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Building Toward Trilateral Cooperation on Extended Deterrence in Northeast Asia: the First US-ROK-Japan Extended Deterrence Trilateral Dialogue



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Building Toward Trilateral Cooperation on Extended Deterrence in Northeast Asia

**The First US-ROK-Japan
Extended Deterrence Trilateral Dialogue**

A Conference Report
by
David Santoro and Brad Glosserman

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The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

Founded in 2008, the Asan Institute for Policy Studies (asaninst.org) is an independent, non-partisan think tank with the mandate to undertake policy-relevant research to foster domestic, regional, and international environments that are conducive to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and Korean reunification.

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Key Findings

US-ROK-Japan Extended Deterrence Trilateral Dialogue

The Pacific Forum CSIS, with the ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, and with support from the Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering WMD (PASCC) and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA), held a US-ROK-Japan Extended Deterrence Trilateral Dialogue on Sept. 2-3, 2013. Some 35 US, ROK, and Japanese experts, officials, military officers, and observers, along with 15 Pacific Forum Young Leaders attended, all in their private capacities. Key findings include:

A changed and changing regional security environment has created new problems for extended deterrence and assurance. As North Korea becomes capable of striking the US homeland, some South Koreans raised concern that North Korea might conclude that Washington would be reluctant to defend them in a conflict. Other participants worried that North Korea will think that its improved nuclear forces provide cover to be more aggressive or overconfident at the conventional level. China's nuclear and conventional force modernization (and its growing assertiveness on territorial and maritime issues) are also increasingly worrisome,

South Koreans and Japanese stress the essential role of US nuclear weapons for extended deterrence and assurance missions; some South Koreans expressed concern over the US policy to reduce the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons. South Koreans expressed skepticism about ballistic missile defense and conventional strike options for deterrence purposes and argued that emphasizing such efforts could undermine extended deterrence. Americans stressed that the conventional and nuclear components of extended deterrence are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

South Koreans and Japanese want clarity on US nuclear doctrine. If nuclear weapons would only be used in 'extreme cases,' some asked for details about what constitutes an extreme case.

Both allies recognize they must strengthen their defense postures to respond to challenges that fall below the extended deterrence threshold and emphasized the value of deterrence by early detection.

South Korean and Japanese governments seek expanded indigenous capabilities to increase their deterrent capability and as contributions to the alliance. South Korea concluded an agreement with the US to extend missile ranges and Japan is considering strike options. Each sees its own actions as positive and the others as potentially troublesome.

While no decisions have been made about Tokyo's pursuit of offensive strike options, Japanese emphasized that such capabilities would not be used for pre-emption but for retaliation; this did not reflect concern about the credibility of extended deterrence but, rather, concern that the North may be overconfident in its capabilities. Japanese also noted that the correct English translation of offensive strike does not imply preemption.

South Koreans worry about Japan's acquisition of strike capabilities, arguing that the ROK constitution defines all the Korean Peninsula as ROK territory and that a strike against the DPRK would be a strike against the ROK. While this is a legal fiction, it

demonstrates the sensitivity surrounding Japanese interest in offensive capabilities. Japanese understand Seoul's push for the revision of its missile guidelines, but argued that this was completed in a non-transparent manner.

Japanese called for greater transparency in US-ROK alliance talks, referencing the OpCon transfer in particular, to assuage concerns about what was happening, why, and the implications of the process. The US-Japan alliance and the UNC rear are key to Korean Peninsula defense and Tokyo should be better informed of US-ROK alliance developments.

The crisis in Syria was referenced as a test of US credibility: "red lines should not be drawn unless you intend to enforce them"; not doing so would damage US credibility among allies and adversaries. The difficulties faced by the administration to garner domestic support for the use of force against Syria prompted concerns about the US ability to react quickly to a contingency in Northeast Asia.

It is not clear what situations become tests of US credibility and commitment, and why. The tendency to see every challenge as such a threat must be resisted. More work must be done to identify what makes some challenges more critical than others.

While South Koreans are the most reluctant of the three countries to publicly identify China as a potential threat, most are clear-eyed about the challenges posed by China's growing strength. They readily acknowledge that some foreign policy decisions (including those related to missile defense) reflect concern about Korean vulnerability to Chinese pressure. Japanese are most vocal about a potential Chinese threat, in view of the current row over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. They stressed that the United States should not acknowledge mutual vulnerability with China. Doing so, they fear, could embolden Chinese regional assertiveness.

Americans, South Koreans, and Japanese see opportunities for trilateral cooperation, namely in the form of joint exercises, to deal with the DPRK. However, acknowledging that 'publics' shape policy and could derail such cooperation, participants were divided on whether this process should receive high-level attention or develop at the operational level. All agree that high-level support is essential to permit cooperation to proceed; the question is whether to highlight lower-level successes.

Tensions in the overall Korea-Japan relationship inhibit greater defense cooperation, even when such cooperation is seen as contributing to both sides' national security.

South Koreans explained that the current debate over reintroducing US tactical nuclear weapons on the Peninsula and/or developing an independent South Korea nuclear capability is in part driven by a lack of other options to bring pressure on Beijing to constrain Pyongyang, arguing that this quest is not reflective of a lack of confidence in the US extended deterrent.

Americans insisted that reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons and/or development by Seoul of nuclear weapons runs contrary to US policy, which seeks to reduce nuclear weapons in the world, and would serve to justify rather than delegitimize the DPRK's nuclear policy.

Both US allies argued that US consistency is critical to reassurance and warned that change in US policy if/once North Korea develops a long-range nuclear capability would undermine US credibility.

While US commitments to force level benchmarks are helpful, South Koreans and Japanese participants said that force readiness was important than numbers.

Efforts by Seoul and Tokyo to develop expanded missile capabilities may influence Russian thinking. This could impact the debate over the consolidation of US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. More attention needs to be paid on how developments in one region may impact on another.

Americans, South Koreans, and Japanese all acknowledged the value of this dialogue in promoting trilateral cooperation on extended deterrence and assurance. The Japanese in particular saw this dialogue as critical in helping promote understanding of Japan's positions in Korea. With the right people, this process can produce positive results. Table top exercises could enhance track-2 and at track-1 dialogue efforts.

Building Toward Trilateral Cooperation on Extended Deterrence in Northeast Asia

**A Conference Report by
David Santoro and Brad Glosserman**

North Korea's rapid nuclear and missile developments and China's steady force modernization are creating new security challenges for Northeast Asian stability. These challenges have important implications for US extended deterrence, which Washington has long provided to the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. Taking stock of these new challenges, the United States has strengthened its extended deterrence relationships with both its allies by adapting its force posture and policy and by establishing bilateral consultative mechanisms that meet on a regular basis to provide alliance solutions to these problems: the US-ROK Extended Deterrence Policy Committee and the US-Japan Extended Deterrence Dialogue. While progress has been made, much remains to be done in both bilateral alliances. At the same time, at least from a US perspective, stronger cooperation on extended deterrence and assurance at the trilateral level would further strengthen regional stability.

To shed light on ways to enhance US-ROK-Japan trilateral cooperation on extended deterrence and to prod the three countries toward this end, the Pacific Forum CSIS, with the ASAN Institute for Policy Studies, with support from the Naval Postgraduate School's Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, held a US-ROK-Japan Extended Deterrence Trilateral Dialogue in Seoul, South Korea on Sept. 2-3, 2013. Thirty-five US, Korean, and Japanese experts and officials, along with 15 Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders from the three countries attended, all in their private capacities. They examined and compared perspectives on extended deterrence and assurance, China and the balance of power in Asia, North Korea, and changes in national defense postures in the United States, the ROK, and Japan. Participants also explored opportunities and challenges to strengthen trilateral cooperation on extended deterrence and assurance.

Strategic Perspectives and Extended Deterrence

Our Korean speaker opened this session by stressing that North Korea's nuclear development and willingness to engage in military provocations meant that business as usual was no longer an option. As he put it, "we need to revisit what we're doing." While acknowledging that China's force modernization and the impact of a crisis with China should be of concern, these considerations are not yet on Seoul's radar.

North Korea remains Seoul's main concern. Pyongyang is determined to hold on to its nuclear weapons and keep upgrading its arsenal. Our speaker explained that there are questions as to whether Washington will be able and willing to carry out its defense commitment as US territory is increasingly going to fall within range of North Korean missiles, a problem embodied in the concept of "de-coupling." Even if the administration

is willing to honor its commitment, it may not be able to do so because the US Congress may deny action. Another concern is that Pyongyang may see its nuclear arsenal as providing cover to use conventional forces or cyber weapons for offensive attacks; this is known in the arm control lexicon as the stability-instability paradox.

Our Korean speaker argued that deterrence by punishment was no longer an option. As he put it, “why wait to be hit if you know an attack is coming?” More appropriate is to focus on deterrence by early detection” identifying (and then removing) potential threats before they can do damage. He also suggested revisiting the reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea, which would bolster deterrence of North Korea. Moreover, this would reassure Koreans, who trust, in principle, US defense commitments vis-a-vis South Korea, but worry about the reduction of numbers and roles of nuclear weapons in US national security policy. Ballistic missile defense systems may have a role to play in enhancing deterrence, but their technical feasibility is unclear and Seoul is worried about China's reaction to their development and deployment. Still, Seoul is “cautiously favorable” to missile defense systems and even favors cooperation with Japan on such systems, despite the existence of important emotional reservations associated with any type of cooperation with Japan.

Our Japanese speaker explained that Tokyo’s position on these issues is laid out in the 2010 Defense Guidelines, which will be updated at the end of the year. Consistency should be expected. To Japan, the main challenge is “gray zones,” security threats that fall below the extended deterrence threshold, be it in a contingency with China (over the Senkaku Islands) or with North Korea. In this context, our speaker concurred with his Korean counterpart and argued for the need to focus on deterrence by early detection.

When the Japanese doctrine of “Dynamic Deterrence” was coined in 2010 the main worry was Chinese 'creeping expansionism' in the East China Sea. That prompted Japan to focus on developing Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities. Since then, however, Tokyo has come to realize that ISR capabilities may be necessary but they are not sufficient to respond to Chinese and North Korean actions. Kinetic deterrence has become increasingly important: deterrence by early detection must be supported by deterrence by punishment.

Our Japanese speaker explained that Tokyo has no doubt that US extended deterrence is strong. In view of the US defense budget, he characterized his position as “cautiously optimistic”: he is optimistic because the United States has enough weapons systems in the pipeline to provide adequate deterrence for the next 10 to 20 years, but remains cautious because of the F-35 delay. The long, convoluted debate over whether the United States should strike Syria over its alleged use of chemical weapons also sends the wrong message to Japan and other US allies. As our speaker put it, “the United States needs to be clear about what it says and what it does.” More generally, our speaker stressed that nuclear weapons still have a role to play: they cast an important shadow that helps de-escalate conflict. Plainly, these weapons continue to be essential components of extended deterrence. In Japanese eyes, it is also fundamental that Washington not

acknowledge mutual nuclear vulnerability with China, which might tempt Beijing to think that its nuclear arsenal allows it to be more aggressive at the conventional level (again creating the stability-instability paradox).

Our US speaker noted that the US rebalance to Asia, now two years old, is based on the belief that the US economy and the country's future are *inextricably* linked to the region. While there is an ongoing debate about what the rebalance should look like, Washington remains determined to honor the defense commitments it has made to its allies and partners because their interests are, again, *inextricably* linked to its own interests. In the Asia Pacific, the United States is determined to preserve a balance of power that prevents the rise of a hegemon, prevents an attack on its homeland and on its allies and partners, preserves free trade and the freedom of navigation, prevents terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and favors democracy and human rights.

While acknowledging the challenges to US extended deterrence posed by the prospect of a contingency with North Korea or China, our speaker stressed that North Korea cannot decouple the United States from its allies because Washington does not distinguish between deterrence and extended deterrence. Allies should learn from the Cold War, when Washington did not abandon its commitments to allies, even though the Soviet Union was much more powerful than North Korea. Moreover, the US has no intention to acknowledge mutual nuclear vulnerability with China; it may be a "fact of life," but it is also true that this is "unequal vulnerability," in which the United States is much more powerful than China.

While Washington does not think of North Korea and China in the same manner, our US speaker stressed that the two countries represent two sides of the same coin in that they present problems and demand increased trilateral cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo. Unfortunately, there is little political urgency to strengthen such cooperation, mainly because of the bad shape of ROK-Japan relations.

Our US speaker explained that extended deterrence is at work at all levels of escalation. As always, Washington prefers ambiguity regarding the particular conditions at which it will respond to maintain flexibility and ensure that neither adversaries nor allies are emboldened. Moreover, nuclear weapons are not the only means to provide extended deterrence: conventional weapons as well as ballistic missile defense systems have assumed a greater share of the deterrence burden. Conventional forces, in particular, lend themselves well to use in coordination with allies and ballistic missile defense systems can help reduce 'de-coupling' pressures. Looking to the future, it will be important to stop segregating extended deterrence policy with, on the one hand, nuclear weapons and, on the other, conventional weapons and ballistic missile defense systems. The US phased approach on ballistic missile defense systems builds the foundations to address immediate security threats (coming from North Korea), while keeping an eye on China.

During discussion, participants focused mainly on the Syrian debate. Both Koreans and Japanese stressed that US credibility is at stake in this debate: several speakers emphasized that “red lines should not be drawn unless you intend to enforce them.” Failure to do so – for whatever reason -- damages US credibility among allies and adversaries. In Korean and Japanese eyes, the difficulties that the Obama administration faced winning domestic support for the use of force against Syria prompts concerns about the US ability to react quickly to a contingency in Northeast Asia. Americans countered by pointing out that there is more at stake than US credibility in the Syrian debate and that striking Damascus only for credibility reasons would be a mistake. They urged all parties to resist the tendency to see every challenge that the United States faces as a test of US credibility and commitment to its allies. Indeed, additional research is needed to better understand when and under what conditions such challenges truly threaten US credibility. Several participants underscored that a change in US policy after an improvement in a potential adversary’s capability would be seen as highly damaging to US credibility.

Koreans and Japanese appeared unconvinced, however. As one Japanese participant put it, “while the US rebalance to Asia is the order of the day, sooner or later the United States will rebalance to other regions so, to us, it *is* a credibility issue.” The same participant went on to argue that the row over the Senkaku Islands, similarly, is a credibility test for the United States and the US-Japan alliance. Failure to address it appropriately would guarantee failure in the emerging territorial conflicts in the South China Sea.

US budget constraints pose particular problems here, with challenges focusing not on deployments but force readiness. (In a marked shift from past discussions, Koreans and Japanese seem to regard US force readiness as more important than “numbers.”) Americans responded that budget pressures would have only a symbolic impact on force readiness: US military capabilities will remain second-to-none and more than sufficient to prevail in any given situation. Here and in subsequent discussions about the ROK desire to see the reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, there surfaced a tendency in the ROK to attribute the peace in Europe during the Cold War to the presence of US tactical nuclear weapons. This is misleading: the US forward deployed conventional *presence* in Europe should be credited, not tactical nuclear weapons. This argument found echo in a Japanese recommendation that the three countries should harden their military bases as well as make them more resilient and interoperable.

Japan's interest in enhancing its collective self-defense role triggered considerable controversy. While seen as a positive development by Americans, it was met with skepticism and concern by Koreans, who insisted that Japan “needs to clarify its past.” This triggered scrutiny of the Japanese debate about the development of offensive conventional strike capabilities. Japanese participants explained that the issue was only “on the table” and that no conclusion had been reached. They stressed that the debate emerged in response to the growing ballistic missile threat that Japan faces. At any rate,

Japanese participants insisted that these forces would only be used in retaliation and that Tokyo would deal with the first attack against its territory with missile defense systems.

Views of China and the Balance of Power in the Asia Pacific

Our US speaker kicked off this session by stressing the continuity in US policy toward China across several administrations. He characterized US policy toward China as one that “engages and shakes Beijing.” Activism is the norm, which is consistent with US policy to “extend hands” to potential rivals, such as Iran, in an attempt to gauge and engage. This approach is used at the bilateral level, as well as at multilateral organizations.

The rebalance is central to this approach. It does not constitute a pivot away from other regions, but, rather, is merely a *refocus* on the most dynamic region of the world, and it proceeds apace, with greater specificity in recent months. Discussions are now focused on how cooperation can and should work, and the specific capabilities needed.

Our US speaker acknowledged that there is increased skepticism about China in the United States and its allies. The development of Chinese anti-access and anti-denial capabilities, in particular, is of concern; in response, the US has had a more focused debate, one that crystallized with the AirSea Battle concept. Still, today's problems are the same as those of the Cold War: de-coupling pressures and stability-instability paradox. The key question for the US today is how to reassure allies so that they don't make the same decision as the French in the 1960s, i.e., develop independent nuclear weapon capabilities.

Our Korean speaker stressed that the impact of China's rise on the regional balance of power is undeniable. Beijing's assertive and sometimes aggressive stances in the East and South China Seas are changing the security environment and, since the announcement of the US rebalance to the Asia Pacific, relations between the United States and China have become more heated. While most regional countries have welcomed the rebalance, they continue to seek to strengthen economic ties with China.

Our speaker explained that China's force modernization efforts will be critical in structuring the balance of power in Asia. In the short- to medium-term, however, the United States will maintain military superiority over China. The ROK is determined to maintain its security relationship with the United States but is equally interested in forging strong ties with China. In this spirit, our speaker pointed out that if Seoul were to decide to participate in the US-led missile defense system program, this would likely fuel Beijing force modernization efforts, leading to an arms race in Northeast Asia.

Our Japanese speaker assessed China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) modernization efforts. The PLA is modernizing its submarine force and developing fourth-generation fighters as well as stealth technologies. The Second Artillery, the branch of the PLA that controls nuclear ballistic and conventional missiles, is developing short-range ballistic missiles, anti-ship ballistic missiles (DF-21D), medium-range

ballistic missiles (DF-21), as well as tactical cruise missiles. Moreover, China is expanding its space intelligence capabilities and should have six navigation satellites operational in 2020.

How can escalation control be maintained in such a changing security environment? Our Japanese speaker argued that ISR capabilities are no longer sufficient for Japan. Something more is needed and he argued that Japan should upgrade its own air-sea capabilities to deal with “gray zone” situations and low- to medium-intensity conflicts, and US-Japan defense cooperation on high-end operations under anti-access/area-denial environment should be enhanced. To support extended deterrence, the United States should maintain its ability to project force despite China’s anti-access and area-denial capabilities. In-theater power projection, in particular, will also become critical and a forward-deployed US presence will continue to be a key feature of extended deterrence in Northeast Asia.

Our Japanese speaker also expressed concerns about arms races. He suggested that United States pursuit of the AirSea Battle concept could prompt China to drop its no-first-use policy. In this regard, he was worried about the omission of the no-first-use pledge in China’s most recent White Paper.

The discussion began with a focus on the value of trilateral dialogues in Northeast Asia. Korean participants explained that China has been pushing hard to establish the US-ROK-China trilateral dialogue because of growing concern about cooperation among the United States, the ROK, and Japan. Many participants, however, countered that trilateral dialogues need not be mutually exclusive. In the absence of effective mechanisms to address the North Korea problem (the Six-Party Talks have not met since 2009), trilateral discussions can be useful for crisis management and contingency planning to deal with Pyongyang. The US-ROK-China dialogue was established with North Korea in mind. Trilateral discussions among the United States, the ROK, and Japan are meant to focus on North Korea, but they are broader in scope: they are also designed to enhance ROK-Japan defense cooperation, which is weak.

Discussing China in trilateral discussions between the United States, the ROK, and Japan is difficult because all three countries have different perceptions of and relations with Beijing. Koreans are the most reluctant of the three to identify China as a potential threat. They remain clear-eyed about the challenges posed by China’s growing strength, however. They acknowledged that some foreign policy decisions (including those related to missile defense) reflect concern about Korean vulnerability to Chinese pressure. In response, Japanese participants suggested that Beijing would likely act as it did in the late 1990s and early 2000s when the issue came up for Japan, i.e., in their own words, “make a big deal out of it until the decision is made, then accept it as a fact of life.”

The discussion moved on to Xi Jinping’s willingness to develop a “new type of major country relations,” his recent meeting with President Obama in California, and implications for the regional balance of power. At the core of this discussion is Beijing’s

intentions. There are three related questions: First, does China seek hegemony? If not, is it because of domestic concerns which will absorb the regime's attention? Or, will domestic pressures mean that the regime cannot be seen to lose a fight? It is impossible to know, which makes it even more important to focus threat assessments on China's capabilities. At this point, Beijing's notorious lack of transparency on its military capabilities and force modernization plans becomes problematic. Also critical is ensuring that China is deeply integrated into the fabric of the international system, which in theory will make it conflict averse.

Views of North Korea

Our Korean speaker explained that the Park government is determined to develop a healthy inter-Korean relationship and advance a trust process based on "strong deterrence." Seoul is also focused on "rule implementation," as opposed to rule making. In other words, for Koreans, violators should be held accountable if something goes wrong. Seoul still believes that dialogue with Pyongyang should be resumed, and it remains cautiously positive about its potential. Given the traditional cycle of "provocation-engagement-provocation" with Pyongyang, only a cautious approach is viable. As he put it, "we want to make sure that we see strategic change in North Korea, not a tactical shift."

Dealing with North Korea remains a multidimensional problem, one of which is nuclear. Others include human rights, proliferation, smuggling, and counterfeiting. For Seoul, the road to Pyongyang runs through Beijing and there is the belief that a ROK-China-US approach could bear fruit. At the same time, it is important to prepare for a North Korea contingency and for this, US-ROK-Japan cooperation is crucial.

Our Japanese speaker stressed that North Korea has no intention to give up its nuclear arsenal, particularly now that Pyongyang has amended its constitution, indicating that it is a nuclear-armed state. While deterrence of North Korea has worked over the years (because there has been no large-scale war on the Peninsula since 1953), responding to Pyongyang's provocations is increasingly difficult.

Our speaker pointed out that Japan, unlike the United States and the ROK, does not have a good deterrence policy vis-à-vis North Korea and that Tokyo's only option is to strengthen sanctions against Pyongyang if deterrence fails. Japan is addressing this problem, however, by strengthening its ISR and ballistic missile defense systems. Tokyo also believes that joint trilateral US-Japan-ROK exercises would enhance deterrence of Pyongyang. Given strained Japan-ROK relations, however, managing media exposure of such exercises will be critical.

Our US speaker dismissed the idea that restarted Six-Party Talks would yield results because participants are a "coalition of divided." There is no coordination of strategic interests among members. The United States sees North Korea as a threat to South Korea and regional peace, and it also sees it as a nuclear threat, a proliferation threat, and a credibility threat. South Korea is interested in preventing military

provocations from the North and in promoting reunification. Given the differences, it is critical to maintain strong communication among allies, constantly explain what relevant interests and concerns are, and how they align or diverge. This is more easily said than done given the many actors involved: leaders, policymakers, and publics all shape policymaking.

Our speaker pointed out that the United States is developing a comprehensive defense strategy, which includes both political and monetary investments, to deter, detect, defend against, disrupt, and, if necessary, destroy North Korean threats. While recognizing that ROK-Japan relations are difficult, Washington expects the ROK and Japan to cooperate and welcomes joint exercises to prepare for a scenario in which deterrence of North Korea fails. In short, the United States expects a coordinated allied response to a North Korean contingency and, upstream, coordinated diplomacy to deal with Pyongyang.

During the discussion, Korean participants highlighted that the Park administration's approach to North Korea has two tracks: development of a trust process *and* strong deterrence. It does not, as a consequence, constitute a return to the Sunshine Policy. Korean participants conceded that the reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula has costs, but there are benefits as well. As one participant put it, "if North Korea continues to expand its capabilities, the impression is that we would need to do "something physical."

Japanese participants, for their part, explained that North Korea's nuclear and missile developments are of utmost concern to Tokyo. Particularly worrisome are *No Dong* missiles, which cannot be easily detected. Japan's Ministry of Defense received a report after the December 2012 North Korean missile launch stressing that Pyongyang's missile developments have entered a new phase. More generally, Japanese believe that as long as China wants to keep the regime alive, North Korea will not change.

From a US perspective, North Korea is a serious threat because it has weapons of mass destruction, it can use them, it can proliferate them, and it will increasingly be able to decouple the United States from its allies. North Korea, however, will not be able to continue to press on with its nuclear and missile developments *and* achieve economic prosperity because the United States (and others) will not allow it. Americans also insisted that it was paramount for US allies to take up a greater share of the deterrence burden vis-a-vis North Korea and ensure that their capabilities are properly integrated. (Americans reiterated that Washington sees reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula as a counterproductive development.) At the policy level, it is essential that the United States, the ROK, and Japan coordinate their message to North Korea. Significantly, this coordination does not mean that the three countries must send the same message. Rather, it means that messaging needs to be *coordinated*, i.e., shared in advance among the three countries before being issued and contradictory signals should not be sent.

Changes in National Defense Postures and Status of Reforms

Our Japanese speaker explained that the return to power of the Liberal Democratic Party and the fact that the Diet is no longer “twisted” (with a different party controlling each chamber) should bring stability to Japanese politics, at least until 2016. This will allow Tokyo to address foreign policy goals that could not be previously tackled.

Since taking office at the end of 2013, Prime Minister Abe has visited over 20 countries and used Japan’s alliance with the United States as a bridge to enhance cooperation with third parties. In so doing, Japan pursues its version of “favorable strategic balancer” and “favorable balance of relations” to optimize its strategic position in the Asia Pacific. Moreover, despite problematic statements about history, Abe has been relatively cautious in presenting his foreign policy agenda to the region and the world.

By December, a national security council will be established, a milestone in Japan’s foreign policy, providing guidance and enhancing interagency coordination. Whether Japan can exercise its right of collective self-defense in view of restrictions included in Article 9 of its constitution remains unclear. However, our speaker suggested that Abe will likely revise some security-related laws to be able to conduct collective self-defense operations. The key objective will be to increase Japan’s indigenous capabilities, even though numerous questions remain as to how this should be done. Upgrading Japan’s defense posture will be critical and there are a number of issues to be addressed so that this can be done in a manner that enhances the US-Japan alliance. Finally, Japan will continue to build regional capacity to deal with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief as well as maritime security issues and Tokyo will increasingly aim for “collective balancing” vis-à-vis China.

While recognizing that the US rebalance to Asia should have been more thoroughly defined before being advertised, our US speaker explained that it remains a meaningful concept that helps the United States allocate its resources. In other words, while its implementation is yet to be made “visible” to Asia, it is shaping US policy planning.

Our speaker pointed out that strengthening coordination, cooperation, and integration among allies at the bilateral, trilateral, and quadrilateral levels is central to the rebalance. A key part of this effort is engagement at the operational level, namely through exercises, but also in other areas, such as AirSea Battle. Thus, the United States continues to view nuclear weapons as critical to US national security and extended deterrence policy, but it also assesses that it can safely proceed with nuclear reductions. More understanding of the non-nuclear elements of extended deterrence is needed, as well as how deterrence strategies can be better tailored to specific situations.

Our Korean speaker explained the basics of the ROK’s 2012 defense posture and the recent revision of its missile guidelines, which were conducted in partnership with the

United States. He explained that the ROK's ballistic missile defense systems are tailored to its security environment: they are meant to intercept low-altitude missiles. While there is growing support for the reintroduction of tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, our speaker argued that most people are opposed to the idea. He reckoned that the debate about reintroduction is proof that the US must do more to reassure Seoul. Japan's development of offensive strike capabilities raises similar challenges: in principle, the ROK government understands Japan's rationale for development, but remains both suspicious and concerned. Japanese intentions are key. The ROK would like Japan to provide a clear strategic plan about the way such capabilities would be used. Still, our speaker argued that the current security environment lends itself well to greater trilateral coordination among the United States, the ROK, and Japan. Making such efforts work will be tough given difficult ROK-Japan relations.

During the discussion, Korean participants reiterated that the revision of missile guidelines is a direct response to North Korea's nuclear and missile developments. Japanese participants stressed that they understood the need for the ROK to do so but questioned whether developing ballistic missiles was the best response. Korean participants in turn responded that cruise missiles have already been deployed and can reach North Korean caves and hidden targets, but ballistic missiles are also essential to reach targets behind North Korean mountains. Japanese participants also complained that the revision of missile guidelines was conducted with little transparency vis-a-vis Japan; this is part of a more general Japanese grievance about transparency in the US-ROK alliance: transparency is sorely lacking from Tokyo's perspective. This concern was made plain in Japanese comments about working out the OpCon transfer.

Korean participants voiced eerily similar complaints about Japanese efforts to loosen restrictions on the exercise of its right to join collective self-defense. They focused on Japan's possible acquisition of strike capabilities, asserting that the ROK constitution defines the entire Korean Peninsula as ROK territory; thus a Japanese strike against North Korea would be a strike against the ROK. While this is a legal fiction, this demonstrates the sensitivities surrounding Japanese interests in offensive capabilities. These two examples underscore a fundamental problem in the Japan-ROK relationship that has profound implications for the US: each country sees its own actions as contributing to regional security yet labels the other's as potentially destabilizing. Transparency and trust are in short supply.

Reassurance and Extended Deterrence

Our US speaker opened up this session by pointing out that extended deterrence has worked well in Northeast Asia thanks to credible threats to potential enemies and credible reassurance to allies. Reassurance is created by a variety of means: formal treaty commitments, reinforced diplomacy, official statements, superior conventional military forces in the region, power projection, joint exercises and other forms of defense cooperation. Also central to reassurance (and deterrence) efforts is the US strategic nuclear deterrent.

When discussing extended deterrence in Northeast Asia, there are two (very different) reference points: China and North Korea. With regard to China, our speaker stressed that the United States does not view China as an adversary but, rather, as a competitor. This contrasts with the Japanese perspective, which views China more as an adversary. That is not to say that the United States doesn't have important concerns about China. The US worries about conventional and nuclear force modernization, lack of transparency, development of anti-area/access capabilities, challenge to freedom of navigation in the South and East China Seas, and Beijing's blase approach to proliferation. The United States must walk a fine line: it must ensure that regional allies are reassured yet must do so in a way that does not provoke China.

Turning to the Japan-China row over the Senkaku Islands, our speaker reiterated US policy: while the US makes no judgment about ownership of the islands (or any other territorial dispute to which it is not a party), the US nevertheless maintains that they are covered by Article V of the US-Japan Security Treaty, which calls for the United States to defend Japan in the event of conflict over territories under Japan's administration (which includes the Senkakus). Washington would be reluctant to be drawn into a confrontation with China, especially over territory that many consider "strategically insignificant." So while the US will assist Japan to defend the islands, it encourages Japan and China to resolve the issue peacefully.

Our US speaker argued that deterrence of major North Korean aggression is working, if only because there has not been a war on the Peninsula since 1953. At lower levels of provocation and violence, however, extended deterrence has not always worked. While things appear to have calmed down, the multiple provocations that took place in the spring are evidence that North Korea may feel emboldened by its growing nuclear weapon and missile capabilities, and a new cycle of provocations could resume.

In these circumstances, a number of questions arise. One refers to the extended deterrence threshold, i.e. when it should kick in, and whether the United States, the ROK, and Japan agree on this. For attacks "under the wire or for "gray zone" provocations, the issue is how to address these threats and who should do it. The United States? The allies themselves? Both? With what capabilities? (Current debate in Japan about conventional strike options should be viewed in this light.) Another question is linked to the implications for extended deterrence as the United States becomes increasingly vulnerable to China's and North Korea's arsenals. How can there be tighter coupling between the United States and its allies without antagonizing China and creating an arms race? Our speaker rebuffed the ROK call for redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons on the Peninsula, arguing that it is unnecessary since the United States can use nuclear weapons from CONUS, in the remote case that they are needed, it runs counter to the broader US goal to reduce the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons in US national security policy, and it could bolster Pyongyang's claim that it needs its nuclear arsenal. At the same time, however, there are questions about the impact of US nuclear reductions on extended deterrence: in particular, at what point does the nuclear umbrella become 'too thin' to be credible?

Our Japanese speaker stressed that Tokyo is concerned that the United States could openly acknowledge mutual vulnerability with China. Although many experts concede that mutual vulnerability between the United States and China is a fact, such vulnerability is unequal. In Japanese eyes, the United States continues to have a clear edge over China; the task of reassurance would be considerably more difficult if Washington acknowledged mutual vulnerability. China's lack of transparency about its military activities is another reason why Japanese urge the US to not change its stance.

Our Japanese speaker argued that Pyongyang's nuclear and conventional capabilities are progressing and there is concern that these developments will de-couple Japan and the United States. He explained that strong coupling is essential and that Washington must make sure it acts appropriately vis-a-vis North Korea. A failure to do so would undercut Japanese perception of US credibility and might lead Japanese to anticipate a similar failure in the event of a contingency with China.

To counter this fear, our speaker argued for a much more visible deterrence posture on the part of the United States and its allies. US-ROK military exercises, B52 deployment, the revision of US-ROK missile guidelines are all positive developments. Japan is equally determined to be active, as exemplified by promulgation of new National Defense Program Guidelines, the revision of collective self defense limits, the creation of a National Security Council, the creation of a National Security Strategy, and the possible deployment of offensive strike capabilities. Debate about these capabilities, our speaker stressed, does not come from concerns about the credibility of US extended deterrence. Rather, they are meant to enhance Japan's security and contribute to strengthening extended deterrence when North Korea could become overconfident about its growing arsenal.

Our Korean speaker began by explaining that successful deterrence is not necessarily the same as successful assurance. In other words, the United States may deter North Korea while failing to reassure the ROK. Successful assurance of the ROK requires that Seoul resist intimidation from North Korea and refrain from seeking independent nuclear weapon capabilities.

Today's strategic landscape is different from that of the Cold War. While deterrence worked then, it might not today since North Korea may see an advantage in using nuclear weapons. That is why more reassurance of the ROK is needed. In the context of US policy favoring the reductions of the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons, our speaker explained that Seoul is unlikely to be reassured, even less so as the United States is making significant cuts to its defense budget. While the redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons on the Peninsula may not add significant deterrence value vis-a-vis Pyongyang, its psychological value for the ROK should not be underestimated.

During the discussion, Koreans and Japanese stressed the essential role of US nuclear weapons for extended deterrence and assurance missions. Significantly, some Korean participants expressed concerns over the US policy to reduce the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons in its national security policy. One Korean warned that

Washington should not emphasize the benefits of conventional deterrence over nuclear deterrence, as this might undermine both extended deterrence and reassurance. Americans responded that the conventional and nuclear components of extended deterrence are mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive.

More generally, both Koreans and Japanese view extended deterrence and assurance as inextricably linked to their broader relationship with the United States. In other words, extended deterrence and assurance will be strong if the ROK and Japan are, and feel that they are, in sync with the United States. As one Korean put it, “sometimes our perception of our strategic value to the US matters most to us.” However, a recurrent theme of the discussion was the need for a more visible type of extended deterrence and assurance. Both the ROK and Japan regard the B2/52 deployment in the Spring of 2013 as positive. More work needs to be done to ascertain how extended deterrence and assurance can be made more visible.

Opportunities for Trilateral Relations that Increase Extended Deterrence

Our Korean speaker began by stressing Korean and Japanese concerns about extended deterrence. Blame North Korea's nuclear and missile development, President Obama's vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and its commitment to reduce the roles and numbers of nuclear weapons in US national security policy and China (even though Japanese and Korean perceptions of the Chinese threat are not identical). Common concerns provide many potential areas of cooperation for the three allies. They can conduct regular joint military exercises at nearby high seas with the participation of US aircraft carriers or submarines. Occasional fly-overs of the Korean Peninsula or the Japanese islands by US strategic bombers are another option. US airplanes based in either the ROK or Japan could be rotated to train for a rapid response to a North Korean contingency. Improving interoperability and networking among the three armed forces to enhance C4ISR capabilities would also be helpful. The three allies could develop joint missile defense capabilities, as has been done by the United States and Japan. (Our speaker conceded that the ROK government has been hesitant to join such efforts.) Finally, an organization or a more institutionalized forum among the three countries could be established to better plan, consult, exercise, and cooperate on extended deterrence issues. Of course, the United States could also decide to reintroduce tactical nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula.

Cooperation won't be easy, however. All three countries face budgetary constraints. Poisonous ROK-Japan relations, exemplified by the failure to sign a General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and an Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) last year, are another obstacle. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's recent statements on history and territorial issues have fueled mistrust in Korea; in this atmosphere the willingness of his Cabinet to normalize the roles and missions of Japanese armed forces only raises the bar to bilateral cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo. Finally, there are Korean concerns about China's reaction to any heightened cooperation. According to our speaker, the development of trilateral cooperation on

missile defense would be particularly problematic for Beijing, which is why Seoul has resisted it so far.

Our Japanese speaker stressed that it was essential for Japanese and Korean military forces to practice together because large-scale military operations cannot be sustained in the region without Japan-ROK cooperation. Cooperation is needed in time of contingency, but also in peacetime, be it on missile defense, information sharing, military exercises, counterproliferation, or counter piracy. Given political sensitivities to enhanced bilateral cooperation, an incremental approach should be adopted. Conclusion of a GSOMIA is a critical first step to strengthen cooperation and, in Japanese eyes, this would not antagonize China.

Our US speaker stressed that the United States is interested in operationalizing and institutionalizing US-ROK-Japan trilateral partnership not only to deter North Korea, but also to shape its political evolution and enhance regional stability. Focusing on North Korea is important because this is where the interests of the United States, the ROK, and Japan most closely align. It is also urgent because Pyongyang is pressing ahead with nuclear and missile developments and the associated challenges will only grow. In these circumstances, as he put it, trilateral cooperation is not “a nice thing to do but a must do.”

Our speaker acknowledged the hurdles identified by other speakers: history and political issues, practical impediments, such as the lack of a GSOMIA and ACSA, and strained resources. He urged the three countries to conduct joint exercises, not merely exchange observers, in areas like missile defense, counterproliferation, and maritime security, all of which require an ACSA. Given budget constraints, the ROK and Japan should consider joint acquisition of ISR assets such as *Global Hawk*, which, again, cannot occur without a bilateral GSOMIA to protect sensitive information. In addition, senior-leader visits are critical and should be strengthened, and policy statements on extended deterrence and assurance should be coordinated.

Our speaker also addressed what the United States should strive *not* to do. Avoiding being dragged into bilateral political disputes is by far the most important goal. Washington is equally determined not to let either Northeast Asian ally hijack the policy agenda: Washington will not be dragged into an ROK-Japan competition for US influence at the expense of the other. The US will also endeavor to ensure that trilateral cooperation is not construed as part of a strategy to contain China. At the same time, however, the US will push for trilateral cooperation, which can be enhanced without antagonizing Beijing.

During the discussion, participants concurred that ROK and Japanese security communities would benefit from deeper coordination and cooperation. Acknowledging that publics shape policy and could derail such cooperation, participants were divided on whether this process should receive high-level attention or develop behind the scenes, i.e., at the operational level. All agree, however, that high-level support is essential if greater cooperation is to proceed; the question is whether to highlight lower-level successes. Thus, it was recommended that a campaign to raise public awareness about the

benefits of enhancing ROK-Japan defense cooperation would help narrow the gap between security communities and publics.

General Observations, Concluding Remarks, and Next Steps

This trilateral extended deterrence dialogue, the first held by the Pacific Forum CSIS, was immensely helpful in laying out US, ROK, and Japanese positions on extended deterrence and assurance. It also provided a forum where the three countries can better appreciate, build upon, and develop shared interests on these issues, as well as coordinate policy. While all participants conceded that they began the discussions with some trepidation -- given the state of relations between Tokyo and Seoul -- Americans, South Koreans, and Japanese participants readily acknowledged the value of this dialogue. The Japanese, in particular, saw it as critical in helping promote understanding of Japan's positions in the ROK. With the right people, the right agenda, and the right chair, this process can produce positive results. Many participants suggested that the next iteration of this dialogue include a tabletop exercise, which has the potential of considerably enhancing track-2 and track-1 dialogue efforts.

Hanging over the meeting were tensions in the ROK-Japan relationship, which inhibit greater trilateral coordination and cooperation, even when it is seen as contributing to both sides' national security. However, a key takeaway is that this problem can be sidestepped if progress at the trilateral level is conceptualized as an effort to enhance coordination between the US-ROK alliance and the US-Japan alliance, as opposed to an attempt to coordinate policies among the three countries more generally. In future iterations of this dialogue, more thought should be given to what this implies and how this can be done.

Finally, discussions on ways to strengthen the Northeast Asian regional security architecture brought home the point that developments in one region may impact on another. A few participants suggested that efforts by Seoul and Tokyo to develop expanded missile capabilities may influence Russian thinking and impact negatively on the debate over the consolidation of US and Russian tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. It is increasingly clear that cross-regional extended deterrence issues should be given more attention. (Recall that the US-Russian Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, which was concluded in 1987 almost exclusively with the European theater in mind, raised concerns in Japan as a result of the possible redeployment of Russian systems to the Far East.) This also makes a strong case for the conduct of a separate effort to discuss (and perhaps coordinate) extended deterrence issues among, for instance, US participants and Northeast Asian and America's European allies. This would help US allies better understand how extended deterrence is conducted in different regions and nudge them toward better policy coordination and cooperation. This would be an immensely useful exercise for US Northeast Asian allies in particular, which appear to be increasingly looking to the "European model" of extended deterrence (exercised through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization) as a reference point and model for Northeast Asia.

Appendix A

US-ROK-JAPAN EXTENDED DETERRENCE TRILATERAL

September 2-3, 2013

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul, Korea

Conference Agenda

Monday, September 2

9:00AM Introductions

9:15AM **Session I: Strategic Perspectives and Extended Deterrence**

The three countries compare and contrast perspectives on regional security threats and challenges, with special attention to the role of US extended deterrence. What distinguishes these threats from other security challenges? What are the important trends or factors that influence the salience of these threats? What is the role of deterrence by denial and deterrence by punishment for addressing these threats and what role does the US nuclear arsenal play versus other non-nuclear assets like missile defense, conventional forces, etc.? How should we apportion our range of resources to these specific challenges? How should we discuss or frame these challenges to ensure they get the attention they deserve without inflating them or provoking other countries?

Korea Presenter: CHOI Kang, The Asan Institute
Japan Presenter: Sugio TAKAHASHI, MOD
US Presenter: Shane SMITH, NDU

10:45AM Coffee break

11:00AM **Session 2: Views of China and the balance of power in the Asia Pacific**

How does each country see the balance of power in Asia? Is it changing? If so, how and why (i.e, what is driving that shift)? What is the impact of that shift? How does a shift impact US extended deterrence commitments and the role of nuclear weapons? How does each country evaluate PLA military modernization efforts (e.g. nuclear forces, submarines, etc.)?

US Presenter: Eric THOMPSON, CNA
Korea Presenter: KIM Hankwon, The Asan Institute
Japan Presenter: Ken JIMBO, Keio University

12:30PM Lunch

1:45PM **Session 3: Views of North Korea**

How does each country characterize the North Korean threat? What is the role of deterrence? What specific scenarios is each country trying to deter and what are they doing? What does each government expect the other two to contribute to deterrence and what is expected when deterrence fails? At what level does North Korea become a threat that engages the US extended deterrent and at what point should the US nuclear arsenal come into play?

Korea Presenter: CHEON Seong-Whun, KINU
Japan Presenter: Hiroyasu AKUTSU, NIDS
US Presenter: Kevin SHEPARD, USFK

3:15PM Break

3:30PM **Session 4: Changes in national defense postures and status of reforms**

What is the status of defense postures and programs, especially given the new governments in Tokyo and Seoul? What is each government planning to do? How will those changes impact the extended deterrent? To what degree does the extended deterrent shape Japanese and ROK plans? What is the status of the rebalance and the Obama administration's plans to try to continue to reduce nuclear weapons on the extended deterrent? How can these policies best be used to strengthen extended deterrence?

Japan Presenter: Ken JIMBO, Keio University
US Presenter: Bryan PORT, USFK
Korea Presenter: CHO Nam Hoon, MND

5:00PM Adjourn

Tuesday, September 3

9:00AM **Session 5: Reassurance and extended deterrence**

How can the US reassure the ROK and Japan regarding the viability and credibility of its extended deterrent? What does each government want Washington to do? Is there anything in particular that would be troubling to these governments? What should the US NOT do? Are there nonmilitary ways the US can reassure its allies of the durability of its extended deterrent and its commitment to their defense?

US Presenter: Robert GROMOLL, US State Dept.
Japan Presenter: Sugio TAKAHASHI, NIDS
Korea Presenter: WOO Jung-Yeop, The Asan Institute

10:30AM Coffee break

10:45AM **Session 6: Opportunities for trilateral relations that increase extended deterrence**

What can the three governments do together to shore up extended deterrence in East Asia? When can they cooperate in the region in a meaningful way? Can each government see ways that the other two countries can cooperate to increase extended deterrence? Are there things they should not do?

Korea Presenter: KIM Young-ho, KNDU
Japan Presenter: Takehiro FUNAKOSHI, MOFA
US Presenter: Michael URENA, US State Dept.

12:15PM Lunch

1:30PM **Session 7: Next steps**

What should the three countries do to strengthen regional stability and deterrence? How can this dialogue contribute to that process?

3:00PM Adjourn

Appendix B

US-ROK-JAPAN EXTENDED DETERRENCE TRILATERAL

September 2-3, 2013

The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul, Korea

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