

# Asia's New Security Order and the Role of ROK-Japan-US Relationship

## Korea Foundation / Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation

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### Context of ROK-Japan-U.S. Relations in the Broader Northeast Asian Order

#### Andrew YEO

In the early 1990s, Asia was considered under-institutionalized compared to Europe. However, the institutional architecture of Asia today is defined as a “complex patchwork.” Asia consists of overlapping bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral institutions layered on top of each other. The United States support for Asia’s institutional order also has shifted. In the early 1990s, the United States was reluctant to engage in negotiations involving multilateral initiatives, but the United States has been providing support above and beyond the traditional hub-and-spoke system in recent years. The United States encourages its allies to expand their network and to forge closer ties within the region. In this context, it is obvious that the ROK-Japan-U.S. should work together as South Korea and Japan, both democratic countries, are close allies of the United States. Issues such as North Korean nuclear proliferation require the three countries to coordinate policies and to share information. Most importantly, a strong ROK-Japan-U.S. relationship signals to the region

and to the global community that such trilateralism is critical in maintaining the liberal international order.

### Current ROK-Japan-U.S. Trilateral Cooperation

#### Weston KONISHI

ROK-Japan-U.S. defense cooperation is on the upswing, with ongoing dialogues since the 1990s. The three countries signed the trilateral information sharing arrangement in December 2014. Moreover, the three sides will engage in joint missile defense exercises on the sidelines of the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises in June 2016. While this momentum seems to be crisis driven, a change in the trilateral relationship is not expected in the absence of more provocations. This is important, because trilateralism is beginning to become a proxy for bilateral relations. The scope, the range and the speed of trilateral cooperation largely depend on South Korea’s willingness, because of unresolved tensions between Tokyo and Seoul. Japan, on the other hand, is likely to focus more on the ROK-Japan-U.S. trilateral relationship compared to its trilateral relationships with Australia and India. It



is important to continue the momentum because the trilateral relationship is only as strong as its weakest bilateral ties. ROK-Japan-U.S. trilateral cooperation, if strengthened, can function as a platform for broader cooperation in the region.

### The Role of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)

#### Shihoko GOTO

The TPP is an important framework for economic security, especially at a time of global economic decline. The partnership is an open forum with 12 countries that represent nearly 40 percent of global GDP. The TPP will bring great efficiencies to trade, standardization of rules and tariff reduction, and it will only become stronger if South Korea joins.

The Peterson Institute estimates the growth rate for joining TPP will be an average of 1 percent in the next 10 years. Considering that Japan and Korea are growing at about 2 to 3 percent at best, it is a sizable increase. Japan and Korea are still robust economies but eventually the two will face a limit in domestic demand. This creates a need for new ways to do business and to carve out new markets. The TPP will bring new rules to new agendas, such as intellectual property, financial services, environmental issues, dispute mechanisms, labor laws and more.

However, the TPP has limits in addressing complaints from those left behind in the trade negotiations. There is no direct correlation between the



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security reality and the economic environment in Asia, but this may not continue to hold true, because economic stability hinges on social stability. Therefore, the United States, Japan, and eventually South Korea will need to provide a roadmap to those who will be left behind as a result of the TPP. The limitations and challenges of the TPP should be seen as an opportunity for promoting structural changes and for creating common ways to address common challenges.

#### ROK-Japan-U.S. Relationship and the Rise of China

##### Ellen KIM

The United States, South Korea and Japan have strategic limits and challenges in regard to China's rise, because of the fundamental gap in each country's perception of China's rise. Korea has pursued active engagement with China, while Japan and the United States view China as a regional competitor and a competitor on a global scale, respectively. South Korea is especially vulnerable for several reasons. First of all, South Korea is a smaller country in terms of its land size, population and military capabilities compared to China. Furthermore, South Korea's economy is heavily dependent on China. Finally, South Korea's policy priority of unification requires China's cooperation. South Korea's reality leads to extreme caution in its foreign policy towards China. However, South Korea's expectation of China's abilities has been shattered recently given China's reaction to North Korea's provocations. China's reaction to any contingency on the Korean Peninsula and any compromise of South Korea's sovereignty, therefore, will become an important pre-condition for South Korea's engagement with China. Given the complexity of South Korea's

position, the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan need to understand the misalignment of priorities and policies; a robust trilateralism will be important in dealing with China.

### Policy Implications

- The ongoing TPP debate should be more comprehensive and focus on national growth strategy. Negotiations for entry into the TPP zone should be seen as an opportunity for ROK-Japan-U.S. to pursue social change focusing on structural reform.
- Policy makers in Seoul should make efforts to enter the TPP as it will bring great efficiencies in cross-border trade and business for all members.
- The United States and Japan need to understand South Korea's strategic dilemma and address policy mismatches in regard to China.
- An Asian version of NATO is very unlikely and would require careful thinking in regard to China.
- The three countries should promote joint efforts and trust-building mechanisms between South Korea and Japan with US support.
- South Korea must understand that there is danger in heavily engaging with China without also engaging with the U.S. and Japan. A deeper alliance with the United States would strengthen its position with China.

# US-China Relations for Peace and Prosperity in East Asia

## Jeju Peace Institute

### Moderator

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### YAN Xuetong

Officially the government of the U.S. and China describe their relationship as most important. But this does not imply that their relationships are the best. Being the most important means the impact of their bilateral relationship has an impact on more countries.

One thing people really need to understand is the change of the international environment. Many scholars have argued that the world is moving toward a multilateral order, but if this were the case we would not hold the Jeju Forum on the topic of U.S. and China relations, as instead the world is moving toward bipolarization.

The second part we should talk about is if the world is moving toward becoming a bipolar order, how can other countries change their foreign policies to survive this? Their first option would be, by implication, to take a neutral stance. The other option would imply choosing between super powers. In the East Asian Region, we already experience nations being stuck between two super powers. Russia and Japan have made their stand - Russia

with China, and Japan with the U.S.

In the case of South Korea, the U.S. provides cover in the security sector, with their military present in the country, and annual military maneuvers. On the other hand, China is the largest trading partner of South Korea, which leads to interdependency. South Korea is currently trying to find a balance between these two.

### Sergey SEVASTIANOV

I will contribute the Russian perspective toward the U.S. and China relations and the tripartite between Russia-China and the U.S.

Recent events in Syria, Ukraine, the South China Sea and the East China Sea have been indicative of a world that has become more polycentric. China has become more active in negotiating partnerships within the East Asian region.

Beijing is opposing American hegemony in the Asia-Pacific, but it is more cautious in constructing relations with the United States. Also deep and diversified economic and financial ties between the two countries represent a critical stabilizing factor