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Securing Tokyo's Positive Role in North-South Reconciliation: The Need for a Strong U.S.-ROK Alliance to Reassure Japan

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North Korea's ballistic missile tests in July 2006 shone a spotlight on security issues in East Asia. The media paid much attention to political challenges facing the U.S.-ROK alliance.[1] Another top story was Japan's evolving defense posture and international security role.[2] In October 2006, North Korea tested a nuclear device just as the new Japanese prime minister arrived for an important visit to Seoul. What was supposed to be a summit for moving past historical antagonisms was instead a precursor of contrasting Japanese and South Korean approaches toward Pyongyang.[3]

In addition to the main question of how the world should deal with North Korea, commentators pondered what China's role would be, and what implications North Korea's nuclear test would have for the global nonproliferation regime and potential proliferators like Iran.[4] To avoid the possibility of nuclear dominoes in East Asia, security specialists pointed to an urgent need for the United States to reassure its allies South Korea and Japan about the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.[5]

In the midst of all these developments, virtually no public debate was devoted to how South Korea and Japan need to reassure each other. Theoretical work clearly links changing military capabilities and shifting security environments with problems of reassurance.[6] Studies focused on East Asian security have highlighted the need for reassurance to avoid conflict in the region.[7] While official statements out of Seoul express concern for Tokyo's security policies, little consideration is given to how South Korean foreign policy is factoring into Japanese strategic calculations.[8] This paper seeks to fill that gap by addressing the question: If Seoul has reservations about the direction of Japanese security policy, what can South Korea do about it?

Reactions to North Korea's July 2006 missile tests demonstrate the salience of this question. On 5 July 2006, Pyongyang launched from multiple sites a variety of missiles on eastern trajectories toward Japan. These launches included short-range Scud missiles capable of hitting South Korea, medium-range No-dong missiles capable of hitting Japan, and a long-range Taepo-dong-2 missile possibly capable of hitting the United States.[9]

Japan quickly replied with assertive diplomacy. As a rotating member on the United Nations Security Council,

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Japan worked with permanent members to pass a resolution addressing North Korea's missile tests. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1695 demanding that North Korea suspend all ballistic missile activity.[10]

South Korea supported the UN resolution and sent a message to Pyongyang by suspending some aid to the North. However, the most definitive public statements out of Seoul immediately following the July missile tests were criticisms not of Pyongyang, but of Tokyo.[11] South Korean officials labeled Japan's diplomacy an overreaction and voiced alarm that Shinzo Abe, who was then cabinet secretary and is now prime minister, and other Japanese officials mentioned the possibility of discussing the legality of Japanese preemptive strikes against North Korean missiles.[12]

Although discussions in Tokyo about such preemptive strikes were purely hypothetical, the issue raised concerns in Seoul about Tokyo's intentions and potential actions that could destabilize the Korean peninsula. At present, Japan does not possess the independent military capability to perform a preemptive strike because, under the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) are the "shield" for the Japanese homeland while the United States provides the "spear" or "sword" of military force projection. As Japan adjusts its defense posture to meet post–Cold War realities and compensate for what it sees as an increasing North Korean threat, Seoul is worried that Tokyo will develop its own spear. It is clear that North Korea's current activities are lending strength to Japanese domestic political actors in favor of making Japan a "normal" spear-wielding country.

What is less well understood is that Seoul has the ability to shape Japan's military normalization in ways conducive to South Korean interests.[13] Pyongyang's weapons programs and illegal activities are not the only factors in Japan's changing threat perception. Japan has long considered the U.S.-ROK alliance central to its own security. But in Japan, the reliability of the U.S.-ROK alliance is seriously in doubt. From Tokyo's perspective, Seoul has pursued nearly unconditional engagement with the North while it has sought greater security independence from the United States, all as North Korea's behavior has become increasingly provocative.[14]

If Japan loses confidence in the U.S.-ROK alliance, Tokyo may decide that the U.S. spear is not sufficient and that it wants one of its own. Such a development could deepen distrust in East Asia, build pressure for a regional arms race, and increase the possibility of miscalculation and crisis escalation in the region. South Korea can prevent this scenario by strengthening the U.S.-ROK alliance to reassure Japan and by making efforts to improve relations with Tokyo. A reassured Japan can make its nonaggressive intentions clear and can be economically and politically supportive of Seoul's efforts for peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula.

The argument for Seoul's reassurance of Tokyo is developed in four sections that follow. The first section explains the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance for Japanese security and considers Japanese threat perceptions of North Korea. The second section explains why Japanese discussion of offensive capabilities is to be expected, but why procuring capabilities for a preemptive strike is likely not in the interests of either Japan or the region. The third section examines reasons behind Seoul's concerns about Japanese military capabilities, and addresses why reassuring Japan is in South Korea's interest. The fourth section details how better management of the U.S.-ROK alliance could reassure Japan. The paper concludes with prescriptions for South Korea–Japan diplomacy and U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation.

Tokyo's Views on the U.S.-ROK Alliance and North Korea

The Japanese government recognizes the security of South Korea as essential to the security of Japan.[15] For more than 50 years, the U.S.-ROK alliance has provided stability on the peninsula that Japanese strategists traditionally consider "a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan."[16] Japanese scholars have explained that the U.S.-ROK alliance is vital to Japanese security because it effectively functions as a shield for Japan.[17] A strong U.S.-ROK alliance continues to be important for Japanese security in the context of an assertive North Korea, a rising China, and changing Japanese domestic politics.

The U.S.-ROK alliance is important to Japanese security vis-à-vis North Korea because, if the alliance is weak, Pyongyang may perceive that it can get away with more provocative behavior; this can threaten Japan. The U.S.-ROK alliance is important to Japanese security vis-à-vis China because, if the alliance is weak, Beijing's influence on the Korean peninsula would likely increase, an enduring strategic concern for Japan. The U.S.-ROK alliance is important to Japanese security vis-à-vis Japanese domestic politics because, if most U.S. troops were to leave South Korea, U.S. bases in Japan might come under intensified criticism from radical political groups in Japan, bringing the U.S.-Japan alliance—the cornerstone of Japanese security—under serious strain.

The emerging problem from Japan's perspective is a deterrence gap as confidence in Seoul's partnership with Washington is eroding,[18] while the threat from North Korea is

significant and growing.[19] In 1998, well before the round of missile tests in July 2006, Pyongyang launched a rocket over Japanese territory.[20] North Korea's No-dong missiles, capable of delivering payloads to Japan, are believed to be increasing in number and accuracy.[21] Combine these ballistic missile developments and deployments with North Korea's advancing nuclear weapons programs, and the result is the most serious and immediate security threat Japan faces.

Pyongyang's rhetoric is often hostile toward Tokyo, and, although South Korean analysts play down the odds that North Korea would attack Japan, Japanese strategic planners cannot afford to discount the possibility of an attack.[22] Moreover, North Korea's military and diplomatic polices need not result in an actual attack in order to be detrimental to Japan's interests. If Pyongyang manages to miniaturize a nuclear device and mount it atop a ballistic missile, Japan would fear it could become the target of nuclear blackmail and face an unfavorable change in the regional strategic balance. North Korea is already threatening the international nonproliferation regime; this is a major concern for Japan, which places nuclear arms control near the top of its diplomatic agenda.

Japan has attempted a policy of economic and diplomatic engagement with North Korea but switched its focus to application of diplomatic pressure as distrust in bilateral relations intensified.[23] Still unresolved abductions of Japanese citizens are a major source of distrust, as are North Korea's illicit moneymaking activities in Japan.[24] North Korea's military provocations and blusterous rhetoric have led Tokyo to take a tougher line against Pyongyang, including swift implementation of economic sanctions.[25] Less obvious is Japan's concern for instability in North Korea. While Tokyo may not focus as much on stability as countries that share a border with North Korea,[26] it is certainly concerned about a destabilization of the North Korean regime that could result in Pyongyang's lashing out at Tokyo or at U.S. bases in Japan.

Cracks in the U.S.-ROK alliance make North Korea appear even more dangerous to Japan. From Japan's perspective, if South Korea's alliance with the United States is under question, North Korea is less deterred. Meanwhile, Tokyo sees Seoul's nearly unconditional engagement of Pyongyang leading the North Korean regime to believe it can get away with more provocative international behavior and less domestic reform.[27]

Japanese strategists used to feel comfortable that the U.S.-ROK alliance would keep North Korea in check. Even in the unlikely scenario that North Korea started a war, Japan would have only needed to facilitate the flow of U.S. forces and provide rear-area logistical support and supplies. As the Japanese have come to consider the U.S.-ROK alliance as less reliable, Japanese strategists face the question of how to make up for any gap in capabilities necessary to deter North Korea. It is this security challenge, not what some South Korean officials call Tokyo's "invasive ambitions,"[28] that prompts Japanese contemplation of the ability to preempt North Korean missiles.

Debate over Japanese Offensive Capabilities

It is important to understand why Japan may develop offensive capabilities against North Korea. Tokyo presently perceives an increasingly threatening North Korea and a decreasingly credible U.S.-ROK alliance. From Japan's perspective, this means the U.S.-Japan alliance has to pick up the slack in order to deter a North Korean attack on Japan. Predictably, Japan is strengthening its alliance with the United States, and Washington is reassuring Tokyo about the U.S. defense commitment and nuclear umbrella. The problem for Japan is that this may not be enough.

If North Korea sees the U.S.-ROK alliance as weak, Pyongyang may perceive (correctly or incorrectly) that it could intimidate or even attack a Japan that lacks offensive capabilities and that Pyongyang would not suffer serious consequences. In other words, Tokyo has to consider the possibility that Pyongyang may take advantage of some situations in which it could strike Japan and avoid retaliation because the United States would not want to risk a full-scale war on the peninsula.

These military gaming scenarios may seem farfetched to some, but what-ifs such as those below are serious questions for Japanese strategic planners.

- What if North Korea threatens war with Japan if Tokyo presses further economic sanctions?
- What if North Korea prepares missiles for launch after making such a threat?
- What if there is a North Korean incursion into Japanese waters or a serious incident at sea?
- What if Japan suffers a limited missile attack from North Korea but Pyongyang claims it was an accident or unauthorized launch?
- What if North Korea is caught smuggling weapons material into Japan or abducting a Japanese citizen?
- What if there is an unexplained explosion in a Japanese port or sabotage of critical infrastructure?

The issue for Japan is being able to display credible consequences in order to prevent any of these events from happening. In theory, independent Japanese offensive capability would help achieve the goal of deterring Pyongyang.

Japan will gradually acquire more offensive capability than it has now, as Tokyo replaces old military assets with new systems capable of greater power projection. But amassing significant offensive capabilities would require a strategic decision to do so. Offensive capabilities may include sea- and ground-based ballistic and cruise missiles; joint direct attack munitions (JDAMs) or smart-bomb technologies; and air delivery systems such as bombers, strike fighters, and possibly aerial refueling tankers. On top of the hardware, significant offensive capability would require extensive training, high readiness, and sophisticated military intelligence. For now at least, the costs of a Japanese spear are more apparent than the benefits because of serious questions about effectiveness, feasibility, and negative side effects.

Japanese offensive capabilities would presumably be accurate enough to capture North Korean stationary missile installments, but it is unlikely that Japanese offensive capabilities would be sufficient to neutralize an immediate threat from North Korea's mobile missiles. Doing so would require not only a sizable attack capability but also excellent intelligence. The North Korean military's skills at concealment and camouflage are well known.[29] Even with U.S. reconnaissance, Japan would probably not be able to preempt North Korean missiles effectively. Hence, the best Tokyo could likely expect from offensive capabilities would be to improve deterrence vis-à-vis Pyongyang by making a credible commitment to retaliate against a North Korean attack.

Significant Japanese offensive capabilities are not feasible at the present time.[30] Japanese leaders have voiced opinions on the need for public debate about offensive capabilities and even a nuclear deterrent. North Korean provocations have already made missile defense popular in Japanese domestic politics;[31] however, as of yet there is little domestic political support for offensive capabilities, and there likely never will be for nuclear weapons.[32] In addition to being politically infeasible today, significant offensive capabilities would face legal hurdles under the present Japanese constitution. Moreover, offensive military systems would take enormous amounts of money and a great amount of time to bring on line. The Japanese defense budget is already strained, so without significant spending increases, procurement of offensive capabilities would mean unacceptable opportunity costs in the provision of other roles and missions of Japan's SDF.[33]

Foremost in the minds of strategic planners outside Japan are the negative externalities and unintended consequences of a Japanese spear, which could include:

- North Korea's becoming more provocative (spiral effect in Japan–North Korea relations);
- Miscommunication or miscalculation producing unintended escalation; for example, Japan could misread a North Korean test as an attack and decide to launch against known North Korean missile installations;
- South Korea's becoming very concerned about and more suspicious of Japan; Seoul might even increase its military capabilities and contingency planning vis-à-vis Japan;
- China's becoming very concerned about losing its current missile advantage vis-à-vis Japan; this is not to say that China's missiles aimed at Japan should not be countered via missile defense, but Japanese offensive missiles would likely motivate China to engage in a missile buildup and naval expansion that would be destabilizing in multiple theaters;
- Japan's acquiring offensive capabilities, which could have negative effects on Japanese businesses;
- Japan's encountering damage to its international reputation (and bid for a UN Security Council seat); and
- Complication of U.S.-Japan alliance transformation efforts: may make Japanese constitutional revision toward legal collective defensive more difficult, may reduce perceptions of the alliance's contribution to regional stability, and may discredit the position that the alliance is not against any particular states.

Given these questions about effectiveness, feasibility, and negative consequences, it is likely that Japanese strategic planners currently see the costs of significant Japanese offensive capability far outweighing the benefits. But, if North Korea were to become more provocative or unstable as Japanese confidence in the deterrent capacity of the U.S.-ROK alliance further erodes, Japan may decide that the costs of not developing offensive capabilities could be greater than the costs of doing so. The foreign and security policies of South Korea will play an important role in Tokyo's calculations.

Seoul's Views and Interests Concerning Tokyo

The reasons Seoul is uncomfortable with Japanese power projection toward the Korean peninsula are many and com-

plex. First is the memory of Japanese aggression and occupation, which informs South Korean suspicions and historical resentment toward Japan. Recurring flare-ups concerning Japanese history textbooks, the Yasukuni Shrine, and the Dokdo/Takeshima islets open old wounds and inflame anti-Japanese sentiment in Korea. Second is the uncertainty about Tokyo's intentions in a time of Japanese domestic political change. Koreans perceive that Japanese nationalism is on the rise with the coming to power of a new generation of Japanese politicians. Seoul is concerned that these young, conservative Japanese politicians are less repentant about Japan's military past and have domestic political incentives to take hard-line positions against North Korea. Last is the strategic belief that any Japanese military role concerning the peninsula (even one focused on military deterrence) would ratchet up tensions among North Korea, North Korea's neighbors, and the United States.

Given these concerns, and given that Japan is inevitably a major player in Northeast Asian security and the future of the Korean peninsula, it is in South Korea's interest to minimize actions by Tokyo that could raise tensions and to increase the likelihood that Japan makes positive contributions to security on the Korean peninsula. Japan's respective concerns outlined above provide ample space for Seoul to help shape Tokyo's policy through reassurance.

A reassured Japan would be much less inclined toward unilateral measures for defending itself against North Korea. If Japan were reassured by a solid U.S.-ROK alliance and a demonstration of Seoul's overlapping interests with Tokyo, Japan would be less likely to pursue offensive capabilities. Japanese strategic planners are well aware of the costs of developing significant offensive capabilities and are thus inclined not to do so. What they are uncertain about are the costs of not pursuing those capabilities, that is, the possibility of a failure of deterrence vis-à-vis North Korea. A better-managed U.S.-ROK alliance would help alleviate those concerns.

North Korea's missile and nuclear programs are the immediate challenges, but these issues will not be resolved peacefully without a cooperative vision for economically engaging North Korea. In the medium to long term, it is difficult to overemphasize the importance of Japan to the prosperity-driven integration of North Korea into the international system. South Korea cannot possibly shoulder the burden of all the external assistance North Korea will need to reform and modernize its economy. China will have a significant role in the process, but both South Korea and Japan have interests in avoiding a future in which Beijing's influence dominates North Korea's economy and politics.

Given these strategic realities, Seoul could use Tokyo as an ally in pursuing South Korea's long-term vision for economic development and integration on the Korean peninsula. Although anti-Japanese sentiment may offer short-term gains for inter-Korean relations (Seoul and Pyongyang share deep resentment for Japan's historical aggression), directing pan-peninsula nationalism against Japan would seriously detract from regional cooperation and increase South Korea's financial burden for reconciliation with the North. Many top South Korean strategists agree that a reassured Japan would be more willing to pursue diplomatic relations with North Korea, extend economic assistance, and support Seoul's agenda for engagement.[34]

The political debate in Japan about power projection capability is far from over. Seoul can still influence this debate to the tune of South Korean interests. The most substantive way Seoul can reassure Tokyo is by demonstrating better management of South Korea's alliance with the United States.

Toward Better Management of the South Korea–U.S. Alliance

The U.S.-ROK alliance continues to be successful in its original aims of defending South Korea and deterring another major conflict with the North. Meanwhile, the U.S.-ROK security partnership is undergoing a process of transformation in several important dimensions. The alliance is becoming more equal because of South Korea's increased national capacity resulting from successful economic development. The alliance has become more publicly accountable through South Korea's democratization. And the alliance is becoming more flexible in response to the post–Cold War, post–September 11th security environment. Rather than being overwhelmingly focused on North Korea, the future of the alliance will involve greater contributions to regional stability and global security.[35]

While undergoing transformation, Seoul and Washington agree that the alliance needs to remain strong in the face of developments undertaken by Pyongyang.[36] In the interest of regional stability, the alliance also needs to reassure regional neighbors, particularly Japan. But in recent years, U.S.-ROK alliance maintenance has proved challenging. Differing perceptions of the North Korean threat along with domestic political frictions regarding the hosting of U.S. troops have led to uncooperative interactions of South Korean nationalism and U.S. unilateralism.[37]

There is not space here to elaborate on those interactions, for which both Washington and Seoul bear responsibility. The present question is which specific issues have eroded

Japanese confidence in the U.S.-ROK alliance and which options are available to Seoul to reassure Japan on these issues. Thus, the discussion below about basing, strategic flexibility, and command and control provisions will largely focus on South Korea's role in the alliance.

Bases

Seoul and Washington agreed to move U.S. troops from Yongsan and the Second Infantry Division from near the Demilitarized Zone to a new facility in Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul. The 2004 agreement expected at least the U.S. troops in Seoul to move to Pyeongtaek by 2008.[38] But delays in breaking ground at the new site because of protesters and disagreements between Seoul and Washington about cost sharing put the timeline for redeployment in question. Seoul and Washington are expected to draw up a new timeline, but South Korean officials have already said base relocation is likely to be postponed until 2013.[39]

Another issue of contention regarding bases is reversion of land used by U.S. forces back to South Korean control. Seoul has refused to take back bases until the land has been decontaminated to the standards of South Korean antipollution laws. Washington says it wants to hand over bases as planned for financial reasons and will perform cleanup only to the extent required by the Status of Forces Agreement. Compromise has been reached on reversion of some bases, but the return of many more has yet to be arranged because of environmental concerns.[40]

Implementation or successful renegotiation of agreements about basing needs to be achieved to maintain military effectiveness and avoid appearances of a rift in the alliance. A negative example was the provision by South Korea of a bombing range with an adequate scoring system for the U.S. Air Force. Reports alleged that an agreement was reached only after the U.S. side issued an ultimatum about redeploying U.S. Air Force personnel off the peninsula to conduct necessary training.[41] Such problems in alliance management damage trust between allies and credibility in the eyes of third-party nations.

Strategic Flexibility

Delays in basing adjustments also may hamper the alliance transformation goal of strategic flexibility.[42] South Korea and the United States plan to concentrate U.S. forces at the new facilities in Pyeongtaek (expanding upon Camp Humphreys) and at Osan Air Base. This restructuring of the U.S. military is intended to minimize friction between U.S. forces and local populations and adjust force posture for strategic flexibility—the ability of U.S. forces to deploy rapidly off the peninsula to deal with contingencies in the region. Korean officials and commentators have voiced opposition to strategic flexibility, however, out of concern for South Korean entanglement in a U.S. conflict with China.[43] President Roh Moo-hyun even deemed it necessary to defend South Korea's sovereignty, asserting that South Korea "will not be involved in conflicts in Northeast Asia against our will . . . this is a firm principle that will never be conceded."[44] Such a politicization of a core concept of alliance transformation has caused Japanese strategic planners to doubt the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Command and Control

The most politicized alliance issue in 2006 was the reversion of wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea.[45] The South Korean military has made strides since Seoul took over peacetime OPCON in 1994.[46] Reversion of wartime OPCON has been a longtime goal for defining a favorable division of labor under alliance transformation. The U.S. position of supporting OPCON transfer has to do with financial and burden-sharing considerations, much like Washington's positions on basing issues. The ruling party in South Korea supported OPCON transfer out of pride for national sovereignty and improvement of Seoul's position for engaging North Korea.[47] But strategic planners on both sides recognize that the primary concern in making serious changes to the alliance's command and control structure should be South Korea's security and regional stability.[48] Hence, the timing of the agreement in 2006 was poor. In the context of North Korea's provocative behavior and Washington's preoccupation with the Middle East, OPCON transfer negotiations (and especially the politicization of the negotiations) served as a negative indicator for the health of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Resolution and implementation of basing, strategic flexibility, and OPCON agreements will be difficult and will take time. Negotiations as important and complicated as those involving alliance transformation are not easy, even between close allies. But it is possible to manage transformation in such a way that does not result in the loss of alliance credibility in the eyes of third-party nations. South Korean alliance managers can improve upon Seoul's alliance maintenance, not just for South Korea's security and good relations with the United States, but to reassure Japan as well.

Allies tend to exhibit a certain level of diplomatic solidarity and keep official language concerning each other up to a certain standard. Trust between allies, and third-party confidence in the alliance, can be damaged when officials make remarks critical or contradictory of the alliance in some forums and then claim that relations are completely

sound in others. Moreover, sensitive documents concerning alliance negotiations should not be leaked to the media. Instead, the process of alliance transformation and the importance of alliance maintenance need to be well explained to the public. South Korean officials can be better advocates of the alliance, and politicians should avoid making alliance issues a weapon for domestic political gain, particularly ahead of Korea's December presidential election.

South Korea is master of its own relations with the North. But when it comes to U.S.-ROK-DPRK relations, Seoul is half of the U.S.-ROK alliance, not a mediator between Washington and Pyongyang. Alliance politics should not get in the way of engagement, but the Sunshine Policy should not make the alliance look weak. If Seoul does not show willingness to articulate and implement consequences for North Korean provocations, Pyongyang will not take Seoul seriously, neither will Tokyo, and, in the end, neither will the United States. The future of South Korea and the U.S. alliance is not in playing "good cop" and "bad cop" versus North Korea but is in acting as partners for international security and economic development.

Conclusion

If South Korea does not want Japan to develop offensive capabilities, then Seoul needs to help convince Tokyo that the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances can cooperatively and successfully deter North Korea. It is in South Korea's national interest to consider what implications the different paths of the U.S.-ROK alliance transformation offer for regional security. An underconsidered factor in Seoul is the alliance's role in reassuring Japan, especially since Tokyo may pursue its own spear to deter North Korea if the U.S.-ROK alliance appears to be weakening. Seoul has the ability to shape a productive role for Japan in advancing peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula. This requires carefully managing South Korea's partnership with the United States and actively improving relations with Tokyo.

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

Japan will likely phase in more offense-capable weapon systems as older equipment is replaced. However, aggressively developing its own spear will not be necessary or beneficial for Tokyo if the U.S.-ROK alliance is strong and coordinates policy with the U.S.-Japan alliance. Although not the focus of this paper, it is important to note that Japan also has a responsibility for reassuring South Korea.[49] Tokyo should make clear what normalizing means for its military doctrine and focus on building trust with South Korea by overcoming irritants in the relationship.[50] Japan can demonstrate its commitment to regional security and peace on the Korean peninsula through trilateral coordination with the United States and South Korea instead of developing a unilateral deterrent.

U.S.-ROK-Japan cooperation may be pursued by resuming regular meetings of the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) or an equivalent mechanism. Enhanced three-way communication on security issues would have the immediate task of coordinating incentives for North Korean nuclear dismantlement and credible consequences for Pyongyang's noncompliance or further military provocations. South Korea and Japan could work together with the United States to revise and harmonize contingency plans concerning a possible North Korean collapse, incident at sea, or missile attack.

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

- Building mutual understanding about Japanese military normalization, the internationalization of the U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances, regional integration efforts, engagement of China, U.S. global posture transformation, and South Korea's future vision for the peninsula;
- Integrating efforts on deterring and dissuading terrorism, minimizing vulnerabilities of populations and key infrastructure, and addressing root causes;
- Combining training for natural disasters in the region, leading to coordinated deployments and emergency relief efforts in the event of a catastrophic earthquake or tsunami;
- Coordinating base restructuring, plans for flow of forces, and civilian evacuation procedures;
- Studying complementarities of U.S., ROK, and Japanese forces for deployment in peacekeeping operations;

- Developing a trilateral strategy for international aid and investment for the development of the North Korean economy;

- Cooperating on standards and implementation for export controls and transportation security; and

- Pursuing joint historical studies and international initiatives for historical reconciliation in East Asia.

Previous works have articulated in more detail the potential benefits of greater U.S.-ROK-Japan cooperation.[51] Existing scholarship has also explained why ROK-Japan relations have retained elements of antagonism despite shared strategic interests.[52] Notwithstanding these contributions, most attention in policy spheres remains focused on the role of the country that is party to both U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances—the United States. This paper offers a new angle by arguing that Seoul has much to gain by better reassuring Tokyo. While Japan still has ground to cover to respect South Korea as a security partner and earn its trust, Seoul needs to welcome Tokyo's indispensable contribution to peaceful and economically feasible Korean integration. By maintaining a strong alliance with the United States and reaching out to Japan, Seoul can secure Tokyo's positive role in North-South reconciliation and achieve a stable and prosperous Korean peninsula in the heart of East Asia.

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Endnotes

1. Challenges facing the U.S.-ROK alliance were a daily topic of news media in Korea and abroad in 2006. Recent studies on the topic include Nam Chang-hee, "Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea: Strained Alliance, Emerging Partnership in the Changing Defense Posture," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 615–31; Juergen Kleiner, "A Fragile Relationship: The United States and the Republic of Korea," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 17, no. 2 (June 2006): 215–35.

2. Christopher W. Hughes, "Why Japan Could Revise Its Constitution and What It Would Mean for Japanese Security Policy," *Orbis* 50, no. 4 (September 2006): 725–44; Nicholas Szechenyi, "A Turning Point for Japan's Self-Defense Forces," *Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): 139–50.

3. Japan soon implemented additional sanctions against North Korea while South Korea decided to continue its economic engagement projects at Kaesong and Mt. Kumgang.

4. Yuan Jing-dong, "China's New North Korea Diplomacy," *Asia Times*, 14 November 2006; Lionel Beehner, "The Impact of North Korea's Nuclear Test on Iran Crisis," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 13 October 2006, www.cfr.org/publication/11712/impact_of_north_koreas_nuclear_test_on_iran_crisis.html#3.

5. Reassuring allies about U.S. extended deterrence was a focus of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's Asia tour soon after North Korea's nuclear test; see Glenn Kessler and Dafna Linzer, "Rice Trip to Push Full Sanctions for N. Korea," *Washington Post*, 17 October 2006.

6. Evan Braden Montgomery, "Breaking Out of the Security Dilemma: Realism, Reassurance, and the Problem of Uncertainty," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 151–85.

7. Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security* 23, no. 4 (Spring 1999): 49–80.

8. For statements made by Seoul concerning Japan's reaction to North Korea's missile tests, see Norimitsu Onishi, "Missile Tests Divide Seoul from Tokyo," *New York Times*, 11 July 2006.

9. "North Korea's Missiles," *Economist*, 6 July 2006.

10. "Security Council Condemns Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Missile Launches," document SC/8778 (includes resolution text), United Nations Security Council, www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8778.doc.htm.

11. Details about this and earlier episodes in ROK-Japan relations are covered in the quarterly update by David Kang in *Comparative Connections*, available online at www.csis.org/pacfor/ccejournal.html.

12. Choe Sang-hun, "Japan and South Korea Wrangle over Response to North's Missiles," *New York Times*, 12 July 2006.

13. Note that Japan can normalize while remaining defense-oriented militarily and in a close alliance with the United States; Japanese normalization need not mean the acquisition of significant power projection. Power projection is the more important concern of Korean strategic planners.

14. This paper does not assume that North Korea is the only driver of Japan's changing defense posture. In forthcoming works, the author elaborates on the important factors of Chinese military moderniza-

tion and Japanese national identity change. The focus of this paper is the Japanese perception of a weakening U.S.-ROK alliance in the face of an increasingly threatening North Korea. The purpose of this focus is not to contradict studies that have emphasized the U.S. role of reassurance but to draw attention to South Korea's ability to reassure Japan toward positive effect for both ROK and regional security.

15. The earliest significant public articulation of South Korea's importance to Japan's security was in the joint statement by President Richard Nixon and Prime Minister Eisaku Sato, in Washington, D.C., on 21 November 1969. The Japanese position was reaffirmed during Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's 1983 summit with President Chun Doo-hwan. Tokyo has regularly reiterated this position in various security consultation forums, and President Kim Dae-jung and Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi stressed the interdependence of South Korean and Japanese security in their October 1998 joint declaration.

16. Michael Green, "Japan-ROK Security Relations: An American Perspective," Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center Paper Series, March 1999, p. 8, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10060/Green.pdf.

17. Koji Murata, "The Origins and Evolution of the Korean-American Alliance: A Japanese Perspective," Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center Paper Series, August 1998, p. 3, http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10112/Murata.PM.pdf; Koji Murata, "The U.S.-Japan Security Relationship during the Late 1970s: The Road to the Ron-Yasu Era," in *Japan and the United States Reconsidered: Evolution of Security and Economic Choices since 1960* (Washington, D.C.: Economic Strategy Institute, 2002), 71.

18. Japanese policymakers and analysts, interviews with author, Tokyo, November 2006. Japanese officials reportedly conveyed these concerns to their South Korean counterparts in the past; see "Japan Worried about U.S.–S. Korea Alliance," *Kyodo,* 4 June 2004.

19. *Defense of Japan in 2006* (Tokyo: Ministry of Defense, 2006), www.mod.go.jp/e/publications/wp2006/index.html.

20. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., "A History of Ballistic Missile Development in the DPRK," Occasional Paper no. 2 (Monterey, Calif.: Monterey Institute of International Studies, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, November 1999), http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/opapers/op2/op2.pdf.

21. "Special Report on North Korean Ballistic Missile Capabilities" (Monterey, Calif.: Monterey Institute of International Studies, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 22 March 2006), http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/pdf/060321.pdf.

22. For a history of North Korea's diplomatic rhetoric and military posturing that heightens Japanese threat perceptions, see Narushige Michishita, "Calculated Adventurism: North Korea's Military-Diplomatic Campaigns," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 16, no. 2 (Fall 2004): 181–226.

23. Mark E. Manyin, "Japan-North Korea Relations: Selected Issues," report no. RL32161 (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 26 November 2003), www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/crs/27531.pdf.

24. For background on these issues, see "Japan and North Korea: Bones of Contention," Asia Report no. 100 (Brussels and Washington, D.C.: International Crisis Group, 27 June 2005); Larry A. Niksch, "North Korea and Terrorism: The Yokota Megumi Factor," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 7–23; Balbina Y. Hwang, "Curtailing North Korea's Illicit Activities," Backgrounder, no. 1679 (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 25 August 2003), www.heritage.org/Research/AsiaandthePacific/upload/48007_1.pdf.

25. After North Korea's July 2006 missile tests, Japan banned *Mangyongbong-92,* one of the main vessels for trade between the two countries. In September 2006, Tokyo imposed new financial restrictions, prohibiting transfers by numerous firms with suspected connections to North Korean weapons procurement. After North Korea's October 2006 nuclear test, Japan implemented strict bans on North Korean imports, port calls by North Korean ships, and entry into Japan by North Korean citizens. In implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1718, Tokyo added luxury items to existing Japanese export restrictions to North Korea; see "Japan–North Korea Relations," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea.

26. South Korea and China prioritize avoiding the adverse economic effects of a North Korean collapse or serious internal crisis. Beijing worries about refugee flows into China's Northeast and loss of influence in what Beijing has long considered a buffer state. Seoul is most concerned with the effects of instability on the South Korean economy, including international trade and investment. Seoul wants integration with North Korea only gradually, so that South Korea does not face an unbearable economic burden in taking responsibility for the North Korean population.

27. Japanese policymakers and analysts, interviews with author, Tokyo, November 2006.

28. Cheong Wa Dae (office of the president of South Korea) spokesperson Jung Tae-ho used this and other strong language concerning Japan; see "Seoul Slams Japan for Pondering Strikes on N. Korea," *Chosun Ilbo,* 12 July 2006.

29. North Korea Military Guide, Korean People's Army, GlobalSecurity.org, www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/dprk.

30. Daniel A. Pinkston and Kazutaka Sakurai, "Japan Debates Preparing for Future Preemptive Strikes against North Korea," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 95–121.

31. For detailed public opinion data, see "Public Opinion Poll Regarding the Self-Defense Forces and Defense Issues," *Japanese Cabinet Office,* February 2006, http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h17/h17-bouei/index.html.

32. Matake Kamiya, "Nuclear Japan: Oxymoron or Coming Soon?" *Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002–03): 63–75; Brad Glosserman, "Straight Talk About Japan's Nuclear Option," *PacNet,* no. 50A, 11 October 2006, www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pac0650a.pdf.

33. The Japanese government is trying to cut costs but at the same time is increasing spending on missile defense, putting other areas of defense spending under strain; see "Japan to Cut Defense Spending to Rein in Budget," *International Herald Tribune,* 20 December 2006.

34. Japanese policymakers and analysts, interviews with author, Tokyo, November and December 2006.

35. For reference on the alliance transformation process, see Norman D. Levin, *Do the Ties Still Bind? The U.S.-ROK Security Relationship after 9/11* (Santa Monica, Calif.: Rand Corporation, 2004); Charles M. Perry et al., *Alliance Diversification and the Future of the U.S.-Korean Security Relationship* (Dulles, Va.: Brassey's, 2004); "The United States and South Korea: Reinvigorating the Partnership," *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies,* Vol. 14, 2004, www.keia.org/2-Publications/2-3-Monograph/Monograph2004/Monograph2004.pdf.

36. "Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea," White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Wash-

ington, D.C., 14 May 2003, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/20030514-17.html.

37. Leif-Eric Easley, "Forward-Deployed and Host Nation Interaction: U.S.-ROK Cooperation under External Threat and Internal Frictions," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 123–49.

38. "Result of the Tenth Meeting of 'Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative,'" document no. 153, ROK Ministry of National Defense, Seoul, and U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, 26 July 2004, www.mnd.go.kr/mndEng/WhatsNew/RecentNews/index.jsp.

39. Kim Min-seok and Brian Lee, "U.S. Forces' Move Now 7 Years Off," *JoongAng Daily,* 14 December 2006.

40. Jin Dae-woong, "A Tough Year Expected for S. Korea-U.S. Alliance," *Korea Herald,* 1 January 2007.

41. Jung Sung-ki, "U.S. Air Force Sends Ultimatum on Bombing Range," *Korea Times,* 22 September 2006.

42. Agreement on the concept of strategic flexibility was reached at the first meeting of the U.S.-ROK Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership on 19 January 2006.

43. Lee Chul-kee, "Strategic Flexibility of U.S. Forces in Korea," Policy Forum Online 06-19A (San Francisco, Calif.: Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, 9 March 2006, www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0619Lee.html.

44. Ser Myo-ja and Kim Min-seok, "U.S. Gets Troop Flexibility: Korea Agrees to Allow Regional Deployments," *JoongAng Daily,* 21 January 2006.

45. Seoul and Washington agreed in October 2006 to implement wartime OPCON transfer between 15 October 2009 and 15 March 2012; see "38th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué," 20 October 2006, www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2006/d20061020uskorea.pdf.

46. Moon Chung-in, "Misunderstandings on the Transfer of Wartime Operational Control," Policy Forum Online 06-71A (San Francisco, Calif.: Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainable Development, 24 August 2006), www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0671Moon.html.

47. South Korea's increasing military self-reliance, not just in terms of command structure but also via greater independent defense capabilities, can improve U.S.-ROK alliance burden sharing, better deter North Korea, and help reassure Japan. But if pursued within a context of an unraveling U.S.-ROK alliance instead of a comprehensive plan for alliance transformation, Seoul's military upgrades could fuel regional security dilemmas and tragically decrease South Korean security.

48. Japanese policymakers and analysts, interviews with author, Tokyo, October and December 2006.

49. More specific steps Japan could take to improve relations with South Korea are outlined in Leif-Eric Easley, "Steps Toward the Future Instead of the Past: Improving Relations between Japan and South Korea," *JoongAng Daily* (with *International Herald Tribune*), 8 September 2006.

50. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has adopted a policy of strategic ambiguity on the issue of the Yasukuni Shrine, and Japan is advocating negotiation and joint exploration concerning the waters around Dokdo. Government and civil society groups are gradually taking action to persuade skeptics that Japan has broken with its imperial past, but further efforts are needed for Japan to gain the trust of its neighbors.

51. Ralph A. Cossa, ed., *U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations: Building towards a "Virtual Alliance"* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1999); Kim Tae-hyo and Brad Glosserman, *The Future of U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations: Balancing Values and Interests* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2004); James L. Schoff, *Tools for Trilateralism: Improving U.S.-Japan-Korea Cooperation to Manage Complex Contingencies* (Dulles, Va.: Potomac Books, 2005).

52. Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000); Gilbert Rozman and Lee Shin-wha, "Unraveling the Japan-South Korea 'Virtual Alliance': Populism and Historical Revisionism in the Face of Conflicting Regional Strategies," *Asian Survey* 46, no. 5 (October 2006): 761–84.

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