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Contents

Biden Administration's Korea Policy Represents Change and Continuing Challenges 5

Bruce Klingner

How Will North Korea Respond to Shifts in the US-China Relationship? 29

Sung-Yoon Chung

A Shifting Northeast Asian Security Landscape and China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation 59

Gong Keyu

Denuclearization of North Korea:
A Phased Approach to the Zone of Possible Agreement 83

Byong-Chul Lee

Characteristics of the Korean Peninsula Arms Control Model and Its Gradual Implementation 107

Jongchul Park

The EU after Brexit and Potential Impact on East Asia:
The Economic and Geopolitical Implications 129

Doo-Jin Kim

Biden Administration's Korea Policy Represents Change and Continuing Challenges

Bruce Klingner

The Heritage Foundation

Abstract

President Biden's strategies and tone will be a return to normative U.S. views of alliances, decision-making procedures, and diplomacy prevalent in previous administrations of both political parties. The Biden Administration will return to a traditionalist U.S. view of alliances that is based on shared values, principles and objectives rather than transactional relationships focused on allies' monetary contributions. Biden will inherit a more dangerous North Korean security threat than his predecessor faced. During the past four years, North Korea's nuclear, missile, and conventional forces increased in scope and sophistication. Biden will emphasize policy over personality but pressing for progress toward denuclearization rather than touting a close personal relationship with Kim Jong-un. It is unknown how the Biden administration will define the parameters of an acceptable North Korean denuclearization accord nor how strongly it will enforce sanctions or criticize Pyongyang's human rights violations. The North Korean nuclear problem has vexed successive U.S. presidents of both political parties. Pyongyang may not any more willing to engage diplomatically nor make any progress toward denuclearization with a Biden Administration than previous U.S. administrations. President Biden will need to develop a policy of deterrence, containment, pressure, and diplomacy.

Key Words: Joseph Biden, North Korea, denuclearization, nuclear weapons, nuclear negotiations, U.S.-South Korean alliance, Special Measures Agreement

President Joe Biden's strategies and tone will be a return to normative U.S. views of alliances, decision-making procedures, and diplomacy prevalent in previous administrations of both political parties. Biden will be less impulsive, unpredictable, and disruptive than his predecessor. His policies, once set, are expected to be relatively constant without sudden unexpected reversals. Biden will be unlike to surprise his cabinet secretaries, the U.S. government bureaucracy, and America's allies with abrupt policy changes. Instead, Biden's policy statements will be consistent with his administration's National Security Strategy and National Military Strategy.

As Biden assumes the presidency, he will seek to prioritize domestic issues, including remedying the devastating societal and economic impacts of the COVID pandemic, over foreign policy. The world, however, has a tendency to intrude upon the plans of new presidents. China will undoubtedly be the major foreign policy concern for the Biden Administration since it encompasses military, economic, and diplomatic threats.

North Korea may not initially be a predominant focus of the administration. But Pyongyang doesn't like to be ignored. The regime has historically ramped up tensions early in a new U.S. and South Korean administration to, as one North Korean defector told this author, "train them like a dog" and induce concessions. Provocations could include continuation of tactical-level missile launches or the initial launch of the new massive ICBM revealed in North Korea's October 10 parade or another nuclear test. Such blatant violations of UN resolutions would require a firm response by the Biden Administration.

However, the COVID pandemic may serve to initially constrain North Korean provocations. Pyongyang did not implement its threat to conduct a "shocking action"¹ after its December 2019 deadline, possibly because

¹ ABC Net, "North Korea's Kim Jong-un Threatens 'Shocking Action' against US with 'New Weapon,'" January 1, 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-01-01/north-korea-threat-new-strategic-weapon-us/11836450>.

of the impact of its self-imposed COVID restrictions. The regime may delay provocations that are intended to drive U.S. negotiators back to the table with concessions until the COVID situation stabilizes and its diplomats could meet face-to-face with U.S. counterparts.

Repairing Alliances

The most immediate and significant difference in a Biden Administration will be in how the United States treats its allies. President Biden will seek to reassure allies who in recent years have increasingly questioned the continued viability of the United States as an ally. Biden pledged to honor U.S. commitment to its security treaty commitments and extended deterrence guarantee.²

Biden will return to a traditionalist U.S. view of alliances that is based on shared values, principles and objectives rather than transactional relationships focused on allies' monetary contributions. He vowed to “stand with South Korea, strengthening our alliance to safeguard peace in East Asia and beyond, rather than extorting Seoul with reckless threats to remove our troops.”³

Biden will abandon demands for exponential increases in allied contributions that sought to make a profit off the stationing of U.S. forces overseas⁴ and will, instead, seek incremental increases.⁵ He declared that he would not withdraw American troops from the Korean Peninsula. Trump had repeatedly warned he would reduce or withdraw forces from

2 “Exclusive: Former Vice President Joe Biden Sits Down with CNN,” *CNN*, July 5, 2019, <http://edition.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/1907/05/nday.05.html>.

3 Duk-kun Byun, “Biden Will Not Treat Allies as ‘Protection Racket,’ Says Adviser,” *Yonhap*, October 11, 2020, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20201009000600325>.

4 In Special Measures Agreement negotiations with South Korea, Trump instructed his diplomats to seek “cost plus 50%,” which was later raised to four- and five-fold increases in host nation support during subsequent talks.

5 Bruce Klingner, James Jay Carafano and Walter Lohman, “Don’t Break Alliances over Money,” *The National Interest*, November 22, 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/don%E2%80%99t-break-alliances-over-money-98967>.

South Korea and Japan if Washington was not paid enough.⁶ Doing so would be a positive policy change and remove a major source of tension between Washington and its Asian allies.

U.S. polls show strong public support for maintaining U.S. troop levels in South Korea. A survey by the Korea Economic Institute show only 8 percent of American respondents favored withdrawing U.S. troops in Korea and only 11% supported downsizing the force. About half of respondents want troop levels maintained and 7 percent sought an increase.⁷

Biden's rhetoric to allies will be supportive and inclusive. He criticized President Trump for having "belittled, undermined, and in some cases abandoned U.S. allies and partners"⁸ and having "poked his finger in the eye of all our friends and allies [while] embrac[ing] every autocrat in the world."⁹

The 2020 Democratic Party platform declared, "rather than denigrate our partners and encourage tensions between our allies, the United States will work to strengthen ties with and between our key allies in the region, including Japan, South Korea, and Australia... Thailand and the Philippines" as well as India and multilateral institutions like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.¹⁰

Biden may resume combined military exercises with South Korea when COVID conditions allow. Trump had dismissed the exercises, critical to maintaining allied deterrence capabilities, as provocative and "a total

6 Joseph R. Biden Jr., "The New York Times," <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/politics/joe-biden-foreign-policy.html>.

7 "KEI: 2020 Report on American Attitudes toward the Korean Peninsula," Korea Economic Institute, http://kei.org/sites/default/files/publications/kei_report_092920.pdf.

8 Joseph R. Biden, Jr. "Why America Must Lead Again: Rescuing U.S. Foreign Policy after Trump," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2020), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

9 Kylie Atwood and Nicole Gaouette, "How Biden Plans to Undo Trump's 'America First' Foreign Policy and Return US to World Stage," *CNN*, October 31, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/31/politics/biden-foreign-policy-plans/index.html>.

10 "2020 Democratic Party Platform," July 27, 2020, <https://www.demconvention.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-07-31-Democratic-Party-Platform-For-Distribution.pdf>.

waste of money.”¹¹ During the 2018 Singapore summit, Trump unexpectedly announced their cancellation, without having attained any reciprocal diplomatic or military gestures from North Korea.¹²

The Biden Administration is more likely than its predecessor to engage in efforts to ameliorate strained relations between U.S. allies South Korea and Japan. The Obama Administration conducted extensive behind-the-scenes diplomacy with Seoul and Tokyo which facilitated their 2015 bilateral agreement on comfort women.¹³ Vice President Biden personally interceded with both South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to facilitate a bilateral meeting between them.¹⁴

The Trump Administration has largely stepped back from the latest imbroglio over contentious historic issues which was triggered by South Korean court cases, Japanese export controls, and threats to end a bilateral military intelligence sharing agreement.

Ever Growing North Korean Threat

For decades, every incoming U.S. president has inherited a more dangerous North Korean security threat than his predecessor faced. Biden will be no exception. During the past four years,

North Korea’s nuclear, missile, and conventional forces increased in scope and sophistication. Pyongyang conducted its first hydrogen bomb test and successfully launched two different ICBMs that can target the

¹¹ “Remarks by President Trump in Press Conference, Hanoi, Vietnam,” The White House, February 28, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-press-conference-hanoi-vietnam/>; “Trump Calls Allied Exercise ‘Unnecessary,’ ‘Total Waste of Money,’” *Korea Herald*, August 26, 2019, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20190826000126>.

¹² Bruce Klingner, “The U.S. Should Implement Maximum Pressure after Failed Hanoi Summit,” *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, no. 3409 (May 22, 2019).

¹³ “Comfort women” was the euphemism used by Japan for women forced into sexual slavery during World War II.

¹⁴ Daniel Sneider, “Why Biden Will Embrace The American Alliances in Northeast Asia,” *Tokyo Business Today*, November 23, 2020, <https://toyokeizai.net/articles/-/390854>.

American homeland with nuclear weapons.

Pyongyang is producing a new generation of advanced mobile missiles that are more accurate; mobile and solid-fueled that are more survivable and difficult to target; and with a greater ability to evade allied missile defenses. Contrary to President Trump's assurances that the North Korea threat had been resolved and Pyongyang was "denuking all over the place,"¹⁵ Pyongyang continues to *nuclearize* at an accelerated rate. The regime can create fissile materials for an estimated 7-12 nuclear warheads per year¹⁶ and expanded and refined manufacturing facilities for fissile material, nuclear weapons, missiles, mobile missile launchers, and reentry vehicles.¹⁷

In 2019, North Korea conducted a record high number of missile launches, all of which were violations of UN resolutions while demonstrating five new weapons systems which increased the threat to South Korea and U.S. troops stationed there. In its October 2020 parade, Pyongyang revealed a record high number of new weapons systems, including a new massive ICBM that may have the ability to carry multiple warheads to overwhelm U.S. missile defenses, SLBM, numerous multiple rocket launcher systems, and the regime's first new main battle tank in decades.¹⁸

15 "President Trump Sits Down with George Stephanopoulos," *ABC News*, June 12, 2018, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-trump-sits-george-stephanopoulos-transcript/story?id=55831055>.

16 Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "North Korea's Nuclear and Ballistic Missile Programs" (Congressional Research Service, June 6, 2019), <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10472>; Ankit Panda, "US Intelligence: North Korea May Already Be Annually Accruing Enough Fissile Material for 12 Nuclear Weapons," *The Diplomat*, August 9, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/08/us-intelligence-north-korea-may-already-be-annually-accruing-enough-fissile-material-for-12-nuclear-weapons/>.

17 Courtney Kube, Ken Dilanian and Carol E. Lee, "North Korea Has Increased Nuclear Production at Secret Sites, Say U.S. Officials," *NBC News*, June 30, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korea-has-increased-nuclear-production-secret-sites-say-u-n887926>; Ellen Nakashima and Joby Warrick, "U.S. Spy Agencies: North Korea Is Working on New Missiles," *The Washington Post*, July 30, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?destination=%2fworld%2fnational-security%2fus-spy-agencies-north-korea-is-working-on-new-missiles%2f2018%2f07%2f30%2fb3542696-940d-11e8-a679-b09212fb69c2_story.html%3f&utm_term=.b70bf4bfb8d9.

18 Bruce Klingner, "U.S. Will Face Stronger, More Provocative North Korea in 2021," *Heritage Foundation Issue Brief*, no. 6018 (October 22, 2020), <https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2020-10/IB6018.pdf>.

North Korea Policy – Substance Over Style

The Biden Administration will return to a traditional “bottom up” bureaucracy- and expert-based policy formulation and diplomatic outreach to North Korea rather than impulsive “top down” approach. Biden has articulated a comprehensive, though vaguely defined, policy for achieving North Korean denuclearization and preventing proliferation. In a return to familiar policy themes of earlier administrations, Biden emphasized “principled diplomacy,” “empower[ing] our negotiators [to] jump-start a sustained, coordinated campaign with our allies and others, including China,”¹⁹ the “right formula of sanctions enforcement and sanctions relief,”²⁰ and strong military deterrence. Biden emphasized that he would “put enormous pressure on China...for them to put pressure on North Korea to cease and desist” their nuclear programs.”²¹

End of the Bromance

Biden criticized President Trump’s extolling of a strong personal relationship with Kim Jong-un, who is on the U.S. sanctions list for human rights violations and, according to the 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry, a purveyor of crimes against humanity.²² Biden has described Kim as a

¹⁹ Biden, Jr. “Why America Must Lead Again.”

²⁰ “North Korea,” *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/politics/2020-democrats-north-korea-foreign-policy.html>.

²¹ “Full Transcript of Tuesday Night’s CNN/Des Moines Register Debate,” *Des Moines Register*, January 14, 2020, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/elections/presidential/caucus/2020/01/14/democratic-debate-transcript-what-the-candidates-said-quotes/4460789002/>.

²² The UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, February 2014, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/ColDPRK/Pages/CommissionInquiryonHRinDPRK.aspx> concluded that North Korea’s human rights violations were so “systemic, widespread, and gross” as to legally constitute crimes against humanity. The report catalogues North Korea’s atrocities included “extermination, murder, enslavement, torture, imprisonment, rape, forced abortions and other sexual violence, persecution on political, religious, racial and gender grounds, the forcible transfer of populations, the enforced disappearance of persons and the inhumane act of knowingly causing prolonged starvation.”

“thug,” “dictator,” and “murderous tyrant”²³ while Trump had praised the North Korean leader as “honorable”²⁴ and someone who “loves his people.”²⁵ Biden vowed to “make it clear to our adversaries that the days of cozying up to dictators is over.”²⁶

Biden stated he would impose conditionality on any future summits with North Korea. He derided Trump’s three meetings with Kim as “photo ops”²⁷ and “vanity projects”²⁸ which “haven’t won a single promise from North Korea.”²⁹ Instead, Biden commented he’d be willing to meet with Kim only if the North Korean leader agreed to reduce his nuclear weapons. Brian McKeon, foreign policy advisor to Biden, explained there would need to be substantive progress at lower levels, including “detailed negotiations and understandings and documents written down on paper for the leaders to approve and review and sign.”³⁰

Much Remains Uncertain

Some predict that President Biden will resume Obama’s “strategic patience” policy which ignored the growing North Korean military arsenals

23 William Gallo, “For Trump or Biden, N. Korea Is the Problem That Won’t Go Away,” *Voice of America*, August 26, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/trump-or-biden-n-korea-problem-wont-go-away>; Rachel Frazin, “Biden Responds to North Korea: ‘I Wear Their Insults as a Badge of Honor,’” *The Hill*, November 15, 2019, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/470715-biden-responds-to-north-korea-i-wear-their-insults-as-a-badge-of-honor>.

24 Zachary Cohen and Kevin Liptak, “Trump Praises Kim Jong Un as Honorable, Refuses to Explain Why,” *CNN*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/24/politics/trump-kim-jong-un-honorable/index.html>.

25 Maegan Vazquez, “Trump Says Accused Human Rights Abuser Kim Jong Un ‘Loves His People,’” *CNN*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/06/12/politics/donald-trump-kim-jong-un-loves-his-people/index.html>.

26 Josh Smith, Hyonhee Shin and Trevor Hunnicutt, “Biden on North Korea: Fewer Summits, Tighter Sanctions, Same Standoff,” August 20, 2020, <https://in.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-election-biden-northkorea-analysis/biden-on-north-korea-fewer-summits-tighter-sanctions-same-standoff-idINKBN25G2R4>.

27 Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *Twitter*, <https://twitter.com/JoeBiden/status/1271572403563507712>.

28 “Joseph R. Biden Jr.”

29 Sang Hyun Lee, “Joe Biden’s North Korea Policy Will Put Allies, and Facts, First,” *The National Interest*, August 31, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/joe-bidens-north-korea-policy-will-put-allies-and-facts-first-167922>.

30 Byun, “Biden Will Not Treat Allies as ‘Protection Racket,’ Says Adviser.”

while weakly applying pressure on the regime. But much has happened in the intervening four years which could portend a stronger policy. These factors include the growing North Korean nuclear and missile threats to the American homeland, realization that summit diplomacy was unsuccessful in making progress on denuclearization, and bipartisan consensus on the need to strongly pressure North Korea as well as confront Chinese misbehavior in Asia.

It is unknown how the Biden Administration will define acceptable parameters of an acceptable North Korean denuclearization accord. Biden commented that the Obama Administration's Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear agreement with Iran "provides a blueprint for an effective negotiation" with North Korea.³¹

UN resolutions require North Korea to abandon its nuclear and missile forces in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. However, debates could rage within the Biden Administration over the efficacy of continuing to press for full denuclearization, how firmly to apply sanctions, and conditions for offering inducements to Pyongyang. Some might advocate seeking incremental arms control agreement that accepts less than full denuclearization.

Several members of the Biden Administration have suggested deferring North Korean denuclearization and, instead, adopting an incremental, arms control approach. Secretary of State Antony Blinken commented, "The hard reality is it's, if not impossible, highly unlikely that we will achieve, in any near term, the complete denuclearization of North Korea. I just don't see that as realistic in the near term. What I think we can get is an arms control and, over time, disarmament process put in place"³² in "stages and phases."³³

31 "Candidates Answer CFR's Questions: Joe Biden" (Council on Foreign Relations, August 1, 2019), <https://www.cfr.org/article/joe-biden>.

32 David Brennan, "What Antony Blinken Has Said about Key Foreign Policy Issues," *Newsweek*, November 23, 2020, <https://www.newsweek.com/what-antony-blinken-said-about-key-foreign-policy-issues-1549404>.

33 "Biden Foreign Policy Adviser Antony Blinken on Top Global Challenges," *CBS News*, September 25, 2020.

Similarly, Michele Flournoy, a strong contender for secretary of defense, opined it was “hard to see [Kim Jong-un] completely accepting nuclear disarmament, because it is their survival card. That doesn’t mean we shouldn’t pursue reductions to the extent possible...but it’s more of a risk management challenge even though we should keep disarmament out there as the ultimate long term goal.”³⁴

How Much Pressure?

Nor is it known how strongly Biden would enforce U.S. sanctions laws or criticize Pyongyang’s human rights violations. Biden declared he would tighten sanctions until North Korea gave up all of its nuclear and missile programs and would insist on substantial disarmament before relieving any sanctions.³⁵ However, Vice President Kamala Harris commented that she would “consider targeted sanctions relief to improve the lives of the North Korean people if the regime were to take serious, verifiable steps to roll back its nuclear program. And that relief would have to be immediately reversible were they to renege on their commitments.”³⁶

Successive U.S. administrations of both political parties failed to fully enforce U.S. laws and UN sanctions. The Obama Administration engaged in timid incrementalism³⁷ of sanctions enforcement by targeting a few North Korean entities, pausing to see if that altered North Korean behavior, prior to taking action against other violators. Similarly, the Trump Administration’s “maximum pressure” strategy was never maximum as Trump impeded enforcement of U.S. laws.³⁸

34 William Gallo, *Twitter*, <https://twitter.com/GalloVOA/status/1311545861806059521?s=20>.

35 “Joseph R. Biden Jr.”

36 “Candidates Answer CFR’s Questions: Kamala Harris.”

37 Bruce Klingner, “Moving beyond Timid Incrementalism: Time to Fully Implement U.S. Laws on North Korea” (The Heritage Foundation, January 13, 2016), <https://www.heritage.org/testimony/moving-beyond-timid-incrementalism-time-fully-implement-us-laws-north-korea>.

38 Bruce Klingner, “Trump Undercuts ‘Maximum Pressure’ Strategy on North Korea,” *The Hill*, March 30, 2019, <https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/436180-trump-undercuts-maximum-pressure-strategy-on-north-korea>.

President Biden could and should more forcefully enforce U.S. laws against North Korean transgressions more than the Bush, Obama, and Trump Administrations. However, Biden will find it difficult to restore a strong international consensus on pressuring Pyongyang which was weakened by President Trump's undermining international isolation of Kim Jong-un, cancelling military exercises, curtailing enforcement of U.S. laws, ignoring Pyongyang's missile violations and human rights abuses, all while claiming the North Korean nuclear problem had been solved.

Will It Work?

The North Korean nuclear problem has vexed successive U.S. presidents of both political parties. Eight international denuclearization agreements with North Korea have all failed due to Pyongyang's cheating or unwillingness to implement its promised actions. Over the years, the United States has tried diplomatic engagement, humanitarian assistance, security guarantees, sanctions relaxation, summit meetings, and reducing allied military deterrent but all to no avail.

There is much to castigate in Trump's policies. His "maximum pressure and engagement" policy was good in theory but each component was undermined by President Trump. However, President Obama was not successful either. During his tenure, North Korea conducted four nuclear tests, several long-range missile tests, and made significant advances in its nuclear and missile programs.

Obama entered office blaming President George W. Bush for Pyongyang's transgressions and stalemated negotiations. But Obama's preliminary plans to engage North Korea were undermined by the regime's early nuclear and ICBM tests. That led the Obama Administration to adopt a different policy than initially planned and then subsequently ignored North Korea except for a quixotic Leap Day agreement in 2012 which quickly collapsed.

Pyongyang may not any more willing to engage diplomatically nor make any progress toward denuclearization with a Biden Administration

than previous U.S. administrations. While experts debate limitless combinations of benefits, punishments, timelines, and approaches, the U.S. government has already produced drawers full of “roadmaps” depicting strategies for denuclearization. But all of them have been roads not taken by Pyongyang.

Even if President Biden directs the U.S. government to fully enforce its laws, he will find it difficult to persuade the international community to strongly implement UN sanctions after two years of the United States asserting that the North Korean nuclear problem has been solved.

Recommendations

Repair the U.S.-South Korean Alliance and Rebuild Military Deterrence

- ***Affirm unequivocal commitment to defending South Korea.***

President Trump’s harsh criticism of America’s allies, demands to make a profit off stationing of U.S. forces overseas, threats to reduce or remove U.S. forces, and downplaying of North Korea’s growing theater-level threats increased South Korean trepidation that the U.S. will not fulfill its defense treaty obligations. The U.S. should make absolutely clear to friend and foe alike that it will defend its allies.

- ***Don’t threaten to reduce U.S. forces.*** U.S. forces are necessary to defend a critical ally. The Trump Administration’s unwillingness to, for the first time in 12 years, affirm the customary commitment to maintain U.S. forces at the promised 28,500 troop level in the bilateral Security Consultative Meeting communique exacerbated concerns of the U.S. using troop levels as bargaining leverage in burden sharing negotiations. The Biden Administration should declare it will maintain current levels of U.S. forces until the North Korean nuclear, missile, and conventional force threats have been sufficiently reduced.

- ***Abandon demands for an exponential increase in South Korean and Japanese reimbursement for U.S. troop presence.*** U.S. forces overseas serve America's strategic interests, including maintaining peace and stability in northeast Asia. Seeking to profit off U.S. forces overseas is inconsistent with American values and commitments.³⁹ The Biden Administration should seek incremental, rather than exponential, increases in South Korea's contribution to offset the cost of stationing U.S. forces and instead accept an incremental increase.
- ***End unilateral allied disarmament by resuming military exercises.*** President Trump's unilateral decision to cancel U.S.-South Korean military exercises was a major unilateral concession - for which the United States received no diplomatic or security benefits in return. Pyongyang neither codified its missile and nuclear test moratorium nor limited its own military exercises. Two years of cancelled and constrained military exercises degraded allied deterrence and defense capabilities. Washington and Seoul should resume military exercises when COVID conditions allow.
- ***Maintain conditions-based wartime operational control (OPCON) transfer.*** Prematurely transitioning to a South Korean command of Combined Forces Command before Seoul has ameliorated deficiencies in C4ISR and joint/combined operations and the North Korean nuclear threat has been reduced could have detrimental consequences in wartime. President Moon Jae-in's push for transition during his term runs counter to the bilateral agreement for a conditions-based, rather than timeline-based, transfer. The U.S. should hold the line against politically driven decisions.
- ***Review allied ballistic missile defense plans.*** North Korea's growing ICBM force with potential multiple warheads and more launchers poses problems for American homeland missile defenses.

³⁹ Bruce Klingner, Jung Pak and Sue Mi Terry, "Opinion: Trump Shakedowns Are Threatening Two Key U.S. Alliances in Asia," *Los Angeles Times*, December 16, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2019-12-16/how-trump-is-threatening-alliances-in-asia>.

Pyongyang's expanding force of tactical missiles and SLBMs increases the threat to U.S. allies and American forces in the region. The U.S., South Korea, and Japan should review and coordinate missile defense plans, including Tokyo's recent decision to cancel the Aegis Ashore program.

- ***Define the future of the U.S. – South Korean alliance.*** While North Korea must remain the predominant threat focus of the alliance, the allies should also focus on security challenges over the horizon. As South Korea continues to improve its military capabilities, Seoul should be called upon to assume greater responsibilities in regional and global security challenges. South Korea could play a larger role in ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. The country's economic vitality is dependent on safe passage of foreign energy supplies, which are threatened by China's expansionary actions. Seoul has been reluctant to engage in naval operations in the South China Sea for fear of antagonizing China.

Negotiations Should Create a Comprehensive Denuclearization Accord to Be Implemented Incrementally

A series of small agreements would enable North Korea to garner benefits without committing to compliance with UN resolutions requirements for total denuclearization.

- ***Continue pressing for working-level diplomatic meetings with Pyongyang.*** U.S. diplomats should meet with their North Korean counterparts to determine the conditions under which the regime would comply with the 11 United Nations resolutions that require the regime to abandon its nuclear, missile, and biological/chemical warfare in a complete, verifiable, irreversible manner.
- ***Impose conditionality on future summit meetings.*** Initial U.S.-North Korean summits occurred without suitable preparation or requirements for progress toward an agreement. Despite fanfare

and claims of success, the three meetings only provided the illusion of success. Subsequent summits should be reserved for formalizing an agreement worked out by diplomats or in-depth leader negotiations based on meticulous and well-planned policy positions.

- ***Insist on a detailed, comprehensive road map to denuclearization.*** Any future agreement must include an unambiguous and public North Korean commitment to the endstate of abandoning its nuclear and missile production capabilities and existing arsenals. The accord should clearly delineate necessary actions by all parties, linkages to benefits to be provided, sequencing, and timelines for completion.
- ***Require a robust verification protocol in any agreement,*** including data declarations of North Korea's nuclear and missile programs and arsenal, provisions for the dismantlement of those facilities, and destruction of the regime's arsenals of weapons of mass destruction. There should be inspections and long-term monitoring of declared facilities, as well as the right to conduct short-notice challenge inspections of non-declared facilities. A data declaration should occur in the initial phase of implementation.
- ***Condition a peace agreement on reducing the conventional force threat.*** The U.S. and South Korea should not sign a peace treaty until the North Korean nuclear threat is eliminated and the conventional threat reduced. Conventional forces should be capped and then weaned away from the forward area using measures similar to those in the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty and the accompanying Vienna Document of Confidence and Security Building Measures.
 - Signing a simplistic peace declaration would provide a false perception of peace while creating societal and legislative momentum for prematurely reducing or removing U.S. forces prior to reducing the North Korean threat that necessitated American involvement in the first place.

- ***Don't coddle dictatorships.*** The U.S. should restore human rights as an integral component of US policy rather than enthusiastically embracing a dictator on the U.S. sanctions list for human rights violations and purveyor of crimes against humanity. Downplaying North Korean human rights violations is antithetical to U.S. values and undermined diplomatic isolation of North Korea. The North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act, Section 104(a)(5) mandates sanctions against any person who knowingly facilitates severe human rights abuses.
- ***Predicate economic assistance on CVID progress.*** Provision of aid and assistance should be implemented in a manner to encourage economic reform, marketization, and the opening of North Korea to the outside world rather than providing direct financial benefits to the regime. Aid should be consistent with U.S. laws, such as Executive Order No. 13722, which bans “new investment in North Korea [and] any approval, financing, facilitation, or guarantee by a U.S. person...where the transaction...would be prohibited...if performed by a United States person or within the United States.”⁴⁰
- ***Recommend discussions on confidence and security-building confidence measures.*** As was done in agreements between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, such measures can reduce tensions and the potential for miscalculation and conflict by augmenting transparency and notification procedures for military exercises and deployments.
- ***Coordinate North Korea policy with Seoul.*** South Korean President Moon Jae-in has appointed a new national security team that advocates “creative” ways to provide benefits to North

40 Trump Administration, “Blocking Property of the Government of North Korea and the Workers’ Party of Korea, and Prohibiting Certain Transactions with respect to North Korea,” Executive Order, no. 13722, *Federal Register*, vol. 81, no. 53 (March 18, 2016), https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Programs/Documents/nk_eo_20160316.pdf.

Korea while skirting international sanctions. Seoul remains overeager to lower the bar on sanctions enforcement, offer economic benefits, and sign a premature peace declaration in an attempt to improve inter-Korean relations. Washington must counsel the Moon Jae-in Administration to first insist on tangible progress on threat reduction and denuclearization and, if necessary, recontact South Korean banks, businesses, and government agencies to remind them of existing laws and the penalties for violating them.

Enhance Implementation of UN and U.S. Sanctions

- **Fully enforce U.S. laws.** Sanctions are a critical component of U.S. foreign policy, upholding America's laws and defending its financial system-but only if they are implemented. The U.S. should sanction the 300 North Korean entities violating U.S. laws that President Trump declared that he wouldn't take action against, penalize Chinese banks engaged in money laundering and other crimes by identifying them as primary money-laundering concerns or imposing significant fines, impose sanctions against Chinese shipping companies flouting U.N. restrictions on North Korean oil imports and seize ships, and impose secondary sanctions against ports aiding North Korean smuggling.
- **Reduce sanctions only when the triggering activity has abated.** U.N. resolution sanctions and U.S. punitive measures are responses to North Korean violations. As long as the sanctioned behavior continues, then Washington should maintain its targeted financial measures. UN sanction restrictions on North Korean economic activity may be reduced in response to progress on regime denuclearization. However, some unilateral U.S. targeted financial measures, such as those defending the U.S. financial system, are law enforcement rather than diplomatic measures and should never be abandoned.

- Reducing U.S. sanctions is subject to legal constraints, such as the North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act, Sections 401 and 402 which allow the U.S. to suspend sanctions for up to one year or remove sanctions only if North Korea has made progress on several stipulated issues, including human rights.⁴¹
- ***Respond when North Korea violates U.N. resolutions.*** The Trump Administration ignored North Korea's 26 missile violations in 2019 (the most ever in a year) as well as nine missile violations in March 2020 (the most ever in a month). Any future North Korea violation, particularly a nuclear or ICBM test, should trigger a decisive U.S. response.

Conclusion

North Korea will remain an intractable problem for yet another U.S. administration. President Biden will need to develop a policy of deterrence, containment, pressure, and diplomacy. While each component has been a part of previous administrations' policies, they have been applied in different manners and degrees.

The United States must always remain open to diplomatic engagement and negotiations, but must learn from the mistakes of the past. Washington must maintain strong military deterrence and continue to enforce U.S. laws until Pyongyang has taken necessary steps to reduce its nuclear threat to America's homeland and those of its allies. The road ahead will continue to be long and potentially dangerous, but must be tread in close coordination with allies South Korea and Japan.

⁴¹ North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act of 2016, H.R. 757, 114th Cong., 2nd Sess., 2016, <https://www.congress.gov/bills/114/congress-house-bill/757>.

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How Will North Korea Respond to Shifts in the US-China Relationship?

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Abstract

How will North Korea respond to system level changes caused by great power competition between the US and China? To address this question, this article describes hegemonic struggle, strategic competition, and institutional cooperation as the three main ways in which US-China relations will likely be defined based on their relative power, interdependence, and relationships with other countries, and subsequently outlines the challenges North Korea will face in each scenario. The article argues that first, an environment favorable to North Korea will likely emerge if US-China relations stabilize and cooperation increases.

If the US and China agree on denuclearization and a peaceful process, North Korea will abandon its nuclear weapons, either voluntarily or involuntarily, due to the systemic inertia that this creates. Conversely, North Korea's strategic space will expand and enable it to maintain its nuclear weapons if the rivalry intensifies. Military conflict in other regions and disagreement over the denuclearization process between the great powers, and unilateral military action by America will significantly reduce the likelihood of an agreement between the superpowers on the future of the Korean peninsula. Under this scenario, the probability that China implicitly recognizes status as a nuclear state will increase, and consequently destabilize Northeast Asia.

Key Words: future US-China relations, North Korea's security environment, denuclearization

Introduction

North Korea's diplomatic and security environment is changing rapidly. The emergence of great power competition between the G2 countries in the US and China at the system level, and the changing bilateral relationship between the US and North Korea at the state level are the two main drivers causing this transition. Since its establishment, North Korea has undergone macro-level revisions to its strategy and policies whenever the regional environment and its relations with key countries were fundamentally transformed. During a period characterized by Sino-Soviet conflict and detente from the later 1960s to the early 1970s, North Korea adopted, and subsequently strengthened, its dual strategies of maintaining equally close relationships with both the Soviet Union and China and joining the non-aligned movement. From the late 1980s to the early 1990s, North Korea resolved to pursue the development of an independent nuclear arsenal as the communist bloc suddenly collapsed. In recent years, North Korea has officially declared the completion of its nuclear arsenal in 2017 and has been engaged in bilateral negotiations with the US over its nuclear weapons program since 2018 to probe the possibility of a bargain with an adversarial great power. It is difficult to confirm how genuine North Korea's commitment to denuclearization actually is. However, it is nonetheless evident that it is trying to redefine its relationship with a long-standing great power rival. In other words, it appears that North Korea is trying to establish its third grand strategy as it nears 70 years since the country's foundation.

North Korea's national strategy is typically influenced by its aims, capabilities, and the structure of its international environment. Based on this framework, North Korea's future foreign policy strategies can be expected to be determined by these factors also. These three factors tend to affect North Korea's strategic planning collectively, but there are some instances where one key variable dominates the process. These causes may also correlate. Currently, the Kim Jong-un regime is perceived as adopting its foreign policy objectives and strategies by taking into account its nuclear

capabilities as well as the geopolitical environment on the Korean peninsula and the systemic security structure in Northeast Asia.

Among the various factors that influence North Korea's security environment and strategies, this article focuses on a system level variable: the great power relationship between the US and China. As observed in the history of its national strategies, North Korea has traditionally been sensitive to great power politics. This is primarily because the North Korean leadership has recognized that it significantly lacks the absolute and relative power necessary to ensure its survival independently, a view that it will likely maintain in the future. Consequently, North Korea will attempt to mitigate the impact of negative externalities that great power competition may cause, while at the same time strive to increase its strategic value within the context of great power politics. Of course, bilateral relations between the US and North Korea as well as North Korea's nuclear capabilities will play an important role in shaping North Korea's future diplomatic and security environment. But this article contends that these lower-level factors will covary and interact with the system level causes examined in the article.

From this perspective, the main objective of this article is to investigate how changes to US-China relations until 2030 will affect North Korea's security environment and explore how North Korea will likely respond to these shifts in great power politics. In other words, this article focuses on the system level as the independent variable of interest among these various factors that influence North Korea's future security and diplomatic strategies. To do so, this article first describes three specific scenarios of how US-China relations will develop until 2030. The subsequent section analyzes how these different trajectories of US-China relations will likely impact North Korea's political and security environment, and identifies the threats and challenges that North Korea may face under each of these conditions. Based on this analysis, this article concludes by explaining how the North Korean leadership is expected to formulate its national strategy in response to these risk factors. This article hopes to achieve two specific goals. First, the article seeks to contribute to South Korea's strategic plan-

ning as it constructs its own diplomatic approaches vis-à-vis the US and China to effectively react to how North Korea adapts to its security environment in each possible scenario. Second, the article is to contribute to the academic literature through this case study on how small powers adjust to changes at the system level.

The Future of US-China Relations

Determinants of Future US-China Relations

Which factors will likely dictate future relations between the US and China?¹ Scholars and experts have offered a wide range of opinions, but they all agree that the relative balance of power between the two great powers will be a crucial factor. Studies that focus on the distribution of capabilities exist at the systemic level as it primarily seeks to explain the process and outcome of great power competition. There are also many factors other than power that may influence the relationship between the US and China. But generally speaking, the majority of these studies tend to focus on either the domestic politics in each country, the level of mutual interdependence, their respective relationships with other countries, as well as other external factors.²

It is almost impossible to predict and compare the future power of

¹ The literature on current and future relations between the US and China are too voluminous to cite in its entirety. Here, I focused on the following studies to examine the various determining factors of the relationship. Michael D. Swaine et al., *Conflict and Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: A Strategic Net Assessment* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015); John J. Mearsheimer, "Can China Rise Peacefully?" *The National Interest*, October 25, 2014, accessed September 12, 2020, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/can-china-rise-peacefully-10204>; Kurt M. Campbell and Ely Ratner, "The China Reckoning: How Beijing Defied American Expectation," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 2 (March/April 2018), 60-70.

² The primary objective of this article is to analyze how different types of relations between the US and China will affect North Korea. How each of these scenarios is derived by different combinations of causal factors remain beyond the scope of this study. However, the article does discuss how it codes each variable and how it impacts future US-China relations as interactions among these factors will result in specific types of scenarios.

the US and China with great accuracy and certainty. This is because there is no consensus among scholars on what constitutes a state's power and how a nation's soft power should be assessed in particular. Moreover, the measurement problem is compounded by the fact that China's official reporting on its military and economic capabilities that constitute its hard power lacks credibility. Nonetheless, it is still possible to estimate overall trends and the prospective balance of power between the US and China based on previous analyses that are adjusted to account for recent developments. Regarding the Chinese economy which is the primary source of the rise of China, most studies conducted during the early 2000s predicted that it would either match or overtake that of the US in terms of purchasing power by around 2030 if the economic trends persisted. However, these studies were based on assumption that China would maintain a minimum annual growth rate of approximately 10%, and that it would either create or participate in global leading sectors in most areas of the economy. But given how China appears to have started to grow more moderately after recording a growth rate of 6% in 2016, how its manufacturing industry has been hit hard by the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, and how it has likely suffered economic losses due to its trade war with the US, these initial evaluations about China's growth will likely need to be downgraded.³

As for military power, most studies conclude that while China will be able to considerably narrow the gap that exists between China and the US by 2030, it will likely be wider than the economic gap between the two great powers. China has increased its annual military spending by more than 10% almost every year since 2010, and as a result has rapidly strengthened its naval, air force, and missile capabilities.⁴ The US-based RAND Corporation stated in its annual reports published in 2017 and 2018

3 For example, Chinese President Xi Jinping used the phrase "new normal" to indicate that China was entering a period of moderate economic growth in 2014. "The New Normal of China's Economy," *China Daily*, October 10, 2014, accessed September 15, 2020, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2014-10/10/content_18716671.htm.

4 Fiona S. Cunningham and M. Taylor Fravel, "Dangerous Confidence? Chinese Views on Nuclear Escalation," *International Security*, vol. 44, no. 2 (2019): 63-6.

that an American victory against China was no longer guaranteed, and neither was American defeat impossible due to advancements to China's Anti-Denial, Area Defense (A2AD) capabilities. However, the consensus remains that it will be highly improbable for China to match US military force in the foreseeable future considering the latter's operational capacity, military expertise, and accumulative defense spending. In addition, the fact that the US, unlike China, has a broad alliance network with countries such as the EU, Japan, Australia, and South Korea is another reason why most experts predict that the US will maintain its military advantage.

As noted above, there are other various factors that may influence US-China relations aside from the economic and military power of the two countries. In particular, the uncertain domestic situation in each country is expected to likely have a significant impact on bilateral relations in the mid-term. For the US, the most important aspect is the domestic debate on how it should form its China policy as the hegemon in the global system. Since the end of the Cold War, the two main determinants of US foreign policy have been terrorism and the rise of China. Up until 2012 and President Obama's first term in office, the US adopted a relatively conciliatory stance that emphasized joint gains by even accepting China's call for a "new type of great power relations" despite its trepidations about the rise of China. However, US-China relations have become more explicitly contentious since the implementation of the so-called "Pivot to Asia" announced near the beginning of President Obama's second term in office, and tensions have intensified as a result of President Trump's strategy of "America First" and its embrace of a strategy of primacy. Future relations with China will be heavily impacted by whether the US chooses to continue the approach advocated by the Trump administration or revert to a strategy similar to that of the Obama administration's first term.⁵ Potential

5 Kurt Campbell has described four schools of thought that have influenced US policy towards China: the China First School, the bilateral alliance school, the China threat school, and the transnational challenges school. Kurt Campbell, *The Pivot: The Future of American Statecraft in Asia* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2016).

changes in China's domestic politics is also an important variable that will affect bilateral relations between the US and China. Changes in Chinese leadership or its political structure will immensely impact its stance towards the US.⁶ In particular, it is imperative to note that China's strategy may turn aggressive if Chinese nationalism becomes connected to its rise in power in a deleterious manner.⁷

Other variables that may influence US-China relations include changes in the level of mutual dependence between the two countries as well as their respective relations with other countries. First, interdependence between the US and China has continued to increase since the rise of China. This phenomenon may have both positive and negative consequences. As the economic interests of the two great powers become more integrated, an international commercial peace predicted by international institutionalists may occur. Not only are the US and China the largest trading partner for each country, but their interdependence in the financial sector is also extremely high especially in several issue areas including foreign exchange reserves and currency rates. There are well-established interest groups in both the US and China that prefer trade between these countries, and they possess significant influence over the domestic political environment. However, increased interdependence may also cause, or become a tool of, geostrategic competition as it increases mutual vulnerability. The Trump administration's tactics in the US-China trade war are a clear example of how economic interdependence between the two great powers may be weaponized.⁸

US-China relations will also be impacted by how each side manages

6 It is difficult to predict whether China's domestic political system will be sustained in the future. It is questionable, for example, whether the Chinese communist party can maintain its one party system and defend against the political pressure and demand for democracy and freedom that arise due to economic prosperity, illustrated by various theories and case studies in comparative politics. Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, "Modernization Theories and Facts," *World Politics*, vol. 49, no. 2 (1997): 155-83.

7 T. V. Paul, *Restraining Great Powers: Soft Balancing from Empires to the Global Era* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2018), 6-32.

8 Peterson Institute for International Economics (PIIE), "US-China Trade War," accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.piie.com/research/trade-investment/us-china-trade-war>.

their respective relations with other countries and, conversely, which foreign policy strategies other countries adopt vis-à-vis the two great powers. This is because the US and China are not only competing for power and capability but over strategies and influence.⁹ The battlefield for this strategic competition will be Asia. Based on their relationships with the US and China, countries in the region can be categorized into three types. The first category of states is those that are strongly concerned about the rise of China. They include countries such as Japan, Australia, Taiwan, India, Vietnam, and Singapore. The second group of countries has sought cooperation with China to maximize their economic interests. These countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Laos either share borders with China or are geographically close. The last category consists of countries that have adopted hedging strategies¹⁰ and include nations such as South Korea and Indonesia.¹¹ Among these countries, Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Thailand, and South Korea are allies of the US. India, on the other hand, has a neutral relationship with the US but has attempted to firmly balance against the rise of China. It is unlikely that the US and China will compete against each other strictly

9 Here, strategy refers to the general grand strategies that great powers adopt as they compete for hegemony. The main objective of these strategies to maintain or increase its influence both globally and regionally. America's Indo-Pacific Strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) are examples of such strategies. Nuno P. Monteiro, *Theory of Unipolar Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 23-46; John J. Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail: The Rise and Fall of the Liberal International Order," *International Security*, vol. 43, no. 4 (2019): 12-21; Michael Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia: How China's Neighbors Can Check Chinese Naval Expansion," *International Security*, vol. 42, no. 2 (2017): 78-119.

10 Scholars generally conceive of hedging strategies as existing between bandwagoning on one hand balancing on the other. David Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), 21-35.

11 As an ally of the US, South Korea agrees with America's strategies in east Asia in general. However, it is also forced to maintain strategic partnerships with both the US and China given its geographical proximity to China, the need to cooperate with Beijing on the issues of denuclearization and unification, and its high degree of dependence on the Chinese economy. Meanwhile, Indonesia, as a leading state in ASEAN, has conflicted with China over the South China Seas, but has also maintained economic cooperation with Beijing. It has adopted an independent hedging strategy by continuing economic exchanges with China while, at the same time, participating in joint military exercises with Japan. Darren J. Lim and Jack Cooper, "Reassessing Hedging: The Logic of Alignment in East Asia," *Security Studies*, vol. 24, no. 4 (2015): 697-702.

based on their power and influence alone. Therefore, how these two great powers establish strategic partnerships with countries in the region in a targeted manner will have a significant impact on the future of US-China relations.

Types of Future US-China Relations and Their Characteristics

How will future US-China relations evolve? Broadly speaking, bilateral relations between these two great powers will be either conflictual or cooperative when the factors of power, strategy, interdependence, and relationships with other countries listed above are considered. An extreme conflict will likely take the form of hegemonic wars, whereas extreme cooperation will result in “nonhegemonic coexistence.” Neither of these two extreme scenarios is likely to materialize in the near future given the factors described in the previous section. Therefore, it is highly likely that US-China relations will exist somewhere in the middle of these two ideal types. In this context, this article analyzes three scenarios for US-China relations that are most likely to occur in about ten years; hegemonic struggle, hegemonic competition, and institutional cooperation.

Hegemonic Struggle. This article considers the probability of a hegemonic war occurring between the US and China to be very low. Put differently, a scenario in which the US starts a preventive war to stop the rise of China from threatening America’s hegemonic status, or one in which China begins a preemptive war due to fears that the US will attempt a preventive war are excluded from the analysis. This article also discounts the possibility that wars in the periphery caused by other countries will escalate into all-out wars between the US and China. Even as both sides try to avoid war, however, both the US and China are actively striving to maintain and expand its international influence in a state of hegemonic struggle. Thus, similar to the Cold War, though direct military confrontations do not occur, the US and China still try to

dominate the other in various areas of international norms and institutions, security, diplomacy, trade, and advanced technology in a way that distinguishes hegemonic struggle from conventional competition that occurs within the boundaries of normal interstate interactions. Under these conditions, China is highly suspicious of America's apparent attempts at containment and, as a result, will try to weaken both US strategy and its hegemonic status.¹² On the other hand, the US will fear that China is harming its national interests through unfair illegitimate means and that China will try to expel the US from the region and establish its own sphere of influence. Limited confrontations will likely arise in various issue areas as a consequence of irreconcilable mistrust between the two countries, but it will not revert to the superpower competition that existed during the Cold War due to the comprehensive and broad degree of interdependence that exists between the US and China.

Strategic Competition. Strategic competition refers to a situation where competition is relatively less severe and the range and degree of cooperation are broader and more sustained than the hegemonic struggle scenario described above. Rather than a zero-sum game that the hegemonic struggle represents, the two great powers engaged in strategic competition continue competing while simultaneously maintaining a certain level of cooperation. The US and China maintain competitive coexistence under these circumstances,¹³ and the high level of interdependence between the two great powers exert a relatively more positive impact compared to hegemonic struggle. But even if both sides sustain a cooperative stance in general, and even if close cooperation is

12 For instance, China may adopt a strategy in response to the apparent decline of the US that resembles America's approach to the decline of the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson, *Rising Titans, Falling Giants: How Great Powers Exploit Power Shifts* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2018).

13 David Shambaugh, "Tangled Titans: Conceptualizing the U.S.-China Relationship," in *Tangled Titans: The United States and China*, ed. David Shambaugh (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 29-50.

achieved in certain issue areas, the two sides also engage in competition to achieve relative superiority over their great power rival in terms of their overall capabilities and power. But they compete within the system rather than attempting to completely dominate the other side, and they thus attempt to prevent unnecessary tensions and conflicts that would inevitably increase the other side's concerns about the other side's intentions. As a result, the US will not actively attempt to contain China, while China, on the other hand, will prioritize maintaining a stable relationship with the US and focus on further growing its domestic economy. In particular, the Chinese leadership will adequately restrain Chinese nationalist sentiments in order to promote sustainable development and subsequently enhance its power. In this vein, the term strategic is indicative of how the relationship is constructive, rather than being destructive or conflictual.

Institutional Cooperation. Strategic competition outlined in the paragraph above discussed an environment in which cooperation and competition occurred concurrently. Institutional cooperation, on the other hand, refers to a scenario in which competitive pressures further decrease while the level of cooperation is broadened, deepened, and diversified. Specifically, the term institutional cooperation describes not only direct bilateral cooperation between the two states but also includes multilateral cooperation at international organizations and on international norms and regimes. This is a key characteristic that distinguishes this scenario from strategic competition in which cooperation only occurs bilaterally. But an increased level of cooperation does not necessarily mean the absence of competition between the US and China nor does it equate non-hegemonic cooperation. Nonetheless, both sides will attempt to institutionalize bilateral cooperation on global issues and expand cooperation more broadly so that it becomes multilateral in nature. Under this scenario, though the US and China will cultivate shared norms by striving to jointly decide on principles and directions on key global issues through agreement and consultation, in most cases China

will accept and abide by the order and norms that have been institutionalized through the international liberal order that the US has firmly established.¹⁴

US-China Relations and North Korea's Security Conditions

US-China Relations and North Korea's Security Conditions

US-China relations is a system level variable that will impact North Korea's diplomatic and security environment as well as its structure. In general, a stable US-China relationship with a high level of cooperation will likely lead to a more favorable security environment for North Korea. In particular, if the US and China share a joint goal on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and pursues denuclearization peacefully through cooperation, the systemic inertia that will eventually lead to denuclearization of North Korea will be sustained and strengthened. Specifically, if the US and China can agree on how to guarantee the survival of the North Korean regime as well as on sanctions against North Korea, two issues that have been central to bilateral negotiations between the US and North Korea ongoing since 2018, it would substantially reduce the North Korean leadership's suspicions and concerns. Agreement and cooperation between the two great powers in the region will positively impact the shadow of the future and help erase North Korea's fears about the prospect of the US cheating on its commitments regarding compensations for North Korea abandoning its nuclear program.

¹⁴ China's advocacy of G2 relations between the US and China during the Obama administration is representative of this approach. Richard C. Bush, "The United States and China: A G-2 in the Making?" (The Brookings Institute, October 11, 2011), accessed October 3, 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-united-states-and-china-a-g-2-in-the-making/>.

In contrast, North Korea will likely face challenges at various levels if conflict and competition between the US and China intensify and results in greater strategic instability in Northeast Asia. If military confrontations between the two great powers occur in other regions outside Northeast Asia, North Korea will be compelled to support China's position and thus clash with the US. But even under such circumstances, it is unlikely that North Korea will face the entrapment dilemma because both the US and China will likely attempt to prevent further military escalation. Disagreement between the US and China on the process and substance of denuclearization will also affect North Korea's security environment. An extreme example of this might be one in which the US rejects cooperation with China on the issue and instead seriously considers the use of military force to resolve the problem. Under these conditions, China will likely increase its involvement and aggressively resist America's North Korea policies. Conflict between the two great powers may arise even if North Korea denuclearizes at a relatively quick pace. Should this occur, tensions between the US and China might arise due to the latter's concerns about the future of the Korean peninsula and how it might potentially intrude on its national interests. Lastly, if the US tries to establish a close cooperative relationship beyond normalized relations with North Korea or if it actively pursues unification of the peninsula without the consent of China, Beijing will perceive these actions as infringements on its traditional geopolitical interests.

There is also the possibility that factors that directly and potentially influence future US-China relations will also impact North Korea's security environment and strategy. In other words, it is worth exploring how the domestic political situation in both the US and China, the level of interdependence between the two countries, and their relationships with other countries that were discussed in the previous section may affect North Korea also. Among these determinants, America's policy towards China, Chinese nationalism, and the military capabilities of the US and China are particularly likely to directly impact North Korea's future security environment. One specific example to consider is a situation where the US main-

tains its strategy of primacy towards China after the inauguration of the new administration in 2021. This will likely result in the US pressuring North Korea with secondary coercion (indirect coercion) via China for a considerable period of time as it follows the preexisting rules of the strategic game that it has concluded as necessary to solve the North Korea problem. Chinese nationalism and how it might potentially make China's foreign policy more aggressive and revisionist also described above will also be a scenario that North Korea pays close attention to given how it might conflict with North Korea's traditional inclinations for independent foreign policy. The gap, or lack thereof, in military power between the two great powers will also be a structural factor that impacts North Korea's security environment in the mid- to long-term. In assessing military capabilities, analyses need to incorporate the role of the US alliance with Japan. Moreover, as important as contemporary military spending is to the equation, the accumulated amount of military spending also needs to be accounted for as it is an important aspect of a country's military power.¹⁵

Hegemonic Struggle between the US and China

To reiterate, hegemonic struggle refers to a scenario in which both sides impinge on each other's core national interests and are mutually concerned about the revisionist strategy of the other country which consequently leads to more intensified conflict. Under this scenario, the Northeast Asia region will likely be at the center of global competition

¹⁵ China's defense spending in 2017 was approximately 228 billion dollars, which is about 34.8% of America's defense spending that year of approximately 655.4 billion dollars. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *SIPRI Yearbook 2018* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018), 158. Considering how the US defense budget has remained largely the same in recent years coupled with how China and Japan have increased its military budgets respectively, China's defense spending is predicted to be able to match that of the US-Japan alliance only after 2035 at the quickest. Even when such parity in spending occurs, however, it is difficult to state that the military power of the two sides is equal. This is because the accumulated amount of spending over the past 30 to 40 years that the US, Japan, and China have invested in its naval and air capabilities needs to be incorporated in the analysis.

between the US and China and, from a geostrategic standpoint, the Korean peninsula will be the focal point of these two countries in the security realm. The US and China will have fallen into the Thucydides trap despite recognizing its risks. As discussed in the previous section, both the US and China will spend considerable time expanding their respective spheres of influence in the region. The US will attempt to do so by focusing on increasing its naval capabilities in order to maintain its advantage in the seas, while China will focus on establishing superiority in land capabilities within the coastal boundaries defined by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).¹⁶ If both sides try to become a hegemon in the region or implement aggressive security policies, the strategic value of North Korea, which lies on the geostrategic border between the continent from the oceans, will likely be perceived as an area of strategic importance by both the US and China.

North Korea's security environment will likely change rapidly if security competition between the US and China intensifies. Both the US and China might strengthen or at least change how they strategically think about North Korea's nuclear weapons. Above all, the US will denuclearize North Korea at all costs because it will need to weaken North Korea that represents the northernmost boundary of the BRI. In addition, the US will attempt diplomatically to decrease North Korea's dependence on China. If the US and North Korea build sufficient trust through their bilateral negotiations on denuclearization, the US may attempt to drive a wedge in the North Korea-China alliance by sharply increasing its level of interaction with North Korea through various diplomatic efforts including the normalization of relations.

On the other hand, China is expected to maintain its current posture of prioritizing stability on the Korean peninsula even if a hegemonic struggle emerges. But China's strategic interest in North Korea will naturally increase if it concludes that the US is intervening too actively in North Korea even if progress is made in denuclearization negotiations and rela-

¹⁶ Beckley, "The Emerging Military Balance in East Asia," 82-91.

tions are normalized between the US and North Korea. In particular, China might consider extending its nuclear umbrella to North Korea if it either concludes that North Korea was forced to accept an unfavorable agreement on denuclearization due to coercive tactics by the US, or if it perceives North Korea's regime survival remains under severe threat even after it voluntarily abandons its nuclear program. If North Korea, despite the efforts of both the US and China, rejects denuclearization and successfully acquires nuclear deterrent capabilities against the US, it will become much more valuable to China's diplomatic and security interests. Similar to how China assisted Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons to keep India in check, it is impossible to disregard the possibility that China will leverage North Korea to balance against the US-Japan alliance and America's hegemonic strategies in the region. These developments will end up further strengthening China-North Korea relations from a security standpoint.

Strategic Competition

The strategic competition scenario is one in which the US and China maintain a relatively peaceful competitive relationship but neither side has given up on obtaining regional leadership. Under these circumstances, the US will likely sustain its broad approaches of aggressive offshore balancing through both its strategy of primacy and its alliance network in the region, while China will also continuously expand its regional leadership by defensively responding to American actions. As discussed in the previous section, this scenario differs from hegemonic struggle in that both the US and China seek to avoid either intentional or unintentional military confrontations as a method of achieving hegemonic status in Northeast Asia. The US-China relationship will directly affect North Korea's security environment even if a state of strategic competition occurs. In this scenario, the US will likely maintain its military dominance over China in 2030, and China will look towards the future and refrain from engaging in broad competition with the US for the time being. But as economic interdepend-

ence gradually decreases and the US suffers losses in its expected utility as a result, the US will not hesitate to adopt more aggressive stances on issues related to its core national interests.¹⁷

If these conditions persist, the US will likely continue its so-called strategy of secondary coercion by leveraging its trade relationship with China on issues related to North Korea. Put differently, America's current strategy of simultaneously pressuring China and North Korea through sanctions, which it has implemented since mid-2017, will be sustained. In response, China will likely, in principle, cooperate with America's strategy on the denuclearization of North Korea. Moreover, China will refrain from rhetoric and actions that might strongly oppose the rules and structure of America's approach to North Korean denuclearization, and abstain from intervening too heavily on the issue of North Korea in ways that might provoke unwanted suspicion. As a result, it will be difficult to expect a fundamental shift in China's relationship with North Korea that conflicts with America's strategy on North Korea for the foreseeable future.

The security dynamics in the region will remain similar to the circumstances observed from 2018 to 2020 under this scenario. It is predicted that while bilateral negotiations on denuclearization will stall and become prolonged, US-North Korea relations will not deteriorate militarily to the extent to which relations deteriorated in 2017. North Korea will likely face a relatively favorable security environment in which bilateral negotiations with the US are ongoing, the military threat posed by the US is relatively low, and the threat from South Korea is also substantially reduced due to the Korean peninsula peace process. It could also anticipate improvements to its relationships with China and Russia respectively, albeit to a limited degree. Overall, North Korea will face an environment in which it can consider its own limited hedging strategy by preparing for worsening relations with the US while, at the same time, maintaining a friendly relationship with the international community and other countries in the region.

¹⁷ Mearsheimer, "Bound to Fail," 7-13.

Institutional Cooperation

The institutional cooperation scenario does not imply the complete absence of conflict and competition between the US and China, but does emphasize the impact of various factors that would make continued antagonism and repeated confrontations difficult to be sustained. These factors include the issues of climate change, energy, terrorism, and international finance, none of which are likely to directly impact the situation on the Korean peninsula and are especially unlikely to affect North Korea's security environment.¹⁸ Given this, it is probable that, in principle, the US and China will implicitly agree to maintain the status quo on issues related to the Korean peninsula. Consequently, the impact that this structural development and its implications for conflict and cooperation will have on North Korea will be extremely limited. Conversely, enhanced bilateral cooperation between the US and China on issues related to both North Korea's nuclear program and the Korean peninsula may conversely be an indirect cause for greater overall cooperation between the two great powers.

Moreover, if the US and China can further build trust through cooperation at various levels and in different issue areas in a way that facilitates institutionalized cooperation on global security agendas, the two great powers may positively consider institutionalized cooperation on the issue of North Korea including its nuclear weapons program based on these experiences. Agreement and cooperation between the US and China are necessary for the Korean peninsula peace agreement and a multilateral peace regime in Northeast Asia. From this perspective, this particular scenario is likely to have mid- to long-term as well as structural, rather than short-term, implications for North Korea's security environment. Therefore, a

¹⁸ These predictions are made mostly by neoliberal institutionalists such as Ikenberry. G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno and William C. Wohlforth, "Introduction: Unipolarity, State Behavior and Systemic Consequences," in *International Relations Theory and the Consequences of Unipolarity*, ed. G. John Ikenberry, Michael Mastanduno and William C. Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4-29.

situation that resembles the strategic cooperation described above will likely develop on the Korean peninsula and for North Korea in the foreseeable future under these conditions.

Challenges for North Korea and Its Preferred Strategies

Security and Diplomatic Challenges for North Korea in the Future

North Korea's security environment will change depending on the trajectory of future US-China relations, and the diplomatic challenges that it will face as a result will also vary accordingly. First, North Korea is expected to confront both opportunities and threats in its security environment if a period of hegemonic struggle arises between the US and China. The first possible opportunity that may occur in this scenario are conditions under which North Korea may solidify its status as a nuclear power, however illegal and illegitimate that might be. If China strongly suspects that the US will adopt a highly coercive stance in its negotiations with North Korea based on its absolute power advantage and will therefore compel North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons through the threat and use of force, the survivability of the North Korea regime may actually increase.¹⁹ This is because China will become concerned about how this pressure will lead to a situation on the Korean peninsula that is conducive to a South Korea-centered unification in the absence of an agreement between the US and China on how to proceed, and will consequently consider strengthening its political and military assistance to North Korea to alleviate such fears.

¹⁹ Sung-Yoon Chung, et al. *Implications of North Korea's Nuclear Advancement and Response Measures*, Study Series 17-01 (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2017), 31-2.

The second potential opportunity may arise if North Korea can cultivate political and economic conditions that enable it to avoid or circumvent the costs of the international sanction regime. Sanctions will inevitably be prolonged if conflict and competition between the US and China are intensified to an extent that derails negotiations on the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Not only will China oppose comprehensive sanctions that directly harm the welfare of the people of North Korea, but North Korea will also actively complain about the hardship of its people to China which may make them inclined to accept North Korea's requests.

But this scenario will also likely bring about severe threats that might significantly endanger the survival of the North Korean regime. First, the US will likely abandon any hopes of cooperating with China on the issue, and instead implement a strong pressure campaign against North Korea through the trilateral security partnership between the US, South Korea, and Japan. The US increasing its pressure on North Korea through more secondary coercion via China will especially threaten North Korea's security. If a bilateral agreement on denuclearization with North Korea is postponed and if the US suspects that China's role behind the scenes is at fault, as the Trump administration has done in recent years, then the US might decide to increase its political and diplomatic pressure on China despite the risk of substantially worsening its bilateral relationship with Beijing. Under this scenario, China may opt to resist in the short-term but may consider revising its North Korea strategy in the long-term due to how this dynamic harms its own core national interests. Not only is it highly unlikely that China will recognize North Korea as a nuclear state under these conditions, but China may also be compelled to more actively participate in the international sanction regime against North Korea.

North Korea will face various challenges if the US and China engage in strategic competition. The greatest opportunity that North Korea may encounter in this scenario is the removal of the military threat posed by the US through the normalization of relations. If North Korea takes bold steps towards denuclearization and does not demand excessive rewards

for their endeavors in the process, it may be able to conclude a declaration of the end of the Korean war as well as a peace agreement relatively soon. Bilateral relations may be normalized at various steps along the way to these agreements, for example, which will lead to an opportunity to eradicate the hostile relationship that has long-remained between the US and North Korea. The accelerated pace of denuclearization will also likely contribute to the successful implementation of the Korean peninsula peace process which, in turn, will further improve North Korea's security environment. North Korea can also seek an opportunity to stabilize and strengthen its regime. The promotion and visible establishment of a limited peace regime on the Korean peninsula are structurally tied to the denuclearization process with the US, but is also a separate development towards the Korean peace process. If North Korea implements measures for denuclearization that, at a minimum, is at the same level as freezing its nuclear program, an environment conducive for the early progression of the Korean peninsula peace process will likely emerge.

On the other hand, threats and challenges cannot be completely discarded either. First is the threat of abandonment by China, which may be heightened if North Korea decides to reject negotiations with the US due to the realization that it is at a disadvantage, or if North Korea attempts to maintain parts of its nuclear weapons capabilities. Under this scenario, North Korea's nuclear weapons program will incite uncertainty and tension in the region while provoking a conflict between the interests of the US and China which, in turn, will compel China to conclude that these costs outweigh the presumed benefits of supporting North Korea and therefore is less important to do so.²⁰ If the US and China enhance their level of agreement on the aims and means of sanctions against North Korea and

²⁰ The North Korean leadership will likely be aware of this risk. Its perceive risk of abandonment was probably one of the main reasons why it decided to pursue an independent nuclear arsenal in the late 1980s. Client states also face the threat of severely restricting its autonomy when it becomes overly dependent on their patron states for security. Given these structural constraints and risks, it is difficult for weak states to find reliable states to ally with. Moreover, few states adopt a national security strategy that completely relies on their external alliances with other states.

expand their consensus more broadly to the North Korean problem, the North Korean regime will face significant risks. Likewise, if North Korea continues to maintain its position and resists denuclearization despite continued sanctions due to America's steadfast position of only considering the lifting of sanctions after complete denuclearization, China may reevaluate the strategic value of North Korea. This will likely result in the consolidation of American influence in the region, and China may be compelled to seriously consider replacing the Kim Jong-un regime before the US utilizes military options against North Korea.

The second potential risk involves the gradual reduction in the long-term expected utility of North Korea. If North Korea maintains a lukewarm attitude in negotiations on denuclearization, the rewards that North Korea will expect may decrease significantly. As North Korea delays its negotiations with the US, the American foreign policy establishment will become increasingly skeptical about dialogue and the demand for a stronger pressure campaign against North Korea will increase as a result. Under this scenario, the concessions that the US will be willing to offer in subsequent talks will become smaller even if North Korea decides to return to the negotiation table because of American confidence in the effectiveness of the sanction regime as well as its suspicions towards North Korea will have both increased. Consequently, it may be surmised that under this scenario, the vulnerability of the North Korean regime's survivability will decrease the longer it postpones a decision on denuclearization.

Meanwhile, the institutional cooperation scenario will likely be the most favorable for North Korea simply due to the international security environment it creates. North Korea will face a much more stable security environment as a result of institutionalized cooperation between the US and China. This will also mean a situation where not only the two great powers in the US and China but other various international actors will be able to participate and intervene on the issues involving North Korea including its nuclear weapons program. This will be one of the best opportunities for North Korea particularly if it wishes to become a normal member of the international community. If North Korea actively pursues

denuclearization, various opportunities for it to reform and liberalize its economy will be presented. Vastly strengthened institutional cooperation between the US and China in terms of both its breadth and depth will create the systemic inertia that will also contribute to an environment in which complete denuclearization and opening of the North Korean economy will be both inevitable and unavoidable.

This scenario means, however, that the level of cooperation between the US and China on the issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons program will realistically be significantly high which, in turn, means that China will be seeking to closely cooperate with America's overall strategy towards North Korea and policy on denuclearization. As such, North Korea may face a situation where its relationship with China will weaken if the US maintains its hardline stance on the question of partially or completely lifting sanctions against North Korea, an outcome that North Korea desires, and China actively and voluntarily collaborates with the US on this matter. In this regard, North Korea may decide to prepare for a different domestic political situation to emerge in both the US and China after President Trump and President Xi, the two architects behind this cooperative relationship between the two great powers, step down. If the US and North Korea agree to a transitional plan for denuclearization, the possibility that future US administrations will revise its bilateral relationship with North Korea and reassess the temporary agreements with North Korea will also be a potential threat.

North Korea's Preferred Strategies

North Korea is expected to form various responses to the security and diplomatic environment that it will likely face. North Korea will likely choose among three options in case a hegemonic struggle occurs between the US and China. First, North Korea could limit the impact of the international sanctions regime by strengthening its bilateral relationship with China and resume development of its nuclear capabilities. Second, North Korea may choose to advance its nuclear capabilities rapidly and seek a

bargain with the US before security threats against the regime materialize. Third, North Korea may preemptively accept conditions proposed by the US and more actively engage in denuclearization negotiations, but at the same time try to advance its nuclear capabilities as much as possible while delaying negotiations if the US continues to make demands that conflict with North Korea's position and national interests. Regardless of which option North Korea chooses, it will try to advance the nuclear arsenal that it already possesses.²¹ North Korea will also try to retain a minimum number of nuclear weapons in each of these three cases to deter the security threat posed by South Korea and the US to prepare for the worst case scenario.

Under these circumstances, North Korea will most prefer restoring a close relationship with China. Specifically, North Korea will devise various attempts to demonstrate its diplomatic and security value to China as it enters a period of competition with the US and will therefore seek to establish and strengthen its own sphere of influence. North Korea may either ask for assistance in developing mechanisms for denuclearization negotiations that will benefit them, or provide detailed descriptions of its current nuclear capabilities in the hopes of seeking Chinese understanding. In addition, North Korea may form a nuclear strategy that is identical to that of China to persuade Beijing to balance against the trilateral security cooperation between the US, South Korea, and Japan together. In this process, North Korea may promise to refrain from military provocations that might provoke or entrap China on the Korean peninsula while it continues to enhance its nuclear capabilities as a defensive countermeasure. Moreover, North Korea may warn China about the risk of domestic instability caused by internal opposition and argue that only the Kim Jong-un regime will maintain its blood alliance. North Korea may also conclude bilateral agreements with China that guarantees and confers various economic rights and benefits. On the other hand, if the US rejects denuclearization negotiations

21 Sung-Yoon Chung et al., *Peace Regime of the Korean Peninsula and North Korean Policy*, Study Series 18-04 (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2018), 87-99.

and North Korea becomes skeptical of China's resolve in defending North Korea due to American pressure through secondary coercive measures, North Korea will once again focus its policy efforts to advance its nuclear capabilities to combat the uncertainty surrounding its future security environment.

North Korea will likely prefer two strategic options if strategic competition between the US and China arises and continues. First, North Korea will wish to maintain and not disengage from bilateral negotiations with the US initiated by its initial commitment to denuclearization. This will be due to the assessment that it can gain more concessions from the US than was possible in the past based on its confidence in the completion of its nuclear arsenal. Preventing the US from reverting to a firmer policy towards North Korea, especially if the negotiations are derailed early on during the Trump administration, will also become a secondary goal of North Korea's strategy.

But at the same time, North Korea will also prepare for a situation where its interests are harmed or impeded and are not adequately considered due to persistent pressure from the US and its power advantage, an outcome possible based on the general characteristics of strategic competition. North Korea may assess the situation from America's perspective and conclude that the US believes that the current process of denuclearization was made possible by the effectiveness of the sanction regime, and thus plan its response according to such assessments. This will likely prompt North Korea to conclude that it will need to adequately acquiesce to America's demands during the process of negotiations. On the other hand, it will likely delay the bargaining process in order to restructure the nature of negotiations so that it is delayed in a way that benefits them. North Korea will likely attempt to prolong negotiations by increasing the number of meetings as much as possible while also being cautious about upsetting the overall process.

Lastly, under the institutional cooperation scenario, the US and China will probably discuss and deliberate the issues on the Korean peninsula at multilateral international venues such as the UN. Given that the level

of cooperation between the two great powers is high in this scenario, the US and China will likely perceive the North Korea nuclear weapons problem as one of their main priorities central to multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia in the mid- to long-term. This will relatively improve North Korea's security environment in comparison to the current situation. First, it will reduce the likelihood of unilateral action by the US and its efforts to coerce North Korea which, in turn, will improve North Korea's external condition. The international sanctions regime will continue to be imposed on North Korea as long as it resists denuclearization since the international consensus on how North Korea's nuclear weapons program is perceived to be a serious threat to the non-proliferation regime will remain unchanged. But at the same time, North Korea will likely consider various strategic options to weaken the mechanisms of international cooperation on the sanction regime. The most realistic option that North Korea may adopt is dividing the denuclearization process into various steps in order to weaken the international sanctions regime as quickly as possible.

If cooperation between the US and China expands to address issues such as the political system on the Korean peninsula post-denuclearization and the stationing of US troops, North Korea will strongly oppose revisions to the status quo that may potentially impinge upon their interests. In particular, if the US and China agree that a future Korean peninsula that favors South Korea is in both their interests, North Korea will likely further obsess over its nuclear weapons program. North Korea is expected to be extremely sensitive to the prospect of the US and China, the two main parties to the original armistice agreement signed in 1953, agreeing to a post-armistice agreement without consulting them. For these conditions to arise, China needs to conclude that North Korea's strategic value is low and place greater expected value on cooperation with the US. Compared to the other two scenarios discussed above, this is expected to be less likely to occur.

Conclusion

In general, North Korea's security environment will likely improve the more stabilized US-China relations become, and the level of cooperation between the two great powers increases. If the US and China through bilateral cooperation continue to agree on the goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula and pursue denuclearization through peaceful methods, the structural inertia that will lead North Korea to denuclearization will be sustained and reinforced. In particular, if the US and China enhance their cooperation on questions related to the management of the international sanction regime against North Korea as well as the future of the Korean peninsula post-denuclearization, an environment will be created in which the North Korean leadership will be compelled to more actively engage in the denuclearization process. On the other hand, if instability in Northeast Asia increases as a result of intensifying conflict and competition between the two great powers, North Korea will face numerous challenges and threats at various levels. In particular, direct military confrontations between the US and China, heightened tensions and disagreements over how North Korea should denuclearize, and unilateral military actions by the US against North Korea will be most likely to occur when competition between the US and China is the most intense and there is no consensus between these two great powers about the future of the Korean peninsula. Under these conditions, China will ambitiously support North Korea both in terms of its security and economy, while North Korea will become more obsessed with maintaining its nuclear capabilities. This will consequently prompt the US to respond by increasing its pressure on North Korea which may accelerate the speed in which North Korea experiences state failure.

The changes to North Korea's security environment due to shifts in the US-China relationship and how North Korea chooses to react will have significant implications for South Korea also. If hegemonic struggle occurs between the US and China, the probability that North Korea successfully denuclearizes will decrease and the Northeast Asia region will become

more unstable as a result of great power competition. This is the worst-case scenario for the South Korean government. Trilateral security cooperation with the US and Japan will become more necessary in response to stronger ties between China and North Korea. The domestic demands for South Korea to acquire its own nuclear weapons to effectively deter North Korea's nuclear weapons will also become stronger and more frequent. Under the scenario of strategic cooperation, in which cooperation and competition between the US and China simultaneously continue like it currently does, the security dynamic in the region will be strongly influenced by America's policy decisions. If the US pursues an appropriate bargain with North Korea or sufficiently incorporates China's position in how it forms bilateral relations with North Korea post-denuclearization, the regional peace process will likely progress in a relatively stable manner. Strengthening bilateral cooperation in the US-South Korea alliance will further accelerate the dual processes of peace and denuclearization. Lastly, in the case of institutional cooperation between the US and China, South Korea must make adequate diplomatic efforts so that its interests are not ignored by the US, and China as they discuss and decide on the current and future status of the Korean peninsula. In addition, South Korea might need to make efforts to formulate a multilateral consultative process that includes South and North Korea, the US and China to deliberate peace on the Korean peninsula.

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A Shifting Northeast Asian Security Landscape and China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation

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Abstract

The growing competition between Beijing and Washington and the coronavirus pandemic are not only changing the regional landscape but also China-ROK-Japan cooperation in arctic affairs. For the three countries, changes in the Northeast Asian landscape present both opportunities and challenges for trilateral exchange and cooperation. China, South Korea, and Japan all depend on international trade, shipping, and energy for their sustained economic growth. As extra-regional actors with major interests in arctic affairs, China-ROK-Japan share similar policy positions as observers on the Arctic Council. At the same time, the three economic powers also have inescapable competing views and conflicts of interest in the arctic region.

Amid a shifting global landscape and the coronavirus pandemic, Northeast Asia is also undergoing profound changes, which requires higher levels of trilateral cooperation in arctic affairs to provide further momentum for maintaining regional stability and harmony. The best policy for China, South Korea, and Japan, three interdependent major economies in a world of growing uncertainty and competition is more coordination and cooperation. The Arctic could be a region where higher levels of Northeast Asian cooperation and integration can set a new paradigm of sub-regional coordination in the service of regional stability and prosperity.

Key Words: arctic, China-ROK-Japan, Northeast Asian, China-ROK-Japan arctic cooperation

Northeast Asia sits at the intersection of the Eurasian Continent and the Western Pacific. In the midst of a tectonic shift in the global balance of power, Northeast Asia is also experiencing major changes. Bilateral relations, multilateral interactions, and regional economic and security dynamics are all affected by an erratic U.S. president, twists and turns of the North Korean nuclear issue, China-ROK dispute over Seoul's THAAD deployment, easing of tensions between Seoul and Pyongyang, growing tensions between South Korea and Japan, and the dawn of Japan's Reiwa era.

The growing competition between Beijing and Washington and the coronavirus pandemic are not only changing the regional landscape but also China-ROK-Japan cooperation in arctic affairs. For the three countries, changes in the Northeast Asian landscape present both opportunities and challenges for trilateral exchange and cooperation.

A Shifting Northeast Asian Security Landscape

The growing competition between Beijing and Washington and the coronavirus pandemic are not only changing the regional landscape but also China-ROK-Japan cooperation in arctic affairs.

Growing China-U.S. Competition Is a Double-edged Sword for China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation

Washington is adapting its Asia-Pacific policy to changes in the U.S.-China balance of power, strategic calculation, and domestic politics, and external environments in the direction of containing and thwarting China's rise. Growing rivalry between China and the United States after Donald Trump took office is threatening regional stability. Washington has strengthened security ties with its East Asian allies to increase strategic pressure on China in the Taiwan Strait and the East and South China Seas. On the economic front, the Trump administration has waged a trade war

and a technology war with China, trying to strangle the expansion of Chinese tech giants like Huawei by imposing restrictive export controls. On the current trend, the possibility of more conflicts, in the form of financial war, exchange rate war, and industry war, cannot be ruled out. On the military front, the United States continues the Asia pivot by strengthening the alliance with South Korea and Japan and deploying military assets in the Western Pacific.

The fundamental issues in their bilateral ties that Beijing and Washington have to face squarely and address properly are posing unprecedented challenges.¹ The phase one-trade deal announced on December 13 2019 has not ended the broader trade war between the two superpowers. The “China threat” was amplified in the recent U.S. presidential election by Democrats and Republicans who attempted to rally voters by vilifying Beijing on a number of issues that concern China’s core interests, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Xinjiang, Tibet, human rights, trade policies and practices, technology development, and people-to-people exchange. Some U.S. politicians have been trying to push China-U.S. relations to a new cold war.² A pessimistic view holds that the bilateral ties have been changed fundamentally and there is no going back.

Intensifying strategic competition in Northeast Asia is also influencing arctic cooperation that involves China, South Korea, and Japan.

As the prospects for China-U.S. relations darken, other regional powers like South Korea and Japan faced with a potential strategic choice between China vs. America, economics vs. security, multilateralism vs. unilateralism, joint efforts vs. going it alone. For Northeast Asia countries, the strategic elbowroom is shrinking. Japan has chosen to tilt further toward Washington in economic and security terms by promoting its own

1 Wang Yi, “Bringing the Wind and Waves, Moving Forward Resolutely” (speech at the opening ceremony of the 2019 symposium on *International Situation and China’s Diplomacy*, Beijing, December 13, 2019).

2 The third session of the 13th National People’s Congress held a press conference in the Great Hall of the People. State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi answered questions from Chinese and foreign journalists on China’s foreign policy and foreign relations, May 24, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1782257.shtml.

Indo-Pacific strategy and collective-defense rights. South Korea also sided with America on the THAAD issue in Chinese vision.³ Under growing U.S. strategic pressure, Tokyo and Seoul may choose across-the-board alignment with Washington and balk at deeper bilateral and trilateral cooperation on Belt and Road projects and arctic affairs.

On the other hand, the rise of the non-Western world is changing the global economic landscape. The world's free trade system threatened by Washington's growing unilateralism and protectionism. In the name of advancing U.S. national interests, the Trump administration asked South Korea and Japan to pay more for U.S. military protection and threaten allies with the possibility of dismantling America's trade, security, and military agreements with Seoul and Tokyo. In the context of growing downward pressure on the world economy, trade protectionism, and strategic unilateralism, China, South Korea, and Japan have a unique role to play and should assume more international responsibilities.

Improvements in Bilateral and Trilateral Relations Have Cleared Way for China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation

The three pairs of bilateral relationships in the China-ROK-Japan triangle are not without tensions and disputes due to historical grievances and present-day animosity. However, in recent years, these relations have improved significantly.

It is impossible for Tokyo and Beijing to resolve their long-running disputes in the East China Sea. However, top leaders of both nations have decided to take advantage of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties to ease the tensions over recent years.

The THAAD controversy brought China-ROK relations to a new low but summit meetings between top leaders have smoothed over some of

3 About China-ROK dispute over Seoul's THAAD deployment: Most of the Chinese people think that "South Korea agreed with the U.S. on the THAAD issue," but the South Korea's point of view is "THAAD is an inevitable choice for South Korea's security in the face of growing threats from North Korea."

their differences and bilateral relations have returned to some semblance of normalcy.

ROK-Japan frictions include disputes over forced South Korean workers and comfort women in the Second World War, territorial disputes, the 2018 fire control radar lock-on dispute. Tensions further rose after July 2019 when Japan imposed export controls against South Korea. Although Seoul announced that it would delay its withdrawal from the General Security of Military Information Agreement, political and security relations had already worsened.

With a total population of more than 1.6 billion, the GDP volume of China, South Korea, and Japan exceed more than 2 trillion dollars, accounting for 24 percent of the world's total and 70 percent of Asia's.⁴ More than 20 years of China-ROK-Japan cooperation have raised trilateral trade from 130 billion dollars to 720 billion.⁵ This important period has proven that whenever the three regional players can respect each other's core interests, join hands in addressing common concerns, and build up mutual trust, regional stability and security can be assured. Otherwise, competition and instability will grow.

Regular summit meetings have provided opportunities for top policymakers to increase understanding and smooth over disagreements. In 2019 in particular, Beijing assumed the rotating chairmanship of the institutionalized China-ROK-Japan leaders' meetings and arranged for President Moon and Prime Minister Abe to meet in Chengdu to ease their bilateral tensions.

On August 22, 2020, China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi met with South Korea's National Security Adviser Suh Hoon in Busan and spoke highly of the recent outcomes of bilateral cooperation. As Mr. Yang put it, "Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping and Moon Jae-in, Beijing and Seoul have kept strong momentum for cooperation. China stands

4 Wang Junsheng and Tian Derong, "Promoting China-ROK-Japan Cooperation Based on COVID-19 Cooperation," *Overseas Investment and Export Credit*, no. 3 (2020): 29.

5 "The Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade of China-ROK-Japan," *Xinhua News Agency*, December 24, 2019.

ready to work with South Korea to increase leaders' interaction and strategic coordination, identifies new areas of cooperation, expand trade, economic, and cultural links, and bring Seoul-Beijing strategic cooperation to a new height."⁶

Improvement of bilateral relationships and progress in trilateral cooperation has created favorable conditions for more arctic cooperation.

The South-North Rapprochement and Broader Trilateral Arctic Cooperation

Since 2018, regular summit meetings have been held among top leaders of Northeast Asian countries. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un visited Beijing four times in less than one year. Kim also met with his South Korean counterpart three times in less than six months. The two sides signed "Panmunjom Declaration" and the "September Pyongyang Joint Declaration" in April and September 2018, respectively.⁷ On June 12, 2018, Kim Jong-un met with Donald Trump in Singapore, the first ever meeting between the supreme leaders of both countries. And the two met in Hanoi and Panmunjom in late February and June in 2019 respectively. Kim also visited Russia's Far East and met with President Putin in late April 2019.⁸ Although U.S.-DPRK animosity still runs deep, regional countries, South Korea in particular, have seen the rare opportunity for a broader Northeast Asian entente and the possibility of longer-term region-wide stability and prosperity.

Seoul has proposed for its "New Korean Peninsular Economic Map"

6 "Yang Jiechi Held Consultations with the Head of the National Security Office of South Korea: Maintaining Multilateralism and Free Trade," *Xinhua News Agency*, August 22, 2020.

7 *Rodong Sinmun*, the official newspaper of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), published a signed article on January 14, 2019, positively commenting on the "Panmunjom Declaration" and the "Pyongyang Joint Declaration" reached by the leaders of the South and North during their meeting in 2018, and emphasized that both sides should be active Implement the content of the declaration.

8 "Kim Jong-un and Putin Officially Meet for the First Time and Held 'One-on-One' Meeting," *China Government Network*, April 25, 2019, http://photo.china.com.cn/2019-04/25/content_74720962.htm.

vision a series of major infrastructure projects to help Pyongyang develop its economy, including building power plants, railways and roads, and a western coast economic belt. The H-shaped economic map will cover the western coast economic belt (Mokpo – Incheon – Kaesong – Haizhou – Sinuiju – Dalian), the eastern coast one (Busan – Pohang – Seoraksan – Wonsan – Raseon – Vladivostok), and the central belt (Incheon – Jiaנגling – Hamhung). Take the eastern coast belt for an example, through this plan, South Korea will have access to Russia's natural gas and mineral resources of North Korea will be explored. President Moon Jae-in presented a gift to Kim Jong-un at their meeting on April 27, 2018, a USB flash drive that contained this Korean Peninsular Economic Map.⁹

At the same time, at the third plenary session of the Workers' Party of Korea's seventh national congress, the Kim Jong-un administration announced a major transition from a two-pronged strategy that had laid equal emphasis on nuclear weapon development and economic construction to an economy-focused one. As a result of long-standing economic and financial sanctions, North Korean national conditions and capacity still fall short of what is required in a modern country to develop its economy. It is lacking in oil and natural gas and has underdeveloped infrastructure that cannot generate enough electricity to power its economic growth. In a more relaxed external environment, North Korea will be able to free up more strategic resources for economic development and the 9-Bridge Strategy should be used to help Pyongyang to improve its economic conditions and necessary infrastructure. North Korea's involvement in regional development initiatives will also boost arctic cooperation, not only helping fulfilling Seoul's H-shaped peninsular economic map vision, but also advancing Russia's interest in promoting cooperation with Northeast Asian nations.¹⁰

9 "Seoul Proposes to Kim Jong-un a Grand Plan to Link the Inter-Korean Economy with China," *South China Morning Post*, May 8, 2018.

10 Zhang Huizhi and Xu Man, "Korea-Russia Cooperation in the Far East under South Korea's 'New Northern Policy' with the 'Nine Bridges Strategy' as the Core," *Korea Research Essays*, vol. 2 (2020): 72-3.

A future thaw in U.S.-DPRK relations and with it the lifting of international sanctions will help create a favorable regional environment in which DPRK-related economic initiatives proposed by China, Russia, and South Korea for infrastructure, energy, and transportation will be implemented at an early date. Severely affected by international sanctions, the coronavirus pandemic, devastating typhoons, North Korea's economy is now on the brink of collapse. Its involvement in Arctic cooperation will not only alleviate the economic woes but also add to the growing momentum of region-wide cooperation.

Tokyo, Beijing, and Seoul Join Hands in Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Paradigm for Trilateral Arctic Cooperation

A new consensus emerged after the end of the Cold War: given the reduced risk of military conflict and traditional security challenge, nontraditional security threats have gained prominence, such as terrorism, financial crisis, climate change, pandemics, transnational crime, which require joint efforts on the part of all stakeholders, especially great powers. The need to meet common global challenges is the strategic rationale for enhanced great power cooperation.¹¹

For Northeast Asian countries long troubled by historical grievances and unsolved disputes, when it comes to promoting regional harmony and stability, cooperation on nontraditional security challenges should take precedence over tackling traditional ones. Over the years, cooperation in economic, financial, energy and environmental matters has yielded real progress since regional countries are all economy-focused energy consumers.

In early 2020, the coronavirus outbreak that hit China first before it

¹¹ Tao Wenzhao, "The Non-traditional Security Consensus and the United States Going Its Own Way," *Changes in the International Strategic Landscape in the Context of the Pandemic*, Report (Shanghai Institute of International Strategic Studies, March 31, 2020).

spread to other parts of the world, caused economic and social devastation throughout Northeast Asia and cast a shadow over China-ROK-Japan cooperation. The coronavirus pandemic exposed the vulnerabilities of the global public health regime and highlighted the urgency of taking collective action to strengthen human security against nontraditional challenges, especially health risks and biological threats. This urgency of tackling pressing health crises takes on an importance that far overwhelms that of addressing traditional security issues like military conflict and geopolitical risks.¹²

Threatened by a common enemy that is more contagious than SARS and MERS, Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul held a number of high-level meetings like special foreign ministers' meetings and health ministers' meetings to share information and best practices, coordinate national response measures, jointly enforce travel restrictions. In a speech at an extraordinary G-20 summit, President Xi Jinping called for global collective action in a time of crisis to vanquish the virus at an early date.¹³ Beijing also proposed a number of transnational initiatives for health cooperation according to regional conditions in Northeast Asia.¹⁴ Although the peoples of the three nations have to keep a distance from each other amid a global pandemic, sympathy and solidarity have in fact brought their hearts closer.

For Northeast Asian nations, the most pressing concern is how to beat the virus at an early date and restore economic and social orders. Moving ahead, Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul need to establish a new model of economic cooperation by forging more resilient economic chains as the pandemic has exposed major vulnerabilities in the old complementary, externally oriented supply and value chains. Nontraditional security issues

12 "COVID-19 and the International Landscape" by seven experts from CICIR, Report (China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, March 25, 2020).

13 Xi Jinping, "Working Together to Overcome Difficulties" (speech at the special summit of the G20 leaders, Beijing, March 26, 2020).

14 The third session of the 13th National People's Congress held a press conference in the Great Hall of the People. State Councilor and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi answered questions from Chinese and foreign journalists on China's foreign policy and foreign relations, May 24, 2020, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/ziliao_674904/zyjh_674906/t1782257.

should be areas of increased cooperation, for example, maritime cooperation, environmental protection, and public health. More trilateral cooperation could inject fresh impetus into broader Northeast Asian and East Asian cooperation.¹⁵ Moreover, complementary and interdependent industrial chains and economic networks should be set up that are Beijing-based, market-oriented, and enterprise-led.¹⁶

Progress in trilateral efforts to contain the novel coronavirus has set an important example for broader arctic cooperation. As arctic affairs are more complex and challenging for any single country to address them alone, closer coordination on arctic affairs is the best strategic option for Tokyo, Beijing, and Seoul.

China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation: Achievements and Challenges

For China, South Korea, and Japan, changes in the Northeast Asian landscape present both opportunities and challenges for trilateral exchange and cooperation.

The three countries agree on the importance of a rules-based multilateral trade regime, and reaffirm their commitment to free trade, multilateralism, and international norms to build a better international business environment that favors fair competition.¹⁷ In the face of a world in disarray, intensifying great power rivalry, realignment of regional forces,¹⁸ and a new round of rule-making, China, South Korea, and Japan need to step up cooperation at multiple levels and across different areas, among which the Arctic is an ideal place to start.

15 Zhang Yunling, "The Way of China-ROK-Japan in the New Era," *World Knowledge*, no. 10 (2020): 72.

16 Zhang Yunling, "Promoting Northeast Asia Cooperation in the New Situation," *Sungkyunkwan China Observation Quarterly*, no. 3 (2020): 29.

17 "Reviewing the Past and Exploring the Future -- Interpretation of the 8th Trilateral Summit Meeting of China-ROK-Japan," *China Government Network*, December 25, 2019.

18 Jiang Yuechun, "New Opportunities for China-ROK-Japan Cooperation," *Northeast Asian Journal*, no. 2 (2020): 6.

Trilateral Cooperation Foundation: Official Policies and Leaders' Attitudes

Beijing released its first *White Paper on Arctic Policy* on January 26, 2018,¹⁹ which lays out China's policy goals, diplomatic principles, and general positions with regard to arctic affairs in a fast-changing world. It points out that, arctic governance requires contributions from all stakeholders and Beijing is an important actor, participator, builder, and contributor in arctic affairs. China also makes clear that it upholds the principles of "respect, win-win cooperation, and sustainability," stands ready to work with all parties to meet common challenges in a changing arctic, and better understand, protect, and explore the arctic region. The policy paper also calls for jointly building a "Polar Silk Road" to promote inter-connectivity and social and economic sustainable development in the Arctic. On April 23, 2019, when meeting with foreign military delegates participating in a multinational military exercise marking the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Chinese navy, President Xi Jinping first proposed the idea of building a maritime community with a shared future.²⁰

Tokyo issued its *Third Basic Plan on Ocean Policy* in 2018 in which arctic affairs viewed as important as issues such as maritime security, marine economy, and marine environmental protection. Policy measures included in this basic plan are promoting the research of the Arctic Challenge for Sustainability (ArCS), strengthening science and technology collaboration in the Arctic, conducting feasibility studies of arctic shipping lanes, and promoting arctic rule of law.²¹

On September 7, 2017, at the third Eastern Economic Forum held in Vladivostok, South Korean President Moon Jae-in announced Seoul's

¹⁹ "China Publishes Its First White Paper on Arctic Policy: Governance of the Arctic Requires the Participation and Contribution of All Parties," *Xinhua News Agency*, January 26, 2018.

²⁰ "The Sea Testifies – A Full Record of Multinational Naval Activities Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Navy," *Xinhua News Agency*, April 26, 2019.

²¹ Wang Xu, "Interpretation of Japan's Third Basic Ocean Plan," *International Research Reference*, no. 3 (2020): 12.

“New Northern Policy” aimed at building a vast economic area that stretches from the Korean Peninsula and Russia’s Far East through North-east Asia to Eurasia. President Moon also proposed a 9-Bridge Strategy for strengthening Russia-ROK cooperation in nine key areas, namely, natural gas, railway, electricity, port development, arctic sea-lanes, shipping building, job creation, agriculture, and aquaculture.²² Natural gas and arctic sea-lanes has become the core projects carried out by South Korea’s Northern Economic Cooperation Committee under the “New Northern Policy.”²³ In South Korea’s strategic vision, the Far East could be connected with the Korean Peninsula through the nine bridges and there should be sufficient coordination among regional countries’ development and economic initiatives, for example, Seoul’s “New Northern Policy,” Moscow’s “New Eastern Policy,” China’s “Belt and Road initiative,” Mongolia’s “Development Path strategy,” and Japan’s economic cooperation proposal in eight key areas.

Even as Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul unveil their own arctic-focused maritime and economic cooperation initiatives, South Korea and Japan are responding positively to China’s Belt and Road initiative. Leaders of the three countries have expressed their willingness to increase exchange and cooperation on arctic affairs through summit meetings and correspondence.

One agreement among the ten consensus points between Chinese and Japanese leaders at the meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Osaka is that Tokyo believes the Belt and Road initiative is a visionary plan that can better integrate a diverse region.²⁴ During his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in late 2019, President Moon Jae-in reiterated that Seoul hoped to align its “New Southern Policy” and “New

22 “The Prime Minister of South Korea attends the Eastern Economic Forum and Calls on All Parties to Promote Peace on the Korean Peninsula,” *Yonhap News Agency*, September 12, 2018.

23 Guo Rui and Sun Tianyu, “The Arctic Strategy under South Korea’s ‘New Northern Policy’: Progress and Limits,” *Journal of International Relations*, no. 3 (2020): 140.

24 “Xi Jinping Meets with Shinzo Abe and Reached a Ten-point Consensus,” *Xinhua News Agency*, June 27, 2019.

Northern Policy” with Beijing’s Belt and Road Initiative.²⁵ In Seoul’s plan, an air route from Busan of South Korea to Rotterdam of the Netherlands is a major project under the 9-Bridge Strategy, a project that has a lot in common with projects under the China-Russia Polar Silk Road. These projects could be the ideal starting point for multilateral arctic co-operation.

The Achievements of China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation

China, South Korea, and Japan’s policy goals on the Arctic are²⁶ : to understand, protect, develop and participate in the governance of the Arctic, so as to safeguard the common interests of all countries and the international community in the Arctic, and promote sustainable development of the Arctic.

To understand the Arctic, China, South Korea, and Japan will improve the capacity and capability in scientific research on the Arctic, pursue a deeper understanding and knowledge of the arctic science, and explore the natural laws behind its changes and development, so as to create favorable conditions for mankind to better protect, develop, and govern the Arctic.

To protect the Arctic, China, South Korea, and Japan will actively respond to climate change in the Arctic, protect its unique natural environment and ecological system, promote its own climatic, environmental and ecological resilience, and respect its diverse social culture and the historical traditions of the indigenous peoples.

To develop the Arctic, China, South Korea, and Japan will improve the capacity and capability in using applied arctic technology, strengthen

²⁵ “Xi Jinping Meets with President Moon Jae-in of South Korea,” *China Government Network*, December 23, 2019.

²⁶ See “China’s Arctic Policy,” The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, January 2018, “Arctic Policy of the Republic of Korea,” The Korea Maritime Institute, and “Third Basic Plan on Ocean Policy,” Japan.

technological innovation, environmental protection, resource utilization, and development of shipping routes in the Arctic, and contribute to the economic and social development of the Arctic, improve the living conditions of the local people and strive for common development.

The three nations' cooperation in the Arctic have gone beyond mere scientific research, and expanded into diverse areas of arctic affairs including the platforms of global governance, regional cooperation, and bilateral and multilateral affairs, and such disciplines as scientific research, ecological environment, climate change, economic development, and cultural exchanges. As important members of the international community, China, South Korea, and Japan also have played a constructive role in the formulation of arctic-related international rules and the development of its governance system.

For the top level, recent policy statements by top leaders of the three countries have all stressed the strategic and commercial value of the Arctic and the imperative of stepped-up trilateral cooperation. In a joint statement after the 7th trilateral summit meeting in May 2018, the top leaders of the three nations declared that “we support the joint statement agreed at the second China-ROK-Japan high-level dialogue on arctic affairs held in Tokyo in June 2017, reaffirm the importance of trilateral arctic cooperation, in particular collaboration in science and technology.”²⁷

In 2019, the three nations made clear that they would “strengthen cooperation in economic, social and environmental affairs, highlight the importance of cooperation on circular economy, resource efficiency, agriculture, fishery, and arctic affairs, and continue to support and encourage joint efforts to meet such common challenges as ocean plastic waste, air pollution, biodiversity loss, invasive alien species management, and trans-boundary animal diseases.”²⁸

For the professional level, in 2016, China, South Korea and Japan

27 “Joint Declaration of the Seventh Trilateral Summit Meeting of China-ROK-Japan,” *People’s Daily*, May 10, 2018, A3.

28 “The Trilateral Cooperation Vision for the Next Decade of China-ROK-Japan,” *Xinhua News Agency*, December 24, 2019.

launched the first high-level trilateral dialogues on arctic issues to promote exchanges on policies, practices, and experience regarding arctic international cooperation, scientific research, and commercial cooperation.²⁹

China, South Korea and Japan gathered in Tokyo to hold the Second Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic on June 8, 2017.³⁰ The three countries reconfirmed that scientific research presents the most promising area for their joint activities and trilateral cooperative activities. The three sides requested their experts to identify specific cooperative projects on scientific research, such as cooperative research for environmental changes in the Pacific side of the Arctic Ocean as a major contribution to the Pacific Arctic Group (PAG), and Pan-Arctic Ocean observation project in the international coordinated cruises in summer 2020 under Synoptic Arctic Survey (SAS), while taking note of the importance of continually exploring trilateral cooperative activities with the uniqueness and strength of each country in mind. They pledged their support and cooperation for the implementation of the aforementioned activities on arctic science, and confirmed the importance of following up on these activities on a regular basis.

The Third Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic was held on June 8, 2018 in Shanghai, China.³¹ They recognized the Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic as an important platform for deepening and broadening cooperation on the Arctic among the three countries. They continued to promote scientific research as priority for cooperation among the three countries. The three countries supported the enhancement of the exchange of information on arctic expeditions, and encouraged the sharing of scientific data and further development of collaborative surveys. The three countries valued the positive role of the Arctic Council,

29 "S. Korea, Japan, China Hold 1st High-level Talks on Arctic Affairs," April 29, 2016, <http://en.people.cn/n3/2016/0429/c90883-9051475.html>.

30 "Joint Statement the Second Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic," Tokyo, June 8, 2017, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/P020170614645306549315.pdf.

31 "Joint Statement the Third Trilateral High-Level Dialogue on the Arctic," Shanghai, June 8, 2018, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1567103.shtml.

especially in environmental protection and sustainable development in the Arctic.

The Challenges of China-ROK-Japan Arctic Cooperation

China, South Korea, and Japan all depend on international trade, shipping, and energy for their sustained economic growth. As extra-regional actors with major interests in arctic affairs, Beijing, Tokyo, and Seoul share similar policy positions as observers on the Arctic Council. At the same time, the three economic powers also have inescapable competing views and conflicts of interest in the arctic region.

Geopolitical Factor

The Korean Peninsula has been in a state of sub-stability, and the United States and Russia have long been locked in strategic confrontation. This unstable geopolitical situation will limit bilateral cooperation. U.S. military presence, political influence, and regional alliance politics, are constraining Tokyo's and Seoul's diplomacy vis-a-vis other regional actors like Beijing and Moscow. There is also a serious lack of strategic mutual trust between the three countries, which will inevitably bring adverse effects on the closer cooperation between the three countries in arctic affairs.

Rules Factor

In fact, participating in rule-making is a way for countries to protect their own interests through legal means. Western countries have always dominated the formulation of various international rules, using rules to seek and serve their own legitimate interests. The three countries are all extraterritorial countries in arctic affairs and have common interests and aspirations, but there are also obvious competitive relations. How can the three parties reach consensus on the formulation of arctic rules, seek com-

mon ground while reserving differences, and increase the voice and leadership of the three parties in the rule-making process? Cooperating with each other to help the three countries to seek reasonable and legitimate interests for themselves through rule-making should become the focus of trilateral cooperation.

Industrial Competition Factor

China, South Korea and Japan are all major shipbuilding powers with important ports along the planned shipping routes and growing demand for energy. Therefore, there is a phenomenon of homogenized competition among the three parties in participating in economic activities in the arctic field. For example, in the process of using the arctic shipping routes, the three countries all hope to develop a world-class shipbuilding industry. They all focus on turning their ports into shipping hubs and actively participate in energy cooperation with Russia. The high homogeneity of competition among similar industries will put the three parties at a disadvantage relative to the countries in the region, which in turn will reduce the common benefits of the three parties to the arctic countries.

Shipping Routes Factor

The three countries are all interested in the arctic shipping routes, especially the Northeast Routes (NSR), and there is an inevitable competitive relationship in shipping route design, cooperation with countries along the routes, and coastal port development. The shipping routes economy involves the ability of the three parties to drive the country's economy and even industrial development. If the three parties can cooperate to make the shipping routes economy bigger and stronger, it will benefit the economic development of all parties.

Policy Recommendations for Trilateral Arctic Cooperation

China, South Korea, and Japan are all important stakeholders in arctic affairs. Geographically, three countries are all “Near-Arctic State,” the continental States that are closer to the arctic circle. Amid a shifting global landscape and the coronavirus pandemic, Northeast Asia is also undergoing profound changes, which requires higher levels of trilateral cooperation in arctic affairs to provide further momentum for maintaining regional stability and harmony.

Taking Advantage of the Permanent Observer Status to Promote International Cooperation

Gaining an observer status in the Arctic Council will be great opportunity to promote shared interests and cooperation in the Arctic. The three countries should explore the best form and path for broader arctic cooperation with regional stakeholders and strengthen ties with the Arctic Council, the most important multilateral institution in the region. The three sides should lay the groundwork for establishing relations with the Arctic Council and its Working Groups and Task Forces and for strengthening bilateral or multilateral cooperation with various stakeholders in the Arctic including its indigenous peoples.³² China, South Korea, and Japan should step up the efforts to expand their bilateral and trilateral ties with arctic countries like Russia, Canada, the United States, Norway, and Denmark, and seek their support and cooperation on some of the most important issues in the Arctic.

32 “Arctic Policy of the Republic of Korea,” The Korea Maritime Institute, www.kmi.re.kr.

Focusing on Arctic Shipping Lane Development

China, South Korea, and Japan should work with all parties to build a "Polar Silk Road" through developing the arctic shipping routes. The three countries should cooperate more closely on developing arctic shipping lanes and call for stronger international cooperation on infrastructure construction and operation of the arctic routes. For example, they could share icebreakers' costs with Russia, conduct trial voyages, and help facilitate and operationalize arctic commercial shipping lanes. They should conduct joint feasibility studies and hydrologic investigations to ensure safe and fast arctic trips. Moreover, they could also increase cooperation on other matters related to arctic shipping lanes, such as circulation of items used in shipping industry, opening of shipping exchanges, building facilities for ship management, and construction of related industrial parks. China, South Korea, and Japan could also participate in Russian port development on its arctic coastline and increase technological exchanges to reduce investment and operational risks.

Expanding Sister City Ties to Promote Greater Regional Integration

The three countries should build a Northeast Asian city cluster based on the existing sister city ties among Shanghai, Busan, Fukuoka, Osaka, and Yokohama, and a number of sub-regional economic circles like the Tumen River delta, Bohai Rim area, and Yellow Sea Rim area, which could be incorporated into China's Belt and Road initiative. Northeast Asian sister cities must quicken their paces of internationalization and expand trade, financial, and cultural ties as the three countries increase arctic cooperation.

Taking a People-centered Approach and Starting from the Least Controversial Issues

Arctic cooperation should focus on the least contentious areas such as science and technology, environmental protection, social progress. Incentives should be provided to encourage more scholarly exchanges on arctic science and technology. China, South Korea, and Japan should work to strengthen personnel training and public awareness of the Arctic, support higher learning and research institutions to train professionals specialized in natural and social sciences on the Arctic, build science popularization and education centers, and publish cultural products on the Arctic to improve public knowledge. To improving its capacity in arctic expedition and research, China, South Korea, and Japan should strengthen the construction, maintenance and functions of research stations, vessels and other supporting platforms in the Arctic, and promoting the building of icebreakers for scientific purposes.³³ China, South Korea, and Japan should also increase scientific studies on environmental protection in the Arctic and join hands in obtaining a greater say in arctic affairs.

The next decade will be a period of fundamental changes in the world economy, science and technology, and industrial production. The best policy for China, South Korea, and Japan, three interdependent major economies in a world of growing uncertainty and competition is more coordination and cooperation. The Arctic could be a region where higher levels of Northeast Asian cooperation and integration can set a new paradigm of sub-regional coordination in the service of regional stability and prosperity.

33 "China's Arctic Policy," The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, January 2018.

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Denuclearization of North Korea: A Phased Approach to the Zone of Possible Agreement

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Abstract

North Korean nuclear weapons have become the center of politics in South Korea. For more than twenty years since the 1992 Joint Statement on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the nuclear forces of North Korea were fundamental to the strategic competition between South and North Korea. Until most recently, serious people even debated whether complete nuclear abolition in North Korea could be achieved, in particular since the summit meetings between Donald Trump of the U.S. and Kim Jong-un of North Korea. It is now becoming clear, however, that the denuclearization of North Korea must be much harder than people expect, essentially because nuclear weapons remain the ultimate instrument of keeping the Kim regime safe.

Over time, the North Korean nuclear arsenal appears to be aiming directly at the United States, while posing serious threats to the security of the U.S. In the event of some serious military conflicts in East Asia, there is a real risk of nuclear use. Now it's only a matter of time, according to the North Korean state media, before the communist regime in Pyongyang will become militarily and economically prosperous in the future. Most recently, during a nighttime military parade in Pyongyang on October 10, 2020, North Korea displayed what appeared to be its largest intercontinental ballistic missile ever. This poured cold water on the high hopes that a diplomatic solution to the protracted North Korean nuclear crisis has been on the horizon in wake of the historic summit meetings in Singapore (2018) and Hanoi (2019). In addition, intermittent dialogues between South and North Korea are neither new nor unique to the stalled negotiations over the denuclearization of North Korea.

The denuclearization of the peninsula is the final frontier to end the Cold War and would be a paramount move to establish a geographical area free from nuclear weapons in the region. The potential benefits in struggling to achieve this gigantic goal far outweigh the challenges involved. But one of the primary obstacles to deterring North Korea from advancing its nuclear weapons program is a lack of trust between North Korea and the U.S. Washington and Pyongyang (South Korea and China included, if necessary) should reach an agreement on the definition of 'denuclearization' and intended goals of the denuclearization; the backing and support for its realization is a critical step to ensure security and promote peace and stability in the peninsula and beyond.

Key Words: North Korea, denuclearization, nuclear weapons, U.S.-North Korea summit, ZOPA

Introduction

In 2005, Thomas C. Schelling whose interest in game theory led him to write important works on nuclear strategy and use the concept of the tipping point to explain social problems, remarked: “the world has enjoyed sixty years without nuclear weapons exploded in anger.”¹ In November 2017, however, North Korea announced that it had finally realized the great historical mission of developing the state nuclear capacity.² North Korea’s announcement came after two months of crisis with the United States led by President Donald J. Trump. In his bellicose first address to the United Nations General Assembly, Trump threatened to totally destroy North Korea.³ Fortunately, war did not break out. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that North Korea’s nuclear weapons program represents one of the biggest challenges facing the world.

For decades, conventional wisdom at home and abroad held that by enduring years of economic sanctions and international isolation so as to join the nuclear club, North Korea, the world’s ninth existing nuclear power, would advance its nuclear weapons program over time, posing a grave serious threat to security of South Korea as well as to security in the East Asian region. Now it’s only a matter of time, according to the North Korean state media, before the communist regime in Pyongyang will become militarily and economically prosperous in the future, although the nuclear status of North Korea is still debatable in that the status question depends upon whom you ask. At the same time, many people argue that it’s naïve to believe that a denuclearized Korean Peninsula was the dying wish of both Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il, because it’s obviously apparent

1 Thomas Schelling, “An Astonishing 60 Years: The Legacy of Hiroshima” (Nobel Lecture, December 8, 2005), accessed October 27, 2020, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1458836>.

2 Uri Friedman, “North Korea Says It Has ‘Completed’ Its Nuclear Program: What Does That Mean?” November 29, 2017, accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/11/north-korea-nuclear/547019/>.

3 Donald Trump, “Speech at UN Sees Trump Threaten Pyongyang – As It Happened,” February 10, 2018, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2017/sep/19/donald-trump-united-nations-general-assembly-live-updates-news>.

to see the “voluntary denuclearization” happening in Kim Jong-un’s lifetime, given the consequences of the 2018-19 summits between Kim and Trump.

North Korea’s assertions were “vapid,” since North Koreans believed what they wanted to believe. Outside observers are now forced to ask themselves: other than the ongoing rise and fall of tensions, have the benefits that stem from the possession of nuclear weapons been sufficient to justify these kinds of sacrifices North Korea has made? What has North Korea gained from prioritizing its troubled nuclear weapons program at the expense of its economic development? Unfortunately, North Korea has failed to achieve economic prosperity and instead only demonstrated the power of nuclear weapons to deter the remote possibility of aggression from the U.S. That said, North Korea has paid a much bigger price than it expected to.

North Korea as a Fox in the Henhouse

Most recently, during a nighttime military parade in Pyongyang on October 10, 2020, North Korea displayed what appeared to be its largest intercontinental ballistic missile ever. This poured cold water on the high hopes that a diplomatic solution to the protracted North Korean nuclear crisis has been on the horizon in wake of the historic summit meetings in Singapore (2018) and Hanoi (2019). Indeed, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un expressed feelings of gratitude in his January 2019 New Year’s address that the Singapore summit had marked a dramatic turn in the bilateral relationship which had been the most hostile on the earth, saying that the meeting had contributed greatly to the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the East Asian region.⁴

At the same time, the parade eventually debunked the myth that sanc-

4 “Kim Jong-un’s 2019 New Year Address” (National Committee on North Korea, January 1, 2019), accessed October 10, 2020, http://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/kimjongun_2019newyearaddress.pdf/fileview.

tions could produce their expected results. Taking most North Korea watchers at home and abroad by surprise in terms of the unexpected timing, the new ICBM appeared to be much larger than the communist regime's largest, previously disclosed long-range missile, the Hwasung-15.⁵ While the Trump administration's policy-makers who became the laughing stock of the general public because of their intelligence ignorance have been fond of talking about how there's been "no nuclear war with North Korea,"⁶ the general public appears to be quite skeptical of the possibility of the actual implementation because of Mr. Trump's personal inclination toward Kim.⁷ Eventually, the young and fudgy Kim nuked the surprisingly sanguine Trump administration as a wimp, and the regime, upon making good on a threat to lift its temporary and self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and ICBM tests, has emerged as a fox in the Northeast Asian henhouse.

Indeed, historically, the DPRK has notoriously reminded the world of its presence by conducting nuclear tests and launching long-range multi-stage rockets from time to time. With its planned long range rocket launch dominating the headlines of the international media, the DPRK continued to violated Security Council resolutions 1718(2006), 1874(2009), 2094 (2013), 2270(2016), 2321(2016), and 2371, 2375, 2397(all in 2017).⁸ Prior to the reality show-like-parade this time, North Korea launched the Hwasong-15 in 2017, announcing that it would expand North Korea's nu-

5 Sang-Hun Choe, "North Korea's New Missile Is Bigger and More Powerful, Photos Suggest," November 30, 2017, accessed October 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/30/world/asia/north-korea-missile-test.html>.

6 Joe Gould, "Trump, Biden Trade Barbs over North Korea's Nukes," October 22, 2020, accessed October 24, 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2020/10/22/trump-biden-trade-barbs-over-north-koreas-nukes/>.

7 In August 2019, for example, when asked to respond to a spate of North Korean missile tests, Trump brushed them off, pointing out that the test of such short-range missiles is 'very standard' and that the U.S. had also conducted its own test. For more detail, see Alex Ward, "North Korea Continues to Test Weapons. Trump Continues Not to Care," August 15, 2019, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/2019/8/15/20805205/north-korea-missile-test-trump-kim>.

8 Eleanor Albert, "What to Know about Sanctions on North Korea" (Council on Foreign Relation, July 16, 2019), accessed October 22, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/what-know-about-sanctions-north-korea>.

clear program and continue launching satellites. The latest launches in May 2019 were already one of the violations that North Korea continued to pursue aggressively to defy the United Nations resolutions. The KN-23 and KN-24, which reportedly employed solid-fuel technology, had been tested to ranges of approximately 200 kilometers and 400 km, respectively.⁹ These missiles do not need to be fueled prior to launching -- a process that usually takes several hours. This stands in contrast to the liquid-fueled Hwasung-5 and Hwasung-6. Likewise, North Korea knows how to exploit the weak points of the U.S.-led sanctions carried out in the name of the U.N., as evidenced by the fact that late in 2019, North Korea's expected "Christmas gift" of a nuclear or ICBM toward the U.S. homeland, a threat that ultimately didn't materialize, challenged the security of the world. In addition, North Korea has been pursuing a submarine ballistic missile capability. In October 2019, North Korea displayed the Pukuk-song-3 with a range of over 450 km from its original launch point, the third farthest of North Korea's Pukuksong series of two-stage, solid-fueled rockets. In the recent parade, North Korea showcased a submarine-launched ballistic missile labeled as the Pukuksong-4, in the hope that the eminently concealable sea-launched version would be the miracle weapon of the future. Exactly how the Kim regime plans to deploy any such capability remains unknown.

In the meantime, it is certainly safe to say that adding new weapons to the list would mean placing another burden on a stagnant, overburdened economy considering that the absolute number of the people is still suffering malnutrition and chronic hunger across the nation¹⁰ and many factories are lacking electricity, raw materials and export markets. In particular, even though it is hard to tell whether the newly displayed weapons would work perfectly or not, the military parade will likely ce-

⁹ For more, see Michael Elleman, "North Korea's Newest Ballistic Missile: A Preliminary Assessment" (38NORTH, May 8, 2019), accessed October 20, 2020, <https://www.38north.org/2019/05/melleman050819/>.

¹⁰ Benjamin Katzeff Silberstein, "North Korea's Food Situation: Ban But Not Catastrophic" (38NORTH, May 29, 2019), accessed October 20, 2020, <https://www.38north.org/2019/05/bkatzeffsilberstein052919/>.

ment the young dictator's leadership over time, as the KCNA repeated similar past statements that it would "depend on its nuclear deterrence for self-defense, firmly protect its sovereignty, while dynamically pushing forward its development of space technology for peaceful purpose and the industry of nuclear energy..."¹¹ It is assumed that North Korea is producing fissile material enough to make more than five nuclear weapons per year. Its arsenal contains somewhere between 20 and 60 nuclear bombs.¹² This indicates, as North Korean ambassador to the United Nations, Kim Song, claimed on December 7, 2019, "We do not need to have lengthy talks with the U.S. now and denuclearization is already off the table," meaning that the United States would inevitably acknowledge North Korea's nuclear status as a *fait accompli* over the long run.

In making its case for pursuing its controversial status as a nuclear state, North Korea has managed to avoid international isolation while stressing that it has continued to develop its civilian nuclear program. What North Korea has not acknowledged is the possibility that a lack of confidence could spark insecurity and conflict in the East Asian region, even if it's die-hard violations, poor transparency and doubtful work related to nuclear weapons have spurred the international community to question the hostile regime's claim. In short, it was obvious from the start of the countless nuclear talks in the past that the communist regime was determined to cheat the U.S. Indeed, Pyongyang has a long record of deceiving the U.S. in one way or another. Washington has thus monitored North Korea's nuclear push in a variety of ways. In early October 2002, for example, President Bush sent James Kelly, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, to Pyongyang. Kelly reportedly told the North Korean officials that the U.S. had convincing evidence of North Korea's highly enriched uranium program (HEUP) and demanded

11 "Anti-DPRK 'Joint Statement' of UNSC Rebuffed," *KCNA*, May 6, 2012.

12 Si-young Choi, "NK Estimated to Possess Up to 60 Nuclear Bombs: US Army," *The Korea Times*, August 18, 2020, accessed October 14, 2020, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200818000729>.

its complete elimination. Dumbfounded by North Korea's refusal, the Bush administration took steps to "kill" the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework, leading the North to resume its plutonium nuclear program which had been suspended for eight years. Additionally, on October 7, 2002, the Bush administration sent three members of the U.S. intelligence community (IC) to Seoul to brief the Kim Dae-jung government on the American assessment of North Korea's HEUP. The IC's assessment, in summary, was that: "...[It] was judged certain that North Korea was constructing an underground highly enriched uranium (HEU) facility. The location was not identified. North Korea had already obtained materials, including aluminum pipes, to make Pakistani-type centrifuges. If the program proceeded smoothly, North Korea would be able to produce enough highly enriched uranium to make two to three bombs a year by the second half of 2004."¹³

Although some of the evidence presented by hardliners in the Bush administration was exaggerated or logically weak, it has become evident that North Korea possesses an already developed nuclear weapons program.¹⁴ According to the estimates conducted by David Albright and Christina Walrond at the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), North Korea could have had enough weapon-grade uranium (WGU) for 0 to 11 nuclear weapons, given that about 20 kg of WGU is needed to make one nuclear bomb.¹⁵ With regard to plutonium inventory, according to the experts on the North's nuclear arsenal, North Korea seems to be able to make 6-18 nuclear weapons that are with

¹³ Lim, commonly known as an architect of the controversial Sunshine Policy for engagement under the Kim Dae-jung government, fundamentally questioned the credibility of the U.S. intelligence assessment. For more, see Dong-won Lim, "Speech at the Seminar Commemorating the Publication of the English Edition of Peacemaker" (Stanford University, May 18, 2012).

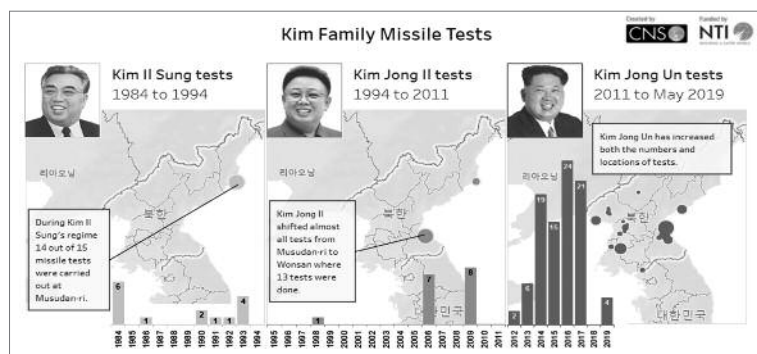
¹⁴ North Korea, on June 13, 2009, announced that "Enough success has been made in developing uranium enrichment technology to provide nuclear fuel to allow the experimental procedure." "DPRK Foreign Ministry Declares Strong Counter-Measures against UNSC Resolution," KCNA, June 13, 2009.

¹⁵ David Albright, "Challenges Posed by North Korea's Weapon-Grade Uranium and Weapon-Grade Plutonium: Current and Projected Stocks" (38NORTH, October 24, 2012), accessed October 2, 2020, <http://38north.org/2012/10/dalbright102312>.

34-36 kg.¹⁶ Each weapon could contain two to five kg of plutonium. Unsurprisingly, the boyish leader Kim Jong-un will likely use the same tactic that led his father and grandfather to convince their people in poverty that nuclear weapons are the best way to safeguard the broken regime. The opponents of the Six-Party Talks thus claim that nuclear talks are of no use in achieving the denuclearization of the peninsula. The time for denuclearization is at a premium, so to speak.

North Korea's Denuclearization: Deep, Tangled Roots

Intermittent dialogues between South and North Korea are neither new nor unique to the stalled negotiations over the denuclearization of



Source: NTI, "Understanding North Korea's Missile Tests" (April 24, 2017), accessed October 5, 2020, <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/understanding-north-koreas-missile-tests/>

¹⁶ DPRK'S total plutonium holdings are estimated to be 30 to 50 kg, enough for six to eight nuclear bombs. The precise number would depend on the minimum amount of plutonium needed for each device and on how much plutonium has already been used in the two nuclear tests. A consensus of experts holds that the 5-MWe reactor and the radiochemical laboratory (reprocessing plant) at Yongbyon appear dormant, but could be reactivated in future, and that the metal fuel rod fabrication building has been converted. For further information, see Sherzod R. Kurbanbekov, Seung Min Woo and Sunil S. Chirayath, "Analysis of the DPRK's Nuclear Weapons Capabilities by Estimating Its Highly Enriched Uranium Stockpile and Natural Uranium Reserves," *Science & Global Security*, vol. 27, issue 2-3 (April 2019): 113-23.

North Korea. The Kim Jong-un regime conducted four nuclear tests (in 2013, twice in 2016, and in 2017, respectively) as well as 93 ballistic missile tests from 2013 through 2017. The number of provocations by the Kim regime has been sixty-three more than the tests conducted by grandfather and father over the past thirty years. (For more detail, see the chart below)

Previous South Korean governments, conservative or liberal, have faced higher rates of on-and-off meetings and military conflicts for generations. A lot of IR scholars, policy analysts, and pundits have been working for almost as long to both characterize and address these “unique” relations. And they are determined to leverage the denuclearization process toward meaningful progress. If one good thing has come out of the U.S.-North Korea negotiations, it may be that we finally have built the momentum to achieve the denuclearization.

Since taking office as the 45th President of the United States in January 2017, Donald Trump has attempted both engagement and sanctions in an effort to stop North Korea’s die-hard aspirations toward a nuclear weapons capability. Despite aggressive rhetoric about North Korea’s continued military provocations in 2017, for example, the Trump administration’s official policy on North Korea was not necessarily aimed at regime change, but rather sought to put “maximum pressure”¹⁷ on the hostile regime of North Korea, in the hopes of getting the state to return to negotiations to remove its growing nuclear arsenal through engagement with the North Korean regime, if and when the Kim Jong-un regime changes its behavior.¹⁸ That was the outcome of a comprehensive policy review

¹⁷ Matthew Pennington, “Trump Strategy on NKorea: ‘Maximum Pressure and Engagement,’” *AP*, April 15, 2017. Many critics jokingly say that “maximum” pressure was by no means maximum.

¹⁸ A senior white House official allegedly pointed out that “The administration’s priority is to end the threat of a North Korean regime armed with nuclear weapons. That is our goal, adding that “The national security interest of the United States in this case is the threat of the regime to us and our allies in the region and so our focus is on that. If and when regime change comes to the northern part of the peninsula, we’ll deal with that then, but for now we are focused on the shorter-term threat.” Josh Rogin, “Trump’s Strategy North Korea Policy Is ‘Maximum Pressure,’ But Not ‘Regime Change,’” *Reuters*, April 15, 2017.

the Trump White House completed three years ago. Apparently, the Trump administration's policy goal was "denuclearization," not simply a halt or freeze of some of North Korea's tests or other illegal activities, which many hawks often claim to be proven ineffective.

Meanwhile, on June 12, 2018, at the Singapore summit, Trump and Kim agreed to four points: the two countries would establish new relations "in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity"; they would "join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula"; they would reaffirm the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration that followed the meeting between Kim and South Korean President Moon; North Korea would commit to "work toward complete denuclearization of the peninsula"; and Washington and Pyongyang "committed to recovering POW/MIA remains." With regard to the agreement, opponents of the Trump administration at home and abroad did not hide their complaints,¹⁹ whereas President Trump said it "largely solved" the North Korean nuclear crisis by asserting that "people don't realize the importance of the first meeting." Trump maintained that North Korea had agreed to denuclearization. Eight months later, on February 27-28, 2019 in Hanoi, Vietnam, President Trump virtually rejected the Singapore statement, without going into detail. Since then, Trump would reiterate: "I'm in no rush. They're not testing nuclear. They're not testing anything."

After three years of a zig-zagged approach to North Korea, the Trump administration has eventually allowed the Kim regime to grow its nuclear and missile capabilities qualitatively and quantitatively. In particular, after the failure of the Hanoi summit in February 2019, North Korea not only put on the front-burner its self-restrained moratorium on nuclear and long-range-missile testing, but also restarted strengthening its nuclear arsenal.²⁰ In retrospect, it was the wrong prediction that the United States

¹⁹ Nicholas Kristof, "Trump Was Outfoxed in Singapore," *The New York Times*, June 12, 2018.

²⁰ Kim Jong-un declared North Korea's nuclear deterrent complete in November 2017 and now he is described as the man that got it all past the finish line. Shannon Tiezzi, "Ankit Panda on Kim Jong Un and the Bomb," *The Diplomat*, July 1, 2020.

would be able to coerce the unpredictable regime into abandoning its nuclear weapons. Neither President Trump's personal diplomacy nor a few rounds of talks between the U.S. and North Korea nor inter-Korean summits between Moon Jae-in of South Korea and Kim Jong-un of North Korea deterred Pyongyang. Fundamentally, it was unrealistic to demand that North Korea should give up its absolute weapons first without the U.S. taking simultaneous measures to guarantee the regime's security including bilateral diplomatic normalization. Instead, mentions of the Libya deal as a model for North Korea's own denuclearization - first by Trump's national security adviser, John R. Bolton, and then by Vice President Mike Pence - were enough to draw threats of withdrawal from the Hanoi talks by North Korea.

North Korea has not only continued but accelerated its nuclear development, accumulating sufficient highly-enriched uranium and plutonium that would be sufficient for approximately 20-60 nuclear weapons.²¹ Consequently, as the communist regime makes major advances in its nuclear capabilities, speculation has increased that the United States may be nearing the decision to conduct a military strike to disable North Korea's nuclear program.²²

Analysts and policymakers have offered various explanations for the failure to make progress toward a negotiated resolution to the nuclear dispute with North Korea.²³ A survey of these explanations would draw attention to a multitude of barriers to a nuclear agreement - decades of hostility and estrangement, domestic politics on both sides, poor tactics, and missed opportunities, to name a few. Indeed, U.S. tactics with respect

21 David Albright and Andrea Stricker, "U.S. and Allies Should Hold Out for Broad North Korean Declaration and Inspector Access" (Institute for Science and International Security, October 11, 2018), 1-21.

22 Bob Woodward contended in his latest book "Rage" that "The Strategic Command in Omaha had carefully reviewed and studied OPLAN 5027 for regime change to an attack that could include the use of 80 nuclear weapons." Bob Woodward, *Rage* (N.Y.: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 74.

23 Ankit Panda and Vipin Narang, "The Hanoi Summit Was Doomed from the Start: North Korea Was Never Going to Unilaterally Disarm," *Foreign Affairs* (March 5, 2019), accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2019-03-05/hanoi-summit-was-doomed-start>.

to the North Korean nuclear negotiations became a major point of contention in the 2016 U.S. presidential campaign, with candidate Hillary Clinton stressing engagement and candidate Donald Trump emphasizing sanctions and force.²⁴

Amid this preoccupation with diplomatic processes - whether to offer a bottom-line deal or a phased agreement, whether to seek a grand bargain or a narrow understanding, whether to declare a deadline for talks or not, whether to deal directly or through intermediaries, whether “front” or “back” channels are more promising, whether a multilateral (six-party talks) or bilateral U.S.-North Korea format would be better, and so on - a more fundamental issue has become obscured: Is there any outcome to the nuclear crisis upon which North Korea and the United States could both agree? The inability of multiple international negotiators, via a variety of diplomatic processes, to conclude a nuclear deal with North Korea raises the possibility that no deal has been feasible over the course of the negotiations, at least through the summer of 2018 in Singapore.

North Korean Nuclear Forces vs. U.S. Nuclear Forces

The failure of the Trump administration to stop North Korea’s nuclear advancement has eventually encouraged Kim and his risible courtier in Pyongyang to believe that North Korea could develop its nuclear activities, without worrying about an effective and serious response from the U.S., and show off a new generation of mid-range or even ballistic missiles and other domestic military achievements to the outside world.²⁵ North Korea

²⁴ In August 2017, Trump directed the word “fire and fury” against the Kim regime and threatened later in September of the same year to “totally destroy” the country. And in February 2018 Trump insinuated a preventive military operation against the regime which was dubbed “a Bloody Nose,” in his speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference.

²⁵ Sang-Hun Choe, “North Korea Unveils What Appears to Be New ICBM During Military Parade,” *The New York Times*, October 11, 2020.

has improved its guidance capabilities for shorter-range missiles and moved away from liquid-fueled missiles towards solid-fueled missiles that are more mobile and faster to launch, achievements that could help its intercontinental ballistic missile technology.

On cue, the North Korean ambassador to the United Nations has made no secret of its offensive measures to ensure the sovereignty and security of North Korea, claiming that:

“Building a peaceful world without war is the consistent goal of North Korea. During the past several decades, we have done everything possible to safeguard peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region. This notwithstanding, the nuclear threat on North Korea continues unabated along with all sorts of hostile acts taking place before the very eyes.”²⁶

This means that North Korea’s nuclear successes and brave trajectory require a new perspective for thinking about how Seoul and Washington can deal with Pyongyang in the future.

The denuclearization of the peninsula is the final frontier to end the Cold War and would be a paramount move to establish a geographical area free from nuclear weapons in the region. The potential benefits in struggling to achieve this gigantic goal far outweigh the challenges involved. The idea of a nuclear free peninsula was officially documented by the two Koreas in 1992 with the support of the U.S. The primary aim of realizing such a goal is to rid the peninsula of possible “factors,” not to mention all the nuclear weapons. The peninsula would eventually cover a geographic area of about 219,155 square kilometers (about the same size as the U.S. state of Minnesota. South Korea alone is about the size of the U.S. state of Indiana).

²⁶ Ambassador Song Kim, Permanent Representative of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to the United Nations at the General Debate of the 75 Session of the UN General Assembly (New York, September 29, 2020).

In the meantime, the recent history of the North Korean nuclear development has consisted of the Kim regime attempting to test and advance its nuclear weapons and missiles since its first nuclear test in 2006. The table below shows North Korea's nuclear tests and their development over time.

Table 1: Results of North Korea's Nuclear Tests

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Date	October 9, 2006	May 25, 2009	February 12, 2013	January 6, 2016	September 9, 2016	September 3, 2017
Test site	Eastern tunnel, Punggye-ri	Northern tunnel, Punggye-ri	Northern tunnel, Punggye-ri	Northern tunnel, Punggye-ri	Northern tunnel, Punggye-ri	Northern tunnel, Punggye-ri
Explosive power(kt)	Approx. 0.8	Approx. 3-4	Approx. 6-7	Approx. 6	Approx. 10	Approx. 50
Nuclear Material	Plutonium	Plutonium	Highly enriched uranium	H-bomb (North Korea's claim)	Boosted fission weapon	H-bomb (North Korea's claim)

Sources: the author re-organized the table based on *The 2018 White Paper on South Korea's National Defense* (Seoul: ROK Ministry of National Defense, 2019)

In 2018, Trump taunted Kim about the size of his nuclear arsenal after his UN envoy, Nikki Haley, dismissed the value of proposed high-level talks between Pyongyang and Seoul. Trump used Kim's New Year's Day speech as the basis for his latest provocative tweet against the young dictator, whom he has previously referred to as "little rocket man," saying his "nuclear button" is "much bigger and more powerful" than Kim's." At the beginning of 2019, in truth, the U.S. Department of Defense maintained an estimated stockpile of 3,800 nuclear warheads for delivery along with 800 ballistic missiles and aircraft. Most of the warheads in the stockpile are not deployed, but rather stored for potential upload onto missiles and aircraft as necessary. Many are destined for retirement. It is estimated that approximately 1,750 warheads are currently deployed, of which roughly 1,300 strategic warheads are deployed on ballistic missiles and

another 300 at strategic bomber bases in the United States. An additional 150 tactical bombs are deployed at air bases in Europe. The remaining warheads - approximately 2,050 - are in storage as a so-called hedge against technical or geopolitical surprises. Several hundred of those warheads are scheduled to be retired before 2030.

Table 2: U.S. Nuclear Forces, 2020 ²⁷

Type/Designation	No	Year deployed	Warheads X yield(kilotons)	Warheads (total available)
ICBMs				
LG-30G Minuteman				
Mk12A	200	1979	1-3 W78 x 335 (MIRV)	600
Mk21/SERV	200	2006	1 W87 x 300	200
Total	400			800
SLBMs				
UGM-133 Trident II D5/LE	240			
Mk4A		2008	1-8 W76-1 x 90 (MIRV)	1,486
Mk4A		2019	1-2 W76-2 x low (MIRV)	50
Mk5		1990	1-8 W88 x 455 (MIRV)	384
Total	240			1,920
Bombers				
B-52H Stratfortress	87/44	1961	ALCM:W80-1 x 5-150	528
B-2A Spirit	20/16	1994	B61-7 x 10-360/-11 x 400	322
			B83-1 x low-1,200	
Total	107/60			850
Total strategic forces				3,570
Nonstrategic forces				
F-15E, F-16 DCA	n/a	1979	1-5 B61-3/-4 bombs x 0.3-170	230
Total				230
Total stockpile				3,800
Deployed				1,750
Reserve (hedge & spares)				2,050
Retired, awaiting dismantlement				2,000
Total Inventory				5,800

ALCM: air-launched cruise missile; DCA: dual-capable aircraft; ICBM: intercontinental ballistic missile; LGM: silo-launched ground-attack missile; MIRV: multiple independently targetable reentry vehicle; SERV: security-enhanced reentry vehicle; SLBM: submarine-launched ballistic missile.

²⁷ Hanks M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "Nuclear Notebook: United States Nuclear Forces" (Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, January 1, 2020), accessed September 30, 2020, <https://the-bulletin.org/premium/2020-01/nuclear-notebook-united-states-nuclear-forces-2020/>.

A Zone of Possible Agreement for Denuclearization

While a macro view of denuclearization is necessary to highlight the enormity of the task ahead, there is also a need to frame the implementation of the denuclearization process in terms of a practical and attainable roadmap. The details of achieving the end state of a denuclearized North Korea through a phased approach should include mutually agreed guidelines and parameters of the complete denuclearization, with practical, confidence-building measures to shore up trust among all stakeholders as well as a sequence of steps to achieve the universality of a nonproliferation regime and its corresponding norms. Considering the slow progress, political wrangling on the issue, and the many setbacks of denuclearizing the scope and extent of North Korea's program that could take decades, there is a risk that any initiative will be seen as naïve and hopeless. Paradoxically, yet, that is exactly why there is an urgent need for the proponents of denuclearization, such as scholars, and policymakers to astutely refine the practical mechanisms in order to proceed towards a nuclear-free North Korea. Inaction is not an option. Furthermore, the positive impact of denuclearization will not be limited to the peninsula and will have profound effects on the nonproliferation regimes in the region.

Needless to say, achieving North Korea free of nuclear weapons will require sustained efforts by all stakeholders. The end state of a nuclear-armed North Korea will demand robust commitments by all the parties concerned to a set of guidelines, principles and agreements to keep North Korea nuclear-free and refrain from any kind of clandestine nuclear weapons program. But one of the primary obstacles to deterring North Korea from advancing its nuclear weapons program is a lack of trust between North Korea and the U.S. In particular, given that a hegemonic power like America typically functions through the use of carrots and sticks, the U.S. may not feel a strong necessity of providing North Korea carrots to uphold the nonproliferation regime only if the North does not transfer its nuclear materials and technologies to the third party. Wash-

ington may have found itself satisfied with the 1992 joint declaration of denuclearization between the two Koreas, which already turned out to be “dead-on-arrival.”²⁸ Nevertheless, in a practical sense, in order to handle a volatile North Korean nuclear game, a nuclear-free peninsula could be achieved in a phased approach for stability and to improve the agreed documents’ longevity.

In the realm of negotiators, whether a deal is feasible is said to depend on the existence of a “zone of possible agreement” (ZOPA).²⁹ A ZOPA is “the range of potential deals that are better in terms of each party’s perceived interests than the best alternative to a negotiated agreement (or ‘no-deal option’) of each party.”³⁰ Sometimes no-deal options consist of alternative offers or their absence (as in the two summits between Trump and Kim); in other cases, no-deal options entail different consequences of walking away (as in the Hanoi summit).³¹ As evidenced by the case of Singapore, there might be no ZOPA in the initial negotiation, if one side were, absolutely convinced it would prevail in the negotiations against the “weak” counterpart.

To explore whether a nuclear deal with North Korea is possible - that is, whether a ZOPA exists - it is necessary to visualize the ZOPA and therefore the range of realistically feasible deals, and how they would be affected by different assumptions and policy choices.³² In essence, Washington and Pyongyang (South Korea and China included, if neces-

28 Clay Halton, “Zone of Possible Agreement (ZOPA),” May 20, 2020, accessed December 20, 2020, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/z/zoneofpossibleagreement.asp>.

29 James K. Sebenius and Michael K. Singh, “Is a Nuclear Deal with Iran Possible?” *International Security*, vol. 37, no. 3 (Winter 2012/13), 53.

30 Ibid.

31 According to Bob Woodward, Kim had offered to dismantle the Yongbyon nuclear scientific research center-North Korea’s major site of nuclear weapons but not all five sites he had. Trump flatly refused it, by saying that “Listen, one doesn’t help and two doesn’t help and three doesn’t help and four doesn’t help. Five does help.” Woodward, *Age*, 175.

32 For a good start, the following guiding principles are required: 1) all parties will commit to a set of confidence-building measures; 2) all parties will take part in each phase of the process; 3) all parties should maintain transparency in the process through a wide level of communication channels; 4) all parties should avoid linking the denuclearization issue to current and future disputes, such as North Korean human rights; 5) all parties should facilitate bilateral and multilateral cooperation in advancing North Korea’s denuclearization; 6) all parties should encourage the establishment of a subcommittee to monitor and evaluate

sary) should reach an agreement on the definition of “denuclearization” and intended goals of the denuclearization; the backing and support for its realization is a critical step to ensure security and promote peace and stability in the peninsula and beyond, since discussions of North Korean nuclear negotiations have often been confusing, intentionally halted, or conflated several relevant factors together so that, when properly considered, result in the underlying potential for a shaky deal. And it is frequently asserted that negotiating with the North Korean regime is not unlike haggling in the porcelain or traditional folk paintings bazaars of Pyongyang, where one must keep one’s wits or else be outsmarted by the savvy merchants. No wiles, however, will help the poor carpet consumer whose best offer is less than the price that the merchant can rapidly and confidently get from another buyer. More generally, if one party sees walking away (no deal) as better than any deal potentially offered by the other, an agreement will not be struck. For North Korea and the United States, the fundamental challenge for negotiation is finding an agreement that is better - in the eyes of both parties - than the two most likely no-deal options: war or a North Korean armed with nuclear capabilities. The existence of a ZOPA is a prerequisite for diplomatic success by whatever process. If no such zone of possible agreement can be created, then the alternatives, however unpalatable, must be considered.

Conclusion

North Korea’s nuclear weapons program has traversed across over sixty years of crisis and opportunity to arrive at today’s troubled moment. Judging from the fact that North Korea has done the six nuclear tests over

progress toward the denuclearization; 7) all parties should incorporate a conflict-resolution mechanism to offset disagreements throughout the process and facilitate dialogue; 8) all parties should abide by the resolution adopted by the IAEA General Conference on September 21, 1990. Seyed Hossein Mousavian and Emad Kiyaei, *A Middle East Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction: A New Approach to Nonproliferation* (London, UK: Routledge, 2020), 54.

a period of eleven years, the communist regime's behavior has come in many guises. Under its Juche [Self-reliance] ideology banner, in particular, numerous ideologues, technocrats and military strategists have championed becoming a nuclear weapon state as well as revolutionary socialism. They have justified the "byungjin" line - i.e., equal emphasis on the nuclear weapons and economic sectors. The advocates of the byungjin line have used it to defend military and economic hierarchy and to create the impetus for self-defense and autarky. North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons can be viewed as its last trump card of keeping the regime safe, and its logic and tactics have been shaped and reshaped as the economically broken regime struggles to attain economic prosperity. President Moon Jae-in announced in September 2018 during his summit with Kim Jong-un in Pyongyang that "The era of no war has started," pointing out that "Today the North and South decided to remove all threats that can cause war from the entire Korean peninsula." Likewise, the political and security reality facing South Korea necessitates a more robust and deep involvement of the U.S.-led international community for any productive advancement toward denuclearization.

Looking back, no other duo matched the partnership between Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un. Mr. Kim will not find his likeminded partner in furthering the denuclearization process in fiasco under the Biden administration, since now it seems certain that the 2019 Hanoi summit was a memento mori moment for North Korea's denuclearization, a crack in Trump-Kim relations and a reminder that the good times have gone. At the same time, the phrase "denuclearization of North Korea" conjures up its importance for peace and stability in the peninsula. Whereas the denuclearization once converged based on the assumption that the Kim regime was vulnerable to the multi-layered sanctions, now there is fear of a military adventurism within the regime that might one day bring down the entire North Korea. Ambitions to bolster the military capability should be stopped. Although the denuclearization will not take place in one fell swoop, the essential goals of denuclearization in North Korea have not changed: "the complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization (CVID)"

or, in Trump era parlance “final, fully verified denuclearization (FFID).” Either CVID or FFID aims to foster a nuclear-free peninsula in a way that protects and facilitates the peace and stability in the region on the one hand and on the other, in a way that is congenial with some great powers’ long-term security and interests. It is also best understood as an ongoing project to make the peninsula safe for nonproliferation.

Whereas the former five US presidents³³ have believed their respective strategy of forcing the broken regime to choose between nuclear weapons and regime survival could work, the Kim dynastic regime has judged that possessing nuclear weapons only would secure its regime and economic development rather than dumping them off. It should be clear that a complete denuclearization is unrealistic and, at least for a long time, unachievable. Both Washington and Pyongyang looked as if they were on the same bed but with a different dream. From the perspective of a disappointed Kim, the Trump administration, in concert with the Moon government of South Korea, eventually pulled the wool over the communist regime’s eyes in order to sell North Korea down the river.

The incoming Joe Biden administration and the Moon government both should be taught the lessons from the failures of past approaches as it is said that in foreign policy, failures garner more attention than success. Indeed, because the most important policy decision should be ultimately made by the highest level of a state, holding the summit meeting is certainly strong medicine to resolve the outstanding problems. The importance of the summit meeting should not be underestimated, as the summit, viewed as a vehicle for regional cooperation and confidence-building, is intricately connected to the long-term stability and security of the peninsula. Given this, the Biden administration should pursue a more pragmatic and proactive diplomacy that prioritizes peace and stability in parallel with long-term denuclearization and active engagement in reciprocal and proportional measures, in the pursuit of realistic results

33 George H.W. Bush (1989 ~ 1993), Bill Clinton (1993 ~ 2001), George W. Bush (2001 ~ 2009), Barack Obama (2009 ~ 2017) and Donald Trump (2017 ~ 2021).

in the near-term with tangible security payoffs and support from regional partners.³⁴

This article is not designed as the final word on the recipe for the denuclearization negotiations with North Korea. Ongoing endeavors to persuade North Korea to come to the negotiating table are necessary to demonstrate there could be a fresh alternative to North Korea. With precisely the lessons in mind, above all, the Moon and the Biden administrations must work to build confidence from the beginning: it must place an emphasis upon the principle that all responsibilities and burdens are equally shared so as to act together in a way that gives them a critical mass in the denuclearization of North Korea. In addition, they should take into consideration some technical step North Korea could take to relinquish its nuclear arsenal and join nonproliferation mechanisms. These steps, despite the storms of uncertainty emanating from China, require North Korea to (1) shut down its Yongbyon nuclear facilities; (2) place all nuclear materials and facilities under the IAEA safeguards agreement; (3) dismantle stockpiles of nuclear weapons and fissile materials (separated from plutonium and HEU) in collaboration with IAEA and in accordance with an agreed schedule; (4) limit the level of uranium enrichment; and (5) begin the official process of joining the NPT as a non-nuclear weapons state.³⁵

³⁴ Joseph Yun and Frank Aum, "Four Ideas for a More Practical Approach to North Korea," October 1, 2020, accessed October 2, 2020, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2020/10/four-ideas-more-practical-approach-north-korea>.

³⁵ Mousavian and Kiyaei, *A Middle East Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 139-40.

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Characteristics of the Korean Peninsula Arms Control Model and Its Gradual Implementation*

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Abstract

Korean peninsula arms control model has several characteristics. Arms control on the Korean Peninsula goes hand in hand with denuclearization and the transition to a peace regime. In the mid- and long-term, Korean Peninsula arms control implicitly needs to prepare for inter-Korean military cooperation and integration. And how to respond to military threats from neighboring countries will be a factor to be considered in arms control. Denuclearization, a peace agreement and arms control should be pursued at the same time so that they are able to create synergy while forming a virtuous circle. It would be appropriate to select from among various items of arms control and to combine them rather than consecutively pursuing military confidence building, operational arms control and structural arms control in a linear manner.

Arms control on the Korean Peninsula should be focused on human security and cooperative security. The two Koreas should seek a virtuous cycle of a peace settlement and economic cooperation in implementing arms control. South Korea should consider covering arms control costs and providing incentives for North Korea to accept arms control and pursue cooperative security. Arms control on the Korean Peninsula needs to be pursued considering the process of denuclearization and peace settlement. At initial peace building stage, the September 19th Inter-Korean military agreement should be implemented. An inter-Korean joint military committee should be composed and follow-up measures be discussed. Next, at the peace promotion stage, confidence building measures and operational arms control need to be implemented. Lastly, at the peace settlement stage, operational arms control and structural arms control should be carried out.

Key Words: denuclearization, peace regime, Korean Peninsula arms control model, 9.19th military agreement, human security, cooperative security

The Characteristics of the Environment for the Korean Peninsula Arms Control

Characteristics of European Arms Control

In Europe, three arms control negotiations took place at the same time¹: US-USSR negotiations on nuclear disarmament, conventional disarmament negotiations between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), and pan-European negotiations on the confidence-building measures of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Europe is an example of a comprehensive approach to arms control, covering and linking issues of various areas, including politics, security, the economy, society and human rights. For instance, the 1975 Declaration of Helsinki and the 1985 Stockholm Declaration were composed of several sections, such as those on building political trust, arms control, cooperation in economic affairs and science and technology, and human rights issues, which were pursued simultaneously.

One of the factors behind European arms control was the international environment. Discussions on arms control in Europe started in the détente period and came to fruition with the achievement of arms control following the end of the Cold War.

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1 Yeol-su Kim, "Denuclearization of North Korea and the Implementation Direction of Korean Peninsula Arms Control," in *The Way to a Nuclear-Free and Peaceful Korean Peninsula: The Background of North Korea's Acceptance of Negotiations and South Korea's Strategies*, ed. Seong-Chang Cheong (Seongnam: The Sejong Institute, 2018), 146-53.

Characteristics of the Environment for Korean Peninsula Arms Control

Structural Characteristics: Security Circumstances and the International Environment

Arms control on the Korean Peninsula is an issue that has to do with a transition from an armistice regime to a peace regime. In Europe, there were no laws and regulations governing arms control. Yet on the Korean Peninsula, there has been an armistice regime, which the two Koreas have violated by engaging in a continuous arms race since the ceasefire. Full compliance with the armistice regime and the transition from an armistice to a peace regime are issues pertaining to the direction of arms control.

After the end of the Cold War, arms control discussions started on the Korean Peninsula, but they did not lead to a conducive international environment for arms control on the Peninsula as conflicts continued in Northeast Asia and US-China strategic competition was unfolding. While European arms control started in the détente period and was completed in the post-Cold War era, Korean Peninsula arms control has been put on the back burner as a secondary concern with the emergence of nuclear issues. In Europe, negotiations on nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament took place in tandem. On the Korean Peninsula, however, since their emergence, nuclear issues have become a more urgent challenge to tackle than conventional arms control. The key challenge now is to identify the relationship between denuclearization, a peace regime and arms control, and set priorities among them.

The achievement of arms control on the Korean Peninsula requires an inter-Korean agreement on peaceful coexistence with both parties recognizing each other's political systems as well as the borderline. European arms control was made possible based on mutual recognition of regimes between the Eastern and Western Blocs, which resulted in the Helsinki Process. In 1992, the two Koreas agreed on political, economic and military confidence building and a framework for coexistence under the Inter-

Korean Basic Agreement, but the failure to comply with the Agreement has led to sustained distrust and confrontation between the two Koreas.

To achieve inter-Korean arms control, arms races among neighboring countries and military threats in Northeast Asia should also be taken into account. As the purpose of United States Forces Korea (USFK) is not only to deter North Korea but also to secure the U.S.' deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, there are international factors to consider in order to achieve arms control on the Peninsula. In short, it is necessary to take account of international conditions, such as arms races in Northeast Asia and security threats from neighboring countries, in order to achieve arms control on the Peninsula.

Characteristics of Approaches to Arms Control

The two Koreas take different approaches to arms control. South Korea prefers a three-stage approach: first, military confidence building; second, the limitation of armaments(or operational arms control); and third, arms reduction. On the other hand, North Korea argues that arms reduction, including the withdrawal of USFK, should come first, assuming that once arms reduction is achieved, confidence building will follow naturally. North Korea has negative views about step-by-step arms control, judging that the 1975 Helsinki Declaration was the reason why the Soviet Union was disrupted.

The two Koreas also disagree on who should lead arms control. While South Korea believes that two Koreas should lead the arms control, North Korea argues that it should be led by North Korea and the U.S. North Korea believes that any inter-Korean confidence building is meaningless if the U.S. opposes it and that the suspension of the U.S.' hostile policy toward North Korea and the withdrawal of USFK are the key to arms reduction on the Korean Peninsula.

Due to asymmetry in inter-Korean military strength and threats, the two Koreas have different perspectives about the target and scope of arms control. The most sensitive issues are to what extent South Korean, USFK

and North Korean military power should be subject to arms control, and whether USFK's military force should be included as a target. Furthermore, there are difficulties assessing the military capabilities of the two Koreas. As they have different weapon systems, it is not easy to come up with combat capability indices, such as the combat capability index for tanks of the two Koreas.

The two Koreas have partially agreed on military confidence building to provide military assurance for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation. Indeed, military confidence building has seen some progress as the two Koreas work together to ensure the implementation of economic cooperation projects, such as Mount Geumgang Tours, cooperation in railways and highways, and the Kaesong Industrial Complex. North Korea accepted military confidence building with South Korea for the purpose of pursuing economic cooperation that has tangible benefits.

However, the lack of a verification mechanism for the military confidence building agreement has made it impossible to continuously implement what was agreed upon and impose sanctions for failure to comply.²

The Process of Korean Peninsula Arms Control

Different types of inter-Korean military talks have been held depending on situations on the Korean Peninsula, such as inter-Korean defense ministerial talks, inter-Korean general-level talks, and inter-Korean military working-level talks.

Those talks have led to the adoption of several inter-Korean military agreements, including the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the Non-Aggression Agreement in 1992, the agreement related to the "prevention of accidental military clashes in the West Sea" at the inter-Korean gen-

² Yong-Sup Han, "The Significance and Prospects of the September 19th inter-Korea Military Agreement from the Perspective of Arms Control," *National Strategy*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2019): 13-6.

eral-level talks in June 2004, the Inter-Korean Military Agreement adopted at the inter-Korean defense ministerial talks in November 2007, and the September 19th inter-Korean military agreement of the inter-Korean defense ministerial talks in September 2018.

Characteristics of the Korean Peninsula Arms Control Model

Arms Control with Multi-layered Implications

Amid the changing security situation of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, arms control on the Peninsula has multi-layered implications.

Korean Peninsula arms control provides a practical condition and foundation for eased military tensions and a peace settlement on the Peninsula. In doing so, it helps prevent accidental armed conflicts and reduces the risk of war.

Peace on the Korean Peninsula revolves around three pillars: denuclearization, the transition to a peace regime, and arms control in conventional military power. Arms control on the Korean Peninsula thus goes hand in hand with denuclearization and the transition to a peace regime, forming a package with the two other pillars.

In the mid- and long-term, Korean Peninsula arms control implicitly means preparing for inter-Korean military cooperation and integration. It is thus necessary for the two Koreas to exchange information and data on their national defense power in the process of arms control, readying themselves for military integration.

Arms control on the Korean Peninsula has a positive effect on securing support from neighboring countries and the international community for an inter-Korean peace settlement, and on implementing multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Meanwhile, there are other issues to consider in pursuing arms control

on the Peninsula, such as the security situation of Northeast Asia, the regional arms race, and military threats from neighboring countries. Among others, how to respond to military threats from neighboring countries will be an important challenge when the two Koreas decide to implement arms control.

A Virtuous Cycle of Denuclearization and the Peace Process along with Arms Control

According to a mechanical and linear approach to denuclearization, peace and arms control, it is assumed that the completion of denuclearization should come before the conclusion of a peace agreement, which should then be followed by arms control. In theory, it is ideal if denuclearization, the signing of a peace agreement, and arms control take place consecutively.

However, more flexible approaches, such as making efforts for a peace agreement and arms control side by side, or the implementation of arms control before the conclusion of a peace, should also be on the table to achieve a peace settlement on the Korean Peninsula in practice. It must be taken into account that complete denuclearization takes time and that a number of complex issues regarding the concerned parties, approaches, and ways to guarantee the agreement are involved in reaching a peace agreement on the Korean Peninsula, which means that short-term progress will not come easily. A good example of a flexible approach is the September 19th Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain, which is a military agreement achieved in the middle of denuclearization negotiations and at a time when sanctions against North Korea were making it difficult to make further progress in inter-Korean relations.

One of these objectives may experience more rapid developments than the others depending on the situation. What matters is making progress in the denuclearization process and the peace process overall. As North Korea argues that military threats from ROK-US Combined Forces

are the very reason for its nuclear development, reducing military threats against North Korea through arms control would provide grounds for accepting denuclearization for North Korea. By implementing arms control before signing a peace agreement, the two Koreas can go one step further to create a peace agreement as arms control is one of the key issues of such an agreement.

Selective Fusion in the Implementation of Arms Control

Since the achievement of arms control in Europe, the dominant view on arms control has been that it should be implemented in the order of military confidence building, operational arms control and structural arms control. However, it is noteworthy that military confidence building and disarmament negotiations were conducted simultaneously in Europe.

Europe took the following step-by-step approach: first, forming an agreement on confidence-building measures (CBM) under the 1975 Helsinki Declaration; second, making an agreement on confidence- and security-building measures (CSBM) under the 1986 Stockholm Declaration; and lastly, forging the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty in 1990. However, it should be noted that the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) for confidence-building measures and the Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) talks had been taking place at the same time since 1973. That is, confidence building and disarmament talks ran parallel to one another, but an agreement on confidence building was settled first because it was easier to accomplish.

Instead of taking a linear and mechanical approach and simply applying the European experience as a textbook example, it would be desirable to take a flexible approach to arms control on the Korean Peninsula,³ considering the unique characteristics of the security situation on the Penin-

3 Gapsik Kim et al., *Korean Peninsula Denuclearization and Peace Process and Inter-Korean Arms Control Implementation Strategies* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2018), 13-20.

sula, such as the risk of accidental armed conflicts near the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and at sea, high military density in the borderland, offensive forward-deployed forces, and the highly populated metropolitan area close to the MDL. Also, it should be taken into consideration that inter-Korean military cooperation is necessary for the purpose of inter-Korean exchange and cooperation in the borderland, as well as for railway and highway network connection, cooperation in energy, resources and tourism, and arms reduction for North Korean economic development.

Given such specific security circumstances, it would be appropriate to select from among various items of arms control and to combine them in implementing arms control on the Korean Peninsula rather than consecutively pursuing military confidence building, operational arms control and structural arms control in a linear manner. In other words, arms control on the Korean Peninsula requires selective fusion considering urgency, effects and feasibility.

Pursuit of Human Security and Cooperative Security

Arms control on the Korean Peninsula should be focused around human security, reducing threats and dangers to and fear of individuals, and enabling them to lead ordinary lives. Human security is about shifting the target of security from countries to individuals, and protecting human survival and dignity from not only military threats but also from hunger, violence, human rights violations, social discrimination, and environmental disasters.⁴

Considering that the division of the two Koreas, military confrontation, and the risk of armed conflicts have limited economic and social activities in people's daily lives and have caused psychological trauma, the focus of arms control on the Peninsula should be on ensuring peace, along with

⁴ Edward Newman, "Human Security and Constructivism," *International Studies Perspective*, vol. 2, no. 3 (August 2001): 2-3.

the safety and survival of ordinary people in their daily lives based on the concept of human security.

With the implementation of the September 19th inter-Korean military agreement, living space has been increased for the residents of border areas after the expansion of the joint fishing zone in the Han River Estuary and the fishing zone on the five West Sea islands, and people can now experience peace at peace trails, which have been established in three areas near the DMZ, namely in Goseong and Cheorwon counties and Paju city. The agreement also contains the idea of human security as it covers firefighting, ground and maritime rescue, medical evacuation, weather observation, and farming support. In this context, the two Koreas should find ways to ensure that arms control on the Peninsula contributes to the formation of inter-Korean ecological, life and living communities.⁵

Furthermore, the focus of arms control should shift toward common security and cooperative security, where the two Koreas work together toward coexistence and common interests, moving away from military defense and deterrence. The idea of common security is that security and peace cannot be achieved through unilateral arms reinforcement, and security should be sought through coexistence and co-prosperity with the other Party. Cooperative security is about implementing mutually beneficial cooperative measures to ensure security and serve common interests on a bilateral and multilateral basis.⁶

A Virtuous Cycle of Peace and Economic Cooperation Along with the Provision of Incentives for Arms Control

Arms control on the Korean Peninsula would serve as a catalyst, providing necessary military measures for exchange and cooperation. As a classic example of successful military consultation on inter-Korean ex-

5 Jae-in Moon, "The Greatness of the Ordinary: Thinking of a New World Order," Op-ed. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, May 7, 2019.

6 Yong-Sup Han, *Peace on the Korean Peninsula and Arms Control* (Seoul: Bagyeongasa, 2015), 17-9.

change and cooperation, some landmines were removed from the Demilitarized Zone, and corridors were installed to build the Gyeongui (Seoul-Sinuiju) Railway and Highway. Other examples include the opening of Jangjeon Port, a North Korean military port and the relocation of North Korean troops stationed near the port for the Mount Geumgang Tour program; and the opening of a highway and the rearward deployment of North Korean forces in the west for the Kaesong Industrial Complex project.⁷

The two Koreas should seek a virtuous cycle of a peace settlement and economic cooperation in implementing arms control on the Korean Peninsula. On the one hand, they should lay the foundation for economic cooperation by easing tensions and building trust, and should eliminate the military obstacles to exchange and cooperation between them. On the other, the two Koreas should work together to ensure that peace takes root by expanding economic cooperation and prevent conflicts by sharing the profits.⁸

Meanwhile, South Korea should consider covering arms control costs and providing incentives for North Korea to accept arms control and pursue cooperative security.⁹ In the case of Germany, West Germany offered economic incentives in return for East Germany's cooperation in increasing the freedom of movement, the easing of the border control process, and the disarmament of the borderland.¹⁰

In implementing arms control on the Peninsula, South Korea should

7 Jongchul Park, *How to Implement Military Measures to Promote Inter-Korean Cooperation* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2002).

8 Jongchul Park, "A Virtuous Cycle of Peace and Economy," *Era of Unification*, vol. 150 (April 2019): 6-8.

9 Jangyeol Moon, "Denuclearization and Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula: Assessment and Challenges" (paper presented at *Progress and Future Challenges One Year after the April 27 Panmunjom Declaration*, academic conference celebrating the 28th anniversary of the Korea Institute for National Unification, April 17, 2019).

10 Jongchul Park, "U.S.-North Korea Military Relations and a Comprehensive Plan for the Implementation of Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula," *National Strategy*, vol. 2, no. 2 (1996); Yeonggyu Park and Jongchul Park, "A Comprehensive Plan for Eased Tensions and a Peace Settlement on the Korean Peninsula: At the Inter-Korean, North Korea-U.S., and International Levels," *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs*, vol. 13, no. 2 (2002): 3-82.

also find ways to link arms control to economic aid and loans for North Korea, inter-Korean economic cooperation projects, and North Korea's conversion of its munitions industry into a civilian industry. For instance, South Korea could provide loans to North Korea by utilizing the inter-Korean economic cooperation fund or establishing a separate fund exclusively for loans for North Korea; could link cooperative projects to build electricity, transportation, communications systems and other infrastructure to arms control; and could support North Korea in converting its munitions industry into a civilian industry through technology transfer, investment and cooperation in the utilization of a technical workforce.¹¹

A Gradual Implementation of Korean Peninsula Arms Control

With regard to the following "Roadmap for denuclearization, a peace regime and arms control," it should be kept in mind that the Roadmap does not suggest a fixed step-by-step implementation order, and is a general guideline that presents the overall outlook for policy directions. The Roadmap does not suggest a mechanical and step-by-step approach to the implementation of denuclearization, a peace regime and arms control. Rather, it proposes that the three should be interconnected as they develop.

11 In implementing the conversion of the North Korean munitions industry into a civilian industry, South Korea should find ways to apply cooperative threat reduction, such as by providing scientific, technological and educational support for denuclearization. Refer to the following resource on cooperative threat reduction. Jongchul Park et al., *Peace on the Korean Peninsula and Denuclearization of North Korea: How to Apply Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR)* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2011).

The Initial Peace Building Stage and the Implementation of the September 19th Inter Korean Military Agreement

Arms Control at the Initial Peace Building Stage

The two Koreas have made achievements in denuclearization and arms control at the initial peace building stage. For denuclearization, nuclear tests and missile launches have been suspended, and the Punggye-ri Nuclear Test Site and the Dongchang-ri long-range missile launch site have been shut down. In arms control, the September 19th inter-Korean military agreement has been adopted.

The two Koreas should continue to pursue denuclearization, a peace regime and arms control with a view to signing an agreement on a comprehensive denuclearization roadmap and step-by-step implementation of denuclearization at North Korea-U.S. negotiations (denuclearization), the adoption of an end-of-war declaration or the start of discussion on a peace agreement (a peace regime) and faithful compliance with the inter-Korean military agreement (arms control).

Significance of the September 19th Inter-Korean Military Agreement

The September 19th inter-Korean military agreement reflects the characteristics of the Korean Peninsula arms control model in the following ways: First of all, the agreement shows that military confidence building can be achieved upfront, moving away from the idea that denuclearization and building a peace regime should come first and arms control later.

The agreement represents that confidence building can start in the military domain because of existing sanctions against North Korea, shifting away from a functionalist idea that military cooperation should be pursued only after progress is made in economic and sociocultural exchange and cooperation.

Arms control may lead to measures for easing military threats to North Korea, in turn building a favorable environment for North Korea's denu-

clearization. North Korea has been arguing that it develops nuclear weapons because of military threats against it, and thus it can dismantle the weapons only after the threats are eliminated.

The agreement paves the way for alleviating military tensions and seeking inter-Korean cooperation, offering ways to ensure military assurance for future exchange and cooperation.

The agreement adopts the method of selective fusion for arms control, reflecting the characteristics of the security circumstances of the Korean Peninsula, instead of simply applying the European step-by-step arms control process as a textbook model. It selectively combines the items of military confidence building and operational arms control, such as the designation of restricted deployment zones, the disarmament of the Demilitarized Zone, and assurance measures for exchange and cooperation.

It also reflects the concept of human security by covering such issues as rescue, the guarantee of fishing activities, the excavation of remains, and the guarantee of exchange and cooperation.¹²

The main contents and implementation progress of the September 19th inter-Korean military agreement are as follows:

¹² Seongyeon Jeong et al., *Comprehensive Assessment of the North Korean Nuclear Issue and Strategies to Promote Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2018), 313-20.

Table 1: The Contents and Implementation of the September 19th Inter-Korean Military Agreement

Category	Items of agreement	Note
Cessation of hostile acts against each other	• Cessation of hostile acts on ground, at sea and in the air	Implemented as of Nov. 1, 2018
	• Application of military operation procedures on ground, at sea and in the air	Implemented as of Nov. 1, 2018
	• Cessation of the use of military force and hostile acts against each other	To be discussed after the formation of a Joint Military Committee
Transformation of the Demilitarized Zone into a peace zone	• Withdrawal of all Guard Posts (GP)	Completed(11 GPs) on Nov. 30, 2018
	• Free movement across the Joint Security Area at Panmunjom	Discussions underway
	• Joint excavation of remains	Implementation started by the South in Apr. 2019
	• Military assurance for the joint survey and excavation of historical remains	To be discussed
Turning the area around the NLL in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone	• Full restoration and implementation of the agreement related to the prevention of accidental military clashes in the West Sea	Ongoing implementation
	• Establishment of a maritime peace zone and a pilot joint fishing zone	To be discussed after the formation of a Joint Military Committee
	• Establishment of inter-Korea joint patrol measures	To be discussed after the formation of a Joint Military Committee
Military assurance for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation	• Support for passage, communication and customs in the inter-Korean management zone	Ongoing implementation
	• Shared use of the Han River Estuary	Implemented in Apr. 2019
	• Issues related to permitting the use of Haeju Passage and Jeju Strait for North Korean vessels	To be discussed after the formation of the Joint Military Committee
	• Cooperation in railways and roads	To be discussed
Military confidence building	• Composition and operation of the Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee	To be discussed
	• Installation of direct communication lines between respective military officials	To be discussed

* Source: Ministry of National Defense, "Policy Brief on the September 19 Inter-Korean Military Agreement," February 2019

Future Implementation Directions of the September 19th Inter-Korean Military Agreement

The two Koreas should focus on implementing follow-up measures to the September 19th Inter-Korean Military Agreement through the composition and operation of an Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee. Indeed, an inter-Korean joint military committee was put into operation in 1992, which led to inter-Korean national defense ministerial talks, general-level talks, and military working-level talks. Lessons should be learnt from those talks. The composition and operation of an Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee under the inter-Korean military agreement would provide an opportunity to regularize inter-Korean talks in the military domain and enhance military cooperation between the two Koreas.

In implementing military confidence building under the military agreement, the two Koreas should divide the task into two categories of “cessation of hostile acts and assurance for cooperation” and “institutionalization of information sharing and communication,” while at the same time organically connecting the two categories. The first category, “cessation of hostile acts and assurance for cooperation,” covers ceasing hostile acts against each other, transforming the Demilitarized Zone into a peace zone, turning the area around the NLL in the West Sea into a maritime peace zone, and securing military assurance for inter-Korean exchange and cooperation. The second category, “institutionalization of information sharing and communication,” includes regularizing military talks (inter-Korean talks at the national defense ministerial-, general- and working-levels) and establishing a communications system between military authorities.

Peace Promotion Stage and Inter-Korean Arms Control 2.0

At the peace promotion stage, denuclearization, the transition to a peace regime, and arms control should be aimed at: the declaration, verification, disablement and dismantlement of nuclear materials, nuclear warheads and nuclear facilities, and the dismantlement of intercontinental

ballistic missiles (denuclearization); the signing of a Korean Peninsula peace agreement (a peace regime); and the implementation of inter-Korean arms control 2.0 with a combination of military confidence building and operational arms control (arms control).

The two Koreas should reach an agreement on inter-Korean arms control 2.0 through inter-Korean talks, such as summit meetings and national defense ministerial talks. In implementing inter-Korean arms control 2.0, the two Koreas should work on institutionalizing military confidence building measures and carrying out operational military arms control at the same time.

As the two Koreas pursue military confidence building, they should put more efforts into implementing items not included in the September 19th inter-Korean military agreement, such as exchanges between military officials, military information exchanges, and notification and observation of major military activities.

Regarding operational arms control, the two Koreas should increase mutual transparency and seek common security based on defensive sufficiency by focusing on the following: demilitarization and peaceful use of the Demilitarized Zone; the establishment and operation of zones where military buildup and deployment is prohibited; the establishment of a line to prohibit the deployment of specific offensive military forces; the rearward deployment of forward-deployed forces for raids; and safety assurance for specific regions and facilities (metropolitan area safety assurance).

In operational arms control, the rearward deployment of North Korea's long-range artillery should be implemented as an important pilot project to guarantee safety in the Greater Seoul area. It was reported that the rearward deployment of the North Korean long-range artillery currently deployed near the Military Demarcation Line was discussed at the inter-Korean general-level talks in Jun. 14, 2018. North Korea offered to relocate its long-range artillery 30 to 40 km to the rear from the Military Demarcation Line, requesting in return the rearward relocation of the South Korean 155 mm self-propelled howitzer and the Multiple

Launch Rocket System (MLRS), the Army Tactical Missile System (AT-ACMS), and the new M1 Abrams Tank of the 210th Field Artillery Brigade under the 2nd Infantry Division of USFK, for the sake of reciprocity.¹³

It is also recommended to discuss the “Taegeuk positional adjustment model” designed to expand the offensive weapons restricted zone in the west to the north for the safety of the Greater Seoul area. In setting the restricted zone under the Taegeuk model, the two Koreas are needed to discuss a plan to relocate North Korean 170 mm and 240 mm multiple rocket launchers in the west 40 km to the rear and to keep the artillery in the east in place for now but relocate it rearward later.¹⁴

Peace Settlement Stage and Inter-Korean Arms Control 3.0

The peace settlement stage has the following objectives in terms of denuclearization, a peace regime and arms control: completing the dismantlement of nuclear materials, nuclear warheads, nuclear facilities and means of delivery (denuclearization); finding ways to manage and ensure a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula (a peace regime); and implementing inter-Korean arms control 3.0 (arms control).

Inter-Korean arms control 3.0 should be focused on carrying out part of the operational arms control as well as structural arms control. In operational arms control, the restriction of large-scale military activities should be emphasized among others.

At the same time, structural arms control (arms reduction) should be implemented to preclude any risk of armed clashes in practice. Arms re-

¹³ It is estimated that some 1,000 artillery pieces are deployed in North Korea around MDL, among which six battalions with 170 mm self-propelled artillery with a range of 54 km, and about 330 artillery pieces of 10 battalions with 240 mm multiple rocket launchers with a range of 60 km, are directly targeting the Greater Seoul area. “Two Koreas Start to Discuss Removing North Korean Long-range Artillery, a Threat to the Greater Seoul Area, from the Border,” *Yonhap News Agency*, June 17, 2018.

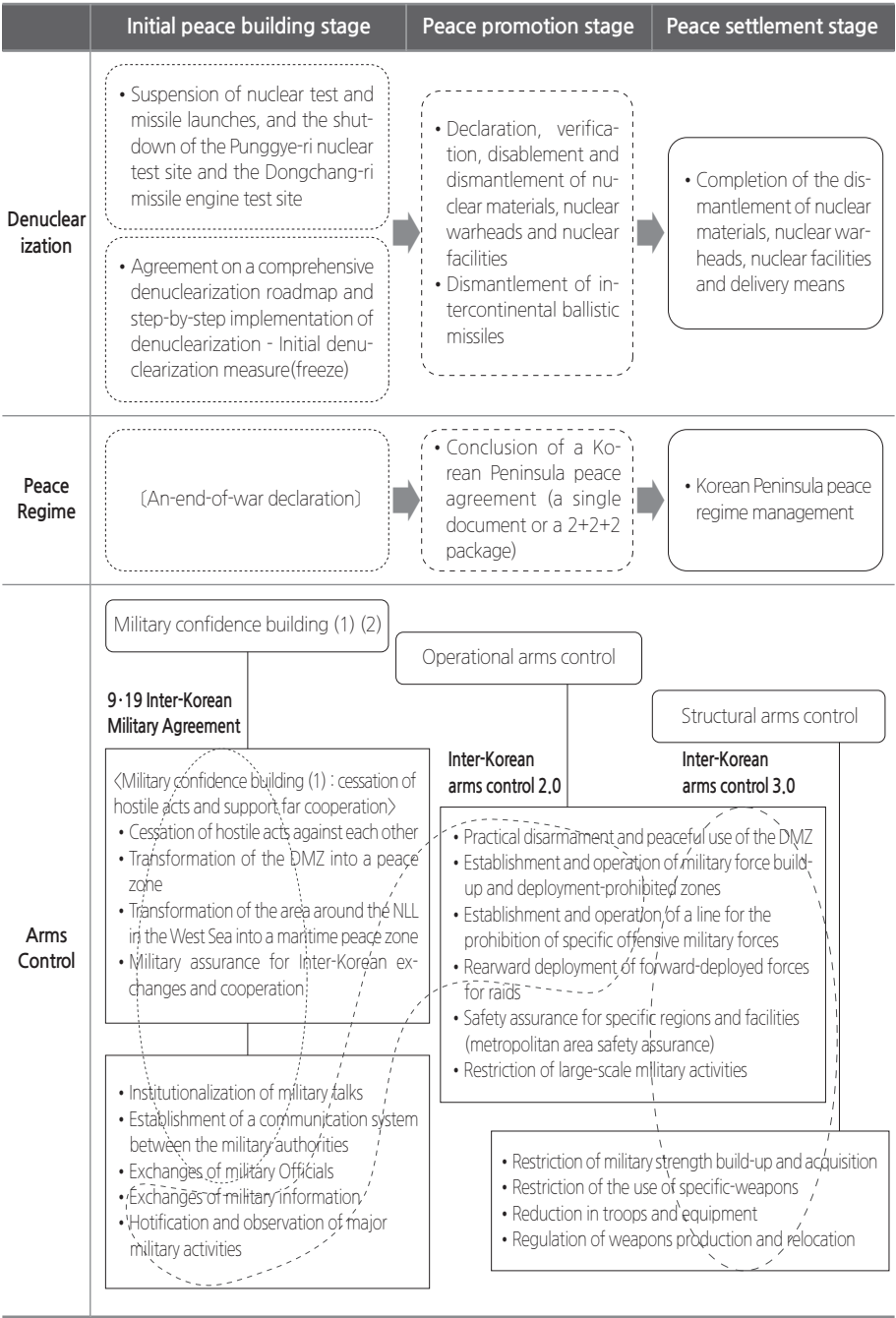
¹⁴ Hyeonuk Bu, “Implementation Direction of Arms Control on the Korean Peninsula” (paper presented at *Outlook and Challenges for the Establishment of the Korean Peninsula Peace Regime*, Korea Institute for Defense Analyses Seminar, May 16, 2019).

duction fundamentally inhibits the risk of war outbreak through reduction in troops and military equipment. In economic terms, arms reduction is likely to boost investment in economic development and social welfare by reducing the size of the military workforce and equipment, and cutting national defense expenses. Furthermore, arms reduction would give North Korea more social mobility in the society by easing military mobilization system.

As for structural arms control, the two Koreas should learn from the experience of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), focusing on five major offensive weapons (tanks, armored vehicles, field guns, fighter jets and attack helicopters) while aiming at reducing and withdrawing forward-deployed forces and weapons first and foremost; dismantling decrepit equipment and combat capabilities for both Koreas; restricting military power buildup and acquisition; restricting the use of specific weapons; reducing forces and equipment; and regulating the production and relocation of weapons.

Meanwhile, it is necessary to prepare for the situation that North Korea accepts the reduced military troops so that it can cut national defense expenses and secure more economic workforce when North Korea agrees to dismantle its nuclear weapons and commit to economic development through a “big deal” with the U.S. At the past inter-Korean talks, North Korea put more emphasis on arms reduction than military confidence building, preferring in particular reduction in troops to weapons reduction. It also insisted that both Koreas limit the ultimate number of troops to 100,000 each and achieve it within three to four years. It appears that North Korea finds it easier to mobilize troops back after the reduction and hopes to keep its military equipment and weapons system in place until the final stage.

Roadmap for Denuclearization, Peace Regime and Arms Control



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The EU after Brexit and Potential Impact on East Asia: The Economic and Geopolitical Implications

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Abstract

The Brexit decision tends to alter the economic and geopolitical dynamics of Europe as well as the wider global community. In East Asian economies, the Brexit decision has created a great deal of uncertainty in recent times. Significantly, Brexit will make the UK less valuable as a diplomatic and economic partner to the US. Japan has attempted to maintain as close relationships with the UK and the EU after Brexit. With the rise of China, Japan has become increasingly reluctant to participate in the process of regional integration in East Asia. Post-Brexit EU has a major stake in East Asian security as any conflict would immediately impact global economic connectedness.

Given Brexit, the EU must maintain its critical engagement towards North Korea, so-called the most acute security problem in the region. As for Japan, Brexit may be considered particularly 'damaging' as the UK has generally been seen as the gateway to Europe. China is a huge partner for the UK trade as the UK's third-largest trading partner, after the EU and the US. China would see the UK's role in the world diminished as a consequence of Brexit. While President Trump's isolationist character may give rise to a more favorable China's perceptions of the EU in an era of Brexit, China's growing engagement with the UK and the EU will accelerate its commitment to East Asia. The geopolitical situation of this kind would intensify instability in the East Asian region.

Key Words: Brexit, EU, FTA, East Asian economies, security, geopolitics

Introduction

Brexit affects the identity and capabilities in the EU as a global actor. The decision of the UK to leave the EU after the Brexit vote of June 2016 came as a big surprise for most global partnerships. Brexit is not simply a British phenomenon, but rather a specific manifestation of overall Europe-wide tensions that have characterized the EU since its foundation around the 1950s. Staiger and Martill would define Brexit as a “wicked problem.”¹ Further, Brexit is not only a major crisis for the EU, but also one of the EU’s many crises. Related to this, Nugent maintains that:

It is not only because it is the first time a Member State has sought to withdraw from the Union, but also because the state concerned is a large and powerful Member State whose withdrawal will have damaging political and economic implications for the EU’s standing and influence. But Brexit is *not the only* major crisis the EU has experienced in recent years. Rather, it has experienced, and to some extent is still experiencing, a series of crises.²

Brexit has been shaped by developments in European politics over the decades. Brexit will have important consequences across a broad range of European institutional arrangements, including the policy process, the forms of governance, the legal architecture of Europe, and the norms underpinning the legitimacy of Europe, including major changes to Europe’s foreign policy agenda.

In contrast to the multiple crises the EU has encountered over the past years, Brexit raises for the broad public existential questions about the future of the EU. In the process of European integration, former crises have always been interpreted as exceptional challenges likely to be kept under

1 Uta Staiger and Benjamin Martill, “Rethinking of the Futures of Europe,” in *Brexit and Beyond: Rethinking the Futures of Europe*, ed. Benjamin Martill and Uta Staiger (London: UCL Press, 2018), 260-1.

2 Neil Nugent, “Brexit: Yet Another Crisis for the EU,” in *Brexit and Beyond*, 54-62.

control in the given framework. However, Brexit makes the difference in the context of the heavy blow of the self-confidence for the *European idea*. Any of the EU member states could not imagined that a country could leave the EU. Arguably they realized that the British might *not* be the only ones.³

Given the fact the UK's relationship with the EU has always been paradoxical, the UK has always rather successful in shaping European integration processes to meet its interests. Some students have argued that the UK's relationship with the EU has long been regarded as "awkward." With Brexit, the EU loses not only its second-largest economy, and one of its military powers in permanent membership in the UN Security Council, but also an external actor with a special relationship with the Commonwealth and the United States.⁴

Brexit tends to bear economic, geopolitical, and security-related consequences and is supposed to impact external perceptions of the EU in a complicated way. When the US is concerned, the UK enjoys a special relationship with the US in many respects and played as the US's advocate inside the EU. The UK's departure from the EU has the potential to impact the EU-US relationship. Brexit indeed could have a real impact on U.S. strategic interests with Europe and concerning possible implications for future development in the EU. With the UK normally regarded as the strongest U.S. partner as well as an influential voice in the EU, Britain has initiated EU foreign and defense policies and undertaken military integration projects under the EU Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). Brexit has inevitably raised the question about the UK's ability to remain a leading military power and effective U.S. security partner. No doubt that the UK's withdrawal is inclined to increase diver-

3 Peter Wahl, "Between Eurotopia and Nationalism: A Third Way for the Future of the EU," in *Brexit and the Political Economy of Fragmentation: Things Fall Apart*, ed. Jamie Morgan and Heikki Patomäki (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 59-65.

4 Johnna Speyer, Natalia Chaban and Arne Nieman, "Introduction: Uncertain Change and Changing Uncertainty - The Brexit Referendum and the EU in the Eyes of the World," in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit: Global Perspectives*, ed. Natalia Arne Chaban, Niemann and Johanna Speyer (London and New York, 2020), 1-24.

gence between the EU and the U.S. on certain security and defense issues. Undeniably, the UK has been in a better position to play a critical role in urging the EU to move beyond what is often perceived as an internal pre-occupation tendency toward addressing a wide range of shared *external* challenges.⁵

The UK's alliance with the US remains a top priority and the cornerstone of bilateral and regional relationships. NATO is vital to Britain's and Europe's security at a time of increasing threats, including from information warfare, across the globe. Behind the US, the UK is the most influential member of the Alliance, meeting the 2 percent target for defense spending. Russia has become more aggressive and nationalist, increasingly defining itself in opposition to the West by way of using covert and overt powers, e.g. subversion or cyber interference to expand its policies.⁶

The Eurocentric controversies of Brexit in the EU have overshadowed the global impact of Brexit. Since the end of the Cold War, at economic and political dimensions, the East Asian countries had perceived the UK as its "gateway to Europe."⁷ Under these circumstances, East Asian countries need to respond to the EU's internal changing integration dynamics. While the domestic debate on Brexit has mainly focused on the implications for the UK, it is also important to sketch out the possible implications of Brexit for non-EU partners, in particular, for East Asian countries. This article aims to explore the implications of Brexit for East Asia that reflect on EU's perceptions at times of uncertainty. This study will be examined by the following questions: how does East Asia – China, Japan, and Korea, etc.- see the challenges introduced by Brexit to overall East Asia. How much big impact will Brexit have on the East Asian economy regarding

5 Derek E. Mix, Shayerah Ilias Akhtar and Kristin Archick, "Brexit: Status and Outlook," *CRS Report R45944* (Congressional Research Service, February 13, 2020), 1-21.

6 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "How UK Foreign Policy Responds to an Ever More Challenging Global Environment," FPW0027 (2018).

7 Irian Angelescu, "Brexit, a Catalyst for Closer EU-Japan Relations?" November 20, 2017, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://www.hhs.se/contentassets/14f7df689ff64f619265da42fb8cc099/pw-irian-angelescu--brexit.pdf>.

the bilateral relationship with the EU or the UK? From geopolitical perspectives, we also need to figure out what foreign policy options for East Asia the perceptions of Brexit bring about.

The EU-US Relations after Brexit: NATO and Security Issues

As for security issues, one of the most inappropriate characteristics of the “special relationship” between the United States and Britain is asymmetric power between the two countries. The UK has traditionally played an ambivalent role in European security and defense policy-making. With Brexit, the EU might lose one of its two serious military players. Brexit also raises questions about the future relationship between the US and the UK. Over the short- to medium term, Brexit will make the UK less valuable as a diplomatic and economic partner to the US. The EU is unlikely to afford the UK a strong role in the formulation of its security policy.⁸

The UK governments have been meaningfully successful in shaping EU initiatives in accord with what seems to be perceived as the national interests, playing either its *supportive* role or its *constraining* role, within the EU. In the meantime, the UK has tended to prefer the *intergovernmental* solutions to EU issues, e.g. institutional reform. Also, the UK governments have advocated a more liberal economic agenda in the EU, regardless of which party in power.⁹

We assume that that the EU and the UK had overlapping interests in foreign, security, and defense policy. Both the UK’s traditional belief in the ‘special relationship’ with the US and President Trump’s distaste for the EU and NATO are inevitably related to the questions of how the post-Brexit UK is perceived in the US and of what implications this has for how

8 Jolyon Howorth, “EU Defence Cooperation after Brexit: What Role for the UK in the Future Defense Arrangements?” *European View*, vol. 16, no. 3 (November 2017): 191-200.

9 Michelle Cini and Amy Verdun, “The Implications of Brexit for the Future of Europe,” in *Brexit and Beyond*, 63-71.

the US regards the EU.¹⁰

In terms of reformulating its foreign policy identity, the UK has already undergone a complete sea change in shifting from a post-imperial to a twentieth- and now twenty-first-century power. The nature of EU foreign policy-making has tended to blur between distinctions between “internal” and “external” arena in scope. European foreign policy as a whole remains traditionally intergovernmental in practice.¹¹

To be sure, the US is the EU’s most important partner. Considering the influence of Brexit on transatlantic relations is a top priority for anyone who attempts to understand changing Europe in a changing world and global perceptions of the EU affected by partial integration, e.g. Brexit. What foreign policy options may emanate from the US’s perceptions of Brexit?

As for security issues, since the end of World War II, the alliance between the US and the EU has been a critical variable in international relations. It has contributed mainly to the basis of the liberal world order, depending on a belief in the virtues of democracy, human rights and multilateral cooperation. Both entities have actively participated in NATO in accord with mutual trade and investment partnerships. The Alliance has been a backbone of the Western security community notwithstanding frictions of some kind. During the Cold War, the US had a vital security concern in the stability of Western Europe as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. The EU and the US may be understood to enjoy the most integrated economic cooperation in the world. In terms of total trade, the EU-28 member states constitute the US’s most important trading partners, accounting for 18.5 percent of the country’s import and export revenues, surpassing China (16.5 percent).¹²

¹⁰ Geoffrey Edward, “The UK’s View of Brexit and Its Foreign Policy Implications,” in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, 25-41.

¹¹ Amelia Hadfield, “Britain against the World?: Foreign and Security Policy in the ‘Age of Brexit,’” in *Brexit and Beyond*, 174-83.

¹² Johanna Speyer, Laura Hähn and Arne Nieman, “Increasingly Brittle? US Perceptions of the EU after Brexit and Their Impact on EU-US Relations,” in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, 95-115.

Britain's departure from the EU may be used to transform the future of NATO, as well as improve the UK's relationship with the US. While Britain opts for EU exit, its role in NATO will become ever more essential as a way to keep its substantial and continuing commitment to both global security as well as regional cooperation in Europe. However, although the exit may be a confrontative departure, there is still concern that selective, or differentiated relations with European allies from Brexit could have a spill-over effect on the alliance. In this context, a chaotic Brexit has the potential to further disrupt transatlantic relations.¹³

The UK is the US's most important trading partner inside the EU. Further, the UK is the US's largest source for FDI (foreign direct investment). When it comes to US firms, the UK has served as a bridgehead to enter the Single Market.¹⁴

In 2016, President Obama made his position particularly clear that the UK within the EU should be a better ally than Britain outside it. However, Obama focused not just on Britain's role but the economic consequences. Obama said as a "friend and ally"- to stick together with the rest of the EU. He asserted: "a strong Europe is not a threat to Britain's global leadership. Rather it enhances Britain's global leadership." Obama emphasized the UK's need to remain, say, including within Europe.¹⁵ However, London's mayor, Boris Johnson, one of the public leaders of the Leave campaign, accused President Obama of "hypocrisy" as the US does not share sovereignty with its neighbors the way the UK used to do with the EU.¹⁶ President Trump has frequently declared a US-UK deal would be far easier after a hard Brexit that removes the UK from the Single Market and customs union. Supposing that the UK-US relationship has been, for over a

¹³ Leslie Vinjamuri and Jason Maselli, "Brexit Makes NATO Even More Important for the Atlantic," Chatham House, April 4, 2019, accessed October 25 2020, <https://www.chatham-house.org/2019/04/brexit-makes-nato-even-more-important-atlantic>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Barack Obama, "Barack Obama: As Your Friend, Let Me Say That the EU Makes Britain Even Greater," *The Telegraph*, April 22, 2016.

¹⁶ Michael D. Shear and Steven Erlanger, "Obama Urges Britain to Remain in the EU," *The New York Times*, April 21, 2016, accessed October 25, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/22/world/europe/obama-urges-britain-to-remain-in-the-eu.html?ref=world&_r=0

century, the most significant and history-defining partnership, the US conventional view indicates that the UK is much more valuable to the US *inside* the EU than in the case of Leave.¹⁷

In the 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, Moscow aspired to join the West, or e.g. European sphere anticipating the disappearance of ideological divides. Notwithstanding Russia's idealist endeavor, after the EU's and NATO's enlargement in 1999 and 2004, the image of the West in Russia changed. Russia came to realize that as for universal norms and values targeting Russia, the West would apply a double standard when Russia's national security interests are concerned. Given the fact Russia may not expect positive implications for the Brexit EU, the EU may be expected to advance as a global player more independent of the US and UK, thereby giving rise to cooperation with Russia in depoliticized spheres of mutual interest.¹⁸

Since 1945, the UK and other European states have had a highly complex involvement in the field of security and defense. The EU has remained considerably dependent on US military initiatives. It should be noted that the UK played a critical role in the initial launch of the CSDP (The Common and Security Defense Policy) in 1999. As for the CSDP, then Prime Minister Tony Blair agreed to launch the CSDP since he was convinced that without serious European military capacity, the US was believed to distance themselves from NATO. A gradual US withdrawal from NATO and the transfer of leadership to the EU was under consideration. Brexit will not negatively impact either the UK's ability to continue to work with its European security partners, or the effectiveness of the CSDP itself.¹⁹

Russia's illegal annexation and occupation of Crimea in March 2014 and subsequent support for the insurgency in East Ukraine have challenged the integrity of Europe's territorial borders. Perceptions of Russia as a military threat following the Ukrainian crisis differ sharply across Europe. EU

¹⁷ Vinjamuri and Maselli, "Brexit Makes NATO Even More Important for the Atlantic."

¹⁸ Elena Ananieva, "Perceptions of the EU and Brexit in Russia and Their Influence on Russia-EU Relations," in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, 61-77.

¹⁹ Howorth, "EU Defense Cooperation after Brexit": 191-200.

countries, in particular, eastern NATO members understand that the Alliance is not well-equipped with the current crisis with Russia. While NATO members bordering Russia regard it as potentially posing an external threat, they recognize that the threat can be significantly addressed by the deployment of US and NATO troops on their territory. NATO was on a path to strengthen its capability to deter Russia's intention to threaten the security of NATO members.²⁰

The US perceives the EU as a trustworthy, but modest political actor, still lacking hard power and military clout. As a consequence, the EU needs to get free rides on US security guarantees. The EU's importance is widely acknowledged as an "economic powerhouse"²¹ Holding the US to NATO commitment to come to the defense of any other NATO country is the priority for the UK foreign and defense policy. The UK may fulfill its commitment to NATO's 2 percent GDP defense spending target through to 2022. As Angela Merkel asserted, the EU could no longer "completely depend" on the US and the UK following the election of Donald Trump as President and the UK's Brexit option.²²

Against this backdrop, Brexit will make it extremely difficult for the UK to play a proper role in European foreign and security policy. Some analysts have suggested that the EU should take on ever greater responsibility for the security of European countries. According to British Defense Secretary Fallon, the UK has always been skeptical of EU ambitions to build up its own force as the following:

We are leaving the political European Union. But we are not leaving the continent..... Our oldest and strongest ally was the United States. It is a very strong defense relationship. So we see that benefiting both.

20 Stephanie Pezard et al., *European Relations with Russia: Threat Perceptions, Responses, and Strategies in the Wake of the Ukrainian Crisis* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2019).

21 Speyer, Hähn and Nieman, "Increasingly Brittle? US Perceptions of the EU after Brexit and Their Impact on EU-US Relations," in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*.

22 David Own and David Ludlow. *British Foreign Policy after Brexit: An Independent Voice* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2017).

We see that benefiting the United States, where we will be a bridge between Europe and the United States.... the defense is for NATO and not the European Union... NATO has to be our primary defense.²³

Some have argued that Brexit might lead to a strengthening of the alliance since the UK will place greater importance on its NATO membership after departure from the EU. The problem is not limited to intra-European divergence, among other things, since Trump's ardent support for Brexit has continued to greater discord in the transatlantic relationship. In this regard, the UK is no longer in a better position to act as a transatlantic bridge between the US and the EU, thereby paving the way to further squabbles in years ahead.²⁴ One of the much more likely scenarios to be expected is that the UK is going to reach out to the US to strengthen economic and military ties going forward since Trump views the EU with skepticism. At present, one of the major powers will be outside the framework. The UK is unlikely to set its foreign policy against the EU, but Chalmers, the RUSI analyst, said "we cannot rule anything out."²⁵

Brexit as Likely "Global Britain" and a Franco-German Brexit Strategy

Brexiteers maintain that Britain is leaving the EU not leaving Europe. It remains to be seen how many years the consequences of Brexit will take to be fully understood. The important question is mainly focused on what kind of Brexit the UK should seek to achieve. The debate on the nature of Brexit may be simplified as a choice between "hard" and "soft" Brexit.

23 Deutsche Welle, "UK Minister Fallon: Defense is for NATO and Not the EU," February 18, 2017, accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.dw.com/en/uk-minister-fallon-defense-is-for-nato-and-not-the-eu/a-37611182>.

24 Benjamin Martill, "UK in a Changing Europe," December 2, 2019, accessed November 4, 2020, <https://ukandeu.ac.uk/nato-has-many-problems-is-brexit-one-of-them>.

25 David B. Larter, "As Britain Lurches toward Brexit, How Will European Security Fare?" September 8, 2019, accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2019/09/08/as-britain-lurches-toward-brexit-how-will-european-security-fare/>.

The former was a maximalist position, defined as taking back control of laws, borders, and money. The maximalist position was closely connected to the promotion of “global Britain.” The other maximalist position on the Leave side to a large extent reinforces the nationalist position, including such issues as a big reduction in the number of immigrants already in the UK. The UK endeavors to redefine itself after Brexit and find external support to establish its domestic political solidarity. From the European perspective, the isolationist strand in Trump’s options makes him an unreliable partner for the British government which wants to become globalist for free trade and the international market order.²⁶

If the UK leaves the EU, the impact that follows would depend on the new relationship between the UK and the EU, including the political dynamic between major European states in the EU without the UK. The UK’s influence in the EU has been damaged both by the ambivalence of the UK to the EU and by staying outside the Eurozone. The impact of Brexit is through political contagion. If the UK leaves and adopts a more independent policy in sensitive areas, this might have far-reaching political ramifications for the rest of Europe.²⁷

The UK’s free trade with EU members will continue through the transitional period until the end of 2020. During the transition the UK still follows EU rules and trade between the two is the same as before. The UK continues to pay into the EU budget. A further extension of two years was technically made possible through negotiation with the EU before June 2020. When the transition period ends on December 31, the UK will without reservation drop out of the EU’s main trading agreements, including the single market and the customs union.²⁸

Some might assume that the UK’s departure would affect the EU se-

26 Andrew Gamble, “Taking Back Control: The Political Implications of Brexit,” in *The Politics and Economics of Brexit*, ed. Simon Bulmer and Lucia Quaglia, 127-44.

27 Global Counsel, “Brexit: The Impact on the UK and the EU” (June 23, 2015), 1-44.

28 Tom Edgington, “Brexit: All You Need to Know about the UK Leaving the EU,” *BBC*, September 23, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-32810887>. The single market means that EU members share the same rules on product standards and access to services. By contrast, the customs union is an agreement between EU states not to charge taxes (e.g. tariffs) on each other’s.

verely, to the point of dissolution, but the exact opposite took place. In some regards, recent developments, incorporating speeches and policy actions both from the European elites and the generic public indicate that the remaining 27 member states decided to turn to flexibility as the driving force that could keep the EU actively running in the post-Brexit era. Inescapably, Brexit poses just a warning of what could happen if things keep working the same way and if change and reformation are not pursued.²⁹

Brexit and US President Donald Trump's "American First" policy have brought about several dormant issues in the global system. The post-Cold War tide of European integration and the growing German-Franco partnership places the UK between a constraining EU led by Germany and France and a free-riding EU shaping its prominent Atlantic defense allies.³⁰

The UK's decision to leave the European Union left the other 27 member states in shock and took them by surprise since no country was expecting any of their member states will leave the supranational organization, i.e. the EU. As for UK-French relations, Britain and France are the only two European countries with substantial global interests and commitment. Brexit will not change the fact that the UK and France share a common interest in the international rules-based order, and common responsibilities by way of coordinating closely and voting together as Permanent Members of the UN Security Council. Both also participate in the other main multilateral institution, including the G7 and G20 processes.

Given common global interests and commitments shared by both sides, Britain and France might be divided on many issues of controversy. However, they share an aspiration to be considered as Europe's leading

29 Andreea Streteta, "The French-German Approach on the Future of the European Union," *On-line Journal Modelling the New Europe*, no. 25 (2018): 160-75, doi:10.24193/OJMNE.2018.25.08.

30 Yoichiro Sato, "Brexit's Stakes for Japan," *Australian Institute of International Affairs* (January 16, 2020), accessed October 27, 2020, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/brexit-stakes-for-japan/>.

foreign policy players. Still, both of them are willing to continue on their historic paths of deep commitment in international politics. Brexit would not weaken the case for close bilateral UK-French defense and security cooperation. In particular, France would not want to see the UK float away into a distance from the European sphere. NATO is the main framework, where France has become felt comfortable and the UK has a key player.³¹ The two countries are among each other's largest partners, and investors in each other's economies. Both countries have witnessed the extraordinary scale of free movement between the two countries, which is estimated to be about 12 million visits by British people to France each year, and around 4 million in the other direction. Brexit will not weaken the case for close UK-French defense and security cooperation, but it will face the risk of the two countries drifting apart.³²

France and Germany saw their position inside the EU as guardian and models for other member states in the integration process. In the beginning they took this leading position involuntarily as the continent reconciliation relied on the Franco-German reconciliation. As times passed, they started to take the leader position deliberately to accelerate the integration process. Given the history, European countries might turn to France and Germany as the most plausible actors in the EU that are destined to refashion the rearrangement project of the EU model for a longer period.³³

The Brexit once again provoked different reactions to the Brexit decision between France and Germany. The different responses stem from the two countries' opposing interests vis-à-vis the UK. While Berlin is concerned about the economic consequences of Germany's third-largest trading partner leaving the single market, France is more worried about the potential negative political effects of Brexit on other EU countries, including Italy, the Netherlands, and France itself. Both countries interpret

31 Christopher Hill, "UK-France Relations after Brexit," January 22, 2017, accessed October 10, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/22/uk-france-relations-after-brexit/>.

32 Peter Ricketts, "National Security Relations with France after Brexit," *Briefing Paper* (Royal United Services Institute for Defense and Security Studies, January 2018).

33 Stretea, "The French-German Approach on the Future of the European Union": 160-75.

their relationship with the UK in different terms. For Paris, London is predominantly a partner in security and defense issues, whereas Berlin sees the UK as a key economic partner, pursuing the same option that implies international free trade. It is understandably implied that German and France have come to different interpretations of Brexit and its potential impacts.³⁴

The loose diplomatic coalition of major European powers has more strongly refashioned in the aftermath of the UK's decision to leave the EU, in addition to the strained transatlantic relationship under US President Donald Trump. While the UK, France, and Germany, so-called the Big Three long had an independent relationship with each other in the EU, an important impetus for close trilateral coordination came after the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Since the 2016 Brexit vote, although the UK was leaving the EU, three European major powers tend to preserve foreign policy coordination among the Big Three. It should be noted, however, that much of the evolution of European diplomacy will mainly depend on the role of the United States, assuming that the Trump administration is steadily pro-Brexit and would not see Europe as a priority for policy partnership.³⁵

The overall macroeconomic impact of Brexit seems hard to estimate. After Brexit the balance in the European Council on economic policy debates would shift, coupled with the loss of a large member state supporting liberalization. The EU has an open, liberalizing approach to trade policy, in part due to UK influence. The UK would be free to set its own trade policy priorities under some Brexit frameworks.³⁶ In economic terms, Germany is seriously concerned about Britain's departure in that it pursued free trade as Britain did. Both Germany and the UK proactively defended the free movement of goods, people, services, and capital within the SEM,

34 Yann-Sven Rittelmeyer, "Will Brexit Revive the Franco-German Engine?" *Policy Brief* (European Policy Centre, January 26, 2017).

35 Erik Brattberg, "The E3, the EU, and the Post-Brexit Diplomatic Landscape" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 18, 2020).

36 Global Counsel. "Brexit."

whereas France favors a stronger state intervention. With the departure of the UK from the EU, Germany will lose an important ally on issues regarding free trade. For the time being, this loss is likely to be less severe owing to the fact that French President Macron is a strong advocate of the SEM and free(r) trade unlike many of his predecessors.³⁷

Brexit would raise the costs of UK trade with the EU through higher tariff and non-tariff barriers. New trade deals to be signed by the UK with countries outside of the EU could accelerate economic growth. However, they may not be sufficient enough to offset the loss of the UK's membership in the EU Single Market.³⁸

Germany is the EU's largest economy. The EU's Single European Market (SEM) - formerly the Common Market - significantly helped Germany to develop into one of the world's leading export champions. The UK has long been a very important export market for German companies. While Germany is likely to be less reliant on imported British goods, the UK is considerably dependent on German goods in sectors such as automobiles, machinery tools and pharmaceuticals. Related to Brexit, the German government's priority in the negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and the UK will be to safeguard the SEM, not allowing other member states to follow the UK's example. The imposition of significant tariffs by the EU on the UK after Brexit is not in accord with Germany's willingness to take measures.³⁹

Regarding the frame of the Franco-German relations, following the German unification that left France significantly weaker inside the EU, Germany started to question its role in Europe. Thus, the Maastricht Treaty (1993) indicates a stronger Germany ready to strive for its interest, and a weaker France in the face of unified Germany.⁴⁰ Even though Brexit might exert great influence over power relations in the EU, the balance between

37 Ruediger K. W. Wurzel, "Germany: How to Manage Brexit While Trying to Safeguard European Integration," *Marmara Journal of European Studies*, vol. 26, no. 1 (2018): 171-7.

38 Mix, Akhtar and Archick, "Brexit," 1-21.

39 Wurzel, "Germany": 171-7.

40 Stretea, "The French-German Approach on the Future of the European Union": 160-75.

France and Germany is therefore likely to be tilted in favor of the latter.⁴¹

Once France and Germany endeavor to agree on how to best deal with Brexit, the two should focus on how to move EU 27 forward. If in the past, the basis for any European discord were France and Germany, in the future the couple of European powers are destined to pave the way for the basis for any improvement in the EU.⁴² Among other things, the two are expected to concentrate on a couple of priority topics. The first relates to the Franco-German cooperation on security and defense which require attention and strong support from other member states. The second priority arena is associated with the future of common currency and a new attempt to reinforce the eurozone by equipping it with the tools it needs to avoid future crises.⁴³

Following December 2019 and UK's withdrawal from the EU on January 31, 2020, the UK and EU seek to negotiate an FTA to govern their future and economic relationship. The impact of Brexit would be more evident in trade policy. The UK has championed a liberalizing agenda for the EU. The UK was one of the strongest advocates for launching the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). But the EU is not the top trade priority for either the US or Japan, who are preoccupied with negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).⁴⁴

Post-Brexit and Its Potential Impact on East Asia: The Economic and Geopolitical Implications

The decision of the UK to leave the EU following the Brexit referendum of June 2016 came as a surprise for China, Japan and Korea etc. To

41 Rittelmeyer, "Will Brexit Revive the Franco-German Engine?"

42 Stretea, "The French-German Approach on the Future of the European Union": 160-75.

43 Rittelmeyer, "Will Brexit Revive the Franco-German Engine?"; James Black et al., *Defense and Security after Brexit: Understanding the Possible Implications of the UK's Decision to Leave the EU* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation 2017).

44 Global Counsel, "Brexit."

what extent will Brexit have big impact on East Asian economy and geopolitics as a whole? As Brexit seems to become reality, its impact on the East Asian economy is garnering attention. Brexit has created a watershed moment in the history of the region, along with the implications that may have a significant impact on not only Europe but also Asia and the wider global community. We would provide an analysis of how the Brexit decision will impact the East Asian region. The key Asian economy's total economic relationship with the EU and the UK needs to be analyzed in more detail.

In a globalized world, Brexit also has implications in the context of East Asia. According to the one survey done by Eurobarometer in February 2017, there is still a majority of Chinese (84 percent) who expressed positive views of the EU. 77 percent in China agree that “the EU is a place of stability in a troubled world,” with no big shift of public perception of the EU in China.⁴⁵

The advocates of a “hard Brexit” are convinced that membership of the EU constrains the UK's ability to trade freely with the rest of the world. “Brexiters” argue that the lack of a free trade agreement (FTA) between the EU and China hampers the UK's business abilities to trade there. Over the past decades, the UK's export to China has been surpassed by those of Germany, France and Italy, the three other major European countries. It is a pattern replicated in trade with other East Asian economies. The UK's export to GDP ratio is only 27.3 percent, compared to an average for the rest of the EU of 47.3 percent, with its export to South Korea jumping 131 percent between 2009 and 2015. This success came after the signing and entry into the force of the EU-South Korea FTA in 2011.⁴⁶ In 2015 South Korea was the UK's 11th largest trading partner. The UK is currently Korea's largest export market in the EU and 12th largest world-

45 Jin Ling and Emil Kirchner, “China's Perception of the EU after Brexit and Its Influence on China-EU Relations,” in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, 200-14.

46 Michael Reilly, “The Burial of Thatcherism? The Impact of Brexit on the UK's Relations with North-East Asia,” in *The Implications of Brexit for East Asia*, ed. David W. F. Huang and Michael Reilly (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).

wide, with its exports more than doubling from \$3.79 bn in 2009 to \$7.86bn in 2015.⁴⁷ To ameliorate a possible hard landing, South Korea and Britain signed an FTA in 2019 that will be implemented after London formally leaves the EU. Trade between the two countries reached \$ 9.7 bn in 2019, which South Korea's export to the European countries estimated at \$ 4.4 bn. In late August 2019, South Korea and Britain signed an FTA to help maintain the continuity of bilateral trade and economic ties after Brexit. The new FTA will take effect automatically when the UK leaves the EU after the transition period.⁴⁸ On the negative side, the Korea Economic Research Institute predicted Korea's GDP will drop 3.1 percent by 2033 when Brexit occurs.⁴⁹ The UK is most unlikely to be able to negotiate a better FTA deal with Korea than the one to which it already has access through its membership of the EU.

The security of Asia and Europe are intertwined as demonstrated by the 2016 Global Strategy and reemphasized in the 2018 policy paper entitled Enhanced Security Cooperation in and with Asia. In that context, taking a clear EU position is necessary to avoid seeing the EU caught between the US and China. The EU would be directly affected by a major crisis on the Korean Peninsula, with the EU the fourth largest export market and one of the largest investors in South Korea. The case of the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) project in the 1990 pertains to the importance of the EU that is a part of any such process, going beyond not simply a financial contributor.⁵⁰

China is a huge partner for the UK trade as the UK's third-largest trad-

47 Sunghoon Park and Michael Reilly, "Lost in Brexit: The Complexities of Negotiating a New Trade Deal between Korean and the United Kingdom," in *The Implications of Brexit for East Asia*.

48 "Korea, Britain Agree to Maintain Close Ties after Brexit," *Korea Times*, February 27, 2019; "South Korea-Britain FTA to Buffer Post-Brexit Impact: Official," *Yonhap News*, October 23, 2019, accessed <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20191023006100325>.

49 Suk-yeo Jung, "Will Brexit Have Big Impact on Korean Economy?" *Business Korea*, October 18, 2019, accessed October 27, 2020, <http://www.businesskorea.co.kr/news/articleView.html?idxno=37129>.

50 Michael Reiterer, "The European Union and Security Cooperation: Bringing Northeast Asia into Focus" (East Asia Institute, November 10, 2020), accessed http://www.eai.or.kr/new/en/project/view.asp?code=103&intSeq=20129&board=eng_issuebriefing&keyword_option=&keyword=&more=.

ing partner, after the EU and the US. In 2016, UK-China bilateral trade in goods and services reached £ 59.3 bn, up 9.4 percent on 2015. The UK was the first major Western country and the first G7 member to announce the membership of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), based in Shanghai.⁵¹ The UK is traditionally perceived by the Chinese as a former colonial power which inflicted humiliation on China in the Opium Wars. The ongoing thorny issue of Hong Kong will remain a contentious issue. Trade between the UK and China, as well as relations between the EU, the UK, and China more extensively, are affected by the UK's membership of the EU in complex ways. As known, EU membership is a significant factor affecting the UK's attractiveness at least to Chinese business. In any circumstances, the UK is definitely seen by China and the outside world as a country that is publicly open to foreign investors, including serious investor such as China. Prior to the decision of departure, the Chinese government made it clear that it would not be supportive of Brexit. It is not beneficial to China that the UK could no longer be a partner within the EU. China would see the UK's role in the world diminished as a consequence of Brexit.⁵²

The EU is an important source of foreign capital. As of the end of 2017, it has invested over 177.7 bn euros in China. Until most recently, China's investment in Europe has also manifested significant growth. On the financial side, Beijing has traditionally supported the euro and gradually increased its foreign exchange reserve in euros, totaling over one-third of overall reserves. As sometimes mentioned, the UK has always been major pro-liberalism power, but with its leaving, the tendency is highly likely to weaken.⁵³

China would ask for some options from the current UK government. First, that the UK continues to provide a secure home of investment op-

51 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "How UK Foreign Policy Responds to an Ever More Challenging Global Environment."

52 Jane Henderson and Eva Pils, "The Impact of Brexit on Relations with Russia and China," *King's Law Journal*, vol. 27, no. 3 (2016): 473-88.

53 Ling and Kirchner, "China's Perception of the EU after Brexit and Its Influence on China-EU Relations."

portunities for Chinese investors without the fierce resistance encountered in the Continent. Second, expecting potential support in any likely confrontation over trade with the US under Trump, with China committed to the principles of free trade and globalization, not at the expense of the remaining 27 EU member states.⁵⁴

How can we assess the prospects of Sino-British and EU-China relations after Brexit? The UK was the first Western country to join the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). This actually shocked its ally, the US. Beijing would originally want to establish a “privileged relations with the UK” in terms of attempting to enjoy economic relations with other EU members. With Brexit, the question is as to how the PRC government would respond to the future challenges arising from the UK leaving the Single Market. It is likely that the weakened UK and its enterprises would depend on the Chinese market. The UK after Brexit can resume its independence in determining its external economic policies. If the UK loses the EU Single Market, London would be more interested in China’s enhancing role in the emerging markets. Faced with a weaker EU and a weakened UK after Brexit, China might even endeavor to strengthen its position in modifying the formulation of international norms as well as common values.⁵⁵

From the Japanese perspective, Brexit may be considered particularly “damaging” as the UK has generally been seen as the gateway to Europe. Many Japanese companies such as Nissan and Hitachi, have chosen Britain for their main production sites, with their products as well as the components parts gaining free access to and from Europe. Japan has shared the orientation for free trade with the UK with strong links to the US, similar to Britain. Here we need to examine the Japanese perceptions of the EU, and in particular those after the Brexit vote. The question is

54 Yu Ji, “China is a Crucial Partner for Britain to Prosper Outside the EU,” January 26, 2018, accessed October 26 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/2018/01/26/china-is-an-indispensable-partner-for-britain-to-prosper-outside-the-eu/>.

55 Wai Ting, “EU-China Relations after Brexit,” in *The Implications of Brexit for East Asia*, 91-112.

considerably focused on how Brexit may be understood to impact EU-Japan relations.⁵⁶

In the long term, faced with the prospect of losing access to the Single Market, and a weakened EU and the UK owing to Brexit, Japan has accelerated its engagement with Europe. Coupled with the election of Donald Trump in the US, the Brexit vote served as a catalyst for a more proactive Japanese involvement in international trade and foreign policy options. Brexit is so important to Japan's engagement with Europe in terms of its engagement with security and defense issues, with its investments concentrated in the UK. Based on the outcome of Brexit, Japan mostly stands to lose its unrestricted access for its companies at present located in the UK, with Japanese companies hiring approximately 140,000 and creating at least 50,000 jobs. The UK is supposed to be the second destination for Japanese direct investments, after the US.⁵⁷

North Korea and China also pose military challenges, including North Korea's development of offensive nuclear capabilities, while China has spent more on its military than Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Vietnam combined. Moreover, China attempts to show the persistence to build military bases on the disputed islands in the South China Sea and has deployed heavily armed public patrol vessels into the territories near the Senkaku islands. Against the backdrop, Japan has steadily sought partners to uphold an international environment as open and liberal, by way of enhancing cooperation with like-minded countries, such as the US, Australia, and India. Also, Japan is an EU partner that shares the values of freedom, democracy, the rule of law, and human rights as well as principles such as the market economy.⁵⁸ The UK is one of the most important European partners for Japan, depending on Britain's global political clout,

⁵⁶ Ken Endo, "A Distant Partner: The Japanese Perspectives of a Post-Brexit European Union," in *Changing Perceptions of the EU at Times of Brexit*, 229-46.

⁵⁷ Irian Angelescu, "Brexit, a Catalyst for Closer EU-Japan Relations?" November 20, 2017, accessed October 20, 2020, <https://www.hhs.se/contentassets/1417df689ff64f619265da42fb8cc099/pw-irina-angelescu---brexit.pdf>.

⁵⁸ Endo, "A Distant Partner."

military importance, and international standing. Japan and the UK have continued to maintain good cooperation in this field, as illustrated by the fact that the UK is the few countries with which Japan has 2 + 2 regular consultations. As Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō strongly stated that:

The question on Brexit, this is a matter to be decided by the British people.... because of the close partnership with the UK, Japan's interests are also at stake. *Japan very clearly would prefer Britain to remain within the EU. We want to see Britain and Europe continue to be influential actors on the international stage, contributing to rules-based peace and stability globally, including in Asia* [emphasis added].⁵⁹

In the wake of US President Trump's decision to withdraw from the TPP negotiation, Japan quickly strived to sign an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the EU. After Brexit, the UK has signaled its willingness to negotiate a separate bilateral free trade agreement with Japan to maintain competitive ground vis-à-vis EU exports to Japan. However, the Brexit vote has also led to renewed perceptions of the EU's importance as well as accelerated the conclusion of the Japan-EU FTA and EPA.

In East Asian economies, the Brexit decision has created a great deal of uncertainty in recent times. However, while there is cause for concern, there are also significant opportunities. The Brexit decision will tend to alter the economic and geopolitical dynamics of Europe as well as the wider global community. While a soft Brexit would remarkably provide somewhat less volatile impact on East Asia, a hard Brexit might constitute sort of potential benefit to some countries, particularly China. For Japan, the impact of Brexit may have relatively severe consequences.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ UK Government, "PM Statement at the Press Conference with Japanese Prime Minister Abe: 5 May 2016," accessed October 25, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-at-press-conference-with-japanese-prime-minister-abe-5-may-2016>.

⁶⁰ Jacob Wood and Haejin Jang, "Brexit: The Economic and Political Implications for Asia," *Social Sciences*, vol. 6, issue 2 (April 2017): 1-11; Emilio Casalichio, "UK Will Be 'Diminished' after Brexit, Rutte Warns Tory Leadership Hopefuls," *Politico* (June 2019): 47-64.

Japan has attempted to maintain as close relationships with the UK and the EU after Brexit. With the rise of China, it has become increasingly reluctant to participate in the process of regional integration in East Asia. As Ikemoto suggests, Japan would prefer to regard itself as one of the three pillars of the Western Alliance alongside the US and Europe, rather than as an equal partner with its Asian states.⁶¹

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The decision of the UK to leave the EU after the Brexit vote came as a big surprise for most of global partnerships. Being outside of the EU does mean that the UK will be a different, even more vulnerable and diminished country. Brexit has already raised questions about the future relationship between the US and the UK. Over the short- to medium term, Brexit will make the UK less valuable as a diplomatic and economic partner to the US. That's not to say that the US-UK relationship will become unimportant. It will remain a very significant relationship. Brexit tends to make it extremely difficult for the UK to play its proper role in European foreign and security policy. An exodus of other members from the EU could create serious concern in European financial markets, thus leading to having an impact on the long-term investments that East Asian investors have made in Eurozone. Undeniably, EU will continue to face important challenges to its integration process.

While there is cause for concern, there are also significant opportunities. The Brexit decision might alter the economic and geopolitical dynamics of Europe as well as the wider global community. The Brexit once again caused different reactions to Brexit between France and Germany. The different responses stem from the two countries' opposing interests vis-à-vis the UK. While Berlin is concerned about the economic conse-

⁶¹ Daisuke Ikemoto, "Is the Western Alliance Crumbling? A Japanese Perspective on Brexit," in *The Implications of Brexit for East Asia*, 113-27.

quences of Germany's major trading partner, the UK leaving the single market, France is more worried about the potential negative political effects of Brexit on the remaining EU states.

In East Asian economies, the Brexit decision has created a great deal of uncertainty in recent times. Also, the decision of the UK to leave the EU came as a surprise for East Asian economies. In an era of Brexit, the economic and geopolitical significance of what is at stake in East Asia will lead to changing perceptions of East Asian security issues as well as economic potential unlikely to be calculated for the foreseeable future. Post-Brexit EU has a major stake in East Asian security as any conflict would immediately impact global economic connectedness. Given Brexit, the EU must maintain its "critical engagement" towards North Korea, so-called the most acute security problem in the region.

The UK is one of the most important European partners for Japan, depending on Britain's global political clout, military importance, and international standing. The Brexit vote has led to renewed perceptions of the EU's importance as well as accelerated the conclusion of Japan-EU FTA and EPA. From the Japanese perspective, Brexit may be considered particularly "damaging" as the UK has generally been seen as the gateway to Europe. As for Japan, the impact of Brexit may have relatively severe consequences, whereas Japan is unlikely to alter its commitment towards closer relations. Tokyo generally needs to see Brexit as a phenomenon that will impact primarily its economic interests. They are also concerned about the political and defense implications of Brexit.

China is a huge partner for the UK trade as the UK's third-largest trading partner, after the EU and the US. While a soft Brexit would obviously provide somewhat less volatile impact on East Asia, a hard Brexit might constitute sort of potential benefit to some countries, particularly China. China would see the UK's role in the world diminished as a consequence of Brexit, although the UK continues to provide a secure home of investment opportunities for Chinese investors.

As large trading partners, both China and the EU depend on free trade and multilateral trade frameworks. While President Trump's isolationist

character may give rise to a more favorable China's perceptions of the EU in an era of Brexit, China's growing engagement with the UK and the EU will accelerate its commitment to East Asia. Given the isolationist nature of the US, China's commitment to the East Asia region will cause serious tensions among neighboring Asian countries. During a time of great uncertainty, Japan will further accelerate its "normalization" to prevent China from rapidly expanding its influence in East Asia. The geopolitical situation of this kind would intensify instability in the East Asian region.

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Vol. 29, No. 2 (2020)

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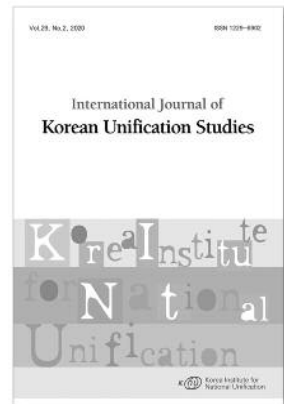
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An Analysis of the Implementation of the Moon Jae-In Administration's New Security Policy and South Korea-Russia Economic Cooperation

Editor: Lee

The "New Strategic Concept" Concept of the Trump Administration and Its Strategic Implication on the Korean Peninsula

China's Policy on the South Korean Peninsula and the Implications of the Institutionalization of Disparity

Comparative Analysis of the Korea-U.S. Trade Pattern of U.S. and China using Gravity Model

AI Open-Source Intelligence and the

Republic of Korea: Response in the Context of U.S.-Korea Relations

China's Policy on the Korean Peninsula in the Context of U.S.-Korea Relations

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