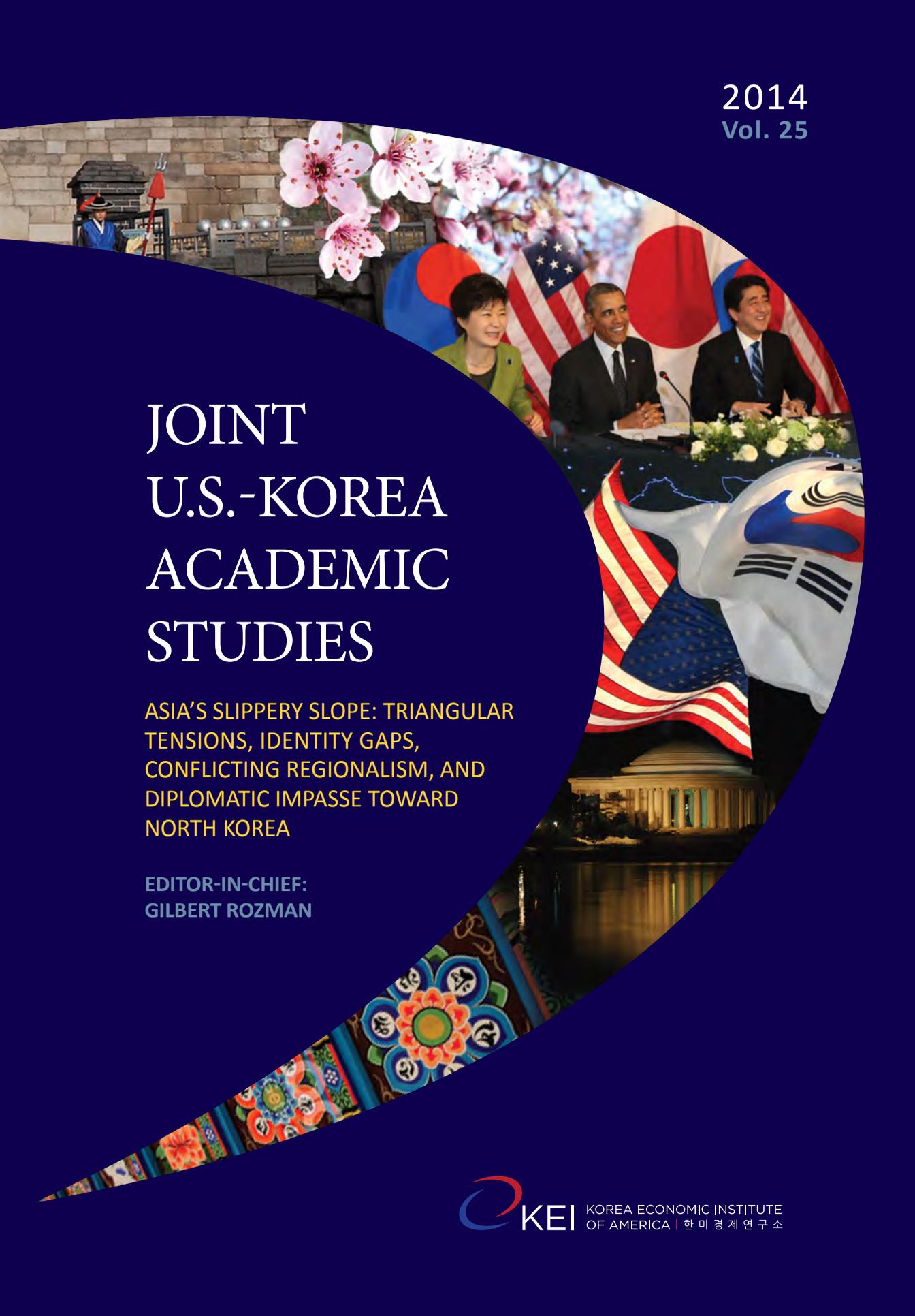


2014
Vol. 25



JOINT U.S.-KOREA ACADEMIC STUDIES

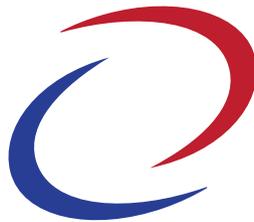
ASIA'S SLIPPERY SLOPE: TRIANGULAR
TENSIONS, IDENTITY GAPS,
CONFLICTING REGIONALISM, AND
DIPLOMATIC IMPASSE TOWARD
NORTH KOREA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
GILBERT ROZMAN

JOINT U.S.-KOREA
ACADEMIC STUDIES

2014 | VOLUME 25

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
GILBERT ROZMAN
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY



KEI EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor-in-Chief: Gilbert Rozman, Princeton University

KEI Editor: Nicholas Hamisevicz

Contract Editor: Gimga Group

Design: Gimga Group

The Korea Economic Institute of America is registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act as an agent of the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, a public corporation established by the Government of the Republic of Korea. This material is filed with the Department of Justice, where the required registration statement is available for public inspection. Registration does not indicate U.S. government approval of the contents of this document.

KEI is not engaged in the practice of law, does not render legal services, and is not a lobbying organization.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors. While this monograph is part of the overall program of the Korea Economic Institute of America endorsed by its Officers, Board of Directors, and Advisory Council, its contents do not necessarily reflect the views of individual members of the Board or of the Advisory Council.

Copyright © 2014 Korea Economic Institute of America

www.keia.org

Printed in the United States of America.

ISSN 2167-3462

CONTENTS

KEI Board of Directors	i
KEI Advisory Council	ii
About the Korea Economic Institute of America	ii
Preface	iv
SOUTH KOREA'S TRIANGULAR RELATIONS	
Introduction.....	2
Japan-South Korea-U.S. Relations <i>Sue Mi Terry</i>	7
The Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo Triangle: Terra-centric Nordpolitik vs. Oceanic Realpolitik <i>Sung-Yoon Lee</i>	23
China-South Korea-U.S. Relations <i>Gilbert Rozman</i>	43
Russia, China, and the Korean Peninsula <i>Valery Denisov and Alexander Lukin</i>	55
NATIONAL IDENTITY APPROACHES TO EAST AND SOUTH ASIA	
Introduction.....	74
Japan's National Identity Gaps: A Framework for Analysis of International Relations in Asia <i>Gilbert Rozman</i>	79
National Identity and Attitudes Toward North Korean Defectors <i>Jiyeon Kim</i>	95
Bridging the Chinese National Identity Gap: Alternative Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan <i>Syaru Shirley Lin</i>	113
Identity and Strategy in India's Asia-Pacific Policy <i>Deepa M. Ollapally</i>	135
DIVERGENCE ON ECONOMIC REGIONALISM	
Introduction.....	152
Asia-Pacific Regional Economic Integration: U.S. Strategy and Approach <i>Matthew P. Goodman</i>	157
Japan and Regional Integration Dominoes: Golden Opportunity or Another Political Failure? <i>Takashi Terada</i>	171
Korean Bridge: Balancing Asian Economic Regionalism Between the United States and China <i>Jin Kyo Suh</i>	187
China's Choice: To Lead or to Follow on Asian Economic Integration <i>Zhang Xiaotong</i>	201
NEW THINKING ON DIPLOMACY TOWARD NORTH KOREA	
Introduction.....	218
South Korea's Search for a New Diplomatic Strategy Toward North Korea: Trustpolitik as a Goldilocks Approach? <i>Shin-wha Lee</i>	221
What to Do about North Korea <i>Mark Fitzpatrick</i>	239
Purge of Jang Song-Taek and its Impact on China's Policy Toward North Korea <i>Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga</i>	255
 Contributors	 265

KEI BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Sukhan Kim, Esq.

Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld

Dr. Won-ho Kim

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

Dr. Yoon-Shik Park

George Washington University

Professor David Steinberg

Georgetown University

OFFICER

The Honorable Donald Manzullo

President & CEO

KEI ADVISORY COUNCIL

Chair

The Honorable Stephen W. Bosworth

Harvard Kennedy School

Mr. Bradley Babson

U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS

Dr. Claude Barfield

American Enterprise Institute

Dr. John Bennett

Former KEI President

Dr. Thomas Cargill

University of Nevada, Reno

His Excellency Yoon-je Cho

Sogang University

Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt

American Enterprise Institute

Mr. Robert Fallon

Phosplatin Therapeutics LLC

Mr. Gordon Flake

Perth USAsia Centre

The Honorable Thomas Hubbard

McLarty Associates

The Honorable James Kelly

EAP Associates, LLC

Dr. Abraham Kim

The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Center

Mr. Andrew Kim

Sit/Kim International

Mr. Spencer Kim

CBOL Corporation

Mr. Bruce Klingner

The Heritage Foundation

Dr. Kirk Larsen

Brigham Young University

His Excellency Tae-sik Lee

Former Ambassador to the U.S.

Dr. Young-Sun Lee

Yonsei University

Dr. Wonhyuk Lim

Korea Development Institute

Mr. Paul McGonagle

Consultant

The Honorable Mark C. Minton

The Korea Society

Dr. G. Mustafa Mohatarem

General Motors Corporation

Dr. Chung-in Moon

Yonsei University

Dr. Hugh T. Patrick

Columbia University

The Honorable Ernest Preeg

Manufacturers Alliance/MAPI

Dr. Mitchell Reiss

Washington College

Mr. Alan Romberg

Henry L. Stimson Center

Dr. Jeffrey R. Shafer

JR Shafer Insight

His Excellency Joun-yung Sun

Kyungnam University

Mr. Robert Warne

Former KEI President

Mr. Joseph Winder

Former KEI President

ABOUT THE KOREA ECONOMIC INSTITUTE OF AMERICA

The Korea Economic Institute of America (KEI) is a leading not-for-profit policy outreach and educational organization focused on promoting economic, political, and security relations between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea. Located in Washington, D.C., KEI aims to broaden and deepen understanding among American policy leaders, opinion makers, and the public about developments in Korea and the value of the U.S.-Korea relationship. Since its founding in 1982, the Institute has organized programs across North America and published research on a diverse range of issues, including U.S.-Korea trade and investments, the North Korea nuclear program, alliance issues, the role of Korean Americans in U.S. politics, and China's growing role in the Asia-Pacific region. Through its publications, outreach programs, social media outlets, and website, KEI provides access to in-depth and current analyses about the two Koreas and issues impacting U.S.-South Korea relations.

KEI's current accomplishments include:

- Publishing three celebrated annual compilation volumes—*On Korea, Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, and *Korea's Economy*—used by experts, leaders, and universities worldwide.
- Bringing Korea experts and government officials to colleges and civic groups to lecture on timely events related to the Korean Peninsula and region.
- Reaching thousands of global listeners through its featured podcast show, *Korean Kontext*, where Korean and American policy, civic, and cultural leaders are engaged in a casual conversation about recent events, their work, their personal lives, and advice to those interested in the field.
- Holding the annual Ambassadors' Dialogue program where the Korean Ambassador to the United States and the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea embark on a series of private and public outreach programs on U.S.-Korea relations.
- Hosting a premier luncheon program every year on Korean American Day to recognize the contributions of the Korean American community to the U.S.-Korea alliance and to honor prominent Korean Americans who have excelled in their field or career.

For more information about these programs and upcoming events at KEI, please visit our website, www.keia.org.

KEI is contractually affiliated with the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP), a public policy research institute located in Seoul and funded by the government of the Republic of Korea.

PREFACE

As the President and CEO of the Korea Economic Institute of America (KEI), I am constantly reminded of the importance of relationships. At KEI, we utilize our established relationships and develop new ones to promote dialogue and understanding between the U.S. and the Republic of Korea about the importance of a strong U.S.-Korea alliance and the rising Asia-Pacific region. For 25 years, one way KEI has done this is by inviting leading Korea and Asia experts from around the world to its annual academic symposium. For the past three years, KEI has developed a relationship with the Association of Asian Studies (AAS), and we now incorporate our symposium into the AAS annual conference. This allows KEI to reach a wide academic audience, enhance its university contacts, and provide quality panel discussions and papers on important issues. KEI provides the AAS annual conference with timely, policy-relevant panels, especially in the field of economics.

Much of the recent success with this publication and its individual chapters these past few years is owed to the fortunate relationship KEI has with Dr. Gilbert Rozman, the emeritus Musgrave Professor of Sociology at Princeton University. Dr. Rozman serves as the Editor-in-Chief for this Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies volume and as an advisor to KEI's efforts with the AAS conference. His knowledge and skills have helped enhance the scholarship and insight generated in this volume.

The importance of relationships in Asia has been well-documented. This volume examines the growing dynamics of multilateral partnerships for economic and political purposes. Economic relations have significantly defined the rise of the Asia-Pacific, and this volume has an excellent set of chapters assessing the future of regional economic relations through big, multilateral arrangements like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership as well as other smaller, multilateral partnerships. Another group of papers looks at the important relationship between national identity and how countries pursue foreign policy. Lastly, a new leader in North Korea has made countries reassess their relationship with North Korea and develop new ways to interact with this difficult regime.

This volume incorporates the works of scholars examining more deeply the core issues of some of the big trends in relationships in Asia. Our academic symposium demonstrates KEI's effort to provide constructive conversation and insightful analysis that will provide the policies for a strong U.S.-Korea alliance and U.S. foreign policy in Asia to ensure these trends develop in a positive direction. Whether you have a new or continuing relationship with reading this publication, we hope you enjoy the 25th edition of the Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies volume and the excellent work inside.

– The Honorable Don Manzullo
President & CEO, Korea Economic Institute of America
July 2014



SOUTH KOREA'S TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The discussion at the AAS meetings on March 29, 2014 included not only the four authors, but also Thomas Christensen, moderator, and Evans Revere, presenter on the Sino-ROK-U.S. triangle. It came within days of the trilateral summit that boosted Japan-ROK-U.S. relations. In the background was concern raised by Russians in the past few weeks about the implications of the Ukraine crisis for Sino-Russian ties and the triangle linking them to the Korean Peninsula. The timing was propitious for a wide-ranging assessment of triangular security involving South Korea, not least due to President Park Geun-hye's Northeast Asia Peace and Security Initiative, which aims to transform international relations in the region. As President Barack Obama prepared to travel to Tokyo and Seoul on the first legs of his spring trip to Asia, there was more direct criticism of China by high U.S. officials accompanying more tangible support for Japan and in response to more vigorous China's efforts to portray Japan as a militarist state trying to contain it. The Sino-Japan-U.S. triangle is not the object of our analysis here, but its shadow extends to all four of the triangles we examine. A synopsis of the discussion was posted on www.theasanforum.org in May 2014.

Recently South Korea's place in triangular configurations has risen to the forefront in discussions of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region. The chapters of Section I explore four triangles that encompass the ROK. In this introduction, I compare these triangles, searching for commonalities as well as differences. At one extreme, South Korea could stand at the fulcrum of each geometrical formation, serving as a bridge or even a balancer between the other two sides. At the other, it could be left as a marginal factor—two great powers dealing with each other with scant regard for how South Korean interests are affected. The four triangles differ on this dimension, as on how they impact Seoul's policy toward North Korea and the regional balance of power. Taken together, these triangles reveal a region in abrupt, unexpected flux.

In the first months of 2014, the previous upbeat response toward Park's trustpolitik diplomacy was rapidly fading. Japanese charged that this was nothing more than a tilt toward China, an extended "honeymoon" that put the U.S. alliance system in East Asia at risk. Russians saw a reaffirmation of the U.S. alliance, notably in the response to the crisis in Ukraine, and warned that Russia would draw closer to China and be more supportive of North Korea. Chinese kept their ambivalence, which had sufficed in 2013 to raise expectations in Seoul, but with no indication of serious interest in joint approaches to multilateral diplomacy, such as Park's Northeast Asia Peace and Security Initiative. The U.S. response to South Korea was to continue to urge it to cooperate more with Japan on security and to join actively in preparations to resist Chinese maritime aggression, but with the understanding that on the most important joint task—vigilance toward North Korea—South Korea will strive for China's trust. Yet, the pressure suddenly mounted to tilt the triangle toward Washington as Vice President Biden made clear in his December visit to Seoul and Obama reiterated in his late April visit. Despite talk of a visit by Xi Jinping to Seoul not long afterwards, Park's stronger warnings about the consequences of another North Korean nuclear test and her agreement to expand missile defense interoperability with the United States were indications that China's preferences are now outweighed by U.S. ones.

Section I opens with a chapter on the triangle on which Seoul has the greatest leverage, the alliance U.S.-Japan-ROK triangle. Sue Terry emphasizes Obama's "pivot" as the driving force in this triangle, but she warns that it has hit a "snag," owing to a sharp deterioration

in Japan-ROK relations. Terry assesses the causes of the downward slide in these bilateral relations, identifies factors that would be expected to bring the two states closer, and ends with suggestions for U.S. action to draw its two allies into closer alignment. Her detailed list of what is complicating relations will be familiar to informed readers. It catalogues a relationship in distress after a year of deterioration. As the Obama administration intensified its efforts from March to facilitate closer ties between the two and more trilateralism, Terry's checklist of what could be done warrants closer attention. She updated it in light of the trilateral summit and new developments.

Terry also compiles a list of reasons for finding a basis for hope that the Japan-ROK leg of the triangle will become less problematic. Although public perceptions in both states are at their nadir, they have fluctuated sharply. Just a few years ago they were improving to the extent many were optimistic about the future. Moreover, there was a growing sense that both cultural affinity and aspects of national identity other than the four plus decades of Japanese imperialism and annexation would keep narrowing the gap. Terry concludes her cultural coverage with, "the current low in relations could yield to another period of increased cooperation in response to the right security or economic incentives." Another factor that could bring the two closer with the United States playing a leading role is the North Korean threat. Since the late 1990s, this recurring threat has led to tentative moves to improve relations, including military cooperation, and some in South Korea recognize that the urgency of this has been growing. A third factor—the way China uses its rising power—with seemingly divisive impact of late may turn into a force for closer relations. Terry recognizes anxiety in South Korea over recent Chinese moves and leaves open the possibility that it will increase and have an impact on relations with Japan. She considers the Park administration, despite the failure to reach an agreement on intelligence sharing, as recognizing the benefit of the military cooperation already achieved. When she adds this list to existing close economic relations, the case for stable relations grows even stronger.

The first chapter concludes with suggestions for what the United States should do to reinforce the weak leg in the U.S.-Japan-ROK triangle. Terry writes, "The priority should be to encourage the involvement of both Seoul and Tokyo in multilateral security structures, and for them to develop joint strategies for addressing common threats and objectives in areas such as maritime security, missile defense, anti-submarine and mine warfare, and ODA." She envisions the United States as an "honest broker," facilitating progress and tamping down tensions. If preliminary steps prove fruitful, it could launch a concerted diplomatic effort to try to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries. With this proposal, which draws a parallel with U.S. diplomacy on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, Terry concentrates her discussion on how to forge a cohesive alliance triangle.

The second chapter considers the China-Japan-South Korea regional integration triangle as a struggle between what Sung-Yoon Lee calls "terra-centric nordpolitik vs. oceanic realpolitik." It treats South Korea as the swing country, determining whether this triangle tilts toward China at the expense of Japan and maritime national interests or toward Japan in order to protect vital economic interests and with due regard for the strategic implications, beginning with North Korea. In Lee's opinion, the tilt is occurring, Seoul is apathetic toward Tokyo, and it is not acting very strategically. To support this argument, he starts with public opinion data showing that not only is Abe Shinzo less popular than Xi Jinping, he is less popular than Kim Jong-un. Sung-Yoon Lee finds that Roh Moo-hyun proved that bashing Japan has public appeal even if

it comes at the expense of the national interest, and he charges Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye with following the same script. While this is a continuing pattern among South Korean leaders, Lee discerns something new in Park's "gullible" approach to China.

Others doubt that Park is tilting toward China even if the relationship between Park and Abe is horrible and probably irremediable. Yet, just juxtaposing Park's pursuit of Xi and shunning of Abe leaves a seriously incomplete picture. The two issues of greatest importance in South Korean thinking about the world beyond their borders are North Korea and the history of Japanese annexation. Together they constitute a century of anguish with powerful impact on national identity. Unlike the way China behaved in 2010 when North Korea twice attacked the South, Japan professes to help constrain the North's aggression, sharing in a common mission. In contrast, at odds with the way Japan approached historical issues over most of the past two decades, Abe has been insensitive to South Korean concerns. His offensive language in the eyes of South Koreans is parallel to China's offensive indifference three years before. Yet, the contrast of 2013-14 does not amount to a tilt. On matters of security, the presence of a virtual alliance by virtue of the alliance each has with the United States is reinforced by quiet cooperation between the armed forces of both states. On matters of universally-shared values and distrust of Chinese ones—however much current events may obscure it—the two states are also largely in accord. This is a multi-dimensional triangle.

The third chapter focuses on the U.S.-China-South Korea security triangle with greatest impact on North Korea. Whereas many discussions of this triangle take U.S. policy as the starting point and recent commentaries have emphasized South Korean policies to reshape triangular dynamics, this chapter argues that China is in the driver's seat. Given the narrow orientation of the U.S.-ROK alliance in comparison to the U.S.-Japan alliance and the predominant stress in Sino-ROK relations, the fact that China is the gateway to North Korea makes it the object of attention by the other two states in matters of a triangular nature. To grasp the nature of triangularity, one needs first to recognize the divergent objectives of these three states in dealing with North Korea.

In the chapter on this triangle, I consider China's overall geopolitical/geocultural objectives and its three bilateral relations with North Korea, South Korea, and the United States. On North Korea, I argue that the position assumed by Valery Denisov and Aleksander Lukin to be that of Putin in the wake of the Ukraine crisis and elaborated more fully by Georgy Toloraya, accepting the revival of a cold war and offering more support to North Korea as the enemy of the United States and its ally, South Korea, differs from China's attitude toward North Korea. Instead, China seeks to pressure North Korea into policies supportive of its goals for economic reform, peninsular transformation, and change in the regional balance of power without making a sharp break with the United States. China benefits from drawing Seoul closer and keeping Washington interested in a "new type of great power relations," both desirable at a time of more tensions with Japan. As long as Sino-U.S. cooperation on North Korea is proceeding in a positive manner, South Korea would not be forced to resume the tilt toward the U.S. side of 2008-12 and could seek advantage in riding on the heels of ties between the two great powers—not troublesome to U.S. officials, since they are confident of the strength of this bilateral relationship as the bedrock in the overall triangle. Yet, in 2014 the balance was tipping to greater Sino-U.S. rivalry, more U.S. pressure on Seoul to solidify the alliance in ways troubling to Beijing, and less scope for Park.

Positive reinforcement for Seoul serves as a reward to Park for her continuous, conciliatory efforts and a warning to Kim Jong-un against his disregard of China's guidance. Consideration of more multilateral cooperation with China is Seoul's way of building hope that China will finally agree to excluding North Korea until it takes a sharp turn toward regional cooperation. Obligated to prioritize crises in other areas, Washington is not adverse to this conciliatory bilateral atmosphere between the other two countries. At present, this is the least problematic of the triangles, but the potential exists for abrupt change.

Section I closes with coverage of the China-Russia-South Korea continental triangle. At the time of the Six-Party Talks it appeared to be relatively unproblematic, in large part because Sino-Russian cooperation regarding the peninsula centered on North Korea and neither of their relationships to South Korea posed a problem for this cooperation. In 2009-11 there were times when Russia seemed to take a harder line toward Pyongyang. Yet, its role on the peninsula is marginal compared to the much greater significance of China's economic and political ties. Moscow was generally deferential, accepting China's leadership in return for seeking China's support on issues in other regions. If Moscow dreamed of a north-south corridor from the Far East of Russia to Busan rather than the east-west corridor from Northeast China to Seoul that is Beijing's preference, there was so little prospect of success for its plan that it posed little problem for Sino-Russian relations. South Korea was mostly aloof from any maneuvering between these countries with different corridors in mind.

The chapter by Denisov and Lukin presents a Russian viewpoint on the continental triangle. They emphasize that Russia blamed the United States for the North Korean impasse and found China's thinking sympathetic. Having written the paper in Russian and awaiting the editor's translation, the authors perceived a far-reaching transformation in Russo-U.S. relations as a result of the Ukraine crisis in March 2014. They added a conclusion with a more dire argument about the spillover from Eastern Europe to Northeast Asia. In their view, Russia will view North Korea through the lens of what appears to be a new cold war, join with China in supporting it more strongly, and take a harder line toward South Korea as an ally of the United States. While this conclusion is not incorporated into the bulk of the chapter, it reflects the thinking that had gained ascendancy in Moscow. The shadow of the United States looms over this triangle, limiting South Korea's options and giving North Korea room for maneuver, as geopolitics trumps economics in reasoning.

The Ukraine crisis of 2014 raises the question of how the Sino-U.S.-Russian triangle will evolve, leaving South Korea on the periphery. On March 15, 2014 the Security Council voted 13 in favor, one abstention, and one against with a veto in regard to the U.S.-initiated resolution to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine and reject the referendum in Crimea to secede. Russia cast the veto, and China abstained. This is but the opening gambit in triangular management of the crisis, sufficient for the Russians to expect at least tacit Chinese support but unclear about the spillover into Northeast Asia in the coming months and years. The strategic Sino-U.S.-Russian triangle will loom in the background as South Korea maneuvers in the context of the four triangles inclusive of it, deeply conscious that North Korea is closely watching the Ukraine crisis as well with the possibility it can see an opening. By early May Sino-Russia cooperation was less in doubt, further narrowing Seoul's options.



Japan-South Korea-U.S. Relations

Sue Mi Terry

In November 2011, the Obama administration announced that the United States would be “pivoting” towards the Asia-Pacific and away from the Middle East, expanding its already significant role in the region. Underlying this “rebalancing” is President Obama’s belief that U.S. strategy and priorities needed to be adjusted to take account of the fact that Asia is now the center of gravity for national security and economic interests. The United States, he believes, needs to do more to safeguard U.S. interests in this vital region by reassuring allies, keeping trade flowing, deterring North Korea, keeping China in check as it acts in an increasingly assertive fashion in the South China and East China Seas, and addressing myriad lesser threats from piracy to terrorism.¹

As the Obama administration tried to implement this “pivot to Asia,” it hit a snag. To succeed, it must have the cooperation of South Korea and Japan, America’s two closest allies in Northeast Asia, but since the announcement of the “pivot,” their relationship has soured considerably, making it difficult to present a united front in dealing with an increasingly assertive China and an erratic and belligerent North Korea. Since coming to office in February 2013, President Park Geun-hye has yet to hold a bilateral summit with her counterpart, Prime Minister Abe Shinzo. While going so far as to say that she would be willing to meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, Park said that holding a summit with Abe is “pointless” if “Japan continues to stick to the same historical perceptions and repeat its past comments” and without a formal apology from Japan for wartime “wrongdoings.”² President Obama was only able to bring the two leaders together for the first time on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit at The Hague in late March 2014. Abe, for his part, caused predictable consternation in Seoul in late December 2013 with his visit to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japan’s war-dead, including 14 convicted Class A war criminals from World War II—in part because he believes Park has shown little interest in rapprochement. Then on January 28, 2014, the Abe government announced that it will revise existing middle and high school teaching guidelines to refer to the disputed islets with South Korea (and China) as “integral territories of Japan,” further angering them.³ In both cases, Abe likely figured he has nothing to lose by catering to his right-wing supporters and doing what he has wanted to do all along since the relationship was not improving in any case.

This chapter begins by examining the major factors responsible for the downward trajectory of South Korea-Japanese relations, then looks at factors that should bring the two powers together, and finally concludes with some suggestions for how the United States can bring its two allies into closer alignment as part of a tripartite security relationship. At a time of strained budgets in Washington, this is one of the most important issues it can tackle to enhance security and prosperity in East Asia.

MAJOR ISSUES IN KOREAN-JAPANESE RELATIONS

The factors exacerbating Seoul-Tokyo relations are many, including the following.

The comfort women, a Korean grievance, dates to the last part of Japan’s colonization of Korea when it was embroiled in World War II. The abuse of sex slaves from occupied countries, including Korea, China, the Philippines, and the Dutch East Indies, has proved to be a painful memory for South Koreans, not least because it was repressed for nearly half a century. Only in 1990 did the first South Korean women lift the “veil of shame” they had

drawn over Japan's forcible recruitment of as many as 200,000 young women and girls to serve in military brothels.⁴

The Koreans have been demanding a "sincere apology," compensation for these comfort women, and for the Japanese government to accept legal responsibility for its historical conduct. Comfort women and their advocates maintain that they did not benefit from the grants South Korea received from the 1965 normalization between Seoul and Tokyo and that the government of Park Chung-hee (father of the current president) did not represent them when he accepted Japanese "reparations" at the time. Moreover, the South Koreans believe that the Japanese government is evading its legal responsibility. While it helped to create the now-defunct Asian Women's Fund (established in 1995 and dissolved in 2007) to express "a sense of national atonement from the Japanese people to former 'comfort women,'" they point out that AWF was nominally a non-governmental organization and, therefore, did not represent an official state redress of their grievances.⁵

For its part, the Japanese government has steadfastly maintained that the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty signed between Washington and Tokyo and the 1965 normalization have settled all postwar claims of compensation. Tokyo also maintains that it has both acknowledged and apologized numerous times for its various crimes during WWII, including its role regarding comfort women. Among these, the Kono Statement issued by Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei in 1993 made a formal apology endorsed by the Japanese government to the comfort women and others affected by the war.⁶ The Japanese want to know, in essence: "How much longer and how many times more should we apologize?" A July 2013 Pew poll shows "apology fatigue"; a strong majority of Japanese (63 percent) thought Tokyo has sufficiently apologized for its military actions in the 1930s and 1940s and no further apology is needed.⁷ A number of Japanese, mostly from the right wing of the ruling LDP, cannot resist fanning the flames by claiming either that comfort women were "necessary" or, more frequently, that their condition was not "as bad" as critics claim.⁸ This is further enflamed when some call for a revision of the Kono Statement, however unlikely that is, and when the government protests against statues that are springing up in the United States and South Korea in honor of the victims.

The controversy has grown since Abe came into office in February 2013 in part because as prime minister in 2006-2007 he argued that there was no evidence that any of the comfort women had been coerced into prostitution.⁹ Abe voiced doubts about the validity of the Kono Statement and even went as far as to periodically suggest that his government might consider revising it, although in March 2014 he did finally announce that his administration would not revise this landmark apology made to comfort women. From the South Korean perspective, time is running out. Just 56 of the 239 women who publicly acknowledged their experiences as comfort women are still alive, and many are in their late eighties.¹⁰ South Korean public interest in the fate of the comfort women has surged since the Constitutional Court ruling on August 20, 2011, which held that inaction on the part of the South Korean government was unconstitutional. It held that the government was obliged to be more diplomatically active on behalf of the victims to secure an apology and compensation, and that its failure to seek a solution with Japan "constitutes infringement on the basic human rights of the victims and violation of the Constitution."¹¹ In the United States, too, the issue of comfort women has

gained visibility because of the efforts of Korean-American activist groups. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton instructed the State Department to refer to them as “sex slaves,” rather than the euphemistic term “comfort women,” to Japan’s dismay.¹²

Yasukuni Shrine, a symbol of historical revisionism, which Abe visited in December 2013, sparks fear in South Korea that Japan is pursuing an aggressive, “right-wing” agenda. Abe’s visit predictably ignited a firestorm of condemnation from South Korea (as well as China) and even a rare admonition from the United States. South Koreans argue that such actions demonstrate a lack of Japanese remorse for imperial-era aggression and are proof that Japan has not completely rid itself of its militarist tendencies. The controversy over the Shrine first surfaced when Emperor Hirohito refused to visit it from 1978 until his death in 1989,¹³ following the internment of 14 Class A war criminals nearly two decades after the first Class B and C war criminals were included.¹⁴ Since the 1978 decision, no Japanese emperor has visited Yasukuni, but prime ministers Nakasone Yasuhiro, Hashimoto Ryutaro, and Koizumi Junichiro preceded Abe in doing so. The leaders of the Democratic Party of Japan refrained from visiting the Shrine while in power. Abe and others defend their visits, saying that it is a national religious institution, which honors the dead of previous wars, not just war criminals or others who died in WWII. They thus claim that the visits are meant to pay their respects to the souls who have died in the service of Japan through history, not to honor war criminals.¹⁵

South Koreans note, however, that Yasukuni is not just a memorial. It also contains a museum visited by thousands of Japanese school children every year, which presents Japan’s 20th century wars in a nationalistic, if not outright xenophobic, manner. The museum glorifies kamikaze pilots but plays down the fact that Japan began the war with China and with the United States (which is blamed for provoking the attack on Pearl Harbor), and it does not give any but the most oblique attention to the atrocities committed by Japan, including the Rape of Nanking. Yasukuni visits are thus a potent reminder to the South Koreans that the Japanese government consistently fails to fully acknowledge its atrocities and its failure to educate its young people about those crimes.

The territorial dispute over two tiny rocky islets in the Sea of Japan (East Sea), known as Dokdo in Korea (“solitary islands”) and Takeshima (“bamboo islands”) in Japan, arises from Korean claims that it was the first to discover the islets and displayed acts of sovereignty in administering them as an appendage of Ulleungdo, a bigger neighboring island, and that it was unable to protest Japan’s annexation of them in 1905 as part of its conquest of Korea. The crux of Japan’s argument is that the San Francisco Peace Treaty, which outlined how Japan’s colonial empire was to be dismantled¹⁶ and forced Japan to recognize Korea’s independence and renounce all right, title and claim to Korea, did not require Japan to renounce its claim to the islets. Thus, it is still the legal ruler. But shortly after the treaty was signed, on January 18, 1952, South Korea declared its sovereignty by setting up the “Rhee Line,” which essentially retained the “MacArthur Line” (the boundary MacArthur established after WWII that remained in the San Francisco Treaty), which included the waters surrounding the rocks.¹⁷ The Japanese government protested, claiming that this was a unilateral act in contravention of international law, but the rocks have been under de facto South Korean control ever since. South Korea was not a party to the 1951 treaty; so it does not necessarily feel bound by all of its terms.¹⁸

Control does have potentially significant economic implications. Both countries believe that the surrounding area is one of their most fertile fishing grounds and that gas reserves of unknown size may lie nearby. In November 1998, South Korea and Japan renewed a 1965 treaty that set a provisional fishing zone around the islands. Under the agreement, fishing boats from Japan and South Korea were allowed to operate in each other's 200-nautical-mile exclusive economic zone if they obtained permits, with fishing quotas and conditions for such operations to be determined by the two countries every year.¹⁹ This agreement laid the foundation for a subsequent 2002 fisheries accord in which each state agreed to lower its catch quota in order to preserve depleted fish stocks around the islets.

A major diplomatic crisis ensued in 2005 after Japan's Shimane prefectural government declared February 22 to be Takeshima Day. Competing claims began to escalate. In 2006, in one of the worst incidents, Korea dispatched 20 gunboats and threatened to use force to prevent Japanese maritime survey ships from approaching the islands.²⁰ As the two sides edged toward confrontation, rhetoric escalated and nationalist public opinion was mobilized, particularly in South Korea. Last-minute diplomatic efforts—with quiet, behind-the-scenes U.S. support—resulted in a temporary stand-down, but the patchwork agreement was followed by a hardening of positions that does not bode well for a solution to the dispute.²¹

President Lee Myung-bak made an unprecedented trip to the islands on August 10, 2012, making him the first leader from either country to do so. The move was widely seen as an attempt to boost Lee's falling approval rating but also served to worsen ties between Tokyo and Seoul. Provocations continue on both sides. Most recently, on January 28, 2014, Tokyo announced a revision to the state teaching guidelines for middle- and high-school textbooks, which instructs teachers to describe the contested island as an "integral" part of Japanese territory.²²

Constitutional revision and Japan's military capabilities, for Koreans, are exacerbating conditions as Japan attempts to increase its armed forces and expand its freedom to deploy them. Constitutional change has been at the forefront of political debate since Abe and the LDP regained power. Citing growing security risks in Asia and the lack of a right to collective self-defense as inhibiting Japan's status as a "normal country," Abe calls revising the constitution his "historic mission."²³ He plans to start by revising Article 96, which stipulates that a two-thirds vote in the Diet and a public referendum is required for constitutional change, and replace it with a provision that would require just a simple majority for amendments. Abe next wants to alter Article 9, the renunciation-of-war clause imposed upon Japan following WWII, which states: "Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes." Further, it stipulates that "land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained."²⁴ Abe's goal is to rewrite Article 9 by stating that Japan refrains from the use of force to settle international disputes, rather than prohibiting the maintenance of a military force. He wants to create a full-fledged military, or National Defense Force (as opposed to today's Self-Defense Force), with the right to launch pre-emptive military strikes and to engage in "collective self-defense" to aid the militaries of its allies, including the United States. These changes are justified on the basis of changing regional security dynamics, including China's military build-up and the ongoing standoff with China over the sovereignty of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and threats

from North Korea including missile launches. Abe and others argue Japan cannot fulfill its obligations under collective security agreements and within the United Nations without a “normal” military force.

Changing the Constitution remains a highly divisive issue in Japan and could take years. Changing Article 9 is particularly difficult. It has become a deeply embedded part of Japan’s own national identity. More than a legal statement, it is a statement of Japanese values and culture as they have developed since 1945. To many Japanese, it is a source of pride that theirs is the one country to renounce war. Abe’s critics argue that “changing the amendment conditions is an act of defiance against a state founded on a Constitution.”²⁵ A majority of Japanese (56 percent) oppose changing the Constitution, although opposition has declined by 11 percent since 2006, when some 67 percent were against it.²⁶ Given the current pushback from opposition parties, peace groups, and the media, Abe for now is treading cautiously and focusing on a drive to reinterpret the current language first, asserting the right to exercise collective self-defense, rather than seeking outright revision.

Abe’s strongest argument is that there is already a considerable gulf between the reality of Japan’s defense posture and any reasonable reading of Article 9. Military spending is already the fifth largest in the world at \$46.9 billion,²⁷ it has the most sophisticated navy in Asia (after the U.S. Navy), and it is in the process of developing a sophisticated, two-tiered ballistic missile defense (BMD) program. Moreover, Japan has sent its forces to Iraq and on refueling missions in the Indian Ocean in support of the Afghanistan war, in addition to contributing to official UN peacekeeping operations.²⁸ Abe can argue that leaving Article 9 unchanged, even as Japan expands its military missions and capabilities, is hypocritical and counter-productive because the Constitution is being undermined.

While the United States sides with South Korea on the issue of comfort women and the Yasukuni Shrine and stays strictly neutral on territorial disputes, it is in Abe’s corner on constitutional revisionism. Having Japan play a more active role in collective security will decrease the burden on the United States, which is dealing with rising debt and a falling defense budget. But Korea is clearly wary of Japanese ambitions, and fears, rather improbably, that constitutional revision symbolizes a return to militarism and aggression. Recent polling data from the Asan Institute suggests that 62 percent of Koreans view Japan as a credible military threat.²⁹ When respondents were asked to rank Japan on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being most favorable), they gave an average score of 2.7. For North Korea, the equivalent figures were 70 percent and 2.4, which suggests that South Koreans view the Stalinist dictatorship as only slightly more menacing than their democratic neighbor.³⁰ A separate Pew Research Poll in July 2013 found that 77 percent of South Koreans had an unfavorable view of Japan. Favorable views have declined by 25 points since 2008.³¹

The impact of personalities, namely those of Park and Abe, is contributing to the strain in relations. Park Geun-hye has a particular burden to avoid appearing too favorable towards Japan, given her father’s past as an officer in Japan’s army, fluent in Japanese, who later signed the treaty to normalize relations. While it helped in rapid economic development, most South Koreans still feel it failed to properly address suffering imposed by Japan’s occupation. Park’s domestic political foes brand her father as “pro-Japan,” a powerful stigma for South Korean politicians. As a result, Park is under domestic pressure to walk a fine line,

not appearing too close to Japan while maintaining effective cooperation. Park also has a history as an advocate for comfort women seeking restitution from Japan and therefore is particularly offended by Abe's stance on this issue.

Abe's outspoken nationalist views do not bode well for improved relations. His comments and actions on controversial historical issues suggest that he has personally embraced a revisionist view, which denies that the crux of Japan's empire was oppression and victimization of its neighbors. He has been tied to groups such as Nippon kaigi kyokai which argue that Japan should be applauded for liberating much of East Asia from Western colonial powers, the Tokyo War Crimes tribunal was illegitimate, and the killings by Japanese troops during the Rape of Nanking were either exaggerated or fabricated.³²

During his first term in office, Abe backtracked on his most controversial statements that upset South Korea, but in April 2013, he made comments to the Diet that suggested that his government would not reaffirm the apology for Japan's wartime actions issued by Prime Minister Murayama Tomiichi in 1995, which is regarded as Japan's most significant official apology for wartime acts. He added that the definition of "aggression" has yet to be "firmly determined" by academics or the international community.³³

IS THERE HOPE FOR IMPROVED RELATIONS?

This summary of issues that divide Tokyo and Seoul might suggest that there is no hope for an improvement in relations. That would be an unduly pessimistic conclusion. There are reasons to be more optimistic about the prospects for cooperating more closely, given the right conditions—especially the right push from their common ally, the United States.

Public Perceptions are in Constant Flux

In 2010, South Koreans viewed Japan almost as favorably as China, South Korea's largest trading partner.³⁴ Less than four years later, Japan is viewed almost as unfavorably as North Korea. While this is a reflection of how toxic relations have become, it is also a sign of how public attitudes can change. In the 1990s, Korea-Japan relations appeared to be trending up after the Kono Statement and the Murayama apology. Monuments and museums were built in Japan to commemorate the victims of WWII and more wartime atrocities were addressed in Japanese textbooks.³⁵ In 1998, when President Kim Dae-jung came into the office and initiated his "Sunshine Policy" towards North Korea, seeking reconciliation through engagement, he employed a similar strategy of active engagement in his dealings with Japan. During an official visit to Japan in 1998 he and Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo declared their intent to improve South Korean-Japanese relations through "political, security, economic and cultural exchanges."³⁶ This led to increased collaboration on regional security matters relating to North Korea and dialogue between the two nations' militaries.³⁷

Increased cultural contact positively affected mutual public perceptions. A Korean ban on Japanese cultural imports (such as songs and movies) enacted after 1945 was lifted and, in 2002, Japan and South Korea successfully co-hosted the World Cup.³⁸ Imports of Japanese products, including cars and electronic goods, surged 82.9 percent from 2002 to 2008. The percentage of Japanese who said they "liked" Korea reached 63.1 percent in 2009, the highest total since the survey began in 1978.³⁹ Japanese consumers became

fascinated by Korean singers and TV and movie stars as part of a “Korean wave,” or *hallyu*, of pop culture. An increasing number of tourists have followed on the heels of these cultural exchanges, reaching 4.84 million in 2007.⁴⁰ In 2012, 3.5 million Japanese accounted for the largest group of foreigners to visit South Korea.⁴¹

This indicates that cooperative Korea-Japan relations are possible given the right conditions. There were motivating factors for both sides to come together for the Obuchi-Kim declaration in 1998. A year earlier Japan faced a security crisis due to North Korea’s test firing of a missile over the Japanese mainland. Meanwhile Kim Dae-jung came into office with South Korea still reeling from the IMF financial crisis in 1997 and saw Japan as a potential source of assistance.⁴² The current low in relations could yield to another period of increased cooperation in response to the right security or economic incentives.

The North Korean Threat

Since the mid-1990s, growing South Korean and Japanese concerns over the North Korean military threat have triggered tentative moves to improve bilateral relations and military cooperation. This effort assumed greater urgency after Pyongyang’s dangerous provocations during 2010-2013: sinking the South Korean corvette Cheonan, killing all 46 seamen; shelling the island of Yeonpyeong, killing four people; testing a third nuclear device; launching short-range missiles; and threatening a war against Seoul and Washington. Japan clearly shares Seoul’s concerns about these actions. Not only have North Korean missiles flown through Japanese airspace, it has admitted abducting Japanese citizens, and it has regularly threatened Japan. One South Korean official explained, “As North Korea raises its threat of provocation, a consensus has formed that there needs to be closer military cooperation among [South Korea, Japan, and the United States].”⁴³ Another commented that the need for South Korea and Japan to share military intelligence “became clear each time North Korea tested a nuclear weapon or launched a long-range missile, but the lack of an accord made that impossible.”⁴⁴

The China Factor

China is another potentially common security concern, although the threat perceptions are quite different in Tokyo and Seoul. Tokyo’s immediate concerns regarding China are its military modernization program and its actions regarding Japan’s southwestern islands. Since 2010, there has been a rapid increase in the number of Chinese vessels and aircraft that come close to, or enter, Japanese territorial waters and airspace in the East China Sea, resulting in Japanese and Chinese patrol ships in almost daily contact in waters surrounding the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. China has been developing new gas fields in the area near Japan’s claimed median line, and various Chinese officials have been questioning Japan’s claim to sovereignty over Okinawa.

South Korean-Chinese relations are generally good, but there is anxiety in South Korea about the rise of China, fostered by China’s claim to the ancient Korean kingdom of Koguryo (covering parts of the northern and central Korean Peninsula), Chinese fishermen’s illegal fishing in South Korean waters, Beijing’s support for North Korea, and territorial disputes over a submerged rock in the East China Sea known as Ieodo to Koreans and Suyan Rock to the Chinese. When China recently declared an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) that

included Jeodo, it drew a negative response from Seoul,⁴⁵ which extended its own ADIZ to include the disputed territory. South Korean perceptions of China have suffered: In a July 2013 Pew poll, 78 percent of South Koreans had a favorable view of the United States while just 46 percent had a favorable view of China.⁴⁶

Military Cooperation

In response primarily to the threat posed by North Korea, but also to some extent because of the looming challenge from China, Seoul and Tokyo have taken preliminary steps to exchange observers during military exercises and allow participation by the other power in what had been bilateral training events with the United States. In June 2012, Seoul and Tokyo were on the verge of signing a bilateral military agreement known as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) to improve joint security capabilities, but less than an hour before the ceremony, Seoul canceled due to flaring public criticism and legislative backlash. This would have been the first military pact between Seoul and Tokyo since the end of Japanese occupation and would have provided a legal framework for the exchange and protection of classified information about North Korea's nuclear and missile programs, potential military incursions, and terrorist or cyber attacks, and also about China's rising military power.⁴⁷ The agreement would have provided South Korea with access to information collected by Japan's high-tech intelligence satellites, AEGIS ships, and early-warning and anti-submarine aircraft.

Despite the failure to conclude GSOMIA and current souring of the relationship, the Park administration is well aware that improving military cooperation with Japan is beneficial because it enhances South Korean security. Japan also provides a critical base of support for U.S. forces which would defend South Korea during a conflict with Pyongyang. Seven U.S. bases in Japan are designated as part of the United Nations Command Rear and would serve as a staging area during a Korean crisis. Japan would also likely be a key economic contributor to Korean unification, including aid, food and medicine, and even civilian and medical personnel. Japan could also offer development assistance and aid.

Economic Ties

The close economic relationship between Seoul and Tokyo is another strong force for stability despite flare-ups over historical and territorial disputes. They are the two most mature market economies in East Asia. Japan is Korea's third largest trading partner after China and the United States, while Korea is Japan's third largest export destination. South Korea continues to rely on Japanese FDI because Japan's niche technologies are needed to complete many Korean consumer products for export. Between 1962 and 2011, Japan was Korea's second largest FDI provider, with \$28.2 billion or 15.1 percent of total FDI.⁴⁸ Japan's FDI in South Korea more than doubled from 2011 to 2012 to hit \$4.54 billion, which is more than the \$4.01 billion that Korea received from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia combined.

Both countries suffered from the 2008 financial crisis, and the Japanese economy has been further hurt by the great earthquake that struck eastern Japan in March 2011. These developments brought new momentum to map out a coordination strategy through enhanced cross-border FDI. Since the earthquake, Japan has been looking to relocate some domestic

parts and component factories to earthquake-free destinations. Korea proved to be ideal, with only a few hours of delivery time separating the two locations, and, while South Korean firms pay high wages, its workers also have high productivity.

The 2008 crisis changed Japanese views of the Korean economy. Japanese once viewed South Korea as a “cormorant economy”—a term coined by Japanese economist Komuro Naoki to indicate that, although Korea exports finished products, it loses much of its profits by buying parts and materials from Japan.⁴⁹ This view became untenable after South Korea recovered faster than Japan from the downturn. Economic disparities between the two countries have also dramatically diminished as Korea has pushed forward. GNI per capita in Japan was 8.4 times that of South Korea in 1973; by 2012, the lead had shrunk to 1.8 times. Korean electronics manufacturers Samsung and LG have overtaken Japanese rivals such as Sony and Panasonic in manufacturing smart phones and high-definition TVs. Japan’s newfound respect was evident during the 2008 crisis when the two cooperated as near equals to implement an aggressive economic stimulus plan and currency swap agreement.

LOOKING FORWARD: THE FUTURE OF THE JAPAN-SOUTH KOREA-U.S. STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP

The Obama administration is making a renewed effort to reaffirm its desire to enhance security and economic ties in the Asia Pacific region. President Obama visited Asia in late April, including Tokyo and Seoul, with the principle objective of demonstrating his commitment to “rebalance” from the Middle East to East Asia. But for Washington’s strategy to work, stronger bilateral ties between Seoul and Tokyo and a more robust triangular security structure are needed in light of growing North Korean and Chinese security threats to the region and the declining budget of the U.S. armed forces. Enhanced cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo can increase America’s capacity to deal with regional threats by redistributing military roles and responsibilities among its most capable allies. History and other contentious issues, however, make a truly triangular relationship difficult to achieve. The South Korea-Japan leg of the relationship is not solid; sometimes it is practically nonexistent. It is imperative that Washington does more to try to bring its close Asian allies together. It can start by facilitating contact and reconciliation on smaller and less contentious issues of mutual concern, as it did when it convened a trilateral meeting at The Hague in March, coupled with “track two” initiatives involving knowledgeable former U.S. policymakers and experts in South Korea-Japan relations. If these initiatives bear fruit, they could lead to a broader reconciliation effort. The priority should be to encourage the involvement of both Seoul and Tokyo in multilateral security structures, and for them to develop joint strategies for addressing common threats and objectives in areas such as maritime security, missile defense, anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and mine warfare, and ODA.

In the maritime sphere, South Korea and Japan should build on the Defense Trilateral Talks that have been held annually since 2008.⁵⁰ Trilateral naval drills, held most recently in October 2013, should be intensified.⁵¹ Parallel involvement should be expanded to other

exercises as well, particularly those relating to maritime and air-defense contingencies, with U.S. forces based in Japan and South Korea included as appropriate.

Missile defense offers a particularly fruitful area for cooperation: the United States should encourage South Korea to engage in trilateral missile defense cooperation exercises in order to implement a multilayered regional missile defense network that includes both South Korea and Japan. An inability to defend against missile launchings leaves South Korea and Japan vulnerable to attack and more susceptible to North Korean threats. The United States has tried to develop common missile defense infrastructure to guard the region against missile attacks from North Korean and Chinese launch sites but has achieved only mixed results. By linking U.S., South Korean, and Japanese sensors, the allies could better deter and, if needed, defeat future North Korean missile attacks, while protecting vital U.S. military capabilities based in Japan or Guam, and minimizing the risk that a North Korea provocation could lead to an all-out conflict.

To make such cooperation possible, Washington should privately urge continued progress toward implementing the scrapped military agreement, GSOMIA, and logistics-sharing agreements. This will require deft public diplomacy from the Park government to convince the South Korean public and legislature of the mutual benefits of the accords. The three countries should also emphasize trilateral cooperation in ASW and mine warfare. As South Korean Vice Admiral Jung Ho-sub noted, “The problem is that the ROK Navy alone cannot deal with a North Korean submarine threat . . . It does not have sufficient intelligence on when and where North Korean submarines might infiltrate. It also has limited ASW assets for the protection of SLOCs (Sea Lines of Communication) around the major harbors and the vital waters near the Korean Strait. Also, an insufficient number of US naval assets are permanently stationed around South Korea’s vital sea-lanes.”⁵² Japan could help fill this gap with its strong ASW and mine-sweeping capabilities. The GSOMIA would enable Seoul and Tokyo to share intelligence on the North Korean submarine threat, enhancing joint exercises and cooperation. Their navies, notes Vice Admiral Jung Ho-sub, are “uniquely suited for multilateral cooperation because of their intrinsic unobtrusive nature as over-the-horizon security forces, out of public view.”⁵³ Trilateral training can occur far from the Korean Peninsula. Mine-sweeping exercises near the Strait of Hormuz and joint patrols to combat Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden, for example, not only could serve common allied interests but also develop skills and familiarity that could be applied in a Korean crisis.

There are numerous other areas in which all three countries could cooperate, including joint peacekeeping missions, counter-terrorism, counter-proliferation, counter-narcotics, cyberspace, humanitarian assistance, and disaster operations. Beyond the military realm, they can work together in providing ODA to Southeast Asia and elsewhere. ODA has been the cornerstone of its foreign policy since Japan began allocating aid to Southeast Asian nations in 1954 and over the past half century, it has provided more than one-third of all the ODA that members of ASEAN have received.⁵⁴ Japan continues to be the largest provider of economic aid to Southeast Asia and its largest source of FDI. As a former beneficiary of development cooperation, South Korean aid is also substantial in Southeast Asia. It has maintained close economic and diplomatic relationships with ASEAN, as one

of its important trade and investment partners, but South Korea has insufficient ODA experience as a donor.⁵⁵ Well-chosen, noncompetitive aid projects could enhance mutual cooperation between Japan and Korea, either on a bilateral or multilateral basis.

The United States, Japan, and Korea should initiate trilateral security talks that build on existing trilateral foreign and defense minister talks—held with Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel several times in the past year and the July 1, 2013 foreign ministers meeting with Secretary of State John Kerry in Brunei—to exchange views on North Korea and a wide range of issues.⁵⁶ The purpose of creating such discussion forums with both foreign and defense ministers from all three countries is to encourage development of a joint strategic vision that better incorporates the missions, roles, and capabilities of their militaries as well as coordination on related diplomatic issues, especially regarding Southeast Asia and the East and South China Seas. Freedom of navigation, and opposition to arbitrary and sudden declarations of ADIZs are also issues on which the three countries share common concerns and prescriptions. Finally, a comprehensive trilateral plan should include a strategy for Korean contingencies, including aid and development contributions.

To enable these talks to bear fruit, leaders in both Tokyo and Seoul should begin by defusing tensions at home by discouraging inflammatory propaganda. Refraining from visiting Yasukuni Shrine again, Abe and other Japanese leaders should cease making insensitive remarks regarding comfort women, and stop escalating propaganda on the territorial issue. In return, Park could at a minimum exercise “quiet diplomacy,” as advocated by Gerald Curtis, on the Dokdo/Takeshima issue, since it is not in the national interest to provoke Japanese nationalism when Korea already has effective control.

In all these areas the United States could act as an honest broker, facilitating progress and tamping down tensions. If such preliminary steps prove fruitful, it could launch a more concerted diplomatic effort to try to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries. That may sound improbable, but Kerry was until very recently engaged in an active effort to bridge the historical differences between Israelis and Palestinians—a process that has scant chance of immediate success because, in addition to everything else, Israel is a pro-Western democracy and the Palestinian territories (half ruled by Fatah, the other half by Hamas) are not. While significant differences between South Korea and Japan will not be easily resolved, the two pro-American democracies have many shared interests, and even elements of shared culture, which the Israelis and Palestinians lack. The odds of success in Japan-South Korea talks are actually higher than in Israel-Palestinian talks. Imagine if Kerry were to engage in the kind of intensive “shuttle diplomacy” between Tokyo and Seoul that Henry Kissinger employed in the 1970s to allow Israel to reach an agreement with its historic enemy, Egypt. The effort might still fail, but then again it could succeed—especially if both South Korea and Japan receive the kind of focused, high-level American attention which Israel and the Palestinian Authority currently receive.

CONCLUSION

The South Korea-Japan relationship is as troubled as any relationship in the world between mature liberal democracies, and there is plenty of historical reason why this should be so, but history does not have to be destiny. Many other nations have overcome decades, even

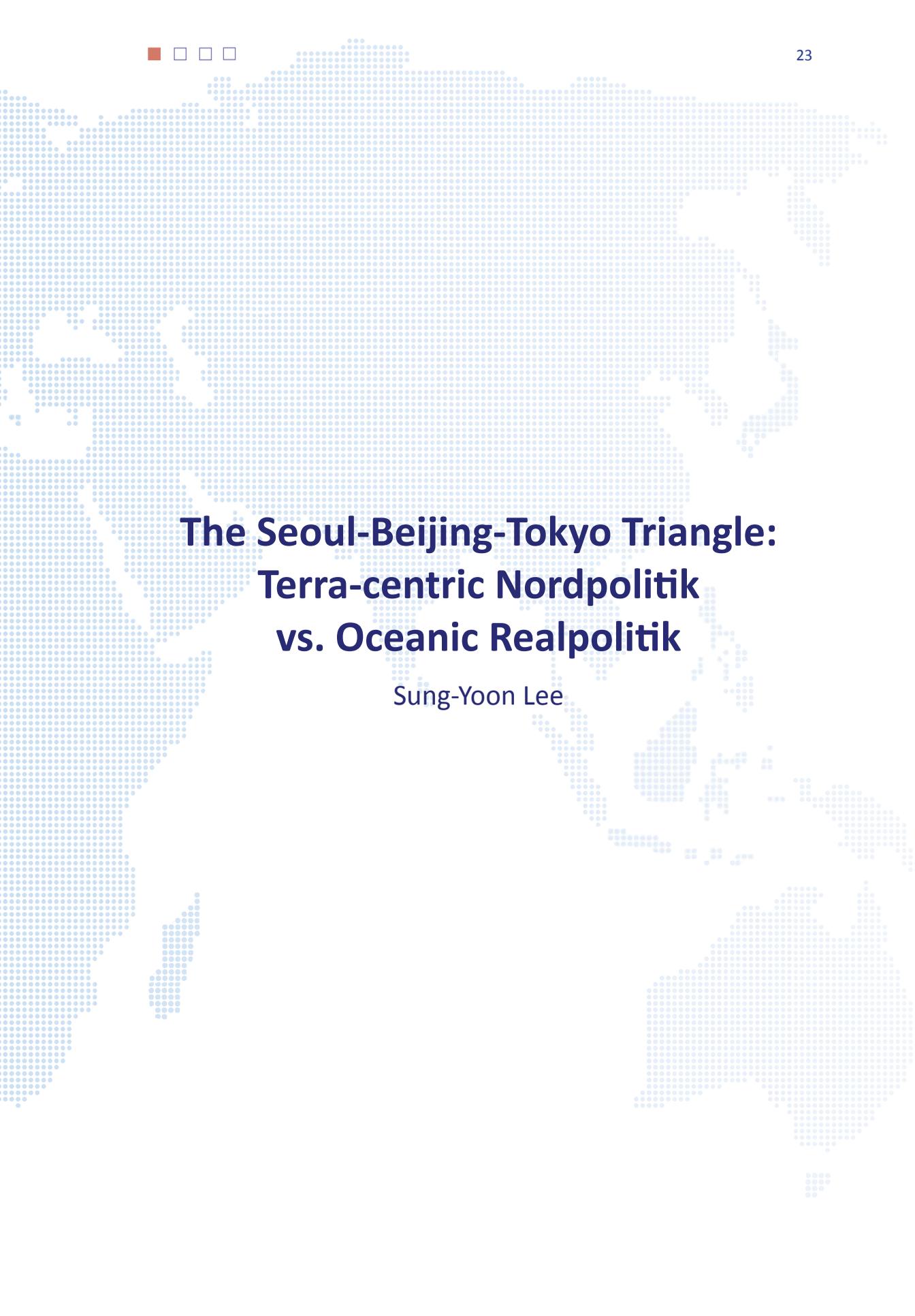
centuries, of tension and outright conflict to establish close working relationships. Think of France and Germany. A similar transformation will not occur anytime soon in the South Korea-Japan relationship, but there are many shared interests to bring the two neighbors together. With a little help from Washington it is quite possible, even probable, that they will be able to enhance cooperation with each other and with the United States in ways that will make Northeast Asia more secure.

ENDNOTES

1. Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011; Tom Donilon, "America is Back in the Pacific and will Uphold the Rules," *Financial Times*, November 27, 2011.
2. Lucy Williamson, "South Korea President Park: 'No Purpose' to Japan Talks," *BBC News Asia*, November 3, 2013.
3. Ankit Panda, "New Japanese Teaching Guidelines Treat Senkakus, Kurils, Takeshima As 'Integral Territories,'" *The Diplomat*, January 28, 2014.
4. Lack of official documentation has made estimates of the total number of comfort women difficult. Numbers range from as low as 20,000 from some Japanese scholars to as high as 410,000 from Chinese scholars. Historians have arrived at various estimates by looking at surviving documentation. Yoshimi Yoshiaki, who conducted the first academic study on the topic, estimated the number to be between 50,000 and 200,000. International media sources repeat the figure of about 200,000 young women recruited or kidnapped to serve in Japanese military brothels. "The 'Comfort Women' Issue and the Asian Women's Fund," *Asian Women's Fund*, http://web.archive.org/web/20070628152156/http://www.awf.or.jp/woman/pdf/ianhu_ei.pdf; Caroline Rose, *Sino-Japanese relations: facing the past, looking to the future* (London: Routledge, 2005), 10, 88; Akemi Nakamura, "Were they teen-rape slaves or paid pros?" *The Japan Times*, March 20, 2007; "Sex Slaves Put Japan on Trial," *BBC News*, December 8, 2000; "Stop Violence Against Women: 'Comfort Women,'" *Amnesty International Factsheet*, <http://www.amnesty.org.nz/files/Comfort-Women-factsheet.pdf>.
5. "The Asian Women's Fund," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/>.
6. "Statement by the Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the Result of the Study on the Issue of 'Comfort Women,'" Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/women/fund/state9308.html>.
7. "Japanese Public's Mood Rebounding: Abe Highly Popular, China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan," Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 11, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/11/japanese-publics-mood-rebounding-abe-strongly-popular/>.
8. Hiroko Tabuchi, "Women Forced into WWII Brothels Served Necessary Role, Osaka Mayor Says," *International New York Times*, May 13, 2013.
9. Alexis Dudden and Kono Mizoguchi, "Abe's Violent Denial: Japan's Prime Minister and the 'Comfort Women,'" *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, March 1, 2007.
10. Peter Ford, "Korea to Japan: Time Running Out for 'Comfort Women' Resolution," *The Christian Science Monitor*, October 20, 2013.
11. Tetsuya Hakoda, "Politics Derailed Resolution of 'Comfort Women' Issue at Last Minute," *The Asahi shimbun*, October 8, 2013.
12. "'Comfort Women' Were Sex Slaves," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 13, 2012.
13. Philip Brasor, "Notes on Yasukuni and a week that will live in infamy," *The Japan Times*, August 20, 2006.
14. "Hirohito visits to Yasukuni stopped over war criminals," *The Japan Times*, July 21, 2008.
15. See, for example, Andrew Browne, "Japan's Abe Defends Yasukuni Shrine Visit," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 22, 2014.

16. Treaty of Peace with Japan, September 8, 1951, article 2(a). Also cited in Kimie Hara, *Cold War Frontiers in the Asia-Pacific: Divided Territories in the San Francisco System* (New York: Routledge Japanese Studies Series, 2007): p. 46.
17. “60 Years of the Republic: The Syngman Rhee Line,” *Chosun Ilbo*, January 23, 2013.
18. Kimie Hara, *Cold War Frontiers in the Asia-Pacific*, p. 47.
19. “South Korea, Japan Agree Fisheries Treaty,” *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, November 28, 1998.
20. *Ibid.*, 219.
21. Thomas U. Berger, *War, Guilt, and World Politics After World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): p. 219.
22. “Japan: teachers to call Senkaku and Takeshima islands Japanese territory,” *The Guardian*, January 28, 2014.
23. “PM Abe says it’s his ‘historic mission’ to change Japan’s Constitution,” *Japan Daily Press*, August 13, 2013.
24. *The Constitution of Japan*, http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Japan.
25. Takao Yamada, “Fighting back the push for Article 96 amendment,” *The Manichi Japan*, May 13, 2013.
26. “Japanese Public’s Mood Rebounding: Abe Highly Popular, China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan,” Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 11, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/11/japanese-publics-mood-rebounding-abe-strongly-popular/>.
27. SIPRI Military Expenditure Database 2013, <http://milexdata.sipri.org>; Isabel Reynolds, “Japan Defense Budget to Increase for First Time in 11 Years,” *Bloomberg News*, January 30, 2013; Liu Yunlong, “Japan increases military expansion for next year,” *Global Times*, December 26, 2013.
28. Michael Green and Nicholas Szechenyi, *Routledge Handbook of Japanese Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 334; Richard Sameuls, *Securing Japan: Tokyo’s Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007): p. 98.
29. Jiji Kyodo, “62% of South Koreans Regard Japan as a Military Threat: Think Tank Poll.” *The Japan Times Online*, October 30, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/30/national/62-of-south-koreans-regard-japan-as-a-military-threat-think-tank-poll/#.UqIvtJHf14S>.
30. Jiji Kyodo, “62% of South Koreans Regard Japan as a Military Threat.”
31. “Japanese Public’s Mood Rebounding: Abe Highly Popular, China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan,” Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 11, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/11/japanese-publics-mood-rebounding-abe-strongly-popular/>.
32. Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mark Manyin, William Cooper, Ian Rinehart, *United States Congressional Research Service. Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, May 1, 2013, pp. 5-6.
33. Reiji Yoshida, “Buoyant Abe’s true colors emerging,” *The Japan Times*, April 26, 2013.
34. Friedhoff, Karl, and Chungku Kang. *Rethinking Public Opinion on Korea-Japan Relations*. Issue Brief. The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, September 13, 2013, <http://mansfieldfdn.org/mfdn2011/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Asan-Public-Opinion-Issue-Brief-Rethinking-Public-Opinion-on-Korea-Japan-Relations.pdf>.
35. Thomas U. Berger, *War, Guilt, and World Politics After World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
36. “MOFA: Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-First Century,” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/korea/joint9810.html> (accessed on December 9, 2013).
37. Victor Cha, “Japan-Korea Relations” Comparative Connections, Vol. 1, No.1, <http://csis.org/publication/comparative-connections-v1-n1-japan-korea-relations-rooting-pragmatic>.
38. Victor Cha, “Japan-Korea Relations” Comparative Connections, Vol. 2, No. 3, <http://csis.org/programs/pacific-forum-csis/comparative-connections/vol-2-no-3-oct-2000>.
39. Cabinet Office, “Public Survey on Diplomacy,” December 14, 2009, quoted in June Park, “Korea-Japan Relations Move Toward Co-Evolution,” *Seri Quarterly*, January 2011.

40. "US-Korea Academic Symposium, 102; *Seri Quarterly*.
41. "Insight: Do South Koreans really hate Japan," *The Asahi Shimbun*, June 21, 2013.
42. Chung-in Moon and Seung-won Suh. "Security, Economy, and Identity Politics: Japan-South Korean Relations under the Kim Dae-Jung Government," *Korea Observer* Vol. 36, No. 4 (Winter 2005); pp. 561–602.
43. Jeong Yong-soo, "3-Wary Military Drill Would Be a First," *Joongang Ilbo*, May 9, 2012.
44. "Cabinet Approves Military Pact with Japan," *Chosun Ilbo*, June 28, 2012.
45. Berkshire J. Miller, "Is the China-South Korea Honeymoon Over?" *The Diplomat*, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/is-the-china-south-korea-honeymoon-over/>.
46. "Japanese Public's Mood Rebounding: Abe Highly Popular, China and South Korea Very Negative Toward Japan," Pew Research Global Attitudes Project, July 11, 2013, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/07/11/japanese-publics-mood-rebounding-abe-strongly-popular/>.
47. Seongho Sheen and Jina Kim, "What Went Wrong with the ROK-Japan Military Pact?" *Asia Pacific Bulletin Number 176*, July 31, 2012.
48. "Korea-Japan Economic Cooperation Amid a New East Asian Integration," p. 50.
49. Cited in June Park, "Korea-Japan Relations Moved Toward co-Evolution," *Seri Quarterly*, January 2011.
50. "U.S., Japan, and Republic of Korea Defense Trilateral Talks Joint Statement," U.S. Department of Defense, January 31, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=15796>.
51. "U.S., Japan hold joint naval drill," *Diplomacy*, October 10, 2013.
52. Vice Admiral Jung Ho-sub, "ROK-US-Japan Naval Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula Area: Prospects for Multilateral Security Cooperation," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Spring/Summer 2012), pp. 201-02, <http://www.icks.org/publication/pdf/2012-SPRING-SUMMER/9.pdf>.
53. Ibid, 193.
54. Amy Thernstrom, "Japanese ODA at 50: An Assessment," *Asia Program Special Report*, No. 128, February 2005.
55. Hyunghwan Joo, "Korea's ODA Policy: Past, Present and Future," Ministry of Strategy and Finance, November 2012, <http://devpolicy.anu.edu.au/pdf/2012/events/20121129-Koreas-ODA-Policy-Hyunghwan-Joo.pdf>.
56. "U.S.-Japan-Republic of Korea Trilateral Meeting," U.S. Department of State, July 1, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/07/211388.htm>; "Joint Statement of the Japan, Republic of Korea, United States Defense Ministerial Talks," U.S. Department of Defense, June 1, 2013, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=16054>.



The Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo Triangle: Terra-centric Nordpolitik vs. Oceanic Realpolitik

Sung-Yoon Lee

History has shown that a power vacuum on the Korean Peninsula is an invitation to aggression. The 60-year-period from the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95 to the end of the Korean War stands in marked contrast to the 60-year-period of de facto peace since 1953. In the former, four major wars enveloped Korea and its vicinity, including the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and the Second Sino-Japanese War. In the latter, the balance of power has been maintained primarily by virtue of the U.S.-ROK alliance, albeit at the cost of periodic lethal attacks and threats from North Korea. This chapter addresses the historical lessons of power shift in Northeast Asia for contemporary international politics and the strategic implications of South Korea's embrace of China and its seeming inability to overcome, in Korean parlance, "issues of the past" with Japan.

In the present security dynamics in Northeast Asia, which closely resemble the Cold War configuration of the U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance vs. the PRC-Russia-DPRK contingent, South Korea's recent tilt toward China and apathy for Japan come at considerable potential cost to its own long-term national interest as well as peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Its need to protect its vital economic relations with China and not jeopardize the overall relationship is evident; but its future security and commercial interests can best be advanced within the U.S.-led alliance structure—even with the bilateral historical issues between Seoul and Tokyo. The next major geopolitical shift or "change in the status quo" in the region will likely emanate from North Korea. China, which, arguably, nods in approval at North Korea's provocations while issuing occasional protestations, is poised to further bolster its significant leverage vis-à-vis Pyongyang and Seoul by exploiting its "North Korea card" in the long-term strategic competition against the United States. Beijing's seemingly unrelenting strategic support of Pyongyang has serious implications for North Korea's denuclearization and Korean unification, a reality that remains unaffected by the bonhomie overflowing from the Park Geun-hye-Xi Jinping summit on June 26, 2013. Unable to withstand the military threat coming from North Korea and China on its own, Japan has dramatically bolstered its U.S. alliance, as borne out in the October 3, 2013 meeting of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC). Is Seoul now the weakest link in this military standoff?

SOUTH KOREA'S NOT-SO-STRATEGIC TRIANGULAR RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND JAPAN

A snapshot of South Korea in early March 2014 may lend weight to the following unproven dictum (embraced by this particular author): Triangular relations among states may at times be as convoluted and toxic as those among individuals. According to a March 3 phone survey of 1000 South Koreans by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, asking respondents to rate the leaders of North Korea, Japan, the United States, China, and Russia, Kim Jong-un came out ahead of Abe Shinzo by a margin of 1.3 to 1.1 on the survey's zero-to-ten scale, zero being the least favorable.¹ Among the leaders of five nations, Barack Obama led with a score of 6.2, followed by Xi Jinping at just under 5, with Vladimir Putin next at 3.5, before popularity plummeted to the depths seen only for Kim and Abe.

That South Koreans overall favor Obama, the leader of the sole treaty ally, makes sense to observers. However, the notion that citizens of an open democracy (that faces an existential threat from the DPRK, an alternate Korean state that is ruled by a menacing dynastic

dictatorship) actually favor the leader of China (a single-party communist dictatorship that shares with the DPRK an alliance forged in blood)² over the leader of Japan (a wealthy democracy and neighbor to which it is strategically aligned by virtue of the U.S. alliance structure in the region) may seem counterintuitive.³ Even higher on the counterintuitive scale is preference for Kim Jong-un, a third-generation totalitarian leader who apparently was behind North Korea's torpedoing of a South Korean navy ship and the shelling of an inhabited island in 2010, and who brutally keeps tens of thousands of innocent North Koreans as political prisoners in gulags,⁴ over Japan's elected leader—Abe's occasional irritating remarks and deeds that seem to deny Japan's past criminal actions against Korea notwithstanding.

Opinion surveys are often unreliable as public opinion is fickle. Moreover, a nation's foreign policy, purportedly pursued in the national interest, may not correlate closely with the prevailing opinion of the day. Hence, South Koreans' apparent counterintuitive attitude toward the leaders of Japan, North Korea, and China may variously be considered a transient phenomenon, a manifestation of irrational ethno-nationalism, or not particularly germane to actual policy vis-à-vis these three powers. On the first proposition that the public's aversion to the Japanese leader, and by extension his government, may be a transitory phenomenon, in actuality, relations between Seoul and Tokyo have steadily declined since 2012. In particular, with Lee Myung-bak's visit in August 2012 to Dokdo (Takeshima), the bilateral relationship took a noticeable dip.⁵ Upon arrival, Lee, the first South Korean head of state to visit the territory, declared to the squadron of ROK police officers guarding the islets, "Dokdo is truly our territory, and it's worth defending with our lives,"⁶ deliberately fanning the flames of Korean nationalism.

Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko condemned Lee's visit as "completely unacceptable," pledging to take a "resolute stance on this matter,"⁷ while his foreign minister characterized the visit as "utterly unacceptable" and recalled his ambassador in Seoul.⁸ With both the return of Abe and the election of Park Geun-hye as president in December 2012, prospects for improved bilateral relations seemed to improve; however, the trajectory of decline in the bilateral relationship has only dipped more steeply since the leadership transitions took place in Seoul and Tokyo.⁹

On the second proposition that South Koreans' strong sentiments against Japan betray their "irrational" nature,¹⁰ it is clear that few actions are as effective in domestic politics as fanning the flames of anti-Japanese sentiment. After Shimane Prefecture in 2005 designated February 22 as "Takeshima Day,"¹¹ invoking the decision a hundred years earlier placing "Takeshima" (Dokdo) under it, Roh Moo-hyun responded a week later, on March 23, that South Korea was on the verge of a "tough diplomatic war with Japan."¹² Casting this decision as a portent of a greater threat, Roh wrote in a letter addressed to his fellow Koreans, "We cannot sit back and watch Japan justify its history of aggression and colonization and pursue hegemonic power again... The issue concerns the future of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia."¹³ Inflammatory rhetoric often begets even more inflammatory rhetoric, and Japan's *Nihon Keizai shimbun* questioned Roh's leadership, painting him as one "easily swayed" by public opinion, even going so far as to call his emotional language "just like North Korea."¹⁴ Democratic Party of Japan (DJP) lawmaker Nishimura Shingo went so far as to characterize Roh's remarks as tantamount to throwing the Korea-Japan relationship into a ditch¹⁵

Park Geun-hye, at the time chairwoman of the opposition Grand National Party, opined, “I cannot but wonder whether President Roh’s remarks are appropriate;”¹⁶ yet within days his approval rating jumped from 20 percent to 48 percent, with 89 percent of South Koreans supporting Roh’s feisty remarks.¹⁷ Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon stated that Roh’s statements represented the ROK government’s “strategic mind,” justifying it after the fact, for by all accounts the foreign ministry was kept in the dark about Roh’s “letter” until its contents became public. A precedent was set, potentially at the cost of the national interest. The lessons were clear: It paid to antagonize Japan when the South Korean public felt Japan had been the provocateur. What is more, bashing Japan has the added advantage of winning over North Korea,¹⁸ which is an attractive proposition to any elected South Korean leader intent on improving ties with Pyongyang and chalking up a North Korea legacy.

On the third proposition, whether the public’s distaste for Abe impinges on actual ROK foreign policy, it is apparent that Park Geun-hye came into office with predetermined views not only on Abe and South Korea’s bilateral relations with Japan but also on Xi Jinping and Seoul’s bilateral relations with Beijing. China’s ascendance in world affairs over the past decade has been all the more pronounced in the international politics of the Korean Peninsula and the region as a whole.¹⁹ Whereas it exercised no real influence over the course of events during the first North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 1990s, since the second nuclear crisis flared up in October 2002, Beijing has assumed a central role, both as the key determinant in negotiations and as the key arbiter of any meaningful punishment to be meted out against North Korea for its continued provocations. More than in any other period since its defeat in the Sino-Japanese War and its consequent loss of influence, China enjoys great sway over the future course of the peninsula. Its economic influence is irreplaceable to Pyongyang, and it is a factor that Seoul is extremely reluctant to defy.²⁰

Park has placed great importance on continuing to strengthen bilateral relations with China. Barely a month after her election victory on December 19, 2012, she broke with tradition and dispatched her first special envoys abroad to Beijing instead of Washington.²¹ Sequencing of summit meetings with leaders of key neighboring states is not without symbolism. What is more telling than the first destination for her special envoys was that she chose not to send any envoy to Tokyo—although she did receive an envoy representing Abe in early January.²²

When Park paid a state visit to China from June 27 to 30, she was given, as the joint statement published by Xinhua stated, “a grand welcome and warm hospitality by the Chinese Government and people.”²³ But buried underneath the diplomatic language of “mutual respect” and in spite of substantive “specific action plans” pledging to “open a hot line between the foreign ministers” and establish a “Sino-ROK Joint Committee for People-to-People Exchanges,” was a classic formulation of Chinese ambidexterity:

The ROK side expressed worry at the DPRK’s continued nuclear testing, and explicitly stated that it will never recognize the DPRK’s possession of nukes in any circumstance. The two sides unanimously hold the view that nuclear weapon development seriously threatens peace and stability in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula, and the world. The two sides affirm that achieving *denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* [emphasis added] and maintaining peace and stability there is in the common interest of all parties, and they unanimously agree to work for this.²⁴

The above passage is noteworthy for the conspicuous absence of Chinese subject-object agreement. The first sentence omits altogether China's stance on North Korea's continued nuclear testing and its ever-growing nuclear arsenal. The second sentence fails to identify just whose nuclear weapons development "the two sides" are addressing; that is, whether or not the extended nuclear deterrence that the United States provides the ROK is also taken into account in this indictment. Just whom the Chinese have in mind as the greatest threat to the region and the world with its "nuclear weapons development," whether it is tiny North Korea or the gargantuan United States, is left unsaid. Above all, the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," a phrase that made its official international debut in the September 19, 2005 joint statement of the Six-Party Talks, means, in both North Korean and Chinese parlance, not only a nuclear-free DPRK, but more pointedly, the abrogation of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the dislodging of the U.S. nuclear umbrella from the ROK.²⁵ In issuing the above words in its joint statement, China maintained its strategic ambiguity on North Korea's nuclear weapons programs and the denuclearization of North Korea. The real question here is to what extent the ROK was aware of this duplicity and went along with it—or whether Park actually came away from the summit believing that Xi was ingenuous in staunchly opposing North Korea's nuclear weapons, as the above passage might, at first glance, suggest. By the ROK foreign ministry's self-congratulatory assessment of Park's visit as having opened a "new era in Korea-China ties," and in dubbing the summit a "trip of heart and trust," coming just two days after the visit, one may be forgiven for not being able to take a firm position on this question.

Furthermore, during the visit Park purportedly asked Xi to honor a Korean nationalist, Ahn Jung-geun, who shot to death Ito Hirobumi, a prominent Japanese leader, at a rail station in Harbin on October 26, 1909, by building a statue of Ahn at the station.²⁶ China not only obliged, but went considerably further and built a small-but-protective memorial hall over Ahn's statue, which opened on January 19, 2014. Japan condemned the memorial, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga Yoshihide claiming that South Korea and China were "banding together." Even before the opening of the memorial, Suga in November 2013 had called Ahn a "criminal," while warning against the tacit Sino-South Korean front against Japan, remarking that the construction of the memorial was "not helpful for Japan-South Korea relations."²⁷ Suga also unintentionally baited South Korea and China to strike back with the following provocative statement: "We recognize Ahn Jung-Geun as a terrorist who was sentenced to death for killing our country's first prime minister."²⁸

Japan's labeling of Ahn, who is universally respected in South Korea, as a "terrorist" predictably prompted a prompt reply. Hong Moon-jong, secretary-general of the governing party retorted, "If Ahn Jung-geun was a terrorist, then Japan was a terrorist state for having mercilessly invaded and plundered countries around it," while Cho Tae-yong, foreign ministry spokesperson, called Suga's remarks "ignorant and anti-historical," adding that he could "not repress his astonishment."²⁹ Two days later, China entered the fray. Foreign ministry spokesperson Qin Gang, when asked to address the question of Ahn as a "terrorist," replied: "Ahn Jung-geun is, in history, an upholder of justice who fought against Japan's aggression. If Ahn Jung-geun were a 'terrorist,' what about the 14 Class A war criminals of WWII honored in the Yasukuni Shrine? If the establishment of the Ahn Jung-geun Memorial Hall were 'a tribute to the terrorist,' what about the Japanese leader's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine where Class A war criminals are enshrined?"³⁰

Park's request to Xi to build a memorial in Ahn Jung-geun's honor, in both principle and historical viewpoint, may be irrefragable. But that the overture was made by the head of state of the Republic of Korea to the head of state of the People's Republic of China unnecessarily created the impression in Japan that the two were working in concert against Japan.³¹ From South Korea's perspective, the request would best have come from a lower-level official instead of Park herself, for there will likely come a day when the convoluted and toxic nature of the triangular relations among Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing will prompt Park to seek Japan's support in advancing South Korea's interests vis-à-vis China. South Korea and China may be aligned by the common history of victimization by imperial Japan, but the formal task of remembrance, commemoration, and rectification of history, especially international history, is best left to historians and academics instead of heads of state.

SOUTH KOREA'S PROPENSITY TO TILT TOWARD CHINA

Historically, Korea's most pressing need to find security within the context of trilateral relations with China and Japan came in a war, which tore Korean lives apart and devastated the Korean land. It touched the lives of the vast majority of Koreans. It was a war that saw Chinese troops cross the Yalu River and dramatically alter the fortunes on the battlefield, forcing their foes to remain largely confined to the southern half of the peninsula. At its end, all the major belligerents claimed victory, while no doubt remained as to who were its greatest victims. A major international war in Northeast Asia that shook the status quo in the region and presaged the contrasting vicissitudes of national fortune among the combatants, it was the *Imjin Waeran* of 1592-98, referred to in English as "Hideoyoshi's invasions"—the most spectacular manifestation of Korea-China-Japan triangular tensions in history.³²

The parallels between this war and the Korean War of 1950-53 are striking. Although the two tragic events stand more than 350 years apart, from a Korean perspective, commonalities immediately draw attention: the leadership's vulnerability, ineptitude, and ignorance of the strategic environment in the lead-up to the war; its helplessness in the prosecution of the war and ceasefire negotiations; and new security challenges that enveloped the Korean Peninsula in the postwar era. Following Japan's invasions in the 1590s, Joseon Korea fell into a long period of decline, closing itself off for the next 300 years from foreign intercourse except with China and intermittent contact with Japan. The implications of this mindset and self-seclusion would be painfully felt in the early twentieth century, as Korea, unable to cope with the drastically different international order into which it was pulled, was colonized by Japan.

Even in the near term, the Korean monarchy, coming out of the *Imjin War*, found itself caught between a declining Ming China, to which it owed allegiance and debt,³³ and a new rising power in Manchuria that the Confucian Korean leadership regarded as barbarian. King Injo would "misread" the strategic environment and side with the Ming, while alienating the Manchus. The result was two devastating and humiliating Manchu invasions of Korea, the first in 1627 and the second in 1636. The latter Manchu campaign, in particular, has been dramatized into a morality play, a best-selling two-volume history by Han Myonggi. Its running theme is the critical need for South Korea today to choose sides wisely in the so-called "G-2 era."³⁴ The main message is that South Korea today is caught up in a shift in

the balance of power in the region and the world, with a rapidly rising China and a declining United States much in the same manner as the scene 400 years ago with the revisionist Manchus on the ascendance and the status quo power Ming in decline.

For North Korea, in the aftermath of the Korean War, its maritime neighbors, South Korea and Japan, and the world beyond the Pacific Ocean, effectively became a dead end. Both Joseon Korea in the seventeenth century and North Korea in the twentieth century turned inward, away from the ocean, and became the quintessential quasi-isolated continental state. The ramifications of such a terra-centric policy on the respective mentalities of the Korean leadership and conditions of life, respectively, of the people of Joseon and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, hardly require elaboration.

In contrast, South Korea, coming out of the Korean War, pursued a dramatically new course. Heavily depending on its patron the United States, it oriented itself toward the Pacific and the world beyond for the first time in Korean history. Its rise to maritime prominence as a major trading nation of the world captures the essence of the South Korean state today: a global leader in shipping, electronics, and a thriving democracy. Yet, as much as South Korea has benefitted from its dependent relationship with the United States and as much debt as it owes, the rapid rise of China over the past two decades has engendered an atavistic nostalgia for China in the traditional vassal state, a romantic attachment rooted in an abstract sense of cultural debt that Korea owes—even going back to Ming China's deliverance of Joseon. South Koreans largely remain unencumbered by the ghosts of history in having fought against the PRC in the Korean War or, in a marked contrast to complex feelings toward the United States, considerations of “flunkeyism” when viewing China today. “Flunkeyism” is a term often used by North Korea to deride South Koreans disposed toward “serving the great” (*sadaeju-ui*: 事大主意), which, in plain language, means being servile to the United States. For example, an article in the *Rodong Sinmun* last October charged, “Flunkeyism and dependence on foreign forces are an inveterate bad habit of the south [*sic*] Korean ruling quarters.”³⁵

At the heart of the North's derision lies Korean ethnic nationalism, in particular, determination to be self-reliant and independent of external powers in shaping the future of the ethnic Korean nation.³⁶ Ethnic nationalism (*minjokjuui*: 民族主義) is hardly native or exclusive to Korea. However, in the Korean context, and particularly in the common lexical configuration *uri minkokgiri* (“by the Korean ethnic nation ourselves”), the term has an unmistakable connotation of Korean exceptionalism and exclusivity. This phrase is featured in the first article of the South-North Joint Declaration signed by Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il at the 2000 Pyongyang summit signifying the spirit and method by which the Koreans will determine their future. The same Korean phrase transliterated slightly differently, *uri minzokkiri*, is the official name of a website run by the Committee for the Peaceful Unification of the Fatherland, a major arm of the North Korean propaganda machinery founded in 1961 under the auspices of the Workers' Party of Korea. Unmistakably, national identity politics resonate in both the North and the South, and in the latter, with particular force in the context of South Korea's asymmetrical relationship with the United States. Since Korea's liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945, the founding of the Republic of Korea in 1948, through America's deliverance of the ROK in the Korean War, to Seoul's ongoing dependent relationship with Washington today, ethnic nationalism has been a psychic force in South Korea's relationship with the United States.³⁷

In contrast to complex attitudes bordering on an inferiority complex toward Japan and the United States, which occasionally manifest themselves in large-scale, organized protests against these countries, contemporary attitudes toward China are characterized by relatively high tolerance for Chinese misdeeds against Korea—which suggests a misguided shade of superiority complex. For example, in April 2008, the Olympic torch relay through Seoul, on its way to the Summer Olympics in Beijing, triggered a violent clash between thousands of Chinese nationals and anti-Beijing South Korean and Tibetan human rights activists. In the melee, hundreds of Chinese, some armed with poles and pipes, were seen attacking Tibetans and their South Korean supporters, not to mention journalists and the South Korean riot police. Several chased the police into the lobby of the Seoul Plaza Hotel, an upscale hotel just across the street from City Hall, and repeatedly thrust their weapons at the police. This unusual infringement on South Korean sovereignty initially did trigger indignation and anti-Chinese commentary in the South Korean media and chat rooms.³⁸ But the anger and animosity were short-lived. The spectacle of thousands of Chinese nationals assaulting South Korean citizens, including the national police, in the South Korean capital in broad daylight certainly did not lead to any kind of organized political protest in front of the PRC embassy in Seoul or sustained civic movement against the Chinese government. Such apparent collective equanimity stands in contrast to the outpouring of indignation and massive demonstration at a far less serious contemporaneous case of perceived foreign infringement—that from the United States. South Korea’s resumption of the import of U.S. beef triggered widespread, unfounded fears of debilitating health implications from consuming U.S. beef, and widespread anger at both Seoul and Washington for colluding in this racket. Anger and ambivalence toward the United States unleashed massive protests that virtually shut down downtown Seoul for over two months,³⁹ while occasional news reports on questionable Chinese-produced foods—ranging from fake to tainted to harmful—entering the South Korean market have produced to date no such social movement. Even China’s provocative announcement on November 23, 2013, of an East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), which impinges on South Korean jurisdiction, triggered no serious anti-Chinese rhetoric or protests, whereas such a declaration by Japan would most likely have resulted in a very different reaction in South Korea.

Were the public’s acute sensitivity to perceived U.S. or Japanese infringement and relative composure in the face of actual Chinese infringement not reflected in South Korea’s foreign policy, such phenomena may not merit attention in the context of South Korea’s international relations. However, South Korea’s latent attachment to China over the United States came close to becoming official policy, when President Roh, during a speech at the air force academy in February 2005 declared that South Korea would assume the role of “balancer” in Northeast Asia. Roh’s statement variously suggested an intermediary role for South Korea in the region, aligning with China against Japan, and checking U.S. strategic policy in the region by inching away from Washington and closer to Beijing. These concerns were confirmed in subsequent months by the Roh government’s repeated calls for an “independent military,” which would not be drawn into a conflict started by the United States, and decrease in military exchanges with Japan—as well as Roh’s “diplomatic war” statement in March—, while elevating military ties with China and vetoing even discussions with the United States of joint contingency operations in North Korea in the event of a change in the status quo in the North.⁴⁰ Roh’s “balancer” statement immediately drew criticism from the main opposition

party, with party leader Park Geun-hye assailing Roh's notion of taking a neutral, balancing role in the region while maintaining a strong alliance with the United States. "The role of a balancer is possible only when we have the power and capability, and other countries recognize us as a balancer. But China, Japan, Russia and even North Korea do not recognize us as a balancer," Park said in a speech at the National Assembly. She went on to warn: "If we break away from the alliance with the United States and isolate ourselves diplomatically, it will do no good for our national interest."⁴¹ Criticism of Roh was not confined to his opposition party. Even Stephen Bosworth, former U.S. ambassador to South Korea and one not known for his immoderate views or undiplomatic remarks, warned that any attempt by South Korea to play the role of the "balancer" in the region would be to "punch above its weight class" and that if South Korea were "bent on pursuing that role," one could not rule out the possibility of "damaging the alliance."⁴²

Needless to say, Park has not shown any inclination to align her nation with China to the detriment of the alliance with the United States. Park's bona fide pro-U.S. stance has never come into question, and it is all but an open secret that Washington was relieved and pleased by Park's election in December 2012. Neither has she made any remarks such as "What's wrong with being anti-American?" as Roh did during his bid for the presidency in 2002,⁴³ or stir up controversy during her visit to China as Roh did, upon being queried on the Chinese figures he most respects during a visit to China in 2003, "Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping."⁴⁴ It is also exceedingly unlikely that any former high-ranking U.S. official ever will come to call Park "anti-American" and "probably a little crazy," as former Defense Secretary Robert Gates did Roh in his memoir.⁴⁵ Therefore, the controversies and strains in the ROK-U.S. bilateral relationship may be said to be confined to the Roh presidency. At the same time, the structural imperatives of the triangular relations among South Korea, Japan, and China favor China, at a cost to the U.S.-led trilateral quasi-alliance among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo, whenever friction between Seoul and Tokyo comes to the fore. As much as the Obama administration may sympathize with South Korea's indignation at the Abe administration for its frequent undiplomatic remarks and, in particular, Abe's visit to the Yasukuni Shrine last December, it can only regard a South Korea that openly turns its back on Japan as a strategic liability, for any fissure among the three nations can only favor China's strategic interests. Furthermore, there is no question that since the Park-Xi summit, South Korea has far more actively pursued diplomacy with China than with Japan, in variety and degree, on issues ranging from negotiations on a free trade agreement, increased cooperation on international security issues, and cultural, humanities, and technological exchange programs. In particular, ROK national security chief Kim Jang-soo and Chinese State Counselor Yang Jiechi met in Seoul in mid-November and agreed to open strategic dialogue channels on diplomacy and security policies governing both countries. Meanwhile, South Korea and Japan held all of three open meetings between July and December, two of which addressed free trade agreement issues in a trilateral setting involving China.⁴⁶

Since the early 1950s, the United States has intermittently played the role of intermediary between South Korea and Japan. The exigencies of the Korean War created a pressing need for it to seek to improve relations between Seoul and Tokyo. Washington arranged for the first bilateral meeting between the two nations during the war, in October 1951, in Tokyo. At the outset, the Korean delegate, Kim Young-shik, called for an apology from Japan

for its invasion and colonial rule of Korea. The meeting fell apart in acrimony.⁴⁷ In 1953, the United States arranged for another meeting between the two sides in Tokyo. Kubota Kanichiro, the Japanese delegate, told the Korean delegation that the United States violated international law in liberating Korea and establishing the ROK prior to concluding a peace treaty with Japan, in redistributing Japanese-held Korean properties to Koreans, and in repatriating Japanese nationals from Korea. Kubota also insisted that Koreans should be grateful for all the improvements made by Japan during the occupation of Korea, and that “Japan’s compulsory occupation of Korea...was beneficial to the Korean people.” Kubota also said the South Koreans were “servile to the powerful and high-handed to the weak,” adding that “efforts should be started to bring down” the South Korean administration of Syngman Rhee.⁴⁸ Kubota’s remarks reflected sentiments stated earlier by a member of the Diet, that “we refuse to stand in silence watching...Koreans...swagging about as if they were nationals of victorious nations...it is most deplorable that those who lived under our law and order until the last moment of the surrender should suddenly alter their attitude to act like conquerors.”⁴⁹ No further meetings between Seoul and Tokyo took place until 1958.

The different strategic implications between South Korea’s strained relationship with Japan during the Cold War and today are apparent. In the former period, South Korea not only did not have diplomatic relations with China, but was, in view of its poverty and corresponding international standing, nothing resembling the key regional economic player that it is today. Until the 1980s, when the Japanese textbooks issue became a thorn in Sino-Japanese and South Korean-Japanese relations, South Korea’s apathy or even animosity toward Japan offered little strategic value to China, since Beijing’s leverage vis-à-vis Seoul was limited. China’s primary concern in its relationship with both South Korea and Japan for most of the Cold War era was the presence of U.S. troops in these countries. However, since the end of the Cold War and the normalization of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China in 1992, China has found a new economic means of pressuring South Korea, and, in recent years, has grown increasingly bold in sending that admonitory message to Seoul. For example, an editorial in the *Global Times* in July 2012 warned Seoul:

South Korea benefits from Chinese prosperity, and a rational South Korea should continue to play the role of a balancer in Northeast Asia. A military alliance between South Korea and Japan poses a potential threat to China. As a result, China should firmly oppose the move and try to persuade South Korea not to further its military alliance with Japan and the U.S.

Ahead of Obama’s visit to Japan and South Korea in late April, the United States has in recent months exhorted its two allies in Northeast Asia to improve relations and not exacerbate the situation.⁵¹ In fact, Park and Abe held their first formal talks in a trilateral setting with Obama during the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague in late March.⁵² This marked the first formal meeting between the leaders of South Korea and Japan since the trilateral meeting among Lee Myung-bak, Noda, and Hu Jintao in Beijing on May 14, 2012, which ended an unusually long lull in bilateral summit diplomacy between Seoul and Tokyo.

The triangular dynamics among South Korea, Japan, and China today favor China, principally due to the occasional fissure in the bilateral relationship between Seoul and Tokyo and Seoul’s propensity to hedge in its relationship with China and the United States,

whether on security issues like joining the U.S.-led missile defense system or on economic issues like joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).⁵³ The trilateral relations among the three nations today resemble less an equilateral or even an isosceles triangle, with equal distance maintained between Beijing and Seoul and between Beijing and Tokyo. Rather, they resemble more a scalene triangle with a fluctuating, but shorter, distance maintained between Beijing and Seoul than between Beijing and Tokyo.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SEOUL-BEIJING-TOKYO TRIANGLE AND REGIONAL SECURITY

The trilateral relations among South Korea, China, and Japan cannot be properly considered outside the context of the long-term strategic competition between the United States and China and the growing ballistic missile and nuclear threat posed by North Korea. The United States, as the preeminent military power in the world, is unlikely to compromise its strategic goals of containing China and North Korea, the principal source of threat in Northeast Asia. To what extent its two allies in the region, Japan and South Korea, support U.S. policy objectives, will determine the nature of the Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo triangle in the near term.

On October 3, 2013, Secretary of State John Kerry and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel laid a wreath at Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery in Tokyo and paid their respects to unidentified Japanese war dead from the Pacific War. It was the first time that two U.S. cabinet ministers paid such homage in the postwar era as well as in the history of U.S.-Japan relations. This remarkable show of solidarity and resolve not to let “historical issues” mar the bilateral relationship would not have been possible without the mutual trust and genuine friendship built over the past 68 years on the shared values of democracy, the rule of law, free and open markets, and respect for human rights. This symbolic act was a statement that the United States recognized Japan as a global political power and a stalwart partner in facing the “complex regional security environment,” as mentioned in the meeting of the U.S.-Japan SCC in Tokyo on the same day. In simple terms, this environment means the challenges and threats posed by the “blood alliance” between China and North Korea.

The United States also expressed its support for Japan’s decision to establish its own National Security Council and contribute more proactively to maintaining both regional and global peace and security, welcoming Japan’s decision to review its legal procedures in order to exercise collective self-defense. In particular, the United States and Japan, for the sake of a “more robust Alliance and greater shared responsibilities,” decided to “expand security and defense cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond” by revising the 1997 Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation by the end of 2014.⁵⁴ This is a noteworthy development as it presumes Japan’s collective self-defense as a *fait accompli* and thereby implies Japan’s considerably expanded global security role in the future. This newly elevated alliance also means U.S. support for Japan’s right to missile interception. The two sides agreed to establish “a more interoperable and flexible force posture that enables side-by-side and agile contingency response” in order to counter challenges against security and international norms.

On his way to Japan, Hagel paid a visit to South Korea and met with Park. The meeting, according to *The New York Times*, came as “something of a shock.”⁵⁵ Instead of reviewing and confirming ways to jointly meet the security challenge from China and North Korea, Park “delivered a lecture about Japan’s ‘total absence of sincerity’ over the suffering that imperial Japan caused Korea in the last century and finished with a request of her own: that Washington force Tokyo to behave.”⁵⁶ As with Xi on the Ahn Jung-geun memorial, Park, in trying to rectify her nation’s history with Japan by appealing to a foreign statesman, was acting like an historian instead of a president. The contrast between Japan and South Korea must have been stark for the U.S. government. The United States and Japan fought a vicious war against each other, but the two nations do not preoccupy themselves with or bicker over “events of the past.” Instead, the two allies focus on meeting the security threat from the region, although neither faces a direct existential threat from either China or North Korea.

South Korea, on the other hand, does face a direct, if not an imminent, existential threat from North Korea, which China supports. Despite the recent thaw in inter-Korean relations, marked by the first vice-ministerial level talks between the two Koreas since 2007, which led to temporary reunion meetings between separated families, North Korea is bound to provoke the South again with a weapons test or even a direct, if not limited, attack. Since Kim Jong-un’s dramatic purge of his uncle, Jang Song-taek, in December 2013, the impression has spread in Seoul that the Kim regime may be unstable due to political intrigues compounded by internal stresses, and, as a result, the North is reaching out to the South for economic aid. This view does not fully take into consideration that demonstrative punishment of alleged offenders, along with their family and minions, has remained the key instrument of regime preservation throughout the state’s existence. Violent and pervasive purges were critical during the formative years under Kim Il-sung, following the disastrous outcome of the greatest gamble by the dynasty, the Korean War.⁵⁷ Likewise, when Kim Jong-il was attempting to consolidate his rule in the mid-1990s he sent tremors through the military establishment by executing hundreds of people suspected of planning a coup within the Sixth Army Corps.⁵⁸

The latest purge in North Korea may not be a harbinger of any meaningful change for the better in that country. The drama surrounding Jang’s swift fall has triggered widespread speculation, ranging from instability and imminent coup, to popular uprising. Beyond doubt, the prolonged decay of the North Korean system, accentuated by a catastrophic famine in the mid- to late-1990s, has thoroughly disillusioned portions of the elite with their political system. But there is no reliable indication that the Kim regime is on the brink of a crisis or unable to govern. North Korea will soon enough return to its strategy of periodic provocations, and South Korea will once again see that China, despite its thinly veiled disdain for the leadership in Pyongyang, will go to extremes to defend it. China will refrain from taking action that may destabilize the Kim regime, despite signing onto UN Security Council resolutions purporting to punish Pyongyang.

South Korea should fully be aware that the recent “peace offensive” by Pyongyang is more likely a smokescreen before a provocation than a genuine overture seeking reconciliation. All states, to varying degree, practice strategic deception—or sending out mixed signals in order to mislead or deceive one’s adversary. North Korea has taken this to a lethal level. Blatant deception on the eve of a provocative act has been its mode of operation since at least 1950.

Just days before invading South Korea in June 1950, North Korea reached out to the South for high-level talks on unification. Kim Il-sung started the Korean War in order to complete the North Korean revolution, which remains the highest goal of the North Korean state today. It was a high-risk gamble, the biggest gamble by the Kim dynasty to date. In short, Kim needed to deceive his enemy with a smokescreen before he attacked.

On the eve of detonating a bomb at the Martyrs' Mausoleum in Rangoon, Burma on October 9, 1983, targeting President Chun Doo-hwan, North Korea asked China's help in conveying that it sought direct bilateral talks with the Reagan administration. Beijing gladly obliged, and the next day the bomb went off, killing 17 South Korean officials and four Burmese nationals. This was an important operation for Pyongyang, because the previous year Kim Il-sung had officially anointed his son, Jong-un, heir. The untested heir apparent needed to prove his military mettle against the despised South Korean head of state. Hence, the smokescreen was a crucial tactic in advancing Pyongyang's objectives.

On March 3, 2010, North Korea sought military talks with the South. On March 26, it torpedoed the *Cheonan*. On October 30 of that year, the two Koreas held their last family reunion meetings. On November 11, the North called for talks on Mt. Kumgang. On November 23, it shelled a South Korean island, killing four South Korean nationals. This was the crucial year for Kim Jong-un coming out, which he did by name in late September and, in person, standing next to his father on the reviewing stand at a military parade on October 10, Party Founding Day. The inexperienced heir, compelled to prove his military mettle, resorted to strategic deception before attacking the South in March and November of that year.

Kim Jong-un used the same tactic on the eve of his long-range missile test on December 12, 2012. On December 8, the North publicly extended its timeline to late-December for launching, as it said, a satellite into space. This led many North Korea watchers to speculate that it may be having second thoughts in the face of Chinese pressure. On December 10, the North stated that it was having "technical difficulties," prompting observers to assume that it was abandoning the planned launch. In this way, it caught many officials in Washington off-guard when it went ahead with the launch on the morning of December 12, exactly one week before the South Korean presidential election—a perfect window of opportunity to remind the South Korean public that it needs to be appeased.

The North's strategic objectives remain the same. Kim Jong-un may appreciate food, fertilizer, and other blandishments from the South, but he can live without them. Yet, what he does need is to raise the stakes yet again by reminding his neighbors that North Korea is a political factor with which they need to deal. Translated into plain language, that means provoke with another weapons test so that Kim's bigger neighbors will, after a decent interval following condemnatory pronouncements, go into damage-control mode and appease Pyongyang once again with negotiations and tacit acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear state.

In short, as the North has little to lose in canceling all talks and reverting to its strategy of provocations and limited attacks, it likely will do that again soon. When that time comes, Japan will reaffirm its alliance with the United States and strengthen its defense posture against North Korea. China will express its displeasure at Pyongyang in meaningless

diplomatic language such as “unacceptable” and “provocative,” while in actuality increasing aid to North Korea as it did in the aftermath of each of Pyongyang’s three nuclear tests to date. South Korea, in that fleeting moment of clarity, will see that Japan is actually a tacit ally and China an unstated foe.

ENDNOTES

1. Alastair Gale, “In Seoul, Kim Jong Un Preferred to Shinzo Abe,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 4, 2014.
2. See the “Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance Between the People’s Republic of China and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea,” signed on July 11, 1961, in particular, Article II, which calls on both contracting parties to render immediate “military and other assistance by all means” in the event the other party is subjected to an “armed attack by any state or several states jointly.” China_DPRK.htm, http://www.marxists.org/subject/china/documents/china_dprk.htm (accessed Mar. 9, 2014). See also Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
3. For generous praise of Japan’s postwar success: “Japanese decisions have been the most farsighted and intelligent of any major nation of the postwar era even while the Japanese leaders have acted with the understated, anonymous style characteristic of their culture,” see Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 324. For an analysis of the alliance structure, see Victor D. Cha, *Alliance Despite Antagonism: The U.S.-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). While this chapter does not cast its arguments within any framework of international relations theory, its main approach is grounded in realism, according to which, as Cha notes on p.2, “states with common allies and common enemies should be friendly.”
4. See “Kim Jong-un ‘Masterminded Attacks on S. Korea,’” *Chosun Ilbo*, August 3, 2011, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/08/03/2011080300499.html (accessed March 9, 2014). For a detailed account of the horrific conditions in the political prisoner concentration camps, see United Nations Human Rights Council, “Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea—A/HRC/25/CRP.1,” 208-245, released on February 17, 2014, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/CoIDPRK/Pages/ReportoftheCommissionofInquiryDPRK.aspx> (accessed March 9, 2014). For a concise account of the prison camps, see Joshua Stanton and Sung-Yoon Lee, “World must awaken to North Korea’s camps of horror,” CNN.com, February 17, 2014 (updated), <http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/07/opinion/lee-stanton-north-korea/> (accessed March 9, 2014).
5. Takeshi Kamiya and Daisuke Ikuta, “Lee’s Takeshima trip likely to undo Japan-South Korea progress,” *The Asahi Shimbun*, August 11, 2012, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201208110060 (accessed March 9, 2014).
6. Choe Sang-Hun, *The New York Times*, August 10, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/11/world/asia/south-koreans-visit-to-disputed-islets-angers-japan.html?_r=0 (accessed March 9, 2014).
7. Mariko Oi, “South Korea’s Lee Myung-bak visits disputed islands,” BBC News, August 10, 2012, at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-19204852> (accessed March 9, 2014).
8. “Why Japan is angry over South Korea’s visit to an island,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 2014, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-Pacific/2012/0810/Why-Japan-is-angry-over-South-Korea-s-visit-to-an-island> (accessed March 9, 2014).
9. In early March 2014 Japanese officials spoke of “reexamining” the Kono Statement, and Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se took the issue to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. See Sarah Kim, “Japan hedges on comfort women,” *JoongAng Daily*, March 8, 2014, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2986030> (accessed March 9, 2014).
10. A senior Japanese policymaker told the author in December 2013: “It’s actually much easier to deal with the Chinese than the South Koreans, because at least the Chinese are rational.”

11. See Martin Faiola, "Island Comes Between South Korea and Japan," *The Washington Post*, March 17, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A41813-2005Mar16.html> (accessed March 9, 2014).
12. Cho Bok-rae, "Roh Daetongryeong Ilbon jeongbu-ae danhohui sijeong yogu halgeot" [Roh to make firm demand of Japan to rescind action], *Yonhap News*, March 23, 2005, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=104&oid=001&aid=0000951221> (accessed March 17, 2014).
13. Min Seong-jae, "Roh sees 'diplomatic war' with Japan," World Security Network, March 24, 2005.
14. *Chosun Ilbo*, March 24, 2005.
15. "Clouds over Korea-Japan relations after Roh message," *The Korea Herald*, March 2, 2005, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=108&oid=044&id=0000049934> (accessed March 17, 2014).
16. Park Song-wu, "GNP Hits Roh's Diplomacy on Japan," *Korea Times*, March 24, 2005, <http://www.koreatimes.com/article/235225> (accessed March 17, 2014).
17. Park Yong-bae, "35% Jijiui Uimi" [The meaning of 35% approval rating], *Jugan Hankook* [The Hankook Weekly], November 21, 2005, <http://weekly.hankooki.com/lpage/column/200511/wk2005112111172037660.htm#> (accessed March 17, 2005).
18. "Japan's Ambition to Grab Tok Islet Denounced in S. Korea," Korean Central News Agency, March 23, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2005/200503/news03/23.htm#7> (accessed March 17, 2014). The Korean Central News Agency followed up in subsequent days with denunciatory reports of its own: See "KCNA on Japan's Reckless Moves for Territorial Expansion," March 24, 2005; "Japan's Claim to Tok Islet Flayed," March 26, 2005; and "Japan's Claim to Tok Islet Slammed," March 29, 2005.
19. An editorial titled "Asia's Trilateral Trade Talks," in *The New York Times*, March 6, 2014, in calling for greater cooperation among China, Japan, and South Korea, if only for the sake of economic interests governing the trilateral relations, states: "As for China, its rise is the world's big story. Under Mr. Xi's leadership, China is now inclined to demand special privileges, believing that it should be granted more deference by its neighbors. But it behooves Beijing's leaders to understand that China's expanding economic and military power cannot be sustained without deep engagement with the interdependent global economy." <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/opinion/asias-trilateral-trade-talks.html> (Accessed May 13, 2014).
20. Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, "China-North Korea Relations," Congressional Research Service, December 28, 2010, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41043.pdf> (accessed March 18, 2014). For a short, recent summation of the bilateral relationship, see Jayshree Bajoria and Beina Xu, "The China-North Korea Relationship," Council on Foreign Relations, February 18, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/china/china-north-korea-relationship/p11097> (accessed March 18, 2014). For overall China-South Korea relations, see Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), in particular pp. 1-10. Chung argues, on p. 11, "South Korea faces a strategic conundrum concerning how it can maintain amicable relationships with both the United States and China, given that the former has no control whatsoever over the relationship between the latter two and that Sino-American relations possess many sources of serious friction."
21. See Kim Oi-hyun, "Park Geun-hye will send first special envoys to China," *The Hankyoreh* January 17, 2013, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/570129.html (accessed February 9, 2014).
22. Choe Sang-Hun, "Japanese Envoy Tries to Mend Ties with South Korea," *The New York Times*, January 4, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/05/world/asia/japanese-envoy-tries-to-mend-ties-with-south-korea.html?_r=0 (accessed February 9, 2014).
23. See "China-South Korea issue joint statement on regional issues, 27 June 13," BBC Monitoring Newsfile (accessed March 9, 2014).
24. "China-South Korea issue joint statement on regional issues, 27 June 13."

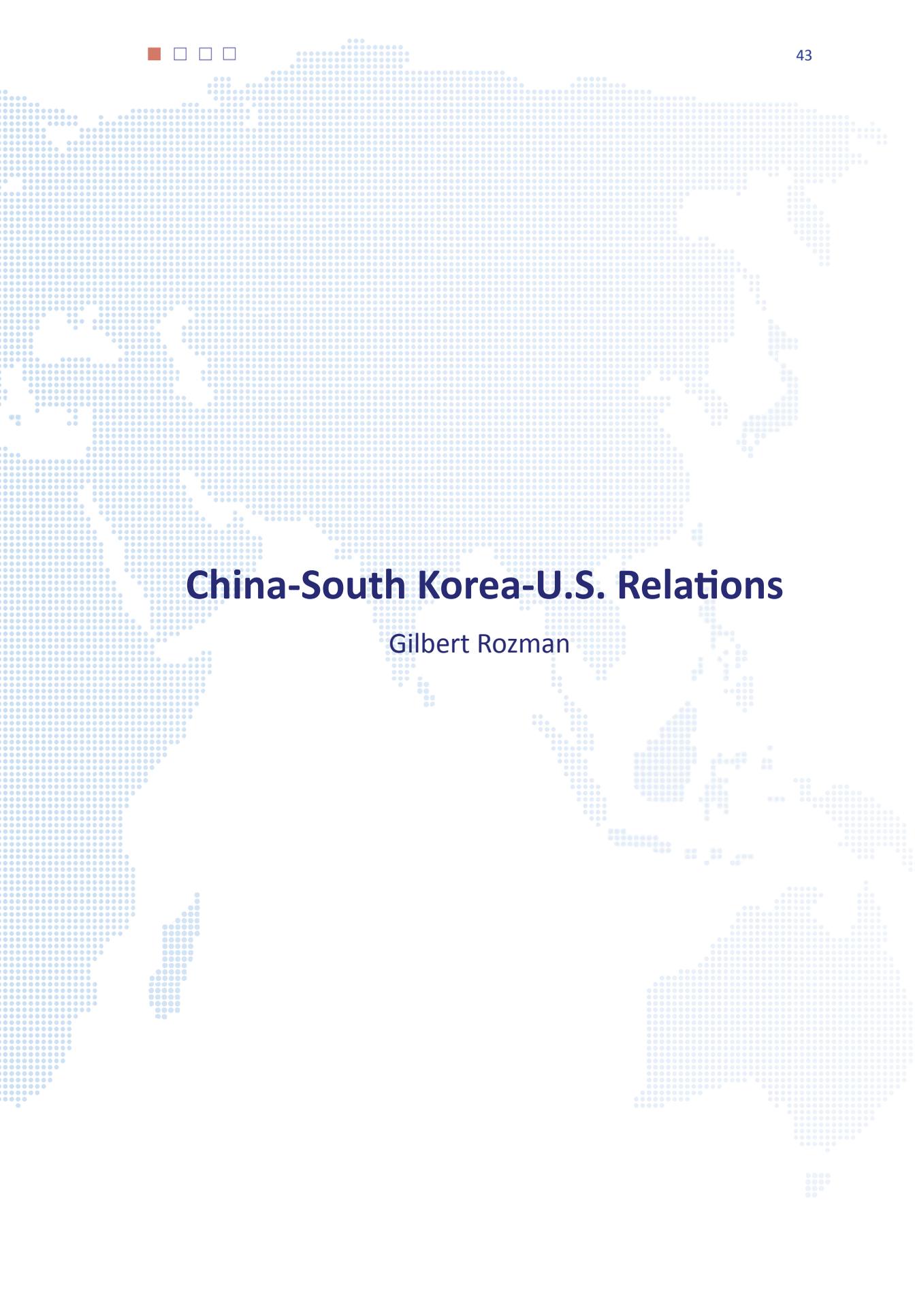
25. Richard C. Bush and Jonathan D. Pollack, "North Korea's Nuclear Ambitions: Hiding in Plain Sight," Brookings, February 18, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2014/02/18-north-korea-nuclear-ambitions-bush-pollack> (accessed March 18, 2014). For a typical North Korean stand on this, see "Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is the DPRK's Invariable Stand," Korean Central News Agency, September 29, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201309/news29/20130929-06ee.html> (accessed March 18, 2014); "South Korea's 'Strategic Rigidity' Obstructive to North-South Dialogue—Chinese Newspaper," Korean Central News Agency, June 1, 2011, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2011/201106/news01/20110601-26ee.html> (accessed March 18, 2014). For the variance in views of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula between Seoul and Beijing, see "Seoul, Beijing Agree on Denuclearized Korean Peninsula," Voice of America, June 27, 2013: "If we look at the official Chinese documents on denuclearization, what they mean is a denuclearization of the complete peninsula, not just North Korea," she [Dong Xiangrong] said, adding that, contrarily, South Korea is solely interested in preventing the North from developing nuclear weapons." <http://www.voanews.com/content/seoul-beijing-agree-on-denuclearized-korean-peninsula/1690379.html> (accessed March 18, 2014).
26. Jane Perlez, "China Exhibit, Part of an Anti-Japan Campaign, Reflects an Escalating Feud," *The New York Times*, February 8, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/09/world/asia/china-exhibit-part-of-an-anti-japan-campaign-reflects-an-escalating-feud.html> (accessed March 18, 2014).
27. Toko Sekiguchi, "Seoul, Beijing Find New Common Ground Against Tokyo," *The Wall Street Journal*, November 19, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2013/11/19/seoul-beijing-find-new-common-ground-against-tokyo/> (accessed March 18, 2014).
28. Emily Rauhala, "104 Years Later, a Chinese Train Station Platform is Still the Site of Anti-Japanese Rancor," *Time*, January 30, 2014, <http://time.com/2609/104-years-later-a-chinese-train-station-platform-is-still-the-site-of-anti-japanese-rancor/> (accessed March 18, 2014). Mr. Suga went on to say, "The co-ordinated move by China and South Korea based on a one-sided view [of history] is not conducive to building peace and stability," calling the memorial "extremely regrettable." See "Japan protest over Korean assassin Ahn Jung-geun memorial in China," BBC, January 20, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-25808437> (accessed March 18, 2014). See also Gil Yun-hyung, "Japanese government voices disapproval of Ahn-Jung-geun memorial," *The Hangyoreh*, January 21, 2014, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/620717.html (accessed March 18, 2014).
29. "S. Korean ruling party executive calls Japan 'terrorist state' after hero criticized," *The Japan Times*, January 21, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/01/21/national/s-korean-ruling-party-exec-calls-japan-terrorist-state-after-hero-criticized/#.Uyg97PI5MrU> (accessed March 18, 2014); Seo Jae-jun, "Jeongbu, 'Suga II Gwanbang Janggwan Baleon Gyutan'" [ROK condemns Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga's statement], News 1, January 20, 2014, <http://news1.kr/articles/1504015> (accessed March 18, 2014).
30. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Regular Press Conference on January 22, 2014," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, January 22, 2014, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1121675.shtml.
31. Even during the Park-Xi summit in late June 2013, major daily newspapers like *Asahi Shimbun*, *Yomiuri*, *Sankei*, and *Nikkei* had all indicated such.
32. Samuel Hawley, *The Imjin War: Japan's Sixteenth-century Invasion of Korea and Attempt to Conquer China* (Seoul: The Royal Asiatic Society Korea Branch, 2005), p. 563-86; Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail: Ming China and the First Great East Asian War, 1592-1598* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), pp. 284-99.
33. Kenneth M. Swope, *A Dragon's Head and a Serpent's Tail*, p. 285. Swope cites Gari Ledyard: "[O]ne is forced to conclude that for all the heroics and turtle-boats, it was the Chinese alliance that was the most crucial military element in Korea's survival." In the wake of North Korea's invasion in 1950, it was the "U.S. that was the most critical element in the Republic of Korea's survival."
34. Han Myonggi, *Byeongja horan* (Seoul: Pureun Yeoksa, 2013).

35. "Dependence on Foreign Forces will Lead to Ruin: Rodong Sinmun," Korean Central News Agency, October 22, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201310/news22/20131022-13ee.html> (accessed March 19, 2014). The next month, the KCNA even adopted sexism and further charged that Park Geun-hye "has to play the coquette with the U.S. and flatter it," and that the "Park group" are "political prostitutes and traitors." "Servile Attitude of Political Waiting Maid: News Analyst," Korean Central News Agency, November 12, 2013, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2013/201311/news12/20131112-07ee.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
36. What Gilbert Rozman terms "national identity" politics. In the context of contemporary Japanese foreign policy, see Gilbert Rozman, "A National Identity Approach to Japan's Late 2013 Foreign Policy Thinking," *The Asan Forum*, January 25, 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/a-national-identity-approach-to-japans-late-2013-foreign-policy-thinking/> (accessed March 18, 2014).
37. See David I. Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2005).
38. Kim Tae-jong, "Anti-Chinese Sentiment Looms After Torch Relay," *The Korea Times*, April 28, 2008, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/04/117_23257.html (accessed March 19, 2014).
39. Jack Kim, "Anti-U.S. beef protest draws 100,000 S. Koreans," Reuters, May 31, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2008/05/31/us-korea-protest-idUSSE021734120080531> (accessed March 19, 2014). "Clashes over U.S. beef in South Korea," CNN, June 2, 2008, <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/06/01/skorea.usbeef/index.html?eref=edition> (accessed March 19, 2014).
40. "Seoul's 'Balancing' Role," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 31, 2005, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB111748666613046386> (accessed March 19, 2014).
41. Choe Sang-Hun, "South Korea's 'balancer' policy attacked," *The New York Times*, April 9, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/08/world/asia/08iht-seoul.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
42. "Hanmi Gwangye Daedam: Gyunhyungja-yeok 'Hanguk Chyegeup' Neomeoseon II" ["Korea-U.S. Dialogue: Balancer Role Punching above 'Korea's Weight Class'"], *Chosun Ilbo*, April 18, 2005, http://news.chosun.com/svc/content_view/content_view.html?contid=2005041870318 (accessed March 20, 2014).
43. Choe Sang-Hun, "Despair Overwhelmed Former South Korean Leader Embroiled in Scandal," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/world/asia/24roh.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed March 20, 2014).
44. Yang Sang-hoon, "Self Respect and the 50th Anniversary," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 15, 2003, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2003/07/15/2003071561006.html (accessed March 19, 2014).
45. Lee Chi-dong, "In memoir, Gates calls ex-Korean President Roh 'crazy,'" *Yonhap News*, January 15, 2014, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2014/01/15/13/0301000000AEN20140115000100315F.html> (accessed March 20, 2014).
46. See Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "China-Korea Relations: Crying Uncle No More: Stark Choices for Relations," *Comparative Connections*, January 2014. Note in particular the chronology of China-Korea relations from September to December 2013 at the end of the article, http://csis.org/files/publication/1303qchina_korea.pdf (accessed March 20, 2014).
47. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times: 1800 to the Present* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), p. 250.
48. Jun Sato, "Japanese official calls Seoul 'arrogant' in 1953 official document," *Asahi Shimbun*, June 19, 2013, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201306190011 (accessed March 20, 2014).
49. Robert T. Oliver, *A History of the Korean People in Modern Times*, p. 250.
50. "S. Korea must stick to role of 'balancer,'" *Global Times*, July 3, 2012, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90883/7863524.html> (accessed March 19, 2014).
51. Lim Min-hyuk, "Obama, Naedal Sunbangeon Han Il Hwahwe Weonhae" ["Obama Seeks South Korea-Japan Rapprochement ahead of Visit Next Month"], *Chosun Ilbo*, March 17, 2014, http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2014/03/17/2014031700179.html?related_all (accessed March 19 2014).

52. "South Korea, Japan leaders set to meet amid possibly thawing ties: media," Reuters, March 20, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/19/us-japan-korea-usa-idUSBREA2I0VX20140319> (accessed March 20, 2014).
53. On the first point, see Lee Chi-dong, "Missile defense dilemma dogging S. Korea," Yonhap News, October 25, 2013, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2013/10/25/13/0401000000AEN20131025000100315F.html> (accessed March 20, 2014). On the latter, see Jennifer Lind, "Between Giants: South Korea and the U.S.-China Rivalry," *The Atlantic*, July 19, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/07/between-giants-south-korea-and-the-us-china-rivalry/260060/> (accessed March 20, 2014).
54. "Joint Statement of Japan-U.S. Security Consultative Committee," October 3, 2013, <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/10/20131003283979.html#axzz2wZ4VIJUY> (accessed March 20, 2014).
55. Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-Hun, "A Growing Chill Between South Korea and Japan Creates Problems for the U.S.," *The New York Times*, November 23, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/24/world/asia/a-growing-chill-between-south-korea-and-japan-creates-problems-for-the-us.html> (accessed March 20, 2014).
56. Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-Hun, "A Growing Chill Between South Korea and Japan Creates Problems for the U.S."
57. See Andrei Lankov, *Crisis in North Korea: The Failure of De-Stalinization, 1956* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).
58. "Kim Jong Il's Bloody Purges," *Chosun Ilbo*, June 9, 2010, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2010/06/09/2010060900794.html (accessed March 20, 2014).

China-South Korea-U.S. Relations

Gilbert Rozman



After the collapse of the Six-Party Talks in 2008 and the confrontational setting of 2009-12 when Sino-South Korean relations were mostly troubled, a new dynamic has emerged in the China-South Korea-U.S. triangle under Xi Jinping, Park Geun-hye, and Barack Obama. In this chapter I review earlier dynamics over a quarter century, assess the triangle as recently seen from each of the three corners, and reflect on the challenges that lie ahead that could alter the current dynamics. In the shadows of this triangle is North Korea, whose policies continue to exert a decisive impact.

This triangle matters primarily for three compelling reasons. First, it is the foremost challenge in South Korean diplomacy, which is concerned, above all, with managing North Korea.¹ Second, it is a litmus test for China's strategic thinking, whose policies to North Korea are of prime concern to South Korea and, at times, the United States.² Finally, it is the principal arena for how the United States is managing North Korea, well understood by all of these countries.³ Even when the ostensible subject at both diplomatic settings and academic seminars is bilateral relations involving any two of these countries, the discussion turns ineluctably to this broader triangular context. On the sixtieth anniversary of the U.S.-ROK alliance when commentators considered new challenges for the alliance, China cast a deep shadow, as North Korea long has. In the same year when Park actively wooed Xi to improve relations, the U.S. alliance was never far in the background. Even in Sino-U.S. relations with their far greater scope, North Korea is arguably the first priority and that means, especially to the U.S. side, coordinating closely with South Korea on this aspect of Sino-U.S. relations.⁴ Triangularity has been unmistakably advancing in 2013-14, as Sino-ROK diplomacy grew noticeably more active and the United States gave, at least, its tacit support. In early 2014, the dynamic was changing, as U.S. disappointment with China's dealings with North Korea was reflected in greater efforts to strengthen U.S.-ROK deterrence.

In the case of South Korea, Park Geun-hye's slogans of "trustpolitik" and "Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI)" cannot be discussed in depth without turning into an examination of the triangle with the United States and China. Unlike Japan, which is pressing the United States to solidify two vs. one in a triangle seen as containing Chinese aggression, South Korea is searching for multilateralism drawing China and the United States closer. This is a more complicated process, especially in recent months, as the Sino-U.S. gap has widened. When Park was greeted eagerly in Washington in May 2013, then Koreans watched the Obama-Xi Sunnylands summit hopefully in June 2013, and finally Park had what was considered a successful visit to Beijing that same month, prospects for a South Korean initiative to capitalize on the triangle appeared to rise. By early 2014 they had dimmed, but Seoul was ready to try to operationalize Park's ideas, which, at a general level, had been greeted in 2013 with interest.⁵ In the background were increased contacts with North Korea, which China welcomed as a possible path to resuming the Six-Party Talks while the United States responded doubtfully that there was little prospect of a breakthrough.

For China, the triangle with South Korea and the United States has a different meaning rooted less in a priority for denuclearization and reunification than in a geostrategic and geo-cultural outlook on a future Northeast Asia in which U.S. influence is greatly reduced. In 2013 an unpredictable new leader, Kim Jong-un, responded defiantly to China's advice, while an

encouraging veteran figure, Park Geun-hye, cultivated its support. No wonder China gave Park reason to proceed,⁶ particularly against the background of its demonization of Japan and Park's own acrimonious relationship with Abe Shinzo. No triangular framework in Asia offered China as much promise as this one, with China, perhaps, anticipating that ROK-U.S. relations would eventually be made more complicated by differences in how to deal with China as well as Japan.

Seeing no utility for the Six-Party Talks, the United States has continued under the Obama administration to make sure that on North Korean issues it would permit as little distance as possible between its position and that of South Korea, even as it also put management of North Korea at the top of its many priorities in working with China. Thus, triangularity was built into the U.S. approach to what has long been the most serious security challenge in the region. Yet, casting a shadow on this triad was the growing sense that other security challenges were growing, including those in the South China and East China seas that put the United States and China in direct opposition to each other. In contrast to Seoul's eagerness for sustaining the triangle with a narrow, shared focus and Beijing's ambition to utilize the triangle for a broader, ultimately divisive purpose, Washington approached the triangle much more cautiously, viewing it through the prism of multiple, conflicting frameworks.

PAST DYNAMICS IN THE SINO-SOUTH KOREAN-U.S. TRIANGLE

Until South Korea pursued normalization of relations with China from the end of the 1980s, alliance relations were scarcely affected by China's behavior, apart from the closer ties resulting from Chinese reinforcement of North Korean belligerence and the increasing appeals after Sino-U.S. normalization by both Washington and Seoul to Beijing to seize the opportunity for a change in its policies toward the peninsula. Given U.S. blessing for "nordpolitik" and China's reluctance to range beyond trade relations with South Korea, prior to Sino-ROK normalization the triangle also did not draw much concern. The alliance seemed impervious to normalizing contacts.

During the decade between normalization and the second nuclear crisis over North Korea, leading soon to the Six-Party Talks, new factors influenced triangular ties. As North Korea sunk into famine amidst isolation in the mid-90s, Seoul became bolder about seeking more support from Beijing and relying less on its ally, especially when Kim Dae-jung launched the Sunshine Policy. The rapidly growing economic relations gave the public on both sides reason to see growing potential for other types of ties. With China "lying low" in its regional policies and eventually embracing proposals for multilateralism and with Seoul becoming enthusiastic for regional diplomacy as well, the scope of interactions expanded with Washington on the outside.⁷ Anger at Japan was rising in China with the "patriotic education" campaign, and sporadically spiked in South Korea too as a democratic society now more sensitive to affronts. In these circumstances, awareness of a national identity gap was minimized: they saw each other mostly as economic partners working together for regionalism, while each was more conscious of identity gaps with the United States (as anti-American sentiments spread in South Korea to 2003) and Japan. With the election of

Roh Moo-hyun as president at the end of 2002, South Koreans were emboldened to express greater resentment toward the United States but were restrained toward China.

The Sino-ROK-U.S. triangle in the final years of Roh Moo-hyun's tenure gave one impression and during the period of Lee Myung-bak's tenure gave quite a different one. In the Roh era, Seoul groped for a role between Washington and Beijing: to be a "hub," to have an independent voice on North Korea, and even to be a "balancer." Yet, Roh found that he lacked the clout with either great power and real leverage over North Korea to gain much traction. China showed its disregard with the mood of the South Korean public with its Koguryo claims, revealing its arrogance about history with serious implications for trust in dealing with the future of North Korea. U.S. distrust came in response to Roh's unilateral offers to North Korea, complicating the strategy for denuclearization and playing into China's strategy. Roh found that he had little room to maneuver; he misjudged the configuration of the triangle, as a still cautious China faced an assertive George W. Bush administration.⁸ This was a time of incipient triangularity, but Sino-U.S. cooperation on North Korea limited its scope. The external environment did not give the Seoul the opportunity Roh sought.

Lee faced a newly assertive China, which might have been more receptive to Roh but now was dismissive of Lee's efforts to prioritize U.S. relations, given suspicions that there was no chance of improving North Korean relations. In 2009 Beijing shifted toward support for Pyongyang despite its belligerence, and Lee drew even closer to Washington.⁹ This remained the pattern until Lee's presidential term ended with triangularity largely in abeyance. Indeed, deteriorating Sino-U.S. relations in the face of aggressive Chinese moves and the Obama "rebalance" to Asia marginalized Seoul. A challenge for Park when she took office was to reactivate this moribund triangle. It appeared that she had the initiative, but China, under its new leader, Xi Jinping, has not relinquished its role as the driving force in the region, attentive to U.S. relations, intensifying rivalry with Japan, and the difficult challenge of North Korea's conduct.

THE CHINESE ANGLE ON THE SINO-SOUTH KOREAN-U.S. TRIANGLE

When China entered the Korean War it was alarmed about American troops on its border, the extension of power of a distrusted regime in South Korea, the failure of a fellow socialist state, and the global balance of power after it had already leaned to one side toward the Soviet Union and away from the U.S.-led capitalist bloc of states. Fifty years later, as it grew more deeply involved in the Korean Peninsula with the encouragement of the Sunshine Policy and North Korea's new diplomatic strategy, leading to the Six-Party Talks, a similar set of concerns were in the forefront. While many observers focused on China's vague concern about "peace and stability" and others decided that China's priority was preventing a massive outflow of refugees across its border, there was always ample evidence that foremost in its calculations was continued wariness about U.S. troops and influence on a long-sensitive border as well as the balance of power implications from the removal of not just a buffer state but an enemy state of the United States and its allies.¹⁰ Moreover, distrust of the leadership and the society of South Korea is deep-seated, as reflected in what could be

called the “culture wars” fought both on the Internet and through the mass media in the years of Lee Myung-bak’s tenure.¹¹ However discomfited China seems to be at times with North Korea’s hide-bound regime, it is considered by many in the party and security establishment, as well as like-minded citizens on China’s side, in an essentially polarized world and region in national identity, not economic, terms.

Given the failure of Pyongyang to coordinate with Beijing in handling diplomatic, economic, and military challenges, a flexible strategy has been required to manage relations with Seoul and Washington in regard to peninsular non-economic affairs. Seoul’s degree of deference has changed over the past two decades, as has Beijing’s interest in talking with Seoul about Pyongyang. Rising deference under Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, despite its limitations, drew a positive response. Signs of reduced deference under Lee Myung-bak, exacerbated by anger at Beijing’s silence over the North Korean attacks in 2010, elicited a negative response. Knowing how China is becoming more or less cooperative while making North Korea ever more economically and diplomatically dependent on it, Park Geun-hye has tried to find the “Goldilocks” solution of coordinating while drawing a red line against rewarding North Korea without meaningful reciprocal actions. At a time when the leadership in Beijing is frustrated with Pyongyang, that strategy is acceptable. The result has been more encouragement to Seoul to coordinate closer with Beijing and more emphasis on positive cooperation with Washington.

In 2013-14 there are clear reasons why Beijing is encouraging Seoul, but one should be wary of drawing wider conclusions about some significant change of direction. As noted above, it is both a reward to Park for her continuous, conciliatory efforts and a warning to Kim Jung-un against his disregard of China’s guidance. Kim has it within his power to change China’s calculus. If he is more respectful of its strategy, which would lead to some de-escalation of his provocative military build-up and embrace of economic reform, he could tilt the balance, perhaps in the process dividing South Korean society and its government from the presumed, more skeptical U.S. reaction. Other reasons for Beijing to convey a positive outlook toward Seoul is that this is in line with the ongoing strategy of isolating Tokyo and keeping Washington interested in a “new type of great power relations.” At a time when its strategic priorities are in the East China Sea and the South China Sea, calming tensions further north serves a broader strategic objective. Finally, an upbeat atmosphere with Seoul can promote talks for a China-Korea FTA, serving as an urgent counterweight to the U.S.-Japan pursuit of TPP, which would create a regional economic framework worrisome to China, even if some economic reformers might use it to advance domestic changes.

While a small number of articles published in China have suggested a recent change of heart toward North Korea, raising the prospects for closer coordination with both South Korea and the United States, many other Chinese publications continue to put the onus on these two countries for the existence of the crisis on the peninsula and for the ongoing failure to take essential steps to resolve it.¹² If Russian sources are to be believed, then the message they have heard from Chinese officials is decidedly on the side of this majority of Chinese writings. Georgy Toloraya on March 13, 2014 made this point clearly, accentuating what Alexander Lukin writes in the conclusion to his chapter. He describes the Crimean crisis as proof that the West is working to contain Russia and that this will affect problems elsewhere, including on the Korean Peninsula, where the Cold War never ended.

Expecting Russo-U.S. cooperation to dry up, he sees closer Sino-Russian coordination. In the past, Toloraya adds, Russia opposed the “U.S. strategy to isolate and eventually dismantle the North Korean regime,” using the nuclear issue as a pretext, but it was in agreement in showing concern about the North’s impact on non-proliferation, military provocations such as missile launches, and human rights. Russia backed UN resolutions, implemented sanction agreements, and had most of its banks refuse to deal with the North. Now, however, he argues, more Russians will see the nuclear deterrent of North Korea as justified, it will be more lenient about investing in the North, and may even assist in modernizing the North’s industrial infrastructure. Suggesting that Russians will perceive the U.S. threat of military intervention in Ukraine as similar to U.S. conduct toward North Korea, Toloraya warns that Russia’s position will probably shift closer to Chinese views, which could contribute to the renewal of confrontation between continental and maritime powers. In this argument, the Russian specialist on Korea assumes a Chinese posture that supports North Korea and welcomes such a shift from Russia toward a joint posture of three versus three on peninsular affairs.¹³

Toloraya’s interpretation of Chinese thinking about North Korea omits the tensions of late in Sino-North Korean relations. It tries to fit China’s thinking into a renewed Cold War framework, showcased in Russia during the crisis over Ukraine. Yet, the idea that China considers the situation in Ukraine grounds for military conflict and a renewal of the Cold War appears to be an exaggeration. Russia may be desperate in early 2014 and determined to reestablish what it can of the Soviet Union’s range of control, but China has no cause for similar desperation. Moreover, for China, North Korea is not some pawn in a great power Cold War, but a target for transforming the entire Korean Peninsula and reshaping the balance of power in East Asia. Lack of cooperation by Pyongyang in Beijing’s strategy requires a Chinese response, not just indifference because it is time to turn harshly against the United States and South Korea, as a U.S. ally. A closer look at Sino-North Korean tensions makes this clearer.

In late February 2014 Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin visited Pyongyang. In early March Foreign Minister Wang Yi made a statement about the Korean Peninsula.¹⁴ A strong warning by North Korea on March 14 directed at the United States could be seen as an indirect response to China’s diplomacy. In one personal communication, it was suggested, although difficult to verify, that this opens a window on secretive interactions between Beijing and Pyongyang. First, Wang Yi reemphasized China’s insistence on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. In the DPRK statement, there is no open criticism of this position, but the United States is accused of behaving foolishly by opposing the DPRK’s nuclear deterrence and letting loose a string of reckless remarks.¹⁵ One wonders who really is blamed for “reckless remarks.” Second, Wang called for restraint, goodwill, and building mutual trust before noting the DPRK accusation against the United States for a policy “aimed at undermining the ideology of the DPRK...and swallowing up all Koreans and the whole of Korea by force of arms for aggression.” Third, Wang is reported to have called for dialogue and opposed confrontation, which will only bring tension and war. In turn, the DPRK accuses the U.S. “patience strategy” of hoping the DPRK will make changes first and responds that the DPRK will “wait with a high degree of patience” for leadership change in the United States. Insisting that “national sovereignty is more

important than human rights,” the DPRK statement, according to this interpretation, is a message to China that it too values sovereignty over human rights and should not be criticizing a like-minded country. In asserting that the United States “would be well advised to mind its own business, being aware of where it stands, before talking nonsense about others’ affairs,” the statement may be making China the real target. It was a sign of troubled relations, which facilitated the greater triangular cooperation with Seoul and Washington in 2013 and early 2014.

The personal communication detects a “veiled back-and-forth between Beijing and Pyongyang over the nuclear issues and the Jang matter.”¹⁶ This reflects recalibrating of China’s position, perhaps in part due to the purge of Jang Song-taek and the group forging economic ties with China, and a sharpening of the resistance from North Korea. Against this backdrop, South Korea and the United States are naturally reticent about doing something that may cause China to reconsider its posture. The danger from North Korea seems to be growing, and China is the driving force in responding as the United States and South Korea keep a close watch and tailor their triangular actions accordingly. The overall point is that in 2013 China’s posture toward Pyongyang had been good for triangularity. After the Jang purge, China’s concern over North Korea may have turned more to instability, reverberating in comments to U.S. officials that led them to conclude that China was less inclined to put adequate pressure on North Korea. The dynamics in triangular or quadrangular relations keep impacting the diplomacy toward Pyongyang, but China’s calculations are what matter most.

North Korea has it within its power to change the dynamics of the triangle as seen in China. Overtures to Beijing could widen the Sino-U.S. divide and leave Seoul in more of a quandary. New cooperation with Seoul as well as Beijing could put Washington in a quandary. China’s strategy for North Korea is likely to be at sharp variance with the strategies of the other two countries; so its stance, reflecting frustration over the failure of that strategy, is the most favorable for this triangle, but it is uncertain to last. A more bellicose North Korea is more likely to sustain this sort of triangularity than would a more flexible, North Korea, recognizing that it has continued options for diplomacy. Yet, even if Pyongyang grows more assertive, Chinese calculations of U.S. relations—more somber in the light of Obama’s late April tour of East Asia—could be decisive. It is this Chinese response that puts the triangle in new doubt.

THE SOUTH KOREAN ANGLE ON THE SINO-SOUTH KOREAN-U.S. TRIANGLE

Of the three countries, South Korea continues to take triangularity most seriously. It is anxious not to be left as a middle power to the mercy of two great powers making decisions about the Korean Peninsula on the basis of their own national interests or national identities. Washington could snub its ally over a preoccupation with human rights or urgent denuclearization without adequate consideration of the dynamics of inter-Korean relations or the security priorities in South Korea. Even more likely, Beijing could marginalize South Korea, given the importance it places on the North.

Park Geun-hye has seized the opportunity of Xi Jinping's more impatient response to Kim Jong-un and Barack Obama's continued "strategic patience" to take the lead in the triangulation of diplomacy toward North Korea. She has articulated slogans for the new approach, suggesting that Seoul is the initiator in building trust among the three countries and in striving for a multilateral replacement or interim supplement for the Six-Party Talks. Washington has delegated to Park both tactical leadership in moves to test Pyongyang's readiness to change course and diplomatic flexibility in seeing what further steps Beijing will take in support of common objectives. Beijing is willing to discuss North Korea with more seriousness than before and shows signs of accepting Park's balance of engagement and insistence on denuclearization. Given this triangular atmosphere, officials and public opinion in Seoul are emboldened to think that it is on the right track and should devise new ways of working together.

Some may exaggerate Seoul's role, overlooking the limited room available for it to operate and the temporary circumstances that allow this. They may be correct in thinking that Obama is satisfied with current arrangements within the triangle and with Seoul-Beijing relations, but China's behavior in maritime disputes and Japan's tensions with China could reverberate to Seoul's detriment. Even more problematic is the assumption that Beijing is deferential to South Korea as having an inherent right to speak on peninsular matters. There is a dearth of exploration of its motives, although even during the Park-Xi summit Chinese wording was carefully parsed to reveal uncertain alignment of thinking. The old problem of overestimation of what Seoul can accomplish—seen especially under Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun—is difficult to avoid. That is not to say that Seoul is without options in today's setting.

Eschewing the ambitions inherent in the notion of a "balancer," Park can continue to seek opportunities to serve as a "facilitator." If Pyongyang decides to be provocative in ways that stretch the forbearance of Washington and Beijing as well as Seoul, she is likely to have a constructive opening to assist the two great powers in finding a common response. This is not likely to be easy, given different views of sanctions and military build-ups or exercises in response to North Korean actions. Yet, there is little optimism that Kim Jong-un will opt for any course other than provocations; so Park may have considerably more time to explore ways to keep working with Xi and Obama. If the Northeast Asia Peace and Security Initiative starts slowly with modest ambitions, it may prove to be accepted by the other two states as constructive. More likely is an outcome where it gains little traction as great power rivalries deepen.

There is little upside to Seoul's quest for a more active role and considerable room for disappointment. The two principal problems are the presumed incompatibility between Beijing and Seoul's strategic thinking about North Korea, and the rising potential for sharper discord between Beijing and Washington. As one or both of these problems comes to the forefront, there is little that Seoul can do. The fact that Vladimir Putin is renewing Cold War images with his foreign policy and rhetoric and Abe Shinzo is oblivious to the strategic costs of his historical revisionism makes the challenges ahead even harder for Park to navigate. She needs to lower expectations.

THE U.S. ANGLE ON THE SINO-SOUTH KOREAN-U.S. TRIANGLE

From the perspective of Washington, there is little awareness of the significance of South Korea as a factor boosting bilateral to trilateral relations. Washington views Seoul as important in coordinating on responses to Pyongyang's behavior, but in the absence of any optimism about denuclearization or resumption of diplomacy with the prospect of leading to that essential objective, Seoul is seen primarily as a force for holding the line. As for its diplomatic dealings with Beijing, they are viewed not as a way to change Chinese thinking, but as reinforcement of the frequent talks between U.S. and Chinese leaders to find some common ground, especially in the event of new North Korean provocations. Few think that Chinese leaders with their strong convictions about how to keep the North Korean regime afloat are in the mood to take South Korean proposals seriously. In short, the Seoul-Beijing path to management of the North Korean challenge is welcomed, but it is not perceived to be a promising alternative to the Washington-Beijing pathway or to have strategic gravitas that would warrant conceiving of it as part of a triangular configuration.

Washington is ambivalent about closer Seoul-Beijing ties, welcoming them when it thinks that they play a constructive role in managing the North Korean threat. When concern about Roh Moo-hyun's encouragement of anti-Americanism and dalliance with great power balancing and idealistic enablement of North Korea was at a peak, Washington was doubtful about Roh's policies. Also, when Chinese cooperation over North Korea appears to be in doubt, U.S. officials question the efficacy of counting on its support. Yet, for the most part, since the 1990s, Washington has emphasized new efforts to encourage Beijing to play a more active role and has considered Seoul a positive influence toward that objective. Thus, reassured by Park Geun-hye's close consultations with the Obama administration, U.S. officials have not deviated from the response that there is no distance at all between the policies of the two states.

In mid-2013, celebrations of the sixtieth anniversary of the U.S.-ROK alliance paid homage to its enduring success and expressed optimism about its renewal in the face of new challenges. Yet, there was already a cloud over rising difficulties in the context of triangular relations, especially with Japan but also with China and, to a lesser degree, with North Korea. This cloud darkened considerably over the Japanese triangle in the fall of 2013, and even more in the first months of 2014, but the shadow of the Chinese triangle was not immune to such anxiety. After all, relations between Japan and China kept worsening, and Sino-U.S. relations also deteriorated to some degree. To the extent that Seoul's relations with Beijing appear to be out of step with Washington's, and some would argue with Tokyo's too, this complicates the Sino-ROK-U.S. triangle. Clashing appeals from Tokyo and Seoul to Washington in seminars before D.C. think tank audiences brought new challenges to the surface.

As long as Beijing keeps pressure on Pyongyang, avoids coercive actions in the East and South China seas, and does not join Moscow in what may be construed as moves leading to a new cold war, then Washington is unlikely to object to Seoul sustaining its measured overtures to Beijing centered on managing Pyongyang. Yet, much could go wrong between Washington and Beijing, leaving Seoul with little leverage. There is an assumption in the

United States that the U.S.-ROK alliance leg of the triangle is the determining factor when security is in doubt, and that would be strengthened.

Uncertainty arises from the economic ties between China and South Korea, which strategic analysts tend to overlook. Although there have been trade wars in which China showed a ruthless response, few anticipate the sort of economic pressure that China exhibited at times toward Japan or the Philippines. As seen in the economic sanctions placed on Russia in response to its actions in Crimea as well as on North Korea and Iran, linkages between security and economics are intensifying. These can affect the way triangularity evolves in a time of crisis and hardball policies.

CONCLUSION

The China-South Korea-U.S. triangle puts Seoul between two great powers testing each other for regional hegemony and influence in the Korean Peninsula. One power is consumed with the threat of nuclear weapons to be deliverable by long-range missiles and finds North Korea anathema for its egregious human rights violations. It expects and finds South Korea to be of like mind and a close ally, but the threat perceptions of the two differ, as does the impact of national identity. In turn, the other power prioritizes transforming the regional balance of power and considers criticism of human rights to be a prelude to charges against its own political system. Its view of South Korea is more ambivalent, doubting its security thinking, the way values affect its policies, and its intentions toward North Korea in reunification. Add to this mix the sharply opposed attitudes toward the ROK-U.S. alliance and we are left with a combustible mix of three bilateral relations that fit together awkwardly in certain circumstances, but have the potential to grind against each other for reasons such as North Korea shifting to engagement with China and a degree of economic reform, North Korea enticing South Korea with gestures of national identity appeal, Sino-U.S. relations deteriorating over one of many causes, and U.S. policies turning more inflexible and intolerant of South Korean overtures to China or North Korea.

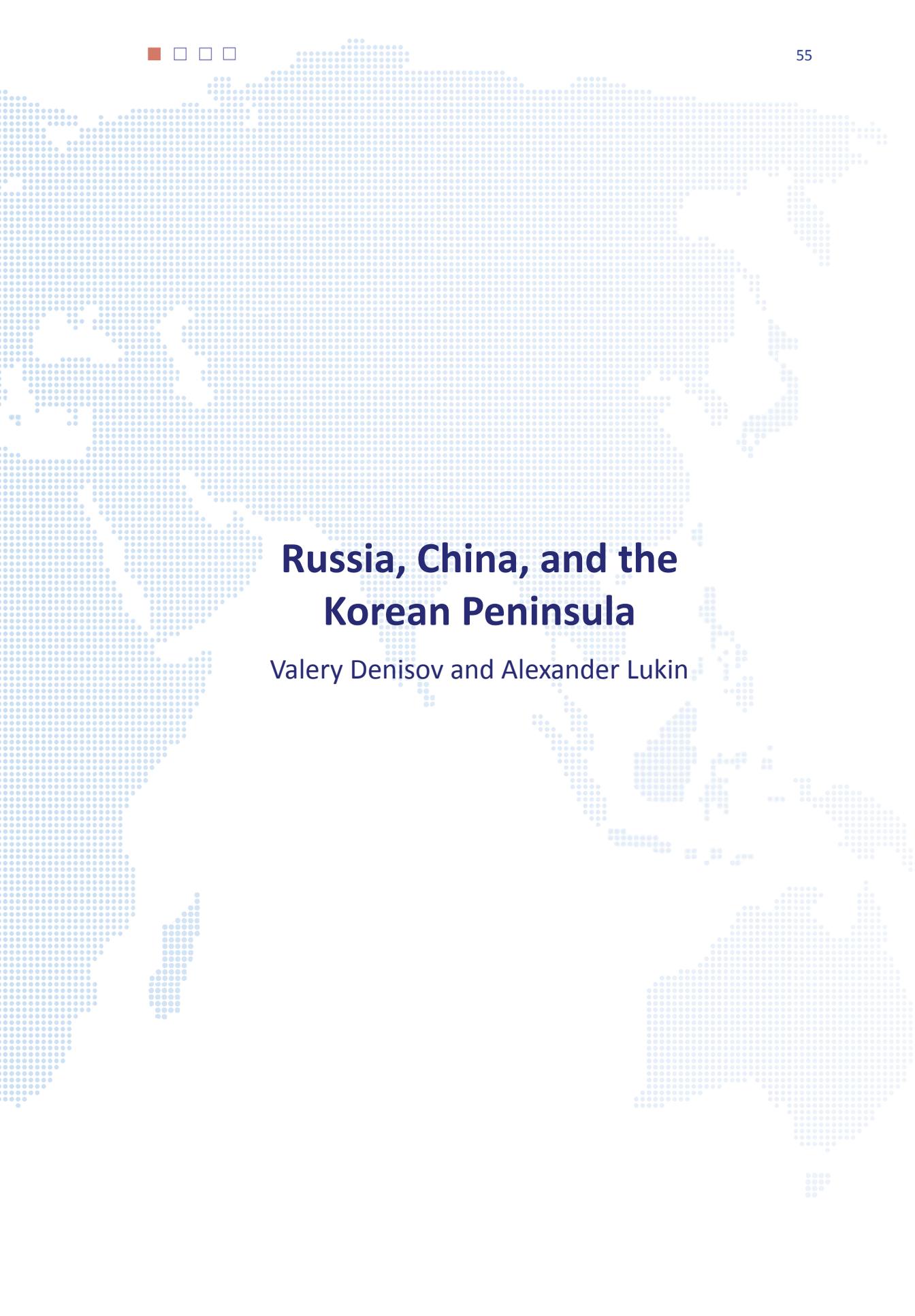
If we recognize that China is the driving force in the triangle, we should ask under what circumstances does it welcome the triad working together for common cause. In 2013-14 such circumstances were present: Chinese anger at North Korea, Chinese eagerness to isolate Japan and damage its relations with South Korea, willingness by China to emphasize improving relations with the United States, a conciliatory mood in Seoul and by the South Korean president toward China, South Korean hesitation to broaden the alliance with the United States into arenas beyond the peninsula, and an upbeat atmosphere in Sino-South Korean FTA negotiations and economic ties. It is these factors that bring positive triangularity to the fore. With other triangles in which South Korea is involved more troubled, there may be spillover damaging to this triangle of highest priority. It is advancing, but in precarious circumstances.

As Valery Denisov and Alexander Lukin argue, North Korea is a geopolitical target for both Russia and China, which is becoming more salient to Russia in 2014 as it perceives Ukraine through the lens of a new cold war. Instead of this triangle being a force for South Korean economic engagement of North Korea in the development of infrastructure of region-wide significance, it is turning more into a basis of pressure against the ROK-U.S. alliance,

complicating Seoul's attempts to maintain a balance between Washington and Beijing. At the same time, the Tokyo-Seoul-Washington triangle is strengthening in the spring of 2014. As Sue Mi Terry shows, U.S. efforts can and now are boosting this triangle. While the changes do not go far to support what Sung-Yoon Lee considers to be a more balanced Beijing-Seoul-Tokyo triangle, they strengthen the deterrence triangle in advance of Pyongyang's next move. For Beijing, remaining hostile to Tokyo and turning more critical of Washington while welcoming new overtures from Moscow, the conditions that boosted the value of Seoul in triangular contexts, especially with Washington, may now be fading away.

ENDNOTES

1. Gilbert Rozman, ed., *South Korean Strategic Thought toward Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
2. Gilbert Rozman, *Chinese Strategic Thought toward Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, rev. edit., 2012).
3. Jonathan D. Pollack, *No Exit: North Korea, Nuclear Weapons, and International Security* (London: Routledge, 2011).
4. Editorial Staff, "Asan Washington Forum Synopsis Part 2: The Alliance and North Korea," Open Forum, *The Asan Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Sept.-Oct. 2013).
5. Editorial Staff, "Washington Insights," Open Forum, *The Asan Forum*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan.-Feb. 2014).
6. Gilbert Rozman, Ch. 9, "South Korean National Identity Gaps with China and Japan," in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies--Asia at a Tipping Point: Korea, the Rise of China, and the Impact of Leadership Transitions* (editor), (Korea Economic Institute, 2012): pp. 141-58.
7. Chung Jaeho, *Chungguk oe busang goa Hanbando oe mirae* (Seoul: Seoul University Press, 2011).
8. Jonathan D. Pollack, ed., *Korea: The East Asian Pivot* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2005); Jonathan D. Pollack, ed., *Asia Eyes America: Regional Perspectives on U.S.-Asia Pacific Strategy in the 21st Century* (Newport, RI: Naval War College Press, 2007).
9. Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Korea: Politics, Economics, Security* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2009).
10. Gilbert Rozman, ed., *China's Foreign Policy: Who Makes It, and How Is It Made?* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).
11. Gilbert Rozman, Ch. 7, "Chinese National Identity and East Asian National Identity Gaps," in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *National Identities and Bilateral Relations: Widening Gaps in East Asia and Chinese Demonization of the United States*, (Washington DC and Stanford, CA: Woodrow Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2013): pp. 203-32.
12. For summaries of some Chinese articles on this subject, see "Country Report: China," bi-monthly since the summer of 2013 in www.theasanforum.org.
13. Georgy Toloraya, "A Tale of Two Peninsulas: How Will the Crimean Crisis Affect Korea?" 38 North, March 13, 2014.
14. "China Will Not Allow War or Instability on the Korean Peninsula," Xinhuanet, March 8, 2014 (accessed on April 25, 2014).
15. Korean Central News Agency, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2014/201403/news14/20140314-14ee.html> (accessed on April 25, 2014).
16. Personal communication to the author from a specialist who prefers not to be cited on April 18, 2014.



Russia, China, and the Korean Peninsula

Valery Denisov and Alexander Lukin

Korea traditionally occupies an important place in Russia's foreign policy directed at Asia. That was the case at the turn of the twentieth century and in the Soviet period. In the first years after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia pursued a one-sided course oriented to the West; however, soon geopolitical and geo-economic realities obliged it to become active in Asia. This reorientation was tied both to global tendencies, above all the shift in the center of world politics and economics to the Asia-Pacific region, and to disappointment with the Western approach, characterized by a lack of understanding and hostility. These general tendencies were not slow to make an impact on Russia's approach to the Korean Peninsula. A course was chosen to forge normal partnership relations with both Korean governments. This occurred against the background of rapidly improving relations with China. Thus, from the outset in the second half of the 1990s, there was a triangular element to Russia's thinking on how to deal with the divided Korean Peninsula in the context of its Asian policies.

As Russia's relations with China were rapidly improving and its relations with the United States were deteriorating in the first decade of the twenty-first century, North Korea was seen through the lens of a triangle within a quadrangle within a hexagon. The quadrangle was the prism of U.S. pursuit of unipolarity, which was approaching the North Korean nuclear crisis in a manner that stood in the way of a political solution, and kept the triangle of Russia, China, and North Korea from pursuing a compromise plan that would lead to successful, multi-stage agreements combining assurances of regime security, assistance in support of economic development and reform, and denuclearization as well as a peace treaty. The hexagon included South Korea, which could be cooperative with Russia because of shared economic interests in a corridor through North Korea, and Japan, which generally was seen as siding with the United States and having a major role only at a later stage of negotiations. Blaming the U.S. hardline policy no less than North Korean suspicions for stalling the negotiations, Russia rested its hopes primarily on its relations with North Korea and China.

Assessments of the triangle with China and North Korea posed a problem, given the general atmosphere of not officially criticizing either of these countries. While there are alternative viewpoints publicly expressed in Russia, the mainstream, including many with official or semi-official positions, is careful not to deviate much from this advisory. Two prevailing arguments followed: 1) North Korea is not interested in the possession of nuclear weapons except as a pressure tactic to achieve reasonable goals, primarily from the United States and its allies; and 2) China shares Russia's thinking in the Six-Party Talks framework, and the two countries can work closely together for mutual benefit. The problem with these assumptions is that the DPRK's behavior defied Russian expectations at various points as it more clearly supported development indicative of a desire to be a nuclear weapons state with supportive missile capacity, and Russians often suspected China of opposition to reunification of the peninsula and aspirations to put North Korea under its own domination. The two other states in Russia's primary triangle were driving forces in the struggle over how to handle the nuclear crisis, while Russia was often relegated to a reactive role.

This chapter emphasizes the Russian side of the triangle. It argues that policy under President Vladimir Putin has been pragmatic, puts priority on the Korean Peninsula, and—since the breakdown in the Six-Party Talks—has been struggling to find balance that will achieve denuclearization as well as other objectives. This struggle is linked to Russia's bilateral relations with both the DPRK and South Korea as well as to its challenges in coordination

with China. Much of the chapter concerns the relations of China with both the DPRK and South Korea and its handling of inter-Korean ties, as seen in Russia. In 2013-14 the increasing seriousness of the situation is prompting new assessments in Russia, which are discussed as well in the concluding section.

THE LEADERSHIP COURSE OF VLADIMIR PUTIN

The pragmatic foreign policy course under the leadership of Vladimir Putin is free of ideology, both communism and early Yeltsin Westernism, and is directed at forming around Russia an independent center of power, which foresees the establishment of normal partnership relations with all countries, above all Russia's neighbors. This is necessary both for the development of economic relations, which are directed at strengthening the economic power of Russia, and at world recognition of Moscow as an important foreign policy player. From this point of view, Asian neighbors are doubly important, since apart from the usual significance, they make possible the diversification of Russian foreign policy activity, which previously had given too much weight to the West. Moreover, in the East its political and economic model meets with much more understanding than in the West. The same applies to the reception given to the shift in Russia's outlook on North Korea, which was met with enthusiasm in China from the start of Putin's presidency, but with U.S. concern.

The Korean Peninsula is important from several perspectives. First, Russia is interested in the security of its borders, consequently in the political stability of both Korean states. Any war or loss of control in developments on the peninsula, in consideration of the presence in North Korea of nuclear weapons, could easily directly affect the adjoining Russian territory, capable of causing casualties, an ecological catastrophe, a flood of refugees, and other dangerous consequences. As a neighbor of North Korea, China expresses these same concerns. Second, both Koreas are economic partners of Russia, with South Korea Russia's third trading partner in Asia after China and Japan and an important investor in the Russian economy. Such cooperation plays an especially big role for the Russian Far East, the development of which is an important strategic issue for Moscow. It is significant too that ties with it serve as a useful balance for what many consider to be one-sided dependency on China. Trade with the DPRK is not large, but, after all, it is a neighboring country. Besides, realization of a whole range of large-scale trans-Korean projects are tied to its participation or, at least, consent. These two factors account for a third: Russian interest in a quick resolution of the nuclear problem of the DPRK. For this, it actively cooperates with all of the partners in the Six-Party Talks. Thus, for very pragmatic reasons, Russia is interested in peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, through cooperation with both Korean governments.

Since the breakdown of the Six-Party Talks in 2008 there has often been tension on how to strike a balance between pressuring North Korea toward denuclearization and restarting the talks on terms that leave the path to denuclearization less clear. China has urged unconditional resumption of the talks, while the United States and South Korea have put conditions on any resumption, as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained, having grown "tired of buying the same horse twice."¹ Russia backs the Chinese position. It is more optimistic that progress can be made in this fashion, compared to U.S., South Korea, or Japanese officials. This results in triangular relations whereby Seoul encourages

Moscow to be more demanding on Pyongyang, while Beijing prefers to follow its own logic with a priority on preventing instability in North Korea. Moscow also worries about instability there, agreeing with Beijing.

RUSSIA AND THE DPRK

Russian authorities well understand the character of the North Korean regime. Indeed, the majority of people who find themselves in power in Russia recall the USSR of the Brezhnev period, which reminds them of communist North Korea, albeit distinguished by a softer regime. At the same time, a debate is under way in Russia's ruling elite about what policy is needed toward Pyongyang. Holding quite a strong position in this are the heirs to communist ideology and approaches of the Cold War era, who continue to view world processes as a battle with the United States on all fronts. In their opinion, any anti-American force, even more, a radical one such as the Pyongyang regime, is a valuable partner. Although such an approach is usually not articulated in official documents, supporters can influence concrete decisions. A second group concentrated around allies of former Acting Prime Minister Egor Gaidar, on the contrary, starts from its western ideology, viewing North Korea with extreme skepticism. However, decisions taken toward the peninsula, as a rule, are based on the pragmatic course described above. This breakdown into three approaches with one deemed pragmatic and the others seen as extreme is similar to the way Chinese describe their calculus, also suggesting that policies in the West are ideological and not pragmatic, while their approach is not extreme support for North Korea.

In Russia the starting point is that in the present circumstances the DPRK scarcely has any chance to escape from its deep economic crisis, which is increasingly of a systematic character. The ruling regime is incapable of reforming the economy of the country, fearing loss of control over the situation and, with it, loss of authority. At the same time, despite the depth of the crisis, spontaneous collapse of the regime in the near future is hardly possible. From all appearances, the young Kim Jong-un has succeeded in strengthening his authority. Moreover, China would hardly allow the collapse of the DPRK. It is deeply drawn into the problems of North Korea and concerned about them and will continue to do everything possible to keep future developments under control and satisfy China's interests there and on the peninsula as a whole. Awareness of China's stance informs Russia's approach to the DPRK too.

Improved relations with Pyongyang were one expression of the overall evolution of Russian foreign policy to a less one-sided and more pragmatic course. Russia strives to sustain good neighbor relations with the DPRK, maintaining political dialogue through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Over the past ten years the two sides have signed more than 40 inter-governmental and inter-agency agreements. The 2000 treaty replaced that of 1961, removing the mutual defense requirement, formally ending the alliance and the role of a shared ideology in favor of the principles of international law. Trade is at an insignificant \$100-150 million per year, reflecting North Korea's difficulty in supplying traditional exports and delays in payment or absence of any payment for goods received.

These factors make it impossible to realize much-advertised triangular projects with South Korea—a gas pipeline, a railroad corridor, and electric transmission lines—, agreement to

which was reached in Kim Jong-il's August 2011 visit to Russia. Yet, two projects have recently been realized: the September 2003 construction of a 54 km. railway segment connecting the ice-free Korean port of Rajin with the Russian border city of Khasan at a cost of 5.5 billion rubles; and modernization of the Rajin terminal at a cost of 3.5 billion rubles. A big step forward was the September 2012 signing of an agreement on North Korea's \$11 billion debt.

The DPRK's missile and nuclear actions have had a negative influence on bilateral relations. Moscow has continuously stood for a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, does not accept the DPRK's nuclear status, and participates in international sanctions that were imposed by the Security Council. On December 2, 2013 a presidential order was signed on fulfilling Security Council resolution 2094, providing the legal basis for implementation of this response to the February 2013 nuclear test in violation of Security Council resolutions. It was tied to the need to stop the DPRK's nuclear and missile programs, but it did not touch the essential needs of the population of that country. Fulfilling its international responsibilities, Moscow did everything possible to soften Pyongyang's reaction and not harm its economic interests. Testifying to this is the fact that the order was not written until almost a year after the Security Council resolution. Moreover, an official pronouncement for the media stressed that Russia's sanctions do not extend to Russians who support ties with North Korean partners in finance, trade, and science and culture, areas not connected to nuclear and missile activities of the DPRK. It was mentioned also that in case Pyongyang met the demands on all of its missile and nuclear programs and returned to the non-proliferation treaty regime and subscribed to the comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, the sanctions would be dropped, opening the possibility for development of trade, investment, and other international ties.²

Russia remains convinced that a resolution of the North Korean nuclear program must be found strictly through political-diplomatic means, through restoration of the Six-Party Talks. Moscow is interested in having in the DPRK a good, reliable, and predictable neighbor, to develop multi-sided relations with it built on the principles of international law, no interference in internal affairs, mutual respect, equality, and mutual benefit. It seeks to prod the DPRK into rational policies, notably cooperation with the ROK. Precisely for this reason Moscow officially welcomed the reopening of the Kaeseong industrial complex in August 2013 and expressed the hope that on the basis of this experience constructive dialogue would ensue on other problems, thus reducing tension, strengthening security, and forging an atmosphere of trust and cooperation on the Korean Peninsula.³ At the same time, in relations with Pyongyang, Moscow often feels dissatisfied with attempts to deceive its partner and pursue objectives incompatible with recognized international norms, which at times are characteristic of DPRK policies.

RUSSIA AND SOUTH KOREA

Political and economic relations between Moscow and Seoul are developing stably today. This is facilitated by mutual economic interests: South Korea's in resources, and Russia's in investment, but also from the geopolitical situation, complicated relations between Seoul and Tokyo and the strengthening of China. Periodically, the heads of government exchange visits. Trade and investment cooperation has grown markedly in recent years; however, as

before, Russian exports are mainly natural resources, and the ROK's are finished goods. Change in the structure of Russian exports is proceeding very slowly, and this is not satisfactory to the Russian side. Investment cooperation is picking up in tempo, especially in the extraction of oil and gas but also in the assembly of automobiles. South Korean car companies annually supply more than 200,000 vehicles, including those assembled on Russian territory.

After Park Geun-hye took office, there have been two summits, one in the context of the G-20 in St. Petersburg in September and the other in Korea in November, when President Putin achieved agreement on an entire array of bilateral cooperation. The eight signed documents included: removing visa requirements, establishing cultural centers, forming an investment platform, cooperating in the establishment in Russia of a center for shipbuilding, and cooperating in the area of transportation. Trade has reached about \$25 billion, cumulative investment in the Russian economy has hit \$2.5 billion, although it is not increasing rapidly, and the summit joint declaration specified concrete measures for strengthening cooperation in technology too.

A lot of attention in the Park-Putin talks was given to the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Moscow and Seoul firmly declared the unacceptability of the DPRK acquiring rocket and nuclear capabilities. It was strongly underlined that North Korea cannot acquire the status of a nuclear weapons state. The two sides were united that the DPRK must fulfill its international obligations and promises to denuclearize as well as Security Council resolutions and Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks. Moscow and Seoul declared their support for the resumption of this negotiating process for managing the nuclear problem on the Korean Peninsula. The memorandum of understanding signed during the summit called for steel giant POSCO, Hyundai Merchant Marine Co., and Korea Railroad Corp. to participate in the Rajin-Khasan development project.

Speaking at a press conference in January 2014, Park Geun-hye assessed the current level of South Korean-Russian relations. "In relations with Russia until now, there were various problems, she noted, answering a journalist's question on designated events. However, in the course of two summits we have been able to resolve many problems and draw closer."⁴ On January 1 an agreement on visa-free entry for a period of up to sixty days went into effect.

RUSSIA'S APPROACH TO THE WMD CRISIS AND KOREAN CONTINGENCIES

Russia has always supported and will continue to support the non-nuclear status of the Korean Peninsula and the non-proliferation of WMD and the means to acquire them in this region. It actively works for and will continue to work for a political resolution of the nuclear crisis on the peninsula. It condemned both the rocket and nuclear ambitions of the DPRK, taking a principled stance on these questions, as in the rocket launch in June 2006 and the nuclear test in October of that year. Russia directly participated in preparing Security Council (rocket and nuclear) resolutions 1695 and 1718, which not only called on the DPRK to halt these programs, but also contained concrete measures for curbing its military potential, specified by means of political management of complex problems on the Korean Peninsula.

Pyongyang's announcement of its intention to withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty came as a surprise. The official statement of the Russian Foreign Ministry issued on January 10, 2003 expressed deep concern.

The Russian approach to the crisis over North Korean WMD should be seen against the general background of Moscow's vision of the situation on the Korean Peninsula and of the non-proliferation issue in general. The proliferation of nuclear weapons is extremely damaging for the world as a whole, and it is at odds with Russian national interests to a greater degree than the interests of other major powers. Russia is the only state in the world that has the possibility of conducting a retaliatory nuclear strike against the United States. In this respect, it is one of the two most powerful countries in the world. Thus, proliferation devalues its military power and, consequently, its influence in the world. For Washington, for instance, proliferation is not so critical, since it is first in other respects. In the case of Russia, this is the only factor that puts it on a level with the United States above other countries. As a permanent member of the Security Council, it is one of five (although important), but not one of two. In today's circumstances, when all other indicators show Russia far behind not only the United States but many other countries, proliferation, especially near Russia's borders, is not only dangerous, it undermines Russia's influence in the world.

Russia has participated actively in the Six-Party Talks since 2003. In order to find an approach for resolving the nuclear problem on the peninsula, it actively cooperates with China. The two began right away to seek a peaceful resolution of the problem. In a joint communiqué of February 27, 2003, the foreign ministers of the two countries expressed deep concern over the situation on the peninsula.⁵ The Korean question was given a substantial place in the joint declaration during the visit of Hu Jintao on May 26-28, 2003.⁶ Subsequently, the two sides continued close cooperation and consultations on this issue. They jointly called for the continuation of the Six-Party Talks in periods when they had ceased and for peaceful resolution of the nuclear problem by diplomatic means. At present, several times a year Igor Morgulov and Wu Dawei discuss this matter.

Moscow has all sorts of reasons to feel deeply dissatisfied with Pyongyang's actions on the nuclear issue, which, from Moscow's point of view, undermine regional security, and create multiple problems. Russia and the DPRK, having restored cooperative relations at the end of the 20th century and signed a series of important political and legal documents, expressed their firm intention to make an active effort on behalf of security and stability around the world. If there is danger of aggression toward either of them or in a situation of a threat to peace and security or also in case of a need for consultations and joint action, Russia and the DPRK expressed readiness without delay to contact each other. This key position of the Pyongyang Declaration has actually been ignored by the North Korean side, which started on the path of escalating the rocket and nuclear crisis, leading to the anti-North Korean resolutions 1695 and 1718. Despite the fact that shortly afterwards there was success in reaching compromise agreements in the context of the Six-Party Talks, questions remain about Pyongyang's observance of the obligations it took upon itself in these joint documents. From Russia's point of view, it is necessary, above all, to verify North Korea's nuclear sites. This requires restoring official relations between the DPRK and the IAEA and conducting inspections of the sites on the basis of existing norms and rules.

For objectivity, it is necessary to acknowledge that the nuclear problem on the peninsula has been aroused not only by DPRK. There were also attempts by South Korea to develop its nuclear potential. In the 1970s the government of Park Chung-hee was on the verge of building an atomic bomb, and only the sharp U.S. reaction forced it to set aside this ambition, but it did not stop attempts to engage in related non-peaceful activities. It is known that in 1982 and 2000 the ROK was conducting secret work on the enrichment of uranium, about which it had to “confess” and inform the IAEA. Although this fact did not lead to a wide-ranging anti-South Korean reaction in the international community, it was a signal that the IAEA had to watch the nuclear activities of Seoul closely too. Experts consider it to have contemporary nuclear technology (about 20 nuclear reactors), putting it on the list of states (more than 30 in all) that the IAEA views as able to build nuclear weapons. In this light, Russia seeks an active role in pursuit of an all-around, diplomatic resolution of the Korean nuclear crisis, turning the peninsula into a zone free of WMD.

Starting from what has been said above, we can specify some characteristics of future Russian policies toward the Korean Peninsula. Russia will continue to try to develop equal relations with both Korean governments on the basis of principles of international law. It will avoid dilatory or hasty changes in policy. Considering the economic situation in the North and the unpredictability of the regime, Russia will accelerate development of economic cooperation with the South. It will exert itself on behalf of disarmament steps, including the withdrawal of armed forces by both sides from areas bordering the DMZ under strict international control. While developing mutually beneficial economic ties with the DPRK, it will strive to establish a mechanism for the inflow of South Korean investment into the Russian economy and take steps for the entrance of Russian business into the high-tech sectors of the South Korean economy, as it also pursues three-sided cooperation in rail transportation linking trans-Korean and Trans-Siberian lines and in other sectors.

Future Russian policy will depend heavily on the overall atmosphere in international relations and especially on relations with the United States. If relations with Washington develop, Moscow can take a more active position, e.g. in urging China to exert greater pressure on the DPRK. In case of deterioration in Russo-U.S. relations, Russia will stick to the prior line of weakening sanctions and verbal exhortations to the North Korean regime. A separate question is Russian behavior in case of sudden destabilization of the situation in the DPRK, connected to the death of the leader and a struggle for power. Here Moscow’s actions would be directed, above all, at reducing the danger of any military conflict, nuclear accident, or uncontrolled exodus of migrants onto its territory. In that situation, it would be ready to cooperate with other DPRK neighbors, above all, the PRC and South Korea, in search of some way to bring the situation under control.

CHINA AND THE KOREAN PENINSULA

In Beijing’s policy toward the Korean Peninsula we can distinguish both overlapping approaches to the DPRK and ROK and specific types of conduct toward each. The main difference in these approaches is that North Korea is an important military and political ally of the PRC in Asia, and South Korea belongs to an opposing camp as a strategic ally of the United States. This distinction, however, is somewhat neutralized by Beijing’s line of

a balanced policy to develop relations with both Koreas. Its approach, which has the most influence on Pyongyang, differs from Moscow's approach. If in Russia only a minority of the elite sympathize with the North's leadership and consider it necessary to maintain it in power, in China there are much more complex feelings about this. On the one hand, one finds great dissatisfaction with Pyongyang's course in developing nuclear weapons, considering their proliferation and possession by such an unpredictable regime unacceptable. On the character of the regime there are also no special illusions. Chinese experts close to ruling circles openly call it "feudal," "dictatorial," "medieval," etc. at international conferences. At the same time, across a wide spectrum of Chinese society, in ruling circles, and especially in the armed forces, there are powerful historical feelings about the North Korean "communist brothers." Relations between the two regimes have a long history, colored by many patriotic myths. China saved the North Korean regime in 1953, sacrificing thousands of "volunteers," whose exploits are remembered in monuments found in many Chinese cities. Still alive and having influence are people who were participants in the war with the South, and scattered across all of North China are memorials to the heroes of that war. For the leadership now to follow a course of complete isolation of North Korea would be to recognize the complete failure and thoughtlessness of its entire policy toward the peninsula, beginning with the formation of the PRC and that thousands of heroes of the Korean War died in vain. This is very hard psychologically and politically.

There is other geopolitical thinking in China, including those who regard the reunification of Korea as inevitable and interference in this process as mindless, citing the need to develop relations with the South and making the most of the unfolding situation. Yet, another point of view is also influential, supporting the opinion that a unified, strong, democratic Korea, in which the United States maintains considerable influence, does not correspond to China's interests since it could become a serious competitor and unfavorably impact on the internal situation in the PRC.

In recent decades China has done a lot to prevent destabilization of the situation in North Korea, which encountered great difficulty (the death of Kim Il-sung; U.S., Japanese, South Korean, and other military, political, and economic pressure; international sanctions, the death of Kim Jong-il). The persistent economic crisis remains a serious destabilizing factor. The (*songun* or military first) line from 1995 is costly, in 2011 comprising about 20 percent of the GDP or \$7.6 billion, and intensification of indoctrination with the ideas of "juche" has driven the country into a dead end. Attempts at quasi-reforms have failed. The ruling elite dares not go close to the edge of economic transformation, recognizing the danger that it would lose power.

The death of Kim Jong-il, a leader who had caused a lot of grief to his ally, was taken quietly in Beijing. The Chinese leadership on the surface reacted positively to Kim's decision to make his young son Kim Jong-un the heir to his power, and even prior to his father's death the son was invited to visit China. The change in party leadership after the 18th Party Congress and later in government positions had little effect on Beijing's support for a leader, who in conditions of international isolation had to listen to Beijing's advice. Under the yoke of severe international sanctions, Pyongyang is widening its economic ties with the PRC, which provides substantial help in energy and foodstuffs. Trade rose from \$3.5 to \$5.6 billion from 2010 to 2011, when they signed a new agreement on economic and technological cooperation.

Chinese business was planting the seeds of its presence in the North Korean economy. Joint management was established on two islands rented by China on the Yalu River and in the Rason trade zone, enclaves until recently run by Jang Song-taek. China invested about \$400 million in developing the zone at Rason, where more than 60 of its firms operated and to which a railway spur from Hunchun was being extended. It declared its readiness to supply to the DPRK credits of more than \$10 billion for developing infrastructure and extracting coal, iron ore, and other mineral deposits. Realization of large projects is scarcely possible, given Security Council sanctions; however, in the opinion of experts, China intentionally “does not notice” Pyongyang’s violations of the sanctions regime, and it is not distinguished by its strict observance of the Security Council resolutions.

China provides substantial humanitarian assistance each year, and unlike the West, does not require monitoring its distribution. Military cooperation also is developing with the DPRK, closed from public purview with both sides limiting official announcements on contacts that occur under an agreement on military and technical cooperation. In light of sanctions, both sides prefer not to advertise their cooperation. The DPRK has a substantial debt of more than \$5 billion, which it hopes will some day be forgiven.

The abrupt removal of Jang Song-taek from the political arena at the end of 2013 raised concern in China. On the one hand, even for the DPRK, it is extraordinary in recent years for one of the highest leaders to be executed, and it is evidence of political instability in a neighbor and ally. On the other, removal of a person with good ties to Beijing along with official charges that he was working on behalf of “another state” (clearly hinting at China) was a blow. At least Chinese were accustomed to working with him. Yet, official responses were restrained, characterizing the matter as “the DPRK’s internal affair” as hope was expressed “to see the DPRK maintain political stability and realize economic development and people there lead a happy life...We hope and believe that China-DPRK economic cooperation and trade will move ahead in a sound and steady manner,” added the foreign ministry spokesmen.⁷ Given the complex military and political situation on the peninsula and the dead end on the nuclear question, Beijing remains careful and vigilant.

Of late, economic ties have acquired more significance in Sino-North Korean relations. Overcoming many obstacles, Chinese business is extending its presence in the Rason economic zone, establishing more than 100 joint ventures with more than 150 Chinese companies working there. Chinese have rented on a long-term lease two wharves at the port of Rajin, and China has a triangular project with the ROK to build a railroad and highway across the entire span of the DPRK, intended to compete with Russia’s triangular project linking the railroad of the ROK and DPRK with Russia’s. Despite its dissatisfaction with the behavior of its strategic ally, China has no intention of altering its fundamental approach, as before regarding it as an important geopolitical factor in its opposition to the United States, whose policies, from China’s point of view are directed against the expansion of China’s influence on the Korean Peninsula and in all of Northeast Asia.

The international isolation into which the United States and its allies drive Pyongyang leave it with no other options besides drawing closer politically and economically to China. As an ally, China can help in overcoming an economic crisis, offering more massive assistance, but Beijing refrains from that as it strives to persuade Pyongyang to start on the path of reform.

“North Korean refugees” in China pose a serious problem, as seen in the recent transfer of more than 30 of them to the DPRK, complicating relations with Seoul, which demands that they be sent to South Korea. An agreement exists with the DPRK whereby each side returns to the other anyone who illegally crossed their border. This is an unwelcome problem, which China promises to solve on the basis of “domestic law and international rights, and in the spirit of humanism.”⁸ Any solution is likely to reflect China’s overall goals: to maintain the stability of the North Korean regime, to strengthen influence over its new leader, to prod him into economic reform to end the deep crisis, and not to allow dangerous exacerbation of the situation on the peninsula.

CHINA AND SOUTH KOREA

China’s policy toward South Korea is well thought out, without leading to the rupture in relations that occurred with Soviet-South Korean normalization. On the whole, it has succeeded in maintaining balanced political relations with both sides, while boosting cooperation with Seoul to a massive scale, climbing to more than \$250 billion in trade and securing 70 percent of the foreign investment by the ROK. The goal is \$300 billion in trade in 2015, as the two sides negotiate the conclusion of an FTA. The rise in economic cooperation is accompanied by cultural influence on both sides. China’s Korea policy is seen with rising concern by a certain part of South Korea’s ruling elite, fearing hegemonism. Seoul has not concealed its disappointment over China’s support for North Korea’s position on the sinking of the Cheonan and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island. In turn, Beijing reacts with growing concern to the intensified ROK-US military-political alliance aimed at the United States incorporating South Korea into a global anti-missile defense. It expressed dissatisfaction with their October 12 agreement on missiles, which gave Seoul the right to extend the range of its rockets from 300 to 800 km.

In the ROK the Koguryo issue drew a sharp reaction. Seoul called the PRC claim that this ancient state was part of China “historical terrorism,” and the public condemned as rewriting history China’s conception of Koguryo as its “regional vassal.” On the South Korean side, scholars “remember” Manchuria in this period belonging to the Korean state, while regarding, as do North Koreans, its territory as the “historical lands of Korea.” Recently a new thorn in bilateral relations is the underground Iedo (Suyan) rock (island), over which Beijing intends to extend its rights, listing it as an object for regular patrols by ship and plane. When China in late 2013 declared its air defense identification zone, Seoul officially protested and declared that it would not recognize the zone. In turn, Beijing is critical about Seoul’s plans to establish a research station in the Yellow Sea on reefs where the exclusive economic zones cross with implications for claims in future negotiations. One more complicating factor is illegal fishing in the ROK economic zone, as in 2011 when the Korean coast guard caught Chinese in the act and one of their officers was killed, resonating in anti-Chinese emotions. Subsequent negotiations to prevent a similar incident did not stop the ROK from strictly controlling such illegal fishing. Uneasiness also occurred over Beijing’s attempt to appropriate the song “Arirang” and other Korean cultural symbols and traditions.

Despite such disturbing elements, China in the foreseeable future will persist in its course of strengthening all-around ties with South Korea, striving to reduce the influence of the

United States and Japan and defend its interests on the southern part of the peninsula. China's significance for South Korean foreign policy noticeably rose after Park Geun-hye became president, as hopes persist for China's help in resolving the nuclear crisis, reestablishing inter-Korean dialogue, and, in the final analysis, reunification. Park's June 2013 visit to Beijing confirmed her vision of relations. This summit showed the intention of both sides to improve strategic cooperation, but standing in the way of such cooperation is the U.S.-ROK alliance.

BEIJING AND INTER-KOREAN RELATIONS

Officially, Beijing supports and does all it can for improving DPRK-ROK relations. They found hope in the "golden decade" of 1998-2008 when relations developed very well in many spheres when Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun were in office. Bilateral trade rose, large-scale economic projects were realized, humanitarian contacts were actively cultivated, and both sides entered into negotiations for reducing military tension on the peninsula. When Lee Myung-bak came to power at the head of the conservative political establishment relations were thrown back to a time of sharp military-political opposition, even to the threshold of military conflict in 2010. Thanks to the efforts of Russia and China the two Korean sides succeeded in averting this danger. Inter-Korean relations are now complex. In 2011 the ROK conducted more than 40 military maneuvers, some involving American forces. At the beginning of 2012 the two undertook new maneuvers in South Korea. All of this aroused Pyongyang, leading in March to an especially intense propaganda war as the two allies proceeded with operation Key Resolve. Many meetings and demonstrations organized in the DPRK called for the "start of a holy war against the traitorous regime of Lee Myung-bak." North Korea continues insistently to seek a South Korean apology for not expressing condolences at the death of Kim Jong-il, making also the following demands:

1. Fulfill the agreements in the joint summit declarations of June 15, 2000 and October 4, 2007
2. Stop accusing the DPRK of participating in the sinking of the Cheonan and shelling of Yeonpyeong
3. Stop military maneuvers aimed against the DPRK
4. Begin practical work for the denuclearization of the peninsula
5. Stop the psychological warfare against the DPRK
6. Restore inter-Korean cooperation and exchanges
7. Accept North Korean proposals to replace the 1953 armistice with a new peace mechanism
8. Abrogate the 1948 national security law and other laws, "directed against the Korean nation and unification of the country"

Pyongyang refused attempts to launch dialogues with the Lee Myung-bak administration and hoped that in the April 2012 parliamentary elections and the December presidential elections forces would come to power with which it would succeed in restoring political dialogue and broadening economic ties—forces standing for resumption of the course of

inter-Korean cooperation of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, which had given birth to hopes in both North and South Korea for reunification. China supports the idea of peaceful unification of Korea through a gradual process, during which attention should concentrate on strengthening security and stability on the peninsula, finding a political resolution of the nuclear crisis, developing dialogue beginning in inter-Korean relations, and realizing various forms of cooperation and exchanges.

Verbally supporting the unity of Korea, Beijing, nonetheless, would never agree to the presence in a unified Korea of foreign military bases and troops. A remark by Kim Dae-jung during his presidency about that possibility was taken extremely negatively by the Chinese. Beijing also fears that further delay in resolving the nuclear problem will provoke a regional arms race, leading to the emergence in Northeast Asia of new nuclear powers (Japan, South Korea, Taiwan). Chinese are actively pressing for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, taking various initiatives to reanimate the negotiating process (Wu Dawei's three-stage plan calls for productive inter-Korean dialogue, then negotiations between the DPRK and the United States, and last, full-fledged Six-Party Talks).

Beijing condemned the DPRK nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, participating actively in the Security Council resolutions that imposed strict sanctions on it. Beijing put pressure on Kim Jong-il, introducing economic restrictions, succeeding in stopping the nuclear weapons program and fulfilling the Joint Statement of Sept. 19, 2005. Despite its general assurances about readiness to return to the Six-Party Talks without conditions, Pyongyang prefers to reach an agreement on the nuclear problem with the United States. China welcomed the February 2012 North Korea-U.S. agreement reached in Beijing for a moratorium on nuclear tests and long-distance rocket launches and to halt the enrichment of uranium and agree to IAEA inspections of nuclear objects. It also approved of the two agreeing to fulfill the obligations set forth by the Six-Party Talks in the Joint Statement. In mid-April Pyongyang's declaration of its launch of a satellite in honor of the centenary of the birth Kim Il-sung drew a sharp negative reaction from the world community. While China did not support this action, it was put in an awkward position and called on Seoul "to preserve peace and show restraint." Plans by Pyongyang to launch missiles were condemned in December as well, by the Russian Foreign Ministry, which appealed on December 3 for it to stop, and on the next day by China, which indicated that it has constantly recommended to Pyongyang not to arouse the world community with such launches, but its opinion has yet to be accepted. When the launch occurred on December 12, the response from Beijing was negative, but less severe than at the time of prior launches.

In February 2013 Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi "firmly" condemned the DPRK's new nuclear test. Tension in bilateral relations led to some incidents of the seizure of Chinese fishing boats by the North Korean coast guard. A strange situation arose: repeatedly recommending that its ally observe the UN sanctions and repeatedly being rebuffed, China "loses face," but it does not adopt more decisive measures. Why? It is not a matter of not being in a position to exert effective pressure, since 90 percent of the DPRK energy and 40-45 percent of DPRK foodstuffs depend on China. Rather, China has not decided and is hardly likely to decide on such sanctions. On the one hand, it is dissatisfied that Pyongyang creates problems for countries in the region and the whole world. Therefore, China joins in UN sanctions and

often expresses its dissatisfaction with the DPRK's actions. On the other hand, we should not forget that the DPRK is the only official ally of the PRC, sealed in a treaty of 1961 obliging each side to respond quickly with military and all other possible means of assistance in the event of an armed attack on the other. This is the only treaty of mutual defense that China has with another country.

A refusal to support the DPRK would signify recognition that the heroes of the war, whose example is taught to schoolchildren, fell in vain. Moreover, for Chinese communists it would be equivalent to wiping away the country's entire foreign policy practically from the formation of the PRC, dealing a serious blow to the PRC's legitimacy. No less important are geopolitical considerations. A majority of official Chinese analysts consider that the main problem with the foreign policy of the country is U.S. attempts to contain its development, for which it organizes along China's entire perimeter a military-political encirclement. In this situation, even a sometimes disobedient, allied DPRK is a useful geopolitical resource. Excessive pressure on it could lead to its economic collapse, bringing a flood of refugees, political instability, etc. Moreover, unification of the two Koreas, which could result from such a collapse, would allow American influence to grow stronger in a new, more powerful state.

For these reasons Beijing strives to apply moderate pressure on Pyongyang, nudging it to a more rational foreign policy and more decisive internal reforms; however, this course scarcely leads to real results. Any serious market reforms would result in more openness, which would lead the people to understand the real situation in the country, bringing about the regime's collapse and reunification. Therefore, Pyongyang is hardly likely to take that path, preferring to continue with a policy of trading threats for assistance.

However the problem of rockets and nuclear weapons unfolds, in our opinion, in the DPRK there is still a chance for managing the situation politically. Beijing continues to support the DPRK, which is an important strategic bastion in its battle with the United States for influence in Northeast Asia, including the Korean Peninsula. In China it is well understood that if there is not out of the ordinary, uncontrolled collapse of the regime, any resolution of the Korean problem, due to its complexity, will require more than one decade. To achieve a comprehensive solution, which assumes above all political resolution of the nuclear crisis, conclusion of a peace treaty in place of the armistice, establishment of constructive relations between the two states on the peninsula, creation of conditions for peaceful coexistence of the DPRK and ROK—all of this is possible under conditions of maintaining the status quo. China's Korean policy is based precisely on this, and will be based in the foreseeable future. Chinese are convinced that normalization of inter-Korean relations and a long period of peaceful coexistence can open the way for a gradual advance to unification of the Korean Peninsula.

CONCLUSION

The approach of Russia and China to the problems of the Korean Peninsula will be determined, even in the long term, by triangular relations with Moscow and Beijing. These very relations are quite strong both due to mutual economic dependence and, to a great degree, to geopolitical reasons. The general state of international relations, especially the rise in tension in Europe, contributes to Moscow and Beijing drawing closer and their joint inclination to contain attempts at world domination by the United States and the West. In connection with this, in the

context of quadrangular relations of Russia-China-DPRK-USA, the tendency is increasing to counteract the attempts by the United States and its allies to liquidate or weaken the North Korean regime with the possibility of more intensive support for the DPRK. Although the DPRK is unpredictable, it is an ally in the overall geopolitical struggle.

The first signs of the softening of the position of Russia regarding the DPRK's military adventurism already are present. The Russian Foreign Ministry did not condemn Pyongyang for its launch of a medium-range rocket of the Nodong class in March 2014. The Information Department only called for "all interested sides to use restraint from actions that could lead to aggravation of the situation on the Korean Peninsula."⁹ Later in March, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia actually laid the blame for the artillery exchange between the two Koreas on Seoul and its allies, accusing them of provoking the North by means of conducting large-scale military exercises.¹⁰

Without doubt, such a change of position was a direct result of the sharp reaction of the West to the reunification of Crimea with Russia. Moscow also in this way expressed its gratitude to Pyongyang for Pyongyang's support for its position during the voting on the question of the legitimacy of the referendum in Crimea at the UN General Assembly, where the DPRK wound up being among only 11 countries that voted against the anti-Russian resolution. Seeking not to be isolated, Russia is striving to strengthen relations with critics of the West in other parts of the world.

It is hard to believe that such changes could proceed without consideration of the position of Russia's strategic partner—the PRC. In contrast to the West, the reaction of Beijing to the hostility to Russia over Ukraine was taken, on the whole, as approval of Russia. China did not support the West in Ukraine since it sees the crisis as engineered by the West aiming at world domination. In countering this tendency, in China's view, Russia is a valuable ally. A commentary by Xinhua news agency on March 7 entitled "The West's Fiasco in Ukraine" was very sympathetic to Russia's actions and critical of those of the West: "Russia may no longer be interested in competing for global preeminence with the West, but when it comes to cleaning up a mess the West created in the country's backyard, Russian leaders once again proved their credibility and shrewdness in planning and executing effective counter moves."¹¹ In short, Beijing is happy that someone was brave and resolute enough to take effective measures against Western "hegemonism." But it is also comfortable that this was not China, and the Ukrainian crisis would not worsen Sino-U.S. relations that China values. It would also divert U.S. attention from an alleged plot of encircling China and limiting its legitimately growing influence in East Asia. Therefore, Beijing rejected any kind of sanctions against Russia. Generally, China sees the current situation in Ukraine as a "mess" created by the West's ineffective and greedy policy. The Xinhua commentary asserted, "For the rest of the world, once again, people see another great country torn apart because of a clumsy and selfish West that boasts too many lofty ideals but always comes up short of practical solutions."¹² By "mess" Beijing usually means a situation created by Western sponsored actions aimed at undermining stable (often authoritarian) regimes all over the world, which in Beijing's opinion can effectively secure the country's economic development and growing cooperation with China. This term was used to describe the Tiananmen crisis in 1989, "color revolutions" in Arab states, etc. Beijing's regime sees countering this tendency even far from China's borders as a means of protecting itself since it understands that

the same tactics can be used by the West in China. From this point of view China would only welcome Russia's growing will to counter Western expansion, and they both may be interested in having Pyongyang on their side.

The only thing China does not officially support is Russia's decision to annex Crimea. That is why it chose to obtain during the voting at the Security Council. Here Beijing's position will be similar to that on the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia: generally supportive of Russia's actions, but not approving of undermining the territorial integrity of existing states. China's approach is determined by its own separatist problems in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

In the current situation the other sides of the hexagon (Japan and South Korea) will be seen by Moscow and Beijing as allies of the United States, and the approach to them will depend on what position they take. Tokyo and Seoul may not want to sacrifice important trade and economic ties with Russia and China on account of European problems distant from them, and will stick to moderate policies. However, in case of serious differences over the DPRK (e.g. the departure of Russia and China from the sanctions regime as a consequence of the growing general confrontation with the West), they will have to more firmly support their allies.

ENDNOTES

1. As quoted in: David E. Sanger, "U.S. Weighs Intercepting North Korean Shipments," *The New York Times*, June 7, 2009, p. A1.
2. Soobshchenie dlia SMI, December 3, 2013, <http://mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rasia.nsf/1083b7937ae580ae432569e7004199c2/44257b100055e10444257c36005ad738!OpenDocument>.
3. "Kommentarii Departamenta informatsii i pechati MID Rossii v svyazi s vozobnovleniem raboty Kesonskogo promyshlennogo kompleksa," August 15, 2013, <http://mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rasia.nsf/1083b7937ae580ae432569e7004199c2/44257b100055e10444257bc800303a7d!OpenDocument>.
4. Oleg Kir'yanov, "*Park Geun-hye* poobeshchala koreitsam ob'edinenie s KNDR," *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, January 7, 2014, <http://www.rg.ru/2014/01/07/obyedineniye-site.html>.
5. "Sovmestnoe kommuniike ministrov inostrannykh del RF i KNR o situatsii na Koreiskom poluostrove," February 27, 2003, <http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rasia.nsf/1083b7937ae580ae432569e7004199c2/31235f84bd5abd2b43256cde00218120!OpenDocument>.
6. "Sovmestnaia deklaratsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Kitaiskoi Narodnoi Respubliki," May 27, 2003, <http://www.rg.ru/oficial/doc/ros-kit.shtm>.
7. "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei's Regular Press Conference on December 13, 2013," <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t1108768.shtml>.
8. KBS World Radio, February 29, 2012.
9. "Commentary of the Department of Information and Print of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia concerning the Launch in the DPRK of a Medium-Range Rocket," March 26, 2014.
10. "Kommentarii Departamenta informatsii i pechati MID Rossii otноситel'no razvitiia obstanovki vokrug Koreiskogo poluostrova," March 31, 2014, <http://mid.ru/bdomp/ns-rasia.nsf/1083b7937ae580ae432569e7004199c2/44257b100055e10444257cac0045e217!OpenDocument>.
11. Ming Jinwei, "The West's Fiasco in Ukraine," Xinhua, March 7, 2014, <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90777/8558083.html>.
12. Ming Jinwei, "The West's Fiasco in Ukraine."



ASIA'S SLIPPERY SLOPE: TRIANGULAR TENSIONS, IDENTITY GAPS, CONFLICTING REGIONALISM, AND DIPLOMATIC IMPASSE TOWARD NORTH KOREA

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: GILBERT ROZMAN, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

■ South Korea's Triangular Relations

Japan-South Korea-U.S. Relations
Sue Mi Terry

The Seoul-Beijing-Tokyo Triangle: Terra-centric Nordpolitik vs. Oceanic Realpolitik
Sung-Yoon Lee

China-South Korea-U.S. Relations
Gilbert Rozman

Russia, China, and the Korean Peninsula
Valery Denisov and Alexander Lukin

■ National Identity Approaches to East and South Asia

Japan's National Identity Gaps: A Framework for Analysis of International Relations in Asia
Gilbert Rozman

National Identity and Attitudes Toward North Korean Defectors
Jiyeon Kim

Bridging the Chinese National Identity Gap: Alternative Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan
Syaru Shirley Lin

Identity and Strategy in India's Asia-Pacific Policy
Deepa M. Ollapally

■ Divergence on Economic Regionalism

Asia-Pacific Regional Economic Integration: U.S. Strategy and Approach
Matthew P. Goodman

Japan and Regional Integration Dominoes: Golden Opportunity or Another Political Failure?
Takashi Terada

Korean Bridge: Balancing Asian Economic Regionalism Between the United States and China
Jin Kyo Suh

China's Choice: To Lead or to Follow on Asian Economic Integration
Zhang Xiaotong

■ New Thinking on Diplomacy Toward North Korea

South Korea's Search for a New Diplomatic Strategy Toward North Korea; Trustpolitik as a Goldilocks Approach?
Shin-wha Lee

What to Do about North Korea
Mark Fitzpatrick

Purge of Jang Song-Taek and its Impact on China's Policy Toward North Korea
Zhu Feng and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga