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Congressional Testimony

**Strengthening U.S. Alliances in Northeast
Asia**

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Chairman Salmon, Ranking Member Sherman, Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to offer my views about how to strengthen U.S. alliance relationships with Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

U.S. government officials refer frequently to these alliances as “cornerstones” or “lynchpins” for America’s foreign and security policies in the Asia-Pacific, and these metaphors would become tiresome if they were not so apt for describing the value the alliances deliver to U.S. national interests. Indeed, as this Subcommittee well understands, these two countries are among our most important partners in trade and rule making, collaborate closely with us within leading multilateral institutions, host significant forward deployed U.S. forces and train with us at an elite level, and are frequently the first to support U.S.-led efforts to ameliorate international crises (to which they bring valuable technology, finance, and human capital assets).

As often as we tend to talk about these bilateral relationships in the same breath, however, it is important to recognize the differences between them (in terms of their structure, their historical and political background, and the trend lines for how they are evolving). In some ways, the two alliances are developing in converging directions and might come to resemble one another more closely, for example in terms of how we seek to govern international trade relations, coordinate development aid in the region, or contribute to regional stability and security. The depth of our shared interests and values helps drive this trend and creates opportunities for more productive trilateral cooperation in the future.

But in other ways – in part due to cultural differences, the scars of history, and the competitive nature of free market capitalism – the United States should expect divergent policy approaches by its allies toward such issues as the North Korean nuclear and missile challenge or China’s economic and military rise. In these cases, Washington can strive to bridge policy gaps where possible, but it should also respect the limits of trilateral cooperation and prioritize long-term harmony over short term gains.

Most importantly, the United States should never forget that its future prosperity is inextricably linked to Asia’s peaceful adjustment to its growing wealth and power, and America has the means to positively affect this outcome, if utilized wisely. Close collaboration with key U.S. allies in the region is a critical enabler for whatever strategy Washington adopts, particularly if stronger links between our allies can be encouraged.

Current Status of Bilateral Alliances and Recent Progress

Overall, the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-ROK alliances are in good shape today, thanks in part to consistent bipartisan support from the U.S. government over the years and careful attention paid most recently by both the Bush and Obama administrations. Polls show broad support on each side of these two alliances, and political change (back and forth) in all three countries over the last two decades has not disrupted their relationships.¹ In fact, the alliances are arguably as strong as they have ever been.

¹ For example, a 2015 poll by the Japanese Cabinet Office shows over 80 percent of the Japanese public support the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. The latest 2014 annual poll by Japan’s Ministry of

Quick and robust U.S. support for Japan in the aftermath of its 2011 tsunami and nuclear crisis was the right thing to do not only from a humanitarian perspective, but also from a U.S. strategic standpoint and as a close friend. Although current Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe often remarks that his party's return to power in late 2012 helped "repair" U.S.-Japan relations, the fact is that alliance cooperation was solid during the last two years the Democratic Party of Japan was in power, and this emerging "bipartisan" support for the relationship in Japan should be celebrated. It is a long-term asset for the alliance.

Acrimonious trade battles are largely a thing of the past (though not extinct), which has strengthened a sense of partnership. U.S.-Japan cooperation initiatives in a variety of fields including energy, the environment, health, science and technology, and development aid (including the recently established U.S.-Japan Development Dialogue²) have been a staple of the post-Cold War period and deliver value to the allies and to the world. Bilateral defense cooperation continues to broaden and deepen in an evolutionary manner, amidst a deteriorating security environment.

In recent years the allies have conducted more frequent and complex military exercises, updated bilateral planning, collaborated in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations including Pacific Partnership and Operation Damayan in the Philippines (among others), established the Extended Deterrence Dialogue (EDD) to consider alliance responses to nuclear threats, and announced new Guidelines for Bilateral Defense Cooperation in 2015 to adapt to modern security threats.³ In addition, the U.S. and Japanese governments agreed on a plan to reduce the U.S. Marine presence in Okinawa and relocate the Futenma Marine Corps Air Station

Foreign Affairs on the U.S. public's attitude towards Japan shows support for the alliance near its highest ranges at over 80 percent. An Asan Institute poll from 2014 shows that over 90 percent of the South Korean public supports the U.S.-Japan alliance. A 2014 poll by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs shows that a majority of Americans view South Korea positively and as a U.S. partner; furthermore, in 2014, the highest percentage of American respondents (since polling started in 1982) supported sending U.S. troops to South Korea if North Korea invaded. See (respectively) Cabinet Office. "Figure 22: Thinking on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty." 2015. Available at <http://survey.gov-online.go.jp/h26/h26-bouei/zh/z22.html>. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "2014 U.S. Poll on Opinions toward Japan." 2014. Available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000061649.pdf>. Asan Institute. "South Korean Attitudes on the Korea-US Alliance and Northeast Asia." April 24, 2014. Available at <http://en.asaninst.org/contents/asan-report-south-korean-attitudes-on-the-korea-us-alliance-and-northeast-asia/>. Smeltz, Dina, Daalder, Ivo and Craig Kafura. "Foreign Policy in the Age of Retrenchment: Results of the 2014 Chicago Council Survey of American Public Opinion and US Foreign Policy." The Chicago Council on Global Affairs. 2014. Available at http://survey.thechicagocouncil.org/survey/2014/_resources/ChicagoCouncilSurvey.pdf.

² See "The Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation," April 27, 2015, Department of Defense at http://www.defense.gov/pubs/20150427_--_GUIDELINES_FOR_US-JAPAN_DEFENSE_COOPERATION.pdf

³ See "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities," October 3, 2013 at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/U.S.-Japan-Joint-Statement-of-the-Security-Consultative-Committee.pdf>

for a more politically sustainable posture, receiving permission from the local governor to initiate the project (although this relocation faces delays due to local political opposition and a new opposition-backed governor).

The U.S.-ROK alliance has weathered numerous North Korean acts of belligerence and attempted intimidation in recent years, often emerging stronger for the experience. The allies approved in 2013 a new coordinated plan to respond to future North Korean provocations (enhancing deterrence) and added new bilateral working groups in the areas of cyber and space security policy.⁴ Another important bilateral initiative—the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee—began in 2010 for the same reason as the U.S.-Japan EDD (i.e., to discuss alliance options with regard to the growing North Korean nuclear threat), and it has been an important tool for facilitating bilateral communication on the topic and reassuring Seoul of U.S. intentions and capabilities. The realignment of U.S. forces in Korea has faced delays and hurdles in implementation—much like the situation in Japan—but progress is being made and the allies signed a new agreement last year on sharing the costs for maintaining the U.S. presence through 2018.⁵

Most notable about the U.S.-ROK alliance, however, is its expanding relevance beyond the Korean Peninsula and in areas other than hard security, a development foreshadowed by a Joint Vision statement issued by Presidents Obama and Lee in 2009.⁶ Adjusting and passing the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) in 2011 has helped to expand bilateral trade in certain FTA-covered areas and provides a foundation for further trade liberalization in Asia.⁷ In addition, the allies are beginning to leverage their talents and resources more effectively in areas of nuclear nonproliferation, HA/DR, development assistance, and environmental protection and climate change.⁸

⁴ See “Joint Communique: The 45th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting,” Department of Defense, October 2, 2013 at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Joint%20Communique,%2045th%20ROK-U.S.%20Security%20Consultative%20Meeting.pdf>

⁵ This Special Measures Agreement renewal (signed February 2, 2014) must still be approved by the ROK’s National Assembly to take effect.

⁶ See “Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea,” The White House, June 16, 2009 at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-vision-for-the-alliance-of-the-United-States-of-America-and-the-Republic-of-Korea

⁷ Early evaluations of KORUS FTA show modest export gains for small and medium-sized U.S. enterprises and bilateral trade expansion for FTA beneficiary items overall. See *U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement: Effects on U.S. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises*, U.S. International Trade Commission, Investigation No. 332-539 USITC Publication 4393 May 2013 at <http://www.usitc.gov/publications/332/pub4393.pdf> and “One Year Trade Statistics of KORUS FTA” by U.S.-Korea Connect at <http://www.uskoreacconnect.org/facts-figures/issues-answers/korus-trade-figures.html>

⁸ See, for example, *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Scott Snyder ed., Lynne Rienner: Boulder, CO, 2012 and “U.S.-Korea Environmental Cooperation

The aforementioned are all positive trends for the two alliances, reflecting mutual recognition of their ongoing value and a mature alliance management infrastructure that strives proactively to minimize policy differences and expand bilateral cooperation when possible. For both Japan and South Korea, public and government support for their alliances with the United States remains strong, and they recognize the alignment of our national interests with the agenda of stability, openness, and access.⁹

Still, U.S. fiscal restraints and political dysfunction, combined with China's rise, raise doubts in Tokyo and Seoul about the long-term sustainability of American primacy in Asia, and they are taking different steps to hedge against relative U.S. decline. The challenge for U.S. policy makers is to find feasible ways to reassure the allies without simply subsidizing their security at an unsustainable financial and political cost to America, essentially to live up to the policy promise of the so-called rebalance to Asia (in all of its political, economic, and military dimensions) in a consistent and practical manner. Before offering policy recommendations toward this end, the following summarizes Japanese and Korean responses to China's military rise in the region, with some concluding recommendations for U.S. policy vis-à-vis its allies.

Allies' Responses to China's Rise in Northeast Asia

By some measures, the policy and military responses to China's rise by Tokyo and Seoul remain modest, suggesting sufficient confidence in national strength and the value and reliability of their alliance relationship with the United States. After all, China has been a significant source of growth for both countries, and a stable and prosperous China has been good for Asia overall. Despite consistent year-on-year Chinese military budget growth of 10-plus percent, for example, Japan's defense spending has been essentially flat since 2000 and South Korea's increase has averaged less than 4 percent per year (and that has been driven more by North Korea than by China).¹⁰ Japanese and Korean direct investment in China during this time continued to grow significantly, perhaps belying any concern about increasing economic vulnerability.

Japan Defense Posture

In Japan's case, part of its apparent complacency on the military front can be attributed to the strong bilateral alliance and its own modern armed forces. Although purely defense oriented and relatively small given Japan's wealth, the country's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) boast the world's

Commission 2013-2015 Work Program, State Department, February 14, 2013 at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/205226.pdf>

⁹ "Access" in this case, describes the ability of Japan and its U.S. ally to be able to take steps to maintain stability and openness, as they deem it necessary to protect national interests, consistent with international law.

¹⁰ Japan's defense budget in 2000 was about ¥49 trillion, which is where it stands in 2015. Defense spending represents consistently less than 1 percent of Japan's GDP. From Ministry of Defense, "Defense Programs and Budget of Japan Overview of FY2015 Budget," p. 50 at http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_budget/pdf/270414.pdf ROK figures from David Kang, "Paper Tiger: Why isn't the rest of Asia afraid of China?" *Foreign Policy*, April 25, 2013.

seventh largest defense budget in the world including such high-end capabilities as mid-air refueling, airborne warning and control (AWACs), Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), Hyuga-class (helicopter) destroyers and Atago-class Aegis (missile defense) destroyers, and will soon field 5th generation fighter aircraft in the form of the F-35.

What Japan lacks, however, is a legal and political framework that would allow the flexible application of these forces to support a wide range of national security objectives, either alone or in concert with the United States. The SDF was built primarily to operate domestically in response to potential attacks on the homeland. Typical of the parochial nature of Japan's forces, it possesses one of the world's largest inventories of CH-47 transport helicopters but no way to deploy them quickly overseas. Its new XC-2 military transport aircraft was designed to be large enough to carry Patriot missile defense batteries for national defense, but not the large helicopters that could be useful in an international crisis. U.S. officials would like to see Japan expand the range of security cooperation activities it can conduct with its ally and with other partners, but the Japanese public is reluctant to endorse SDF entanglement in such activities.

Ever since Japan's purely financial contributions to the Gulf War in 1991 were derided as mere "checkbook diplomacy," successive administrations have expanded modestly the range of SDF missions that Japan can conduct overseas, both legally and operationally. These changes came about slowly – at times through temporary authorization that eventually expired – and they were usually of a non-military nature, such as providing logistical or engineering support to a United Nations operation or multilateral security initiative. The purpose was to contribute more directly to international peace and security, but it was also a way to sustain the alliance by satisfying U.S. requests for more burden sharing in this field, and some saw benefit in the SDF gaining overseas deployment experience. In this sense, Japan has been hedging modestly for several years, maintaining a modern military and broadening its reach.

In contrast to this incremental approach, current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pursuing a more substantive overhaul of the nation's security laws, driven more directly and urgently by the rise of China, as well as North Korea's nuclear and missile development. In 2013, he pushed through a law to strengthen the national protection of classified information, established a new National Security Council to enhance crisis management and oversee the country's first National Security Strategy, and his administration revised the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG) and Midterm Defense Plan (MTDP), which governs Japan's future defense procurement. In this area, Japan will boost the defense budget slightly (about 1-2 percent per year) and extend the life of existing submarines and destroyers as a way to expand its military power affordably.

At the operational level, Tokyo's focus is on:

- strengthening intelligence gathering, maritime domain awareness in the East China Sea, and information security (e.g., with plans to buy unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), enhancing the use of space with new X-band communications and reconnaissance satellites, and bolstering cyber security capabilities);
- strengthening outer island defense and rapid deployment capability (by acquiring amphibious vehicles, conducting joint training with U.S. Marines, and planning to buy Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft);

- improved defense against nuclear/missile attack (with continued investments in missile defense and possibly developing a retaliatory strike capability, either via aircraft or cruise missiles);¹¹ and
- expanding weapons export and defense industry development opportunities by loosening legal restrictions and allowing a wider range of companies to get involved in the global supply chain for defense or dual-use articles.

Connected to this is the Abe administration's push to "normalize" the country's defense posture in the near term by allowing Japan to exercise collective self-defense in certain situations, and longer term by revising the military's legal status with a new Fundamental Law on National Security or even revising the nation's Constitution. This could expand further Japan's ability to utilize its military in a flexible manner, but significant political hurdles exist and will limit any further reforms beyond a package of legislation currently being debated in Tokyo.

The key issue for Japan (and what is most noticeable about the new NDPG) is that it is thinking beyond deterrence as the only role for the military and understanding that it might actually become necessary to use force for self-defense (either around the Senkaku Islands or vis-à-vis North Korea). Previously, Tokyo tended to believe that the mere existence (and later, presence) of Japan's SDF—combined with the U.S. alliance—was enough to satisfy its deterrence needs. It now realizes that lower thresholds of conflict might only be deterred if it shows willingness and ability to fight, and the object of this deterrence is China in the East China Sea. Moreover, Japan needs to be able to project force in a flexible manner to adapt to unpredictable situations in case deterrence fails, as well as to give Japan's leaders different options for controlling escalation.

Of course, Japan is not just looking to increase its own military capability as a means to thwart Chinese intimidation and so-called gray zone conflict (i.e. a state of neither peace nor war, such as skirmishes between Coast Guard vessels). Boosting the military is also seen as responding to U.S. requests for more proactive Japanese contributions to regional security, and strengthening the Japan's alliance with the United States is another way for Tokyo to bolster deterrence by signaling to Beijing that conflict with Japan ensures U.S. involvement. This is the backdrop for the bilateral initiative to revise Guidelines for US-Japan Defense Cooperation, completed in April 2015.

Opportunities in U.S.-Japan Defense Guideline Revision

Washington should welcome Japan's reinterpretation of the Constitution to allow it the limited exercise of collective self-defense, since collective self-defense might apply to UN-approved international security cooperation activities and to a situation involving North Korea. This would allow for more integrated alliance defense cooperation, particularly in the areas of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (including space and cyber domains), logistical support, and

¹¹ The possible development of a strike capability is being studied in Japan, but no decisions have been made. For a country with a restrictive "no war" constitution and a defense-only military, the move would be politically sensitive, even if only technically available for defensive purposes. All of Japan's neighbors already possess such capability.

maritime force protection.¹² These are some of the issues discussed by the allies as they worked to revise their Guidelines for Bilateral Defense Cooperation throughout 2014, and is only the third time in over fifty years that they have taken on this task. The purpose of this stepped-up security cooperation is two-fold:

- To complement the U.S. rebalance to Asia as a response to a more demanding regional security environment (primarily to deter North Korean aggression but also to balance against Chinese maritime expansion); and
- To combine with other allies and like-minded partners (e.g., Australia, South Korea, and some Southeast Asian countries) to build habits of regional security cooperation and a regional security architecture that can eventually involve China and help dampen security competition in East Asia.

The two most important aspects of the updated guidelines are a shift to a more integrated style of security cooperation and a new alliance coordination mechanism (ACM) that will help manage the political and operational dynamics of this shift. These changes are increasingly important as North Korea modernizes its nuclear missile force and as emerging military domains of cyber and space blur the lines between "forward area" and "rear area."

Whereas the previous alliance concept created separate zones of activity that require relatively little joint planning or training, the new guidelines should enable more integrated operations especially in the areas of missile defense, surveillance and reconnaissance, antisubmarine warfare, counter proliferation, and more direct logistical support of each other, depending on the situation. These could apply to the defense of Japan or other situations around the world.

With any luck, the allies will never have to carry out these missions against real threats, but the newfound ability to plan and train for them will strengthen the alliance and enhance deterrence regardless. This is good for both countries and contributes to regional stability. The new guidelines also could facilitate greater multilateral security cooperation and exercises involving countries like Australia, South Korea, and India, which can bolster regional confidence and capacity to address collective security challenges. Cooperation might also be possible further afield, say if Japanese surveillance support could assist a UN-authorized peace building mission someday in Yemen, for example, with assets stationed in nearby Djibouti.

Japan's expanding bilateral relationship with Australia is worth highlighting in this regard, since it represents a sustained effort by various administrations in both Tokyo and Canberra to diversify and strengthen defense ties beyond their alliances with the United States. It began with the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in 2007, follow-up "2+2" (defense and foreign ministry leaders) meeting and an acquisition and cross-servicing agreement in 2010, an information security (sharing) agreement in 2012, and a defense equipment and technology transfer agreement in 2014. This "enabling architecture" between two "hubs" in the U.S.-led "hub

¹² For more on how the United States and Japan could use the Defense Guideline revision process to develop a more integrated "front office/back office" alliance posture, see James L. Schoff, "How to Upgrade U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Policy Outlook, January 16, 2014 available at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2014/01/16/how-to-upgrade-u.s.-japan-defense-cooperation/gykq>

and spoke a security framework in Asia is facilitating trilateral security cooperation that in turn can help operationalize larger multilateral frameworks such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM+) and associated expert working groups.

Overall, the new U.S.-Japan defense guidelines should allow for more comprehensive alliance cooperation that adds a substantive security component to already robust economic and foreign policy coordination, but there will be political and legal limits to what Japan can do. Japan's new security legislation will not allow the SDF to use force unless the country is directly threatened or attacked, and its PKO track record suggests that Tokyo will be very selective about joining multilateral coalitions. The new guidelines will provide opportunities for cooperation over time, but these should be explored incrementally in the near term, with due regard for Japanese domestic and regional sensitivities. Change won't happen overnight.

Republic of Korea

There is less to describe about South Korea in the context of tangible reactions to China's economic and military rise. ROK defense investments in recent years have been driven more by developments involving North Korea rather than China, particularly after North Korean attacks in 2010 led to the buttressing of Northwest Island defenses and other counter-battery systems. Much of this has been considered in close consultation with the United States, and the allies approved in 2013 a new coordinated plan to respond to future North Korean provocations (enhancing deterrence) and added new bilateral working groups in the areas of cyber and space security policy.¹³

The Roh Moo-Hyun administration around 2005 promoted a defense procurement policy to grow the Navy and Air Force and allow them to be more expeditionary, with the idea that the North Korean threat would diminish as North-South relations improved and the ROK's regional and global interests would expand. Renewed North Korean belligerence and its nuclear tests, however, soon led to a paring back of that defense plan, and the result is a sort of hybrid procurement strategy that tries to serve both of Korea's security needs (i.e. on-Peninsula first and foremost, but also a broader regional and even global reach over the longer term).

As such, in addition to investing in battle readiness at home (including a variety of command and control systems and related infrastructure to prepare for the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) to South Korea from the United States by 2015), the ROK military has acquired Aegis capable destroyers, an ever larger submarine force, and AWACs aircraft – among other modernization initiatives – that will help Seoul hedge against Chinese regional military dominance in the future. Indeed, although the ROK push to extend the range of its indigenous ballistic missiles from 300km to 800km in 2012 was explained as a way to counter North Korean missile capabilities, it can also be seen as a long-term investment in a capability that might be needed post-unification, when Korea will be hemmed in by two large nuclear and missile powers

¹³ See "Joint Communiqué: The 45th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting," Department of Defense, October 2, 2013 at <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/Joint%20Communique,%2045th%20ROK-U.S.%20Security%20Consultative%20Meeting.pdf>

in Russia and China. Recent ROK investments in missile defense and UAVs will have a similar dual use (i.e., for North Korea now, and for wider national defense later).

Coupled with this hedging on the military side, a different form of diplomatic hedging by Seoul includes pursuing better ties with China itself, since the cool relations that pervaded the Lee Myung-bak administration (2008-2012) as Beijing often rose to protect Pyongyang despite its aggressiveness was seen as strategically undesirable. Although some in Japan and the United States worry that this diplomatic outreach risks driving a wedge between the U.S.-ROK alliance and between South Korea and Japan, better ROK-China relations can have many positive effects (e.g., to promote regional stability and facilitate cooperation in case of turmoil involving North Korea). Better ROK-China ties is not necessarily a zero-sum dynamic, and Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul should make efforts to ensure it does not move in this direction.

The danger, of course, is that some key factors are moving in negative directions. As Japan-ROK ties worsen, for example, suspicion grows in both countries that steps taken to mitigate the China risk (particularly in the military realm) might also be turned against one another. This exacerbates the security dilemma prompted by China's defense spending growth, and it is hardening public attitudes in all three countries. Sensitive history issues have become highly politicized in the region when precisely the opposite dynamic (i.e. shifting the historical debates to the academic rather than political arena) is preferred. All of this complicates U.S. plans for the rebalance to Asia and risks drawing Washington into a cultural/historical struggle going back centuries, which can only end with strained U.S. relations with one ally or the other.

Korea-Japan Relations

U.S. policy makers should recognize that the historical perceptions gap between Japan and South Korea regarding Japan's colonial era is wide and largely unbridgeable in the near (and possibly medium) term. Political and diplomatic agreements to paper over this gap in the 1990s sustained gradual progress in bilateral relations since then, albeit in ebbs and flows, but both sides poked enough holes in this weak fabric by 2014 to set ties back by a couple of decades. The good news is that leaders in Tokyo and Seoul are making honest efforts to repair the damage, but this is always harder to do the second time around, and there are groups in both countries that are motivated and mobilized to resist compromise. Current efforts seek to two tracks of dialogue whereby discussion and claims related to history can continue, but do not halt bilateral communication and cooperation on shared national security interests.

Because any crisis involving North Korea (or nearly any major regional security, economic, or environmental crisis) will require close U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral cooperation to manage effectively, it is important for the United States to work proactively in support of productive trilateralism. One need only look at the intractability of current challenges in Syria and Eastern Ukraine to see how limited U.S. options and leverage become when there is a lack of regional unity and capacity, and then apply this to a North Korean collapse or war scenario to appreciate the value of U.S.-Japan-Korea cooperation.

In recent years, the three governments have tended to keep trilateral cooperation initiatives out of the public limelight, since this was seen as the easiest way to avoid excessive scrutiny (and possible criticism) and establish habits of operational collaboration. But it is becoming increasingly clear that low public support rates in Korea and Japan for closer security cooperation

(as evidenced by the rejection in late 2013 of required ammunition for a ROK PKO in South Sudan that was donated via UN channels by a nearby SDF unit, among other examples) could interfere with trilateral cooperation, even if the need seemed obvious to Americans.¹⁴ Thus, it might be advantageous to publicize existing cooperation initiatives more actively—especially when in support of regional public goods related to security, health, the environment, and energy—as a way to possibly increase public support for trilateral cooperation in Japan and Korea. The goal over time would be to acclimatize the publics to trilateral cooperation for national interests as a matter of course, which in no way prejudices issues of bilateral concern.

Policy Recommendations

Japan

- In order to address an underlying source of tension in the region, continue to push back diplomatically against expansive Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea by insisting that China clarify the legal basis for its so-called nine-dashed line demarcation and pursue more actively a regional coalition in support of this position.
- Coordinate with Japan the implementation of a Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative (mentioned by Defense Secretary Carter at the 2015 Shangri-La Dialogue) to help build partner capacity to enhance maritime domain awareness and deter unlawful activity.
- Support Japan's reinterpretation of exercising collective self-defense rights, particularly with regard to a North Korea scenario and UN peace keeping operations as a means to support deeper alliance integration of security cooperation. China might complain that such a move would be a sign of dangerous Japanese militarism, but it is simply assuming the same rights as any other nation and responding to a degrading security environment.
- Similarly, be supportive of other steps Japan might take to normalize its military with broader rules of engagement, expand its defense budget, and possibly include development of a retaliatory strike capability, so that Japan is better able to protect its own territory without heavy U.S. involvement. Of course, security treaty commitments mean that the United States could be drawn into any China-Japan conflict in the East China Sea, so adequate bilateral consultation, planning, and defense coordination is required. In this sense, something akin to the U.S.-ROK counter-provocation plan might be a useful way to make sure that operational and political/diplomatic issues are fully considered as an alliance (utilizing the new ACM).
- Overall, be inclined to support the sale of U.S. defense equipment such as UAVs and other systems, as well as the deepening of bilateral defense industrial cooperation. Incorporating Japanese commercial technology (such as fuel cells and advanced materials) has the potential to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of certain U.S. weapon systems.
- Consider expanding opportunities to export U.S. natural gas as a way to support U.S. industry and help Japan diversify its supply sources.
- Follow-through on the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam as a way to strengthen the political sustainability of U.S. military presence in Japan and to support the

¹⁴ "South Korea to Return Ammunition Provided by Japan," Kyodo News, December 27, 2013. Available at <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/27/national/south-korea-to-return-ammunition-provided-by-japan/#.VaQ3mE177cs>

Pentagon's policy of geographic distribution in the region. The move to Guam will reduce modestly the burden of hosting Marines on Okinawa, and it will add momentum to the Futenma Marine Base relocation project and overall U.S. realignment in Japan. In a variety of ways, therefore, it will enhance the alliance posture in the region.

- Sustain sufficient U.S. defense spending to reassure allies and engender support for a U.S. initiative to network alliances and partnerships in the region to strengthen the regional security architecture (inclusive of China, as much as possible). Support for negotiation of a high-standard Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal is an important component of this effort. This is part of living up to the policy promise of the Rebalance to Asia.

Republic of Korea

- Although China is often reluctant, seek joint U.S.-ROK dialogue with Beijing regarding future scenarios involving North Korea (everything from collapse to violent lashing out against the alliance or Japan). The main ROK concern about China involves its approach to various North Korea contingencies, and better communication and more predictability is needed on this front. Such discussions might be able to alleviate Chinese fears about the future posture of the U.S.-ROK alliance post-unification, and if so it could soften Beijing's support for North Korea.
- Support the transfer of wartime OPCON from the United States to ROK and encourage ROK authorities to invest for this transition, even if the potential threat from North Korea has not diminished significantly. This is a way to show North Korea that its primary counterpart for discussions about the future of the Peninsula is South Korea (not the United States) and South Korea is capable of handling this responsibility (with additional investment in domestic capabilities and in close cooperation with the United States).
- Continue to encourage ROK participation in regional security cooperation activities (such as the counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and the Proliferation Security Initiative), as this can help operationalize the regional security architecture and build stronger ROK-Japan, ROK-Australia, and other mil-to-mil relationships that might help shape/moderate Chinese behavior.

Trilateral

- Despite ROK-Japan tensions over history, encourage Seoul to keep up trilateral security cooperation, given the vital role that Japan plays in South Korea's security (via its hosting of U.S. bases and promised rear area support in various North Korean contingencies). Trilateral cooperation should be a "safe haven" for regional cooperation, even when Korea-Japan ties are strained.
- Consider publicizing certain existing trilateral cooperation initiatives more actively—especially when in support of regional public goods related to security, health, the environment, and energy—as a way to help increase public support for trilateral cooperation in Japan and Korea. The goal over time would be to acclimatize the publics to trilateral cooperation for national interests as a matter of course, which in no way prejudices issues of bilateral concern.