

found in the current sanctions imposed on the North.

— **LEE Hyeonseo** Stay and endure a life of privation and oppression or escape and risk being sold into sexual slavery: this is the stark choice facing many women in North Korea. Greater protection is required for North Koreans who manage to flee especially women, many are captured in China and sold into prostitution or end up in forced marriages. All but the lucky few will live the rest of their lives in utter misery. They will be repeatedly raped day in and day out by an endless supply of customers who enrich their captors at their expense. There is no asylum once they reach the other side, they are regarded as illegal migrants and face deportation if caught and then severe punishment in North Korea. The women are in an incredibly vulnerable position. They have little choice but to trust the brokers smuggling them out. But there is no one to turn to if things go wrong. North Korean women and girls run a gauntlet of forced marriage, and sexual abuse, in China as a de facto requirement to escape to a third country.

— **Anna FIFIELD** I have been there a dozen times and follow news from North Korea very closely. I have special responsibility for informing the outside world of the North Korean human rights situation. Now, nearly everyone is well aware of the seriousness of the North Korean human rights situations. However, we now have difficulty in obtaining more information from North Korean defectors, because they ask us to give money in return for the information they provide. Therefore, it is getting more difficult to get enough information from the North Korean defectors, now. This serves as a huge obstacle to writing enough articles that can be distributed to the outside world.

— **PARK Sokeel** We need to discuss the current state of North Korean human rights, changes, and solutions. With regards to the problem itself, North Korea is one of the world's most isolated states. No information can be flowed into North Korea. Political education and totalitarian message are infused into the minds of the North Korean people. It is nearly unimaginable. However, we are also witnessing some

symptoms of change inside the North Korean society, the North Korean economy, and media. I would like to discuss some important changes underlying the North Korean economy. What we are witnessing is the decentralization of North Korean economic activities. A large number of people are observed to start their own business. Some North Korean conglomerates can also be found in the North Korean economy. This is a remarkable phenomenon proving that the North Korean economy is undergoing the process of transitioning into a capitalist economy. It also means the loss of control imposed on the national economy by the North Korean regime. Interestingly, the market is beginning to emerge. We have discovered that many South Korean and Hollywood films are flowed into the North Korean economy. Many information technology tools such as laptop computers, mobile phones, tablet PCs are being used as important devices to break into the government's block. Corruption has immensely increased in North Korea. People seem to realize that they can survive only when they break the rules. Money and connection can make them do everything in their society. What needs to be done is to raise the amount of information that can be flowed into the North Korean society. I believe that these efforts can bring tangible change to the North Korean society.

#### Keywords

North Korea, Human Rights, Refugee, Peace, Commission on Inquiry



#### Policy Implications

- Ensuring human rights protection is the surest path to common peace, security, and prosperity.
- Raising human rights problems in North Korea should not be underestimated due to other concerns related to North Korea such as military security, and technology.
- It is necessary to formulate measures to provide many North Korean defectors in South Korea with programs suited to individual needs.

## The Future of Geopolitics in Northeast Asia: Issues and Discourses



**Moderator** **Moon Chung-in** Distinguished Professor, Yonsei University / Editor-in-Chief, Global Asia  
**Presenter** **Masao OKONOGI** Professor Emeritus, Keio University, Japan  
**John DELURY** Associate Professor, GSIS, Yonsei University  
**ZHU Feng** Director, China Center for Collaborative Studies of the South China Sea at Nanjing University  
**PARK Cheol-hee** Dean, GSIS, Seoul National University  
**Rapporteur** **KIM Hyunjin** Global Asia Fellow, East Asia Foundation

— **MOON Chung-in** Nowadays, the issues involving geopolitical agendas and discourses pose big challenges in Northeast Asia. Does what is called geopolitics actually exist?

— **Masao OKONOGI** It is hard to say that geopolitics is a complete theory of political science. Even though politics and geography are closely related, it is difficult to prove their relationship positively. Why is the North Korean nuclear issue so serious and difficult to deal with? That is because North Korea is not a continental force with nuclear weapons. Japan is not afraid of Chinese and Russian nuclear arms as it knows that mutual deterrence is implicitly effective on them. However, they are afraid of North Korean nuclear weapons as their possible use is not only closely related to the competition between the two Koreas but also to the survival of the North Korean regime. Peace and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula are closely connected. A war could break out when they unilaterally seek North Korean denuclearization in the absence of peace on the Korean Peninsula. Only when a peace treaty is signed by the two Koreas, it would be possible for North Korea to

give up its nuclear weapon.

— **ZHU Feng** Geoeconomics has become increasingly more important in today's world. Even though the political relations are worsening between Korea and China, and Japan and China, their economic relations still remain important. In China, the Korean wave reached an unstoppable level. Sino-U.S. relations are politically worsening but a huge number of Chinese students study in the U.S. each year. This is something that policymakers cannot ignore. And it shows that geoeconomic factors prevail over geopolitical ones in this region. However, geographically Northeast Asia remains an unpredictable area. First, there can be a power transition in the region. Second, a territorial dispute can arise. Third, a historical or political problem due to the patriotism exists in each nation. The issues between China and Japan are a good example. The diverse factors will continue to entangle this region.

— **PARK Cheol-hee** Korea has never been left out of the geopolitical framework. Four great powers have always been around Korea. However, power transitions are taking place in the region nowadays.

Japan is seeking to change itself actively to deal with the rise of China. Since the President Trump was elected, the U.S. has started to show its interest in Northeast Asia, thus revitalizing geopolitical discourse again. Military conflict is unlikely in the region because of a Cold Peace resulting from the checks and balances between heavily armed countries. Even though China took revenge against the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system, it does not affect every field, as China itself may suffer damages, too. Also, the governments in the region are in normal operation, and they are highly supported by their people. The problem is North Korea. The North has been pursuing militarism and continues missile provocations. Recently, a considerable number of people have fled from the country. Regional stability is possible when the North Korean issue is redressed. The sticks and carrots policy seems to be effective in dealing with the North. We need to press the North to come back to the dialogue table first, and help them to give up its nuclear program voluntarily by giving it incentives. It is now time to think up measures to help the North trust the South and see the possibility of stability settling on the Korean Peninsula. To this end, cooperation between the Koreans, China and Japan should be strengthened.

— **John DELURY** The U.S. is still against geopolitics. The U.S. has achieved internationalization, established its values and norms and is still promoting them. Given its power and geographical location, the U.S. was able to transcend geopolitics. However, Trump may call for geopolitics. Given his opposition to free trade, recent withdrawal from the Paris Agreement and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) that took place right after his inauguration. The TPP seemed to be right before the realization of liberal globalization, but Trump took a position against it. Geography has something to do with the fate of a country, and it is a reality of international politics, but I wonder if Trump has any idea about geographical locations and points of view. He tends to approach and treat Korea, China, and Japan, sep-

arately. Although he should put priority on North Korea in his foreign policy, it seems that he does not take the geographical concept into consideration.

— **MOON Chung-in** Is Obama's pivot to Asia policy related to the rise of China? At which country is the strategy aiming? Do you really think that China will do something harmful to marine traffic?

— **John DELURY** The pivot to Asia policy can be a geopolitical response to emerging China, but on the other hand, it is also combined with traditional liberalism. Most of them came from the military point of view. The pivot to Asia policy of the U.S. had problems from the beginning. It is inappropriate that Korea has to join the U.S. strategy and block China.

— **MOON Chung-in** China has had its People's Liberation Army study geopolitical issues, claiming that the First Island Chain be protected since 1985. They even argue that their influence should reach as far as deep sea in 2050, but it is not certain whether China actually has a strategy. I also wonder if China actually has a big plan to integrate countries in the region.

— **ZHU Feng** Geopolitics is an important factor for policymakers both in China and the U.S. The concept is not developed in China. The rise of China and peace are not contradictory in the real politics of the world.

— **MOON Chung-in** China is building a naval base in the South China Sea and causing friction there. It says it is developing the coasts and islands peacefully, but it is doubtful if China has no military ambition over the region. The acts and attitude of China seem threatening.

— **ZHU Feng** Concerns about China's behavior are understandable. China can be said to seek naval expansion, but it should be admitted that China could have behaved even more impulsively in this region. It is yet to be seen whether China's expansion of influence will be temporary or permanent, or if China is taking a selective approach. Historically, China has never been a maritime superpower. Until 1840, all the ruling powers on the Chinese continent have been northern nomads engaged in commerce, not those engaged in maritime trade. Now that China is

seeking naval expansion from a geopolitical point of view, it is a quite new approach for China and a new Chinese dream that might be seen as confusing in a historical sense. As the expansion is going along with the economic development of China, it seems that China simply tries to expand its maritime influence.

— **PARK Cheol-hee** In *The Revenge of Geography* by Kaplan, he argues that China has never posed a threat to the international order, and this was because Chinese forces were staying on the continent only. Everyone thinks China is dreaming of being a maritime superpower. China has built a defensive power on the southern coast, and neighboring countries have become concerned about it. It is obvious that China dreams of change.

— **MOON Chung-in** Prime Minister Abe visited countries neighboring the Chinese coast shortly after he took office in 2006. As seen by the visit, China does not seem to behave peacefully, contrary to its argument that China is making a peaceful rise.

— **PARK Cheol-hee** Japan feels threatened by the rise of China. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces found that Chinese ships make wider and more frequent moves in the South China Sea. China is definitely taking threatening actions toward Japan.

— **ZHU Feng** The opinion seems to be derived from the perception to regard China as a threat. In Sino-Japan relations, the island chain concept is a policy to protect China. China will come up with strategies that are trustful.

— **PARK Cheol-hee** In fact, the First Island Chain is a concept made by a Japanese admiral in the past. It was a concept to stop Chinese forces at the First Island Chain to protect Japan. But today, China is not satisfied with the coastal defense and approaches the second line beyond the first. It is predicted that China will reach the second line by 2049.

— **ZHU Feng** The maritime traffic around China shows that China has no favorable conditions. For example, the Chinese navy is subject to follow international maritime regulations when it moves into international waters, and this always causes difficul-

ties for the navy. Such tension always exists in the seas around China.

— **MOON Chung-in** From the viewpoint of a balance of power, Hans Morgenthau calls the condition of the Korean Peninsula besieged by superpowers as tragic. Do you really think it is difficult for Korea to achieve peace by itself?

— **Masao OKONOGI** As long as there is a confrontation between South and North Korea, there is no peace. Of course, the Korean Peninsula's own peace seems possible. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and capitalism in China, North Korea began the development of nuclear weapons as a survival strategy under the leadership of Kim Jong-Il, which was an inevitable choice for the North to protect its ruling class, regime and ideology. As long as it feels fear, the North will continue to develop nuclear arms. The division will go on, and the unification will be impossible, unless it is pursued by the German way under the external pressure.

#### Keywords

Geopolitics, Asian geopolitics, North Korean nuclear issue, South China Sea dispute, Rise of China, U.S. hegemony in Asia, China's maritime strategy, One Belt-One Road, Island chain, Policy to blockade China, Trump administration's North Korea policy

#### Policy Implications

- Geopolitics is more an artificially created concept than a real one. Mistrust among superpowers around South and North Korea is deep and both Koreas, free from the determinism by superpowers or the balance of power, should try to solve their issues by themselves.
- The pivot to Asia policy of the U.S. is a combination of a geopolitical approach with existing liberalism, and it is not appropriate for the Korean government to participate in the strategy to block China. Since the 20th century, the U.S. has manifested a position that no country, including itself, should not have hegemony in Asia, and this stance seems aimed at barring China from holding power. On the contrary, the U.S. itself can be seen trying to grab the hegemony in Asia. The Trump administration has no other North Korea policy yet than that of the Obama administration. Considering the profiles of the cabinet and presidential staff, Trump is expected to take hawkish stance.