simulation

It is Sept. 9, exactly one year after North Korea's fifth nuclear test and the day that marks the Founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Pyongyang has promised "a spectacular event that will show the world that true meaning of North Korean resolve and power." During the last few days, there have been reports in South Korea, the US, and Japan of an unprecedented increase in cyber activity and intrusions or attempted intrusions into national infrastructure information systems; financial institutions and large corporate entities are being hit especially hard. Signals intelligence shows increased communications among North Korean special operations forces and the mobilization of some army units.

For the past few months, the DRK has continued developing its military capabilities. The country has repeatedly tested components and missiles of various ranges, calling most of them successes, and that assessment has not been challenged. Pyongyang claims to have mastered re-entry technology and says that it has the capacity to put a warhead on target thousands of kilometers away. There is renewed activity at North Korea's Punggye-ri nuclear test site and what appears to be a long-range missile with a large payload is sitting at the Sohae launch site. Preparations for a launch are in what seem to be the final stages, and some experts warn that this is the long-awaited ICBM test that was promised as a "gift to the United States" in May. The US, Japan and the ROK have all deployed Aegis-equipped destroyers to the waters off the Korean Peninsula and the USS Ronald Reagan carrier strike group five is also on station, monitoring the situation.

Meanwhile, Pyongyang has pursued two-track diplomacy with the new government in Seoul. It has insisted that its nuclear program is of no concern to any country, especially South Korea, and it will only discuss it in a multilateral setting that is committed to broad-based nuclear disarmament. At the same time, it has called on the Moon government to abandon the hostility of its predecessors and that of its ally the US and engage in substantive dialog. It has called for the reopening of the Kaesong Industrial Complex as a sign of its commitment to peninsular cooperation and has demanded that Seoul reciprocate. Pyongyang has urged Seoul to show its loyalty to the Korean *minjok* and seeks to hold a leaders summit to show Korean unity to the world. China has urged Moon to reach out to the North, to reopen Kaesong, and to take up the offer of a summit. It has promised to work with Moon to "constrain" North Korea if Seoul acts "responsibly."

On the morning of Sept. 9, North Korean television reports that it has seized an unmanned underwater vehicle that it claims was violating "the untouchable sovereignty" of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and this intrusion cannot go unpunished. Soon after, South Korean news agencies report a fire at Trump World in Yeouido, western Seoul, and there are claims that the blaze could have been started by an explosion. Cyber intrusions skyrocket and large networks in South Korea, the US and

Japan are paralyzed by malware and DDOS attacks. By midday, North Korean television is highlighting (if not gloating over) chaos in neighboring countries and contrasts the dignity, order, and superior technology of the DPRK.

An hour ago, North Korea conducted its sixth nuclear test, declaring it “a demonstration of the growing might of the DPRK and proof of the utter correctness of the path that the county has been following under Kim Jong Un.” The North is claiming the test was a hydrogen device and the size of the seismic disturbance suggest it was a success.

Questions

1. What are the five steps your military takes to respond to this situation?
2. Should you (or one of the three countries) strike the North Korean missile on the pad? Why or why not?
3. What message does your government send to China in this situation? What do you want Beijing to do?
4. What will you ask/tell the other two countries here *not* to do?
5. Should the US forward deploy nuclear weapons in this situation? Generally? Why or why not? If so, when (and your answer can be “now” (as in today, the day of our meeting, before the crisis)?

MOVE TWO

Following close coordination with its ROK and Japanese allies, the United States launched a Tomahawk missile attack that successfully hit and destroyed the Kim Il Sung statue in central Pyongyang. It further warned that a continuation of cyber attacks would be met with “selective” kinetic responses against specific cyber-related facilities and personnel in North Korea.

Pyongyang responded by deploring this “grievous insult to the nation and people of the DPRK” and warned that it had loaded a nuclear warhead onto its ICBM on the Sohae launch pad which would be “unhesitatingly launched against an [unspecified] important target in the United States at the first sign of any additional military action by the US or its south Korean or Japanese lackeys.”

After the government of Prime Minister Abe Shinzo condemned the nuclear test and cyber attacks, the Pyongyang government warned that Japan has no right to criticize the DPRK, and that it “should be punished for its high-jinks and effrontery in using the DPRK for its nefarious fascistic purposes.”

China has called an emergency session of the United Nations Security Council to respond to the North Korean nuclear test and its ambassador and foreign minister have urged all sides to avoid rash acts, to not escalate the situation, or to rush into conflict. Beijing has reportedly mobilized 100,000 troops on its border with North Korea and sealed off all crossings. Signals intelligence shows an extensive mobilization of troops in the DPRK and that they have moved to high alert status. South Korean forces down a North Korean drone that crossed the DMZ, and it is discovered to have attachments to spray aerosols.

Cyber attacks continue and have some success: nuclear power stations in South Korea and Japan are reported to have unspecified ‘difficulties’ and financial networks in both countries are malfunctioning as well. It is estimated that the chaos created by the cyber attack has resulted in 20-30 deaths from a variety of causes. Forensic evidence has shown that the fire at Trump World – which claimed three lives -- was arson and President Trump has called it an attack against South Korea and himself personally. He declared that North Korea is “a clear and present danger” to the region and the United States and he would ensure that the threat is neutralized. He added that North Korea could keep the UUV it had seized as “soon the government in Pyongyang won’t be able to use it anyway.”

In the early morning hours in Korea, as the UNSC is meeting in late night session in New York, there is an explosion on a ROK-held island in close proximity to the North. Ten ROK personnel are reported dead or missing. Pyongyang announces that an enemy listening post which had been violating its sovereignty has been “neutralized” and warns that any attempt at retaliation would justify a preemptive nuclear response. Meanwhile increased activity is noted at the Sohae launch site.

Questions

1. Has your assessment changed regarding the urgency of striking the North Korean missile on the pad? Why or why not?
2. What role do you want China to play now? What message do you send Beijing and how is it different from communications after move 1?
3. What message do you send the DPRK government?
4. What is your country’s bottom line for the end state of this crisis?
5. What is your country’s top priority at this moment?

APPENDIX D

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

Sponsored by the
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Royal Lahaina Resort ♦ Maui ♦ June 19-21, 2017

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