

**Japan-ROK Security Relations:
An American Perspective**

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About the Author

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Introduction

This monograph explores contemporary Japan-ROK security relations from the perspective of U.S. strategic interests in Asia. Japan and the Republic of Korea have been aligned but not allied since the beginning of the Cold War, and the United States has long been frustrated in its desire to strengthen the Japan-ROK leg of its network of bilateral alliances in Asia. The United States abandoned the goal of encouraging a formal U.S.-Japan-ROK alliance early on in the Cold War, and in the current strategic environment a trilateral alliance would probably be counterproductive. At the same time, however, the fluidity of East Asian security relations today has heightened the dangers of leaving the Japan-ROK security relationship in an ambiguous state. Closer Japan-ROK security cooperation will enhance U.S. efforts to maintain forward presence, manage diplomacy and potential crises on the Korean Peninsula, and integrate China as a cooperative partner in the region. In contrast, distant Japan-ROK relations would complicate all of these U.S. objectives. Hostile Japan-ROK relations, particularly in the context of Korean reunification, would have a spillover effect on Sino-U.S. relations and could return the region to the great-power rivalry of the last century.

The future prospects for closer Japan-ROK security cooperation look bright. Japan has grown increasingly sensitive to the threat from North Korea, particularly since Pyongyang test fired the Taepo-dong ballistic missile over Japanese airspace on August 31, 1998. With the establishment of the Korean Peninsula Economic Development Organization (KEDO) in 1995 and the revision of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines in 1997, Japan has taken its first explicit role in the security of the peninsula. The growth of bilateral Japan-ROK trade has also contributed to strategic convergence between the two countries, particularly after Japan contributed billions of dollars to help rescue the South Korean economy (and exposed Japanese banks) from the financial crisis of 1997 and 1998. Japan and South Korea have also succeeded in resolving contentious historical and fisheries issues. These positive trends and accomplishments culminated in ROK president Kim Dae Jung and Japanese prime minister Obuchi Keizo's declaration of a "New Japan-ROK Partnership for the Twenty-First Century" in October 1998.

At the same time, however, bilateral Japanese and ROK policymaking remains fluid and inconsistent. With large Korean communities in Japan, a thirty-five year legacy of Japanese

colonial occupation of Korea, and direct economic competition in fisheries, electronics, steel, and other sectors, Japan and the ROK each have significant constituencies and emotions that can get in the way of the positive trends in bilateral relations. There are patterns in Japan-ROK relations that could, in a different strategic context, drive the two countries further apart. A dramatic downturn in Asia's economic recovery, sudden reunification of the peninsula, or changes in the United States' security posture in the region are all variables that could bring enormous volatility to Japan-ROK ties.

It is beyond the powers of the United States to resolve the cultural, historical, and territorial issues that complicate Japan-ROK relations. In fact, active U.S. intervention in these issues would probably be counterproductive to our own alliance relationships with each country. However, the United States can reinforce the positive patterns of Japan-ROK cooperation by maintaining a focus on close alliance management with each country and by taking a lead in coordinating trilaterally the diplomacy and defense planning for the peninsula.

This monograph recommends just such a policy of "trilateralism" with Japan and the ROK. The essay begins by connecting U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral relations to U.S. interests in Asia. It then examines the evolution and contemporary dynamics of Japan-ROK relations in order to identify potential sources of convergence and friction between the two countries. Finally, the paper assesses the current patterns of U.S. policy toward Seoul and Tokyo and recommends steps to strengthen ties between Japan and the ROK as well as the overall trilateral relationship with the United States.¹

U.S. Interests in Japan-ROK Security Relations

The "strategic triangle" of choice for most analysts of East Asian security tends to be the U.S.-Japan-China triangle. However, U.S. strategic objectives in the region also hinge on the triangle that links the United States, Japan, and the ROK.

1. Preventing Instability and Promoting Transparency and Confidence-building

With the review of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines and U.S.-ROK concerns about possible instability in North Korea,² the functions of America's two bilateral alliances in Northeast Asia are expanding in ways that have mutual repercussions. The United States has an interest in improving ROK-Japan transparency and confidence building so that the modernization of the two alliances does not lead the two sides to develop force structures that are redundant and—at worst—destabilizing sources of mutual mistrust.

2. Improving Operational Coordination and Deterrence

Joint and combined operations between the Japan Self Defense Force (JSDF) and ROK Forces (ROKF) in the event of a Korean contingency are not a U.S. objective under the review of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines. However, Japanese rear-area support for U.S. forces deploying to the Korean Peninsula, Maritime Self Defense Force (MSDF) minesweeping in the Japan Sea/East Sea, humanitarian relief operations (HRO), and non-combatant evacuation operations (NEO) all are, and these will require significant new levels of communication, demarcation, and coordination on a trilateral basis among the United States, Japan, and the ROK.

3. Maintaining Longer-term Forward Presence

The maintenance of a robust forward U.S. military presence in East Asia, particularly after Korean unification, will also rest on stable Japan-ROK ties. There is a general consensus in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington that the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances should continue after unification of the Korean Peninsula, with some level of military presence in each country.³ These intentions are not without controversy in each country, and there is no doubt that the size of U.S. forces and the command relationships in both Japan and Korea would change significantly after the North Korean threat is gone. Nevertheless, the prospects that Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington will all agree on some sustained U.S. military presence after unification are high. When the functions of the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances were distinct, it did not matter to the operations of U.S. forces that Japan and Korea were “aligned but not allied.” In the future, however, both alliances will have a parallel focus on regional stability and supporting U.S. power projection, leading to numerous areas of overlap between the U.S. military commands and the support functions of Japan and Korea. The maintenance and utility of U.S. forces forward deployed would be seriously complicated by a strategic divergence between Japan and Korea. Conversely, closer Japan-ROK security cooperation would lead to a far more efficient division of roles and missions with U.S. forces in the region.

4. Strengthening Diplomacy toward North Korea

The United States requires stable and cooperative Japan-ROK relations not only to maintain deterrence on the Korean Peninsula, but also to begin reducing tensions and the risks of war. Tightly coordinated U.S.-Japan-ROK approaches to engagement of the North can allow for bigger “carrots,” while putting more pressure on Pyongyang to address security concerns such as missiles, terrorism, and nuclear proliferation. Japan has already agreed to pay \$1 billion of the estimated \$4.7 billion cost for the light-water reactors to be developed in North Korea in exchange for the North abandoning its nuclear-weapons-grade reactor program under the 1994 Agreed Framework. Japan is also expected to pay billions of dollars in reparations to North Korea if Tokyo’s normalization talks with Pyongyang succeed. These payments could become an indispensable tool for negotiating reductions in the North’s arsenals or for reconstruction of the North in any unification process. However, Japan has grown increasingly dissatisfied with engagement of Pyongyang since the North has refused to resolve either the case of Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korean commandos or the development and testing of ballistic missiles that range Japan (both discussed below). There is also growing frustration in Japan with the diplomatic architecture for the peninsula, since Tokyo is not a participant in the Four-Party Talks, where terrorism and missiles are discussed.

5. Integrating China

The state of U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral relations is also an important variable in U.S. diplomacy toward China. A formal U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral alliance would have the potential to provoke a combative Chinese response. On the other hand, a divided U.S.-Japan-ROK trilateral security relationship broadens Beijing’s freedom of diplomatic maneuver and weakens U.S. influence in relations with China. On balance, then, the United States should be doing more to support Japan-ROK security cooperation. Divergent Japanese and South Korean perceptions of Chinese power complicate the U.S. task, and Beijing is playing this division to its advantage by attempting to marginalize Japanese influence in the diplomacy of the Korean Peninsula and by playing up the threat to South Korea presented by Japan’s expanded security role. In the long run, the U.S. alliances with Japan and Korea are multipliers of U.S.

power and prestige in the Pacific, but this will increasingly turn on how the two alliance relationships interact absent the North Korean threat.

Trilateral U.S.-ROK-Japan Security Relations during the Cold War

The U.S.-ROK and U.S.-Japan alliances were both products of the Cold War, but with very different functions and original intent. For the United States, Japan has always been a critical strategic center in Asia. There was little doubt during the Pacific War, for example, that postwar security would require that Japan be closely aligned with the United States, whether rearmed or not. Korea, in contrast, was rarely a critical strategic center for the United States in the Pacific before the Cold War. Theodore Roosevelt was perfectly willing to turn hegemony on the Korean Peninsula over to Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century in order to contain Russian expansion in the Far East.⁴ The United States had every intention to withdraw from the peninsula after the disarmament of Japanese forces at the end of the Pacific War. It was only the North Korean attack on the South in 1950 and the requirements to maintain deterrence and win Seoul's support for the armistice in 1953 that the current U.S.-ROK security relationship was born at all. Throughout the Cold War, the U.S.-Japan alliance has functioned as a base for regional security policy, while the U.S.-ROK alliance has primarily functioned as a deterrent against North Korea. In short, Japan was central to the Cold War of position, while Korea was important in the Cold War of movement.

At the same time, however, the two alliances have had an implicit linkage from the beginning of the postwar period. The Korean War gave birth to the U.S.-Japan alliance, the reconstitution of the Japanese military and conservative political forces, and the recovery of Japanese heavy industry.⁵ Moreover, while the Korean Peninsula may have had only temporary strategic importance to the United States, it has always been central to Japanese strategy. For Japan, the U.S.-ROK alliance ensured that the strategically sensitive Korean Peninsula—the “dagger aimed at the heart of Japan”—would be under the control of a benevolent and allied hegemonic power. For Korea, in turn, the U.S.-Japan alliance effectively “contained” Japan, while providing rear-area bases for operations in the defense of South Korea. Each alliance partner therefore remained highly sensitive to the steps that the United States took with the other. Japan, for example, voiced great concern at President Carter's plans for troop withdrawals from the Korean Peninsula and eventually took steps through the 1978 Defense Guidelines to assure that Washington remained committed to Japan's defense.⁶ In a more recent example, the government of Kim Young Sam warned visiting Japanese politicians in March 1997 that any withdrawal of U.S. Marines from Okinawa would undermine stability on the Korean Peninsula.⁷

During the Cold War the United States tried to build on these implicit strategic linkages to strengthen the Japan-Korea leg of the trilateral relationship, but with little success. On the Japanese side there was fear that entrapment in U.S. strategy for the Korean Peninsula would jeopardize Japanese sovereignty and the domestic consensus behind the pacifist principles of the Constitution and the Yoshida Doctrine. Consequently, the Japanese government moved steadily away from committing itself to a role in the defense of South Korea in the decades after the Korean War. Prime Minister Sato Eisaku in his 1968 Summit Communiqué with President Richard Nixon broke the trend when he declared that “the security of the Korean Peninsula is essential to Japan,” but his statement was part of a trade-off in exchange for the

return of Okinawa from the United States, and the Japanese government made great efforts in the wake of the Sato statement to bury the explicit Japanese connection to Korean security. In 1972, for example, Foreign Minister Kimura Toshio (Tanaka Cabinet) asserted that there was no threat to South Korea or Japan from the North.⁸ Then in 1978, when the United States and Japan tried to codify their defense cooperation in the first Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, the Japanese government resisted all U.S. attempts to include specific language about Korea or even the Far East.⁹

On the Korean side, the tone was set by Singman Rhee's openly hostile Japan policy from 1948 to 1960.¹⁰ Even when one side demonstrated initiative, the effort was usually undermined before normalization talks could begin. Japan's best efforts to establish normalization in 1953 (under U.S. pressure) were stalled because of nationalistic statements by the chief Japanese negotiator on the causes of the war (a recurring problem for Tokyo in its relationship with Seoul). Talks did not resume in a substantive way until 1958. When Park Chung Hee demonstrated a willingness to resolve normalization on the Korean side after coming to power, he was thwarted by Japanese media and political criticism of the 1961 coup d'état. Not until 1965 was normalization achieved, largely because of the pressing South Korean need for economic assistance and the Japanese interest in the Korean economy. Security ties between Tokyo and Seoul remained virtually nonexistent.

By the early 1980s growing Soviet military power in the Far East began reinforcing a common threat perception in both Seoul and Tokyo. In this period, the United States and Japan began the first serious bilateral military planning to defend Japan and its strategic sea lanes—defense plans that implicitly linked defense of the Japanese homeland to the containment of Soviet power projection throughout the region (by coincidence of geography). Japan's expanded threat perception was clear in Defense White Papers in the early 1980s that cited the danger of Soviet and North Korean capabilities.¹¹ As the pressure of the new Cold War strengthened the Reagan administration's relations with the governments of both Chun Doo Hwan in Seoul and Nakasone Yasuhiro in Tokyo, the Japanese and Korean leaders pursued a more proactive partnership with each other. Nakasone made the first state visit by a Japanese prime minister to the Republic of Korea in January 1983. With Ito-chu counselor Sejima Ryuzo as his special emissary, Nakasone had reached a \$4 billion loan package agreement with the Chun government and had convinced Chun to release opposition leader Kim Dae Jung from prison (Kim had been kidnapped from a Tokyo hotel in 1973 and was a high-profile figure in the Japanese media). In Seoul, Nakasone referred to the need for a "penitent attitude regarding the past."¹² Chun reciprocated with a state visit to Tokyo the next year. United by closer security relations with the United States and a strong personal relationship between Chun and Nakasone, Seoul and Tokyo began a tentative exploration of indirect security contact in the mid-1980s, through rolling bilateral exercises with the United States such as RIMPAC, and joint training between USAF units from Korea and the Japan Air Self Defense Forces.¹³

The Nakasone-Chun summits established a precedent that was built upon throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s. In 1990, for example, Japanese prime minister Kaifu Toshiki agreed in his summit with South Korean president Roh Tae Woo to coordinate all Japanese policy toward the DPRK and to proceed with normalization talks with the North at a pace acceptable to Seoul. With this baseline established in Seoul, Japan opened normalization talks with Pyongyang in 1991. Subsequent Japan-ROK summits were noted for their informal setting and detailed substance.¹⁴ After deposing the LDP in 1993, Prime Minister Hosokawa Morihiro made his first foreign visit to Seoul, where he tried for a new break-

through in bilateral relations by offering a personal apology for Japan's subjugation of Korea. His counterpart, Kim Young Sam, reciprocated by promising a "new era of Japan-ROK ties."¹⁵

But Japan and Korea were not yet ready for this new era. As Chong-Sik Lee notes in his account of Japan-Korea relations through the 1980s, the generally positive trajectory set by normalization in 1965 and the Nakasone-Chun summits in the 1980s masked unresolved bilateral issues:

In their eagerness to pursue their respective aims, both sides pushed aside their historical animosity and emotional conflicts. Detractors were unwelcome, and Japanese and South Korean leaders made no attempt to build a bridge of genuine understanding.¹⁶

The 1990s presented difficult tests to the Japan-ROK relationship: an unpredictable and increasingly dangerous North Korea; a return to the unresolved and highly political issues of history, fisheries, and territories; and the challenge of financial collapse. By 1998 Seoul and Tokyo emerged from these trials with what diplomats on both sides called "real normalization"—but not before passing through some of the best and worst chapters in the two countries' postwar relations.

The Dynamics of Current Japan-ROK Security Relations

Political Relations: The Fisheries and Territorial Disputes

Given Japan's overriding interest in maintaining influence on and stable relations with the Korean Peninsula, and Seoul's interest in managing possible instability in North Korea, one would expect a deliberate effort to increase bilateral cooperation in the fluid strategic environment of the post-Cold War era. In short, one would expect that both governments would have followed through on the Hosokawa-Kim 1993 pledge to usher in a "new era of Japan-ROK ties."

Unfortunately, that new era proved elusive over the next few years. In 1994 Hosokawa's reform coalition was replaced (after being briefly run by Hata Tsutomu) by an LDP-Socialist-Sakigake coalition that had difficulty sustaining the momentum set by Miyazawa and Hosokawa in relations with South Korea. The coalition's prime minister, Murayama Tomiichi, was personally supportive of the spirit of Hosokawa's approach to Seoul, but as a Socialist he had been nurtured on ties to Pyongyang and had few personal connections with the South's leadership. Moreover, the Liberal Democratic Party called the shots on his foreign policy and successfully watered down a planned Diet apology on the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War in 1995, causing new friction in bilateral relations with South Korea.¹⁷

Bilateral ties took a further beating in 1996 with the controversy over the small islands of Takeshima (in Japanese)/Tokdo (in Korean). Of marginal strategic importance themselves, the rocks become crucial as markers of each nation's Exclusive Economic Zone under the United Nations Law of the Sea Convention. The Japanese Foreign Ministry's assertion of a territorial claim over the islands provoked an unexpected nationalist reaction from President Kim Young Sam himself in 1996, which in turn agitated rightists in Japan. Japanese offers to settle the dispute in the World Court were rejected by the South Korean side, which insisted that the only solution was for Japan to drop its claim. Kim ordered military maneuvers near

the rocks in February 1996. Meanwhile, Murayama's successor, Prime Minister Hashimoto Ryutaro, had his own ties to nationalists as former chair of Izzokukai, the Japanese War Bereaved Families Association.¹⁸

The Japanese and Korean foreign ministries managed to turn down the flames on the Takeshima/Tokdo dispute by 1997, but a closely related dispute over the bilateral fisheries treaty exploded the fall of the same year to further undermine ties between Seoul and Tokyo. The original Japan-ROK Fisheries Treaty was concluded as part of normalization in 1965 and serves as the principal bilateral agreement and channel for diplomatic negotiations between the two countries. The recent dispute had two sides, of course. The South Korean side claimed that Japan's unilateral decision to implement a straight baseline for its twelve-nautical-mile sovereignty and two-hundred-mile EEZ has frozen South Korean fishermen out of their own territory. The Japanese side claimed that Seoul failed to prevent repeated violations of original Japanese territorial waters by South Korean fishermen based on the principle of self-policing inherent in the treaty. Korean fishermen were arrested and (according to the Korean press) beaten. Japanese fishing boats were rammed.¹⁹

Throughout this period, U.S. officials asked Japan to avoid confrontation with Seoul over the fisheries dispute and South Korean president-elect Kim Dae Jung sent a special envoy to Japan in January of 1998 to promise a more conciliatory approach under his new administration. Kim has also invited the Japanese emperor to make a historic trip to Korea. Despite these gestures, however, the Japanese government notified Seoul in January 1998 that it intended to terminate the fisheries agreement, a procedure permitted by Article 10 of the 1965 Treaty.

Why did Japan allow such a confrontational approach, given the strategic imperative of maintaining strong ties to Seoul? The Japanese Foreign Ministry clearly wished to resolve the dispute amicably. However, domestic politics confounded its efforts. The elite ties between Seoul and Tokyo have frayed in recent years. Kim Dae Jung's coalition partner Kim Jong Pil has a long history of connections with the LDP, but the president's own party does not. Thus, within Nagata-cho (Tokyo's legislative district) the logic of the dispute centered almost entirely on domestic considerations. The LDP fisheries caucus was headed by Sato Koko, who was forced out of the Hashimoto Cabinet because of lingering embarrassment over his arrest in the famous Lockheed scandal of the 1970s. Sato, perhaps with a vendetta in mind, pushed a hard line against the Japanese government and the South Koreans. No major LDP figure dared (or cared enough to) challenge him on behalf of Japan-ROK ties.²⁰ This was true of even Takeshita Noboru, Japan's most powerful politician and the nominal head of the Japan-ROK Dietmember's Friendship League.

In his February 1998 inaugural speech, Kim Dae Jung announced his intention to improve relations with Japan, and one of the first acts of his new foreign minister was to reinstate talks on the fisheries dispute.²¹ More importantly, the South Korean side invited Sato for direct talks in Korea in June before formally reopening the negotiations.²² It was his first trip to Seoul, and Sato was treated as an honored guest by Kim Dae Jung and Prime Minister Kim Jong Pil. Meanwhile, back in Tokyo Takeshita arranged for considerable sums of public construction in the nation's fisheries ports (some things still did work in the LDP). The Korean side also reestablished voluntary fishing limits off Japan, which had been lifted when Tokyo unilaterally suspended the treaty in January. Sato and the fisheries caucus began to soften.²³ On the eve of the Kim Dae Jung visit, Sato huddled in Tokyo with leaders of his fisheries caucus and their South Korean counterparts. The two sides were close to an agreement, but had deadlocked on where the fishing zones would be separated. Late in the evening

on September 24, Prime Minister Obuchi intervened, inviting the negotiating parties to his official office (the *kantei*) where he patiently worked with the two sides until a settlement was reached early in the hours of the 25th.²⁴ Under the agreement, the line between each country's fishing area was drawn at 135.30 degrees east longitude; a midway point between the boundary that each country had been claiming. Current catch limits were also maintained for three years.²⁵ Kim Dae Jung signed the agreement in Tokyo on October 7.

The successful resolution of the fisheries issue was influenced by exogenous factors, such as the North Korean Taepo-dong launch and Japan's diplomatic maneuvering vis-à-vis China, but at its core it was handled where the problem originated—in the domestic political arena. The LDP was satisfied because the party's hard line forced the Korean side to compromise on the demarcation line. But ultimately that hard line could have led to increased confrontation with the ROK, had it not been for Kim Dae Jung's personal commitment to strengthening ties with Tokyo and Obuchi's personal intervention at the last minute. As it was, the South Korean opposition almost defeated the new treaty in the National Assembly because the territorial issue remained unresolved.²⁶ The resolution of the impasse was a near miss that demonstrated how far Japan-Korea ties had come, and how many potential areas for bilateral confrontation remain beneath the surface in each side's political system.

Toward Closure on the History Issue

In the midst of the fisheries negotiations, one of the key Japanese players almost scuttled the talks with controversial statements to the press about Japan's historical relationship with South Korea. Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Nakagawa Shoichi, a young nationalist LDP politician from Hokkaido and one of the key negotiators in the fisheries talks, was also the founder of a group of young Japanese Dietmembers dedicated to the drafting of more patriotic history textbooks for Japan's public schools.

Frustrated with the pace of negotiations with the Koreans, Nakagawa told reporters on July 31, 1998, that the government should stop highlighting negative aspects of Japan's past in history textbooks. He touched on one hot-button issue, in particular—accounts that the Japanese imperial army had maintained forced prostitution of so-called “comfort women” from Korea for the front-line troops.²⁷ The Foreign Ministry nervously held its collective breath. Japan-Korea normalization talks had collapsed for ten years over similar statements by a leading Japanese negotiator in 1953 and accounts of Nakagawa's statement would undoubtedly appear in the Korean press the next day.

The comfort women issue plagued Japan-Korea relations from the time it first surfaced in the Japanese Diet in 1990. Initially, the government maintained that the women were recruited and controlled by private firms and were therefore not the responsibility of the imperial army or the current Japanese government. However, in 1992 documents were discovered in the Defense Agency archives that demonstrated the imperial army's role in recruiting and controlling the comfort women stations during the war, and Tokyo had to change its line of argument. In 1993 Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono Yohei issued a report acknowledging the responsibility of the imperial army and offering his “heartfelt apology and deep remorse” to all those affected.²⁸ However, nationalists in the LDP would not allow the government to offer compensation to the victims or to declassify remaining archival records that would allow a full accounting of individual cases. Instead, the Japanese government established a private Asian Women's Fund (*Josei no tame no Ajia Heiwa Kokumin Kikin*) which distributed \$17,000 and a private letter from Prime Minister Hashimoto to each of seven victims in

Seoul in January 1997. The Kim Young Sam government immediately protested the Japanese side's inadequate handling of the issue and demanded government compensation.²⁹ Japan would not respond. Once again Kim Dae Jung stepped into the breach, arranging in April 1998 for the Korean government to compensate individual victims and dropping the demand for official Japanese compensation.³⁰ Still, the problem festered in the Korean and Japanese press, and Nakagawa was threatening to reopen the controversy.

To the amazement of the Japanese press and the delight of the Foreign Ministry, however, almost nothing happened after the Nakagawa bombshell. The Kim government made no formal protest, as was typical in the past in such circumstances, and the Korean president ignored the issue when he called Prime Minister Obuchi to congratulate him on his inauguration the day after the news hit. Meanwhile, Nakagawa continued to play a central role in the fisheries negotiations as a leader in the LDP fisheries caucus, and he was with Sato Koko throughout all of the staged kabuki of the final negotiating session in the prime minister's office. Instead of becoming a problem in the bilateral relationship, he became a key player in finding the solution.

The Nakagawa flap demonstrated once again the ability of the Japanese and Korean governments to manage even the domestic problems associated with the two countries' troubled past—when they have a common purpose. Kim Dae Jung set the tone early, offering as a candidate to invite the Japanese emperor to Korea and declaring as president-elect to then foreign minister Obuchi in March 1998 that Korea should acknowledge Japanese contributions in exchange for Japan acknowledging its history. After taking office in February 1998, Kim took other steps to ease the way for an apology from Japan: unilaterally compensating comfort women; referring officially to Akihito as the “emperor” for the first time in ROK history; and agreeing to lift the long-standing ban on Japanese cultural imports into Korea (including TV, movies, *manga* cartoons, and popular songs).³¹

The Kim Dae Jung formula for resolving the history problem—a Japanese apology coupled with a Korean expression of appreciation for Japan's role—formed the basis for bilateral negotiation on a historic joint declaration for the Kim-Obuchi summit. Japan had struggled with the apology problem for decades without reaching closure. In 1984 Emperor Hirohito expressed “regret” for the past (*makoto ikan de ari*) in a state dinner for visiting president Chun Doo Hwan, sentiments his successor Akihito repeated in future state visits from the ROK. Prime ministers also expressed their personal remorse beginning with Nakasone's call for “a penitance attitude regarding the past” during his visit to Seoul in January 1983, and continuing through Hosokawa's statement of “deep remorse and heartfelt apology” at Kyongju in November 1993.³² However, the Japanese government had never been able to muster domestic political support for a national statement of apology, which was Obuchi and Kim's goal for the October 1998 summit.

Nationalist politicians from the LDP and the Liberal Party protested the early drafts of the declaration in the week before Kim's visit to Japan, but in the end only nineteen members of the Diet signed a petition urging the government not to apologize.³³ The domestic path was clear in both countries for a statement of closure on the historical problem. The October 8 joint declaration did just that:

President Kim Dae Jung expressed appreciation for Japan's contributions to and the Japanese role in the international community, including the United Nations, and expressed expectations that these kinds of contributions and role will be increased in the future.

Prime Minister Obuchi regarded in a spirit of humility the fact of history that Japan caused, during a certain period in the past, tremendous damage and suffering to the people of the

Republic of Korea through its colonial rule, and expressed his deep remorse and heartfelt apology for this fact.³⁴

The resolution of the apology issue in the October 1998 Obuchi-Kim summit was critical to the success of the summit and the credibility of Kim and Obuchi's joint declaration on a new partnership. As the director of MOFA's Korea division noted in a postmortem in the ministry's journal *Gaiko Forum* in December, the joint declaration established the "real" normalization between the two countries that was not possible after 1965.³⁵ And in contrast to the 1965 normalization process, the summit enjoyed a significant level of support in both countries. In South Korean opinion polls conducted the weeks after the summit, 80 percent of the Japanese responded that the two countries had at last reached closure on the history issue.³⁶ In South Korea, leading editorials in the major dailies applauded the joint declaration and Japan's apology, while reminding readers that some issues such as the sovereignty of Tokdo and the fate of the comfort women still needed work.

The Japanese apology contrasted sharply with the summit meeting with Chinese leader Jiang Zemin two months later. What accounted for the success of Japan and Korea in managing the history issue? To begin with, the international context mattered. The growing North Korean threat to Japan and unease with rising Chinese influence led to a new strategic appreciation in Tokyo of the importance of Japan-ROK ties. Moreover, in contrast to China's approach to the history problem, South Korea accepted the Japanese apology and responded with expressions of support for a larger Japanese role in the United Nations and the region. The initiative and patience displayed by Kim Dae Jung in opening to Japan also made a strong impression in Tokyo (and led Japanese in opinion surveys to list him third after Blair and Clinton as the most popular world leader).³⁷ Finally, there was the economic dimension of the bilateral relationship, a variable that contributed to a resolution of the history problem in 1998, but could become a destabilizing factor in the future.

Economic Relations: Competition and Interdependence

A critical factor behind the gradual establishment of political cooperation between Japan and South Korea in the three decades after normalization was the growing economic relationship between the two countries. Japan has become South Korea's second largest trading partner after the United States, and Korea's leading source of investment. At the same time, the economic relationship has been asymmetrical and often contentious, given persistent trade imbalances in Japan's favor and increasingly fierce export competition between the two countries in steel, shipbuilding, semiconductors, and consumer electronics.³⁸

The eruption of South Korea's currency crisis in late 1997 had the potential to exacerbate these tensions in bilateral economic relations. The depreciation of the yen was seen by many in Seoul as one of the causes of the collapse of the won that year. Moreover, the refusal of Japanese banks to roll over South Korean debt in December 1997 was the specific trigger of the South's currency reserve crisis. In addition, as the crisis spread, Japan's failure to stimulate its own economy denied South Korea its best hope to export its way out of the economic crisis without overloading the U.S. market.³⁹

By the time of the Kim-Obuchi summit in October 1998, however, the economic crisis was acting as a greater force for mutual dependence and cooperation than acrimony and conflict between Japan and Korea. South Korea's financial crisis revealed the Japanese banks' high level of exposure in South Korea. Japan accounted for over one-third of all foreign bank claims on South Korean debt in 1997 and, ironically, some of Japan's strongest banks at

home were the most exposed in Korea (including Tokyo-Mitsubishi).⁴⁰ If South Korea's financial system collapsed, many in the Japanese Ministry of Finance feared, Japan's banks could go down with it. MOF barely hesitated before pledging US\$10 billion to South Korea as part of the initial IMF package (\$21 billion from the IMF, \$10 billion from the World Bank, \$4 billion from the Asian Development Bank, and \$20 billion from the G-7 countries, half of which was Japanese).

The IMF crisis also accelerated trends toward greater mutual economic opening by ending many of the government-chaebol policies that had kept Japanese companies from investing in key sectors of the Korean economy. As Yonsei University professor Ahn Byung-joon pointed out in the pages of the *Munhwa Ilbo* in January 1998, Tokyo decided on an early release of \$3.3 billion earmarked for the bailout, but "announced support only after securing promises from Seoul that South Korea would open its own markets and implement structural changes in the economic system."⁴¹ Though Japan was not subject to the same stringent IMF requirements for restructuring, the process of deregulation in Japan (incremental though it may be) will likely open the Japanese market to greater South Korean imports and investment.

Kim Dae Jung was inclined to improve relations with Japan even before the economic crisis hit, but Japanese financial assistance to South Korea in late 1997 clearly eased his task at home. Under the 1998 Kim-Obuchi joint declaration Japan's Export-Import Bank signed a memorandum of understanding with Korea's Ministry of Finance to provide an additional \$3 billion in untied loans for small-to-medium sized South Korean firms. The two leaders also signed a new tax treaty, removing preferential tax treatment for South Korea and establishing a preferential system of incentives through 2003 to encourage Japanese investment in the ROK.⁴² Japan's Keidaren and the Federation of Korean Industries followed the summit with an agreement to coordinate a reduction in overlapping capacity between the two countries and to explore the creation of a bilateral free trade zone in the future. This was an ambitious agenda with little likelihood of implementation, but few would have endorsed such a bold vision of cooperation before the economic crisis.⁴³

At the same time, however, the seeds of potential future economic confrontation were also sown with the South's financial crisis. A further drop in the value of the yen will put increased pressure on South Korean exports and could undermine Seoul's program for economic recovery. And long-term devaluation of the yen is one likely scenario as Tokyo seeks to retire its own massive banking sector debt.⁴⁴ On the other hand, if the yen does not collapse, there is a danger of "carpetbagging" as Japanese firms take advantage of Seoul's incentives for FDI. For the foreseeable future, however, the net effect of Japanese bank exposure in Korea and Seoul's requirement for FDI and loans will serve to reinforce political cooperation between the two countries.

Relations with North Korea

Japan's coordination with the ROK on policy toward North Korea has generally improved over the past few years, but much more could be done. In the past, Japanese initiatives toward North Korea, such as Kanemaru Shin's high-profile delegation to Pyongyang in 1990, have reinforced South Korean suspicions that Tokyo's objective is to keep the peninsula divided.⁴⁵ However, in Japan-ROK summit meetings since the Kanemaru mission, the Japanese side has been careful to reaffirm its commitment to proceed with Japan-DPRK relations only at a pace acceptable to Seoul. Japan has further turned the initiative over to Seoul in relations with the North by agreeing to observer status in the Four-Party Talks. Comfortable with

Japan's interactions with the North, Kim Dae Jung has expressed a readiness to see improvements in DPRK-Japan ties—including normalization—provided that Tokyo not move ahead of Seoul.

However, the problem is increasingly not one of too much Japanese opening toward the North, but rather too little. Japan attempted to jump-start normalization talks with North Korea in a series of working-level preparatory meetings in Beijing in August 1997, but these stalled quickly on the cases of alleged kidnapping of Japanese citizens by North Korean commandos.⁴⁶ The heavy Japanese media focus on North Korean misdeeds also raised new issues in the negotiations, including the fate of 1,800 Japanese wives of North Korean citizens and the status of Japanese Red Army terrorists in asylum in the North. Pyongyang, desperate for food aid, allowed fifteen carefully screened wives to visit Japan in November 1998 and made symbolic gestures to an LDP delegation about investigating the Japanese charges on kidnapping.⁴⁷ This was enough to free up \$28 million in Japanese emergency assistance through the UN World Food Program, but not enough to jump-start normalization talks. Opposition to normalization hardened in the LDP—ironically, even after the new Kim Dae Jung government encouraged Japan to move ahead with normalization as part of the South's "sunshine" policy toward the North.

On August 31, 1998, Japan-DPRK relations went from neutral into hard reverse when North Korea launched the three staged Taepo-dong ballistic missile directly over Japanese airspace. Tokyo immediately suspended its already fruitless negotiations with the DPRK in Beijing and announced that it would suspend all food aid for the North and financial support for KEDO.⁴⁸ Angry LDP politicians called for even harsher responses. LDP secretary Mori Yoshiro, who had led the Japanese delegation to Pyongyang the year before, warned that "a war could have broken out."⁴⁹ The party's Policy Affairs Research Council began investigating measures to cut off remittances to the North from North Koreans residing in Japan.⁵⁰ Some LDP political leaders argued that Japan should have the right and the capability to counterattack in such circumstances.⁵¹ As an assessment of the missile crisis in the Japanese journal *Foresight* concluded, the Taepo-dong demonstrated for the first time "the real possibility of direct attack on Japan" by North Korea.⁵²

On September 2, immediately after Tokyo announced its hard-line response to the North, a U.S. official told reporters on background that Japan's tough rhetoric would not stop the light-water reactor project.⁵³ In the end the official was right. Tokyo had cut off its direct negotiating channel with the DPRK and was not about to withdraw from KEDO, the only remaining outlet for Japan to engage in security issues on the peninsula. Still, the Japanese side expected that Washington and Seoul would at least keep the DPRK waiting. The Taepo-dong launch occurred only hours before the KEDO board of directors was preparing to sign its cost-sharing agreement in New York on August 31, and under Japanese pressure the board had postponed the signing indefinitely.⁵⁴ In direct bilateral U.S.-DPRK negotiations concluded on September 5, however, the U.S. side moved in a completely different direction from Japan, agreeing with Pyongyang to "accelerate" the light-water reactor schedule for KEDO.⁵⁵ The State Department later announced that the DPRK was in fact attempting to launch a communications satellite on the Taepo-dong, a statement that the Obuchi government viewed as further undermining its firm stance toward Pyongyang. The reaction in Tokyo to Washington's rapid reengagement of Pyongyang after the missile launch was anger and embarrassment.

Under heavy pressure from Washington and Seoul, the Obuchi government eventually signed the KEDO cost-sharing agreement on November 10, 1998, pledging to contribute

US\$1 billion to the light-water reactor project.⁵⁶ However, the Taepo-dong crisis catalyzed growing dissatisfaction within the LDP and MOFA with both the U.S. and Japanese formulas for managing the North Korea problem. Japan's direct negotiating pipe to the North had clogged, the Four-Party formula was not addressing Japanese security concerns (particularly about missiles),⁵⁷ direct U.S.-DPRK negotiations were showing symptoms of "Japan-passing"—and all of this while North Korea was demonstrating a willingness and a capability to inflict direct damage on downtown Tokyo.

Tokyo attempted to reopen talks towards normalization with the North in early 1999. Given the Kim Dae Jung government's "sunshine" policy of engaging North Korea, the Japanese Foreign Ministry recognized that it could not be the only nation in Northeast Asia attempting to isolate Pyongyang. However, the Japanese public's hurdle for satisfaction on the kidnapping and missile issues is so high that the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo will have an extremely difficult time winning adequate concessions from Pyongyang. Meanwhile, the LDP and the Japanese media have a significantly lower threshold for North Korean provocations, and further missile launches or revelations about terrorist activities would quickly undermine the already bleak prospects for changes in Japan-DPRK relations.

Security Cooperation

Despite ripples in the U.S.-Japan relationship caused by the Taepo-dong launch, the North Koreans must be thanked for sparking Tokyo's interest in the deliberate institutionalization of political and security coordination with Seoul and trilaterally with the United States. When South Korean newspapers polled Japanese citizens about the 1998 Kim-Obuchi summit, over 70 percent pointed to the two leaders' agreement to "cooperate on international peace and security" as the summit's most significant accomplishment.⁵⁸ This positive view of security cooperation bodes well for future efforts, but the institutional framework for cooperation is fragile, and still depends largely on U.S. initiative.

The U.S. State Department has held trilateral consultations with the policy planning staffs and the Asian bureaus of the Japanese and Korean foreign ministries at least since the 1993–94 nuclear crisis. The establishment of KEDO in 1995 added further regularity to the trilateral consultation process. Meanwhile, trilateral *defense* dialogue moved from ad hoc unofficial sessions in the early 1990s to regular official meetings in 1997 as the U.S. Defense Department and the JDA sought to explain the new Defense Guidelines to the ROK side. The U.S. and Japanese governments took the transparency of the Guidelines Review process seriously, issuing a public interim report in July 1997 and holding trilateral meetings with the ROK Ministry of Defense in March 1997, May 1997, and April 1998, which included detailed briefings on the new Guidelines and trilateral discussions of the appropriate scope of U.S.-Japan operations around the Korean peninsula in a contingency.⁵⁹ While these meetings fell well short of actual contingency planning, they did reinforce ROK understanding of and support for the new U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines when they were concluded in September 1997. Overall, as journalist Kil Jeong Woo noted, the Korean attitude was one of "support with caution."⁶⁰

The Japanese government was initially cautious and incremental about the process of defense dialogue with Seoul, both in trilateral and bilateral settings, since the implications for the constitutional ban on "collective defense" were unclear and the Diet was likely to ask tough questions. After the Taepo-dong launch, however, the Japanese government found new religion in security cooperation with Seoul. Tokyo called a trilateral meeting at the assis-

tant-secretary level the week after the launch, and the JDA began consultations with the ROK Ministry of Defense on ways to build a trilateral “joint defense framework” in the future. As early symbols of this still undefined framework, the JDA and the ROK Ministry of Defense agreed to hold joint naval search-and-rescue exercises and to establish a bilateral hotline for crisis management.⁶¹ A more powerful symbol of the new shape of ROK-Japan security cooperation was the October 1998 Japan-ROK joint declaration, which pledged to increase defense exchanges and consultations and to establish regular bilateral cabinet meetings.⁶²

Second-track security dialogue has expanded as well. Particularly noteworthy are the RAND, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA), and Japan National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS) meetings. Similar trilateral forums for security consultations have been organized by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) with the Japan Research Institute for Peace and Security and the Korean Institute for National Unification; and by the American Korea and Japan Societies with CSIS Pacific Forum, the Yoido Society of Korea, and the Okazaki Institute in Japan (the so-called “KJ Shuttle”).⁶³

Most of these first- and second-track forums are consultative in nature, and could not yet be described as formal policy or operational coordination mechanisms. They clearly fall well short of moving Japan and South Korea from “quasi-alliance” to formal alliance. However, they do reflect some convergence of the explicit security agenda of both Tokyo and Seoul. Korean interest in the revision of the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines and Japanese concerns about new North Korean threats to the Japanese home islands have forced both sides to take security dialogue and cooperation more seriously. Tokyo and Seoul also share a common interest in the long-term U.S. defense commitments in the region. Other areas of common security interest that fuel these consultations include ensuring freedom of navigation; supporting multilateral security forums such as ARF; supporting the development of the Russian Far East; engaging China; and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.⁶⁴

Despite the convergence of immediate Japanese and Korean security concerns, however, major obstacles to security cooperation are evident in the patterns of contemporary consultations on defense. First, the Japanese side is hampered by a lack of consensus regarding the constitutionality of defense coordination with the ROK, while the ROK is still reluctant to empower Japan as a player in Korean Peninsula security and reunification matters. Second, there is a potential for divergence between Japanese and ROK responses to North Korean provocations in the near term. Seoul, for example, would probably tolerate additional North Korean Taepo-dong missile launches over Japan, since the South has lived with a direct military threat for decades and is eager to avoid confrontation with Pyongyang at this delicate juncture. Tokyo, on the other hand, would have little tolerance for additional Taepo-dong launches. Finally, Seoul and Tokyo diverge somewhat in their long-term strategic view of China. Tokyo is increasingly focusing on the potential threat from China, and Seoul has not completely abandoned the notion of a future threat from Japan,⁶⁵ while it continues to accommodate Chinese views more than Tokyo has been.⁶⁶

What Do These Dynamics Suggest for the Future?

If the current patterns of Japanese relations with the two Koreas teach Japanese diplomats and foreign analysts anything, it is to not make predictions about the future of those relations. Still, as this brief survey demonstrates, there are certain trends in Japan’s diplomacy

toward the peninsula that are building, patterns that are being repeated, and variables that have to be watched.

The first trend is Japan's growing aspiration to play a role in the security and diplomacy of the peninsula. After three decades of avoiding the Korea clause in the 1968 Sato-Nixon Communiqué, Japanese politicians and diplomats now freely acknowledge that "the security of the Korean Peninsula is essential to Japan's security." Though the new U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines are not scenario-based, there is no doubt that they apply to the Korean Peninsula. And while KEDO is ostensibly an energy organization, there is no doubt that through it Japan is participating in the most important confidence-building measure on the peninsula. Many in Tokyo are eager to expand their security portfolio on the peninsula to include increased trilateral U.S.-Japan-ROK security consultations, and a new six-power forum to complement the Four-Party Talks.

The second trend is the steadily emerging strategic convergence between Seoul and Tokyo. There is strong public support in Japan for enhancing bilateral security and political cooperation with Seoul based on the agenda outlined in the Kim-Obuchi joint declaration. This support derives from the growing North Korean threat to Japan, a recognition of mutual economic interests, and a sense of closure on the historical issue with Korea. The "China factor" is also at play.

The third trend is the deteriorating pipe between Japan and North Korea. The trend lines are not good for Japan's existing modus operandi for dialogue with Pyongyang. The North Korean community in Japan is losing money and interest in supporting Kim Jong Il. The Socialist Party has collapsed. LDP politicians who deal with the Chosen Soren in their districts have only tactical concerns with the North and lack the clout of a Kanemaru to achieve a strategic breakthrough in relations. Meanwhile, the Japanese media and public have a growing list of grievances against the North (missiles, kidnapping, harboring terrorists, etc.) that Pyongyang is unable to address without considerable damage to its legitimacy.

The fourth trend is enhanced Japan-ROK economic cooperation. Japan's heavy exposure in Korean financial markets and Japanese economic support for Seoul in the currency crisis have highlighted the economic interdependence of the two countries. Economic restructuring on both sides will remove barriers to trade and investment.

At the same time, certain patterns in Japan's relations with the Korean peninsula remain disturbingly consistent:

Japanese security concerns vis-à-vis North Korea continue to diverge from the United States and South Korea. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Japanese government maintained that the North Korean threat to Japan was not significant, but Seoul was alarmed by the threat from Pyongyang. With the Taepo-dong launch the positions reversed: the Japanese government argued that the new North Korean missile threat was highly significant, but Seoul was not alarmed. In the 1970s Japan was able to free ride on U.S. and ROK deterrence against North Korean aggression. In the 1990s Japan was able to free ride on U.S. and ROK engagement of North Korea. Despite expanded security coordination with Seoul and Washington, the three capitals still have different thresholds for the North Korean missile and nuclear threats.

Japanese politicians continue to step on historical landmines. In spite of the closure achieved by Japan's expression of deep remorse and heartfelt apology to Korea in 1998, there is no shortage of nationalist politicians who will continue to fight for a more patriotic presenta-

tion of history in Japanese textbooks and movies. This impulse has passed to a new generation in Japan, just as the teaching of Japan's brutality has been conveyed to a new generation in Korea. It will continue to complicate bilateral relations, though perhaps with a lower level of national attention after the apology. South Korea's tolerance for these outbursts is only slightly lower after the formal Japanese apology in 1998.

The sovereignty of Takeshima/Tokdo remains unresolved. This territorial issue in itself is insignificant and one major benefit of sovereignty (determining fishing zones) was temporarily neutralized by the compromise in the new fisheries agreement. Nevertheless, the issue lies dormant only until nationalist sentiment raises it in a different context.

Japanese and Korean exports in steel, semiconductors, shipbuilding, and other sectors continue to compete, based in large measure on exchange rates.

These patterns could reverse some of the trends listed earlier, depending on several variables:

Leadership: It is possible that Japan and South Korea could have achieved closure on the apology issue and the fisheries treaty or avoided hysteria over Takeshima/Tokdo if Kim Dae Jung had been elected president in 1992 instead of Kim Young Sam. "DJ's" commitment to improving relations, and the reciprocation by Obuchi, were critical factors in the new trajectory set by the 1998 joint declaration. Different leaders in Seoul and Tokyo might not be as inclined to contain clashing constituencies between the two countries.

The Japanese economy: A Japanese economic downturn would undermine South Korea's return to economic growth and could lead to calls within Japan for protection against Korean competition. A devaluation of the yen will press South Korean exports and could raise tensions. Unequal market opening and aggressive Japanese FDI could cause a backlash in Korea.

China: The general convergence in Japan-Korea relations and security cooperation does not apply to China. Japan is motivated to improve relations with South Korea in large part because of uncertainties about China, but Seoul does not share the same level of unease about Chinese power. Regional crises—in Taiwan or the Spratlys, for example—would exacerbate this difference.

The United States commitment: Some scholars have asserted that Japan-ROK relations have been retarded by the benevolent but intrusive strategic presence of the United States in the region. This may be so, but the obverse is not therefore accurate. In fact, Japan-ROK policy coordination has tended to deepen only when there is a trilateral or multilateral effort led by the United States, such as KEDO or the defense trilateral meetings. As Kimiya Tadashi notes, Washington has an indispensable role in resolving the "high politics" (i.e., the strategic issues) but must leave the "low politics" (such as historical and economic issues) to direct Japan-ROK discussion.⁶⁷

Unification of the Korean Peninsula: This is the 500-pound gorilla of variables in the Japan-ROK relationship. It is often asserted that Japan fears the unification of the Korean Peninsula. This view is particularly strong in South Korea. On the thirtieth anniversary of the normalization of Japan-ROK ties, for example, 43 percent of Koreans surveyed answered that unification of the peninsula would have a bad influence on Japan. In the same survey only 17 percent of the Japanese respondents felt the same way.⁶⁸ It makes sense that the elimination of the threat of war on the peninsula would be seen as a good thing for Japan, and that peaceful reunification would therefore be an outcome preferable to the lingering prospect of destructive conflict. The reason Japan appears to be a status quo power on the

Korean Peninsula is not because unification has negative implications for Japan, but because the possibility remains that unification could threaten Japan's interests. This would be particularly true if a nuclear Korea emerged—or one aligned with China against Japan. Even a unified Korea that sought full independence from the United States would be destabilizing from a Japanese perspective. However, we cannot assume from the troubled history of Japan-Korea relations that Japan would necessarily obstruct unification or come into conflict with a newly reunified Korean Peninsula. If anything, the pattern of Japan's relations with the peninsula in the 1990s suggests that Japan could play a critical and positive role in the process of reconciliation and reunification between the two Koreas.

The U.S. Role

What steps should the United States take to enhance Japan-Korea cooperation? Kimiya Tadashi has noted that Washington has an indispensable role in resolving the “high politics” (i.e., the strategic issues) in Japan-Korea relations, but cannot resolve the problems of “low-level politics,” such as economic cooperation and war liabilities.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, a common purpose in the strategic issues of “high politics” will create the proper political environment for resolution of other bilateral problems between Seoul and Tokyo.

In general, U.S. policy has succeeded in maintaining a common strategic direction in U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK relations since the end of the Cold War. However, the focus has often been on bilateral issues, with insufficient trilateralization of U.S.-Japan-ROK planning and coordination. KEDO, the trilateral defense talks, and the trilateral foreign office meetings that surrounded the initiation of the Four-Party Talks are notable exceptions. Overall, however, the message from Washington has been that the “high politics” will be decided by the United States and implemented through bilateral relationships in the region, rather than generated through prior deliberation among our key allies in the region. The continued North Korean threat might make this patron/client approach sustainable for the time being, but as East Asian international relations become more fluid, the old *modus operandi* will undermine the U.S. objectives listed earlier in this essay.

One major obstacle to more effective trilateralism is the architecture of the diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula. Japan will provide \$1 billion to KEDO and would likely be the single largest external provider of capital for the reconstruction and reunification of the North and South. Japan also has central national security interests at stake in the Four-Party Talks, including missile proliferation, sanctions, and terrorism. However, Tokyo is not integrated directly in the negotiating process and must rely on briefings from Washington and Seoul to understand what is transpiring. Meanwhile, Beijing is a central player in the Four-Party Talks as a party to the 1953 armistice agreement—yet Beijing is not a cooperative partner in KEDO or in the multilateral provision of food aid to the North.

Tokyo agreed to its secondary status from the beginning of the Four-Party Talks because it recognized South Korean sensitivities and the armistice focus of the negotiations, and because Japan was presented with a *fait accompli* by the announcement of the Talks proposal by President Clinton and Kim in April 1996. There is also skepticism in Tokyo that the Four-Party Talks process will lead to a significant breakthrough any time soon. At the same time, however, the exclusion of Tokyo from the central negotiating framework with North Korea has caused Japan to pursue narrow sectoral interests with Pyongyang (terrorism, etc.) that

are less likely to succeed absent a common front with Seoul and Washington. In addition, Seoul and Washington have lost the advantages that would accrue to their own negotiating process with Pyongyang by including Japan. Pyongyang, meanwhile, is in the optimal position because it is able to divide its major neighbors into separate negotiating positions.

There are a number of steps that the United States can take now to compensate for this deficiency in the structure of diplomacy on the peninsula and to strengthen strategic cooperation on a trilateral basis with Japan and the Republic of Korea. These do not require dramatic reorganization of government or changes in policy, but they will go a long way toward preparing the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances to interact with each other as the division of the Korean Peninsula reaches its denouement.

1. Institutionalize trilateral diplomacy. The U.S. government should establish a formal trilateral strategic summit at the cabinet or immediate subcabinet level to:

- Oversee the formulation of a joint strategy or “road map” for engaging North Korea (see recommendation 2);
- Anticipate and plan for possible North Korean provocations (such as missile launches) so that Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo respond in concert;
- Demonstrate to Pyongyang that the United States, the ROK, and Japan will jointly respond to any provocations and will coordinate any provision of assistance;
- Encourage Beijing to abandon its à la carte approach to North Korea and to coordinate food aid and other policies more closely;
- Build domestic support for engagement of North Korea in each country by demonstrating that specific security concerns are being addressed in concert.

2. Integrate Japan in a joint road map for the Korean Peninsula. In the Four-Party Talks, the United States and the ROK have reportedly proposed a “road map” to Pyongyang that would incrementally lift U.S. sanctions in exchange for North Korean steps to establish confidence-building measures along the DMZ and in later stages to address issues related to missiles and terrorism. The North Korean side already thinks that it is owed sanctions lifting, however, based on the 1994 Agreed Framework. It is unlikely that Pyongyang will reduce the threat to the South without more considerable inducements. These could include membership in the Asian Development Bank, IMF, or other international financial institutions. At later stages these would include investment or aid. None of these inducements is possible, however, without Japanese and ROK cooperation. Moreover, Japan is unlikely to provide them without progress on missile and terrorism issues which have a direct effect on the Japanese people’s perception of the North. Japan is not a member of the Four-Party Talks, and that is appropriate. But a longer-term strategy for transforming the North Korean threat will only succeed if it is agreed upon by Japan, the Republic of Korea, and the United States (China would be helpful too, of course).

3. Accelerate trilateral defense consultations. The Department of Defense–Japan Defense Agency–ROK Ministry of Defense dialogue has yielded important results in terms of confidence building and transparency during the Guidelines review process. The trilats should now focus on the modalities of coordination during crises and provide a policy framework for direct navy, air force, and army talks. These talks need not lead to direct military planning or command relations, but they should provide a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities in a crisis on the peninsula.

4. *Cross reference the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances.* The United States' two alliances in Northeast Asia often exist in separate realms in the minds of U.S. policymakers. The president and the secretaries of defense and state should always include talking points about the U.S.-Japan alliance in their meetings with ROK officials and in speeches in Seoul. The same should hold for meetings and speeches in Tokyo with regard to the U.S.-ROK alliance. U.S. ambassadors to Japan and Korea should join one another to engage their respective counterparts on the role of the two alliances in Northeast Asian security issues.

5. *Support second-track dialogue.* The U.S. government cannot broker a resolution of the historical issue without putting its relationship with one or both of our allies at risk. However, the broader U.S. policy community can and does support second-track exchanges such as the CSIS Pacific Forum/Okazaki Institute/Yoido Society "Korea-Japan" Shuttle. These kinds of efforts need to be expanded. The U.S. think tank and academic community can also play a useful role beginning the debate about post-unification scenarios for U.S.-Japan-ROK cooperation.

In the long run, resolution of Japan-ROK problems will require a new generation of leadership in each country focused on common security and economic concerns and confident in their nation's role in Asia. It has been argued that this confidence will only come with a U.S. withdrawal, but history demonstrates that a failure of U.S. commitment only increases insecurity and mutual mistrust. Instead of erasing asymmetries by ending alliance relationships with Japan and Korea, the United States must transform these relationships within the alliance structure—empowering Japan and the Republic of Korea to work together with the United States to formulate policies that strengthen the overall security environment.

Notes

¹ The author wishes to thank B.C. Koh, Jim Raphael, Michel Oksenberg, and Dan Okimoto for their comments on the first draft of this essay.

² See Michael J. Green, "North Korean Regime Crisis: U.S. Perspectives and Responses," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 9, no. 2 (Winter 1997); Steve Glain and Thomas E. Ricks, "U.S. Gears Up for North Korean Collapse," *Wall Street Journal*, June 26, 1997; and Michael J. Green and Mike Mochizuki, "The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance in the 21st Century" (New York: Council on Foreign Relations), November 1997.

³ Kim Dae Jung made this point emphatically during meetings with a Council on Foreign Relations delegation in Seoul in April 1998 and in subsequent presentations in the United States. See also Jonathan Pollack and Young Koo Cha, "Toward A New U.S.-Korea Alliance," RAND, 1996.

⁴ W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (London: Oxford, 1987), p. 100.

⁵ Martin Weinstein, *Japan's Postwar Defense Policy, 1947-1968* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 50-55.

⁶ Koji Murata, "The Origins and the Evolution of the U.S.-ROK Alliance from a Japanese Perspective," a paper presented to the Conference on America's Alliances with Japan and Korea in a Changing Northeast Asia, Stanford University Asia/Pacific Research Center, August 21-23, 1997.

⁷ This was publicly communicated in Seoul to a delegation from the ruling LDP-JSDP-Sakigake coalition, led by Yamasaki Taku, on the eve of a controversial vote in the Japanese Diet to extend U.S. base leases in Okinawa.

⁸ Koji Murata, "The Origins and the Evolution of the U.S.-ROK Alliance from a Japanese Perspective," p. 12.

⁹ Katahara Eichi, "The Politics of Japanese Defense Policy Making, 1975-1989," (Ph.D. Dissertation, Griffith University, 1990), pp. 108-239.

¹⁰ Chae-Jin Lee and Hideo Sato, *U.S. Policy toward Japan and Korea* (New York: Praeger, 1982), p. 28.

¹¹ Japan Defense Agency, *The Defense of Japan 1982*, p. 91.

¹² Chong-Sik Lee, *Japan and Korea: The Political Dimension* (Palo Alto: Hoover Press, 1985), pp. 129-139.

¹³ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 11, 1985.

¹⁴ Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1995), p. 443.

¹⁵ Okonogi Masao, "Masatsu to Kyocho no Nikkan Kankei," (Japan-ROK Relations: Friction and Cooperation), *Gaiko Forum*, November 1995, pp. 12-20.

¹⁶ Lee, op. cit., p. 67.

¹⁷ On the thirtieth anniversary of normalization between Japan and South Korea in 1995, the *Yomiuri Shimbun* and the *Hankook Ilbo* conducted a poll in which 43 percent of the Korean respondents thought Japan-ROK ties had improved (13 percent thought they were worse). This high-water mark in bilateral ties was reversed somewhat by events the following year, however.

¹⁸ "Takeshima no Rouyken Mondai: Nikkan no Hanaremono ni Ho o Ko" (The Takeshima Territorial Rights Problem: Spark of Japan-ROK Division), *AERA*, February 26, 1996.

¹⁹ "Japanese, South Korean Boats Play Tag at Sea As Fisheries Dispute Escalates," *Japan Digest*, February 5, 1998.

²⁰ *Asahi Shimbun*, January 30, 1998; *Chosun Ilbo*, January 2, 1998; *Chosun Ilbo*, January 13, 1998 (editorial on Japan taking advantage of South Korea's economic disadvantage in the fisheries dispute).

²¹ "Kim Dae Jung Inaugural Gives Tokyo Both Hopes and Worries," *Japan Digest*, February 26, 1998.

²² *Asahi Shimbun*, *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, June 28, 1998.

²³ "Nikkan shingyogyo kyotei ketchaku," (Resolution of the New Japan-ROK Fisheries Agreement), *Sankei Shimbun*, September 25, 1998.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Chosun Ilbo*, *Yomiuri Shimbun*, September 25, 1998.

²⁶ "GNP Deters ROK-Japan Fisheries Accord," *Korea Times*, December 15, 1998. The treaty was eventually ratified by both governments in 1999.

²⁷ "Nikkan gyogyo kosho ni eikyo mo, kankoku seironhanpatsu no osore, Nakagawa nosuisho ianfu hatsugen" (Agriculture and Fisheries Minister Nakagawa's Comfort Women Statement,

Fear of a Reaction in South Korean Public Opinion, Could Influence Japan-Korea Fisheries Talks), *Asahi Shimbun*, August 1, 1998.

²⁸ Yoshimi Yoshiaki, "State Crime Should Be Compensated by the State," *Asahi Shimbun*, August 22, 1995. Interviews with Japan Defense Agency historians, July 1998.

²⁹ Koh, pp. 40–41.

³⁰ "Seoul to Compensate Comfort Girls Itself, Demanding No Compensation," *Japan Digest*, April 22, 1998.

³¹ "Kankoku no Nihon daishu bunka kaiho" (Korea Opens to Popular Culture from Japan), *Asahi Shimbun*, October 20, 1998. "Kankoku seifu hyomei 'tenno' no koshou, koshiki ni shiyo" (Korean Government Officially Uses "Emperor" in Statement), *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, September 11, 1998.

³² Koh, p. 38 and Lee, p. 132.

³³ "Nikkan shuno kaidan de no 'shazai' ni iron aitsugu, jiminto nato ichibu giin" (Debate Continues among Some Dietmembers in the LDP and Elsewhere about the 'Apology' during the Japan-ROK Summit), *Asahi Shimbun*, October 7, 1998.

³⁴ "Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration: A New Japan Republic of Korea Partnership towards the Twenty-first Century," Provisional Translation by the Japanese Government, October 8, 1998.

³⁵ Sasae Kenichiro, "20 seki no kako kara 21 seki no mirai e" (From the 20th Century Past to the Twenty-First Century Future), *Gaiko Forum*, no. 124, December 1998, p. 72.

³⁶ "Nikkan kankei, nihonjin no 8 wari kako seisan wo, yoron chosa" (Opinion Poll Shows over 80 percent of Japanese See Closure on Past in Japan-ROK Relations), *Sankei Shimbun*, October 21, 1998.

³⁷ *Sankei Shimbun*, op. cit.

³⁸ Japan-ROK trade has grown steadily since 1980. The volume has doubled for Japan's exports to South Korea, bringing Japan's 1996 trade surplus with the South to 1.5 trillion yen (US\$11.7 billion with Y125=\$1.00). Most of this trade has been in steel, iron, and other intermediate manufacturing inputs. Trade in automobiles, semiconductors, and other protected areas of South Korea's market has been predictably low. In some ways, Korea's dependence on Japan for exports has decreased in relative terms, as the rest of Asia's economies have absorbed the ROK's exports—at least until the economic crisis hit in 1997. Foreign direct investment (FDI) between Japan and Korea is also lower than each country's FDI with other booming Asian economies, but Japan's FDI in South Korea was still \$6 billion in 1995. In Douglas Ostrom, "Complementarity and Competition: Korean-Japanese Trade Relations," in *Korea's Trade Relations* (Washington, DC: The Korea Economic Institute of America, 1998), pp. 100–105; and Japan Ministry of Finance homepage, February 1998.

³⁹ Martin Feldstein, "Japan's Folly Drags Asia Down," *Wall Street Journal*, November 25, 1997; and Edward Lincoln, "Maybe It's the Teacher's Fault," *U.S. News & World Report*, December 15, 1997; *Hangyerae Sinmoon* editorial, January 10, 1998; *Moonhwa Ilbo* editorial, February 20, 1998.

⁴⁰ Ostrom, p. 104.

⁴¹ *Munhwa Ilbo*, January 1998.

⁴² Teruaki Ueno, "Japan Makes Historic Apology to South Korea," Yahoo!News, October 8, 1998.

⁴³ *Chosun Ilbo*, October 29, 1998.

⁴⁴ David Asher and Andrew Smithers, "Japan's Key Challenges for the 21st Century: Debt, Deflation, Default, Demography, and Deregulation," SAIS Policy Forum Series (Washington, DC: The Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Relations of the Johns Hopkins University, April 1998).

⁴⁵ Anh Byung-Joo, "Japanese Policy toward Korea," in Gerald Curtis, ed., *Japan's Foreign Policy after the Cold War: Coping with Change* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), p. 264.

⁴⁶ Op. cit. In March 1997 the Japanese families organized into the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea and were actively lobbying the LDP and appealing to a sympathetic media. The group placed full-page ads in the *New York Times*, including one on April 2, 1998. In 1994 a North Korean agent defected with detailed information on the North's kidnapping strategy.

⁴⁷ Barbara Wanner, "Japanese North Korean Politicians Agree that Peace Talks Should Resume," JEI Report No. 44B, November 21, 1998, p. 8.

⁴⁸ "Yvonne Chang, "Angry Japan Sets Measures against North Korea," Reuters, Tokyo, September 1, 1998.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Japan Wants Funds to N. Korea Cut," Associated Press, Tokyo, September 8, 1998.

⁵¹ "Tokyo Insists Anew on Its Right to Strike at Potential Attackers," *Japan Digest*, March 10, 1999.

⁵² "Kikendo ga takamata kita chosen kiki no honshitsu" (How the North Korea Crisis Increased the Danger), *Foresight*, December 1998, p. 37.

⁵³ Jane A. Morse, "U.S.-N.Korea Plan to Resume Talks Thursday," Reuters, Washington, September 2, 1998.

⁵⁴ Telephone interview with KEDO official, January 12, 1998.

⁵⁵ "Text: US-DPRK Joint Press Statement," U.S. Department of State Daily Press Briefing, Thursday, September 10, 1998.

⁵⁶ "KEDO Executive Board Agrees on Cost-Sharing for Light Water Reactor Project," KEDO Press Release, November 10, 1998.

⁵⁷ MOFA officials in early September had attempted to condition Japan's KEDO funding to progress in the U.S.-DPRK missile talks and received some reassurances from Washington that this would be done. "Japan May Give Nuclear Plant Funds," Dow Jones Newswires, Tokyo, September 9, 1998.

⁵⁸ *Sankei Shimbun*, October 21, 1998.

⁵⁹ *Asahi Shimbun*, June 8, 1997.

⁶⁰ Journalist Kil Jeong Woo explains the ROK ambivalence toward the Guidelines as noting that the arrangement strengthens the relationship between the country Koreans trust the most and the country Korea trusts the least. The Korean view is therefore one of "support with caution." See Green and Mochizuki, "The U.S.-Japan Security Alliance in the 21st Century," pp. 76-77.

⁶¹ "North Korea Is Said to be Building 'Missile Silos'," *Japan Digest*, January 8, 1998.

⁶² “Japan-Republic of Korea Joint Declaration: A New Japan-Republic of Korea Partnership toward the Twenty-first Century” (Provisional Japanese Government Translation), October 8, 1998.

⁶³ Details of the Okazaki-Yoido meetings are available in a report from the Okazaki Institute, “KJ Shuttle 1–6: Nikan (Bei) Anzen Hosho Taiwa no Kiroku (KJ Shuttle 1–6: Records of the Japan-Korea [US] Security Dialogue), Tokyo: Okazaki Institute, July 1998. These are also available in English and Korean.

⁶⁴ Umio Otsuka, “Prospects for Japan-Korea Defense Cooperation: Partners or Rivals,” prepared for the Hudson Institute and the East Asian Security Study Group Japan Conference on Japan and Korea’s Future, Tokyo, December 5–6, 1997, p. 11.

⁶⁵ The Korean navy entered the 1990s using the JMSDF as a possible threat to justify indigenous destroyer and blue-water navy programs (which are now in doubt with the Asian currency crisis). See “Prospects for U.S.-Korean Naval Relations in the 21st Century” (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, February 1995). Korea’s more positive view of China and the implications for Japan are highlighted in Hyon-Sik Yon, “The Korea-Japan Security Relations in the Post-Cold War Era,” paper prepared for the ISA-JAIR Joint Convention, Makuhari, Japan, September 20–22, 1996. See Michael J. Green and Benjamin L. Self, “Japan’s Changing China Policy: From Commercial Liberalism to Reluctant Realism,” *Survival* 38, no. 2 (Summer 1996).

⁶⁶ See Victor D. Cha, “Engaging China: Seoul-Beijing Détente and Korean Security,” *Survival* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 73–98.

⁶⁷ Tadashi Kimiya, “Hokuto ajia no chitsujo keisei nikkan no sekimu” (Building a Northeast Asian Order: The Responsibilities of Japan and the ROK), *Gaiko Forum*, no. 119, June 1998, p. 48.

⁶⁸ *Yomiuri Shimbun*, May 24, 1995.

⁶⁹ Tadashi Kimiya, “Hokuto Ajia no Chitsujo Keisei Nikkan no Sekimu” (Building a North-east Asian Order: The Responsibilities of Japan and ROK), *Gaiko Forum*, June 1998.

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