



Sustaining Deterrence in a Time of Change and Uncertainty

A Conference Report of the
US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue

By
Brad Glosserman

ISSUES & INSIGHTS
CONFERENCE REPORT

VOL. 19, CR1 | January 2019

MAUI, HAWAII, USA

Pacific Forum

Based in Honolulu, the Pacific Forum (www.pacforum.org) is a foreign policy research institute focused on the Asia-Pacific Region. Founded in 1975, the Pacific Forum collaborates with a broad network of research institutes from around the Pacific Rim, drawing on Asian perspectives and disseminating project findings and recommendations to global leaders, governments, and members of the public throughout the region. The Forum's programs encompass current and emerging political, security, economic, and maritime policy issues, and works to help stimulate cooperative policies through rigorous research, analyses and dialogues.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
CONFERENCE KEY FINDINGS.....	v
CONFERENCE REPORT	1

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A	A-1
APPENDIX B	B-1
APPENDIX C	C-1

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication results from research sponsored by the Department of the Air Force, United States Air Force Academy. This material is based on research sponsored by the USAF A and the Pacific Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies under agreement number FA 7000-18-1-0003. The U.S. Government is authorized to reproduce and distribute reprints for Governmental purposes notwithstanding any copyright notation thereon.

The opinions, findings, views, conclusions or recommendations contained herein are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies or endorsements, either expressed or implied, of the USAF A or the U.S. Government.

Distribution Statement A. Distribution unlimited.

KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

US-ROK-JAPAN TRILATERAL STRATEGIC DIALOGUE, MAUI

The Pacific Forum, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the US Air Force Academy Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts on Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (AFA PASCC), brought 47 officials and experts from the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), along with 5 Pacific Forum Young Leaders, all attending in their private capacity, to Maui, Hawaii, Aug. 6-8, 2018 to explore the three countries' thinking about changes in relations with North Korea, extended deterrence, and ways to strengthen trilateral security cooperation. A two-move tabletop exercise (TTX) was conducted that dealt with radically different outcomes in negotiations with Pyongyang. Key findings include:

In contrast to our initial meetings a few years ago, the group has become comfortable engaging on these issues and knowledgeable about important features of a nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Significantly, the track-1.5 process is well supported politically in all three capitals.

Discussions were candid and frank, with understandable differences in perspective on various issues. Significantly, there were no references to longstanding animosities between Japan and South Korea that have hampered bilateral and trilateral cooperation. In addition, there was no evidence of competition between ROK and Japanese participants for US attention. Trilateral cooperation prevailed.

The first instinct among all three teams in crises was to consult.

US allies continue to demand reassurance in crises. South Korea is acutely aware that it is surrounded by much larger regional powers; and some South Koreans continue to argue for an independent nuclear arsenal (ideally with US consent or even help). Japan is acutely aware of, and increasingly uneasy with, limits on its defense capabilities and the resulting reliance on the US. Japanese and Koreans were listening carefully for hints of any weakening of US resolve to fulfill our alliance commitments, but more than once misinterpreted US statements as being insufficiently firm and reassuring despite US assurances to the contrary.

There was consensus that North Korea has not made the strategic decision to give up its nuclear weapons and is not likely to do so.

Kim Jong-Un will draw out the negotiating process – with the US and South Korea – as long as possible to maximize benefits he can obtain, to identify and exploit divisions among the allies, and to create conditions for the eventual recognition of the DPRK as a nuclear-armed state.

US policy declarations notwithstanding, there was broad agreement that the maximum pressure campaign against North Korea reached its peak prior to the 2018 summitry and that it will now be nearly impossible to fully reinstate.

Japanese and ROK participants were troubled by the US decision to halt joint military exercises with the ROK and raised the point repeatedly. While some participants acknowledged that the impact of suspension could be limited and have no or only a marginal effect on military readiness – and this was debated – the way it occurred (without allied consultation) and the language used by the US President (adopting North Korean phraseology and characterizations) were especially alarming.

Japanese policymakers see Northeast Asia as a single theater, and acknowledge that their national security is deeply integrated with that of the Korean Peninsula. They repeatedly called on the US to take no action that might weaken the US-ROK alliance or dismantle USFK structures.

While allies insist that decoupling is not occurring, tension is growing in both alliances and there is increasing concern about the potential for decoupling as a result of issues triggered by ordinary alliance relations as well as those arising from North Korean diplomatic initiatives. Shifting public attitudes could also have a negative impact.

A simple characterization of positions would be: ROK – cautious optimism (trust but verify); US – cautious pessimism (distrust but verify); Japan – pessimism (distrust).

Allies experience great uncertainty when they try to anticipate decisions by President Trump. They are not sure how to operationalize his intent to “put America first” and worry about the implications for alliances. Reassurance by some US participants that there is more continuity than change in US policy – while admitting that the president’s style is unique – largely fell on deaf ears. The need to reassure is stronger than ever.

ROK participants revealed a hardening of views toward China and see Beijing as an increasingly malign influence on the Korean Peninsula. It is not clear how much Seoul will cooperate with the US (or Japan) to counter Chinese efforts elsewhere, but this is an important shift in perspective. Japanese views of China remain as hard as ever.

The meeting featured a two-move table-top exercise (TTX). In move 1, nuclear negotiations between the US and North Korea were making progress (including a declaration of nuclear facilities by the North), as were talks between North and South

Korea. There was no movement in relations between Japan and North Korea.

There was great skepticism toward North Korea’s nuclear declaration – which aligned with median estimates of its stockpiles and included all its known facilities – and no inclination to “sweeten the pot” to encourage Pyongyang to do more. All teams wanted the North to take additional substantive steps before they would respond to its offer.

That said, the Korean team was the most receptive or cautiously optimistic, and the Japanese team the most pessimistic, especially since medium-range missiles were not included in the initial DPRK offering and there were no other steps toward denuclearization.

If there was an inclination to provide incentives for North Korea, the “carrots” were economic rewards, not security-related items.

No team suggested a reduction in the US force presence or weakening of the US-ROK military alliance in response to any North Korean proposal.

While some Japanese seemed willing to show flexibility on the abductee issue, Tokyo’s contributions to any denuclearization program will be limited as long as there is no progress on that problem.

TTX Move 2

While North-South economic talks make progress, nuclear talks break down. The North is accused of cheating on its nuclear declaration, and President Trump demands the return to maximum pressure to force DPRK denuclearization, threatening the end of the US-ROK alliance if Seoul does not go along. A Japanese surveillance ship is attacked by North Korea air and naval forces; Pyongyang explodes a

nuclear device in the Sea of Japan with no reported casualties. A US team searching for POW/MIA remains in the North is presumed taken hostage.

There was extensive debate and no conclusion about the meaning of the North Korean detonation. The assertion by some Americans that a nuclear demonstration is a sign of weakness – a bluff – was rejected by most Japanese. Several countered that any North Korean use of nuclear weapons constitutes a deterrence failure. All participants focused on ways to re-establish deterrence after nuclear use.

Japanese pressed Americans on whether a North Korean capability to threaten the US homeland entered into US calculations on how to respond. Americans insisted it did not.

Although the US goal after move 2 was the swift and definitive elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons and capability, that message was not understood by other participants. The problem was that the US response did not include a kinetic response against North Korea. Instead, it focused on rebuilding a coalition to reinstate maximum pressure to achieve denuclearization. While the US was prepared to support a Japanese request for a kinetic response, Japanese participants appeared to desire a more proactive US approach.

Several Japanese participants insisted that only a declaration that the DPRK had committed an act of war and a kinetic response to the attack against the MSDF vessel and the nuclear detonation would meet their public's demand for retaliation. Some stressed that US failure to respond kinetically could spell the end of the alliance.

Korean participants anticipated and understood that a kinetic response to the attack on the Japanese ship was likely but expressed concern that it be coordinated, limited, and with an eye toward the possibility of a counter-response aimed at the ROK.

SUSTAINING DETERRENCE IN A TIME OF CHANGE AND UNCERTAINTY

CONFERENCE REPORT

Aggressive and creative diplomacy in Northeast Asia holds out hope for a breakthrough in relations with North Korea, which could in turn transform political and security dynamics in that region. Historical encounters have occurred – the June 12 meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un (the first summit between the heads of the United States and North Korea), as well as several encounters between Kim and his South Korean counterpart, Moon Jae-in – and new relationships among countries of the region remain a tantalizing prospect. But that hope remains unfulfilled and there is growing concern that the gap between expectations and reality could increase tensions and precipitate conflict if it is not bridged.

To better understand those ambitions and the implications of their realization – or their repudiation – the Pacific Forum, with support from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) and the US Air Force Academy Project on Advanced Systems and Concepts on Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (AFA PASCC), brought 47 officials and experts from the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK), along with five Pacific Forum Young Leaders, all attending in their private capacity, to Maui, Hawaii, Aug. 6-8, 2018 to explore the three countries' thinking about changes in relations with North Korea, extended deterrence, and ways to strengthen trilateral security cooperation. A two-move tabletop exercise (ITX) was conducted that addressed two radically different outcomes in negotiations with Pyongyang.

“
After a year of mounting tensions, marked by North Korean missile tests, its sixth nuclear test, and Trump’s threat to rain “fire and fury” on Pyongyang, Kim Jong Un opened the door to diplomacy with a conciliatory New Year’s address at the beginning of 2018.

”

Assessing Spring Summitry

Remarkable progress has occurred since President Trump took office in January 2017. After a year of mounting tensions, marked by North Korean missile tests, its sixth nuclear test, and Trump’s threat to rain “fire and fury” on Pyongyang, Kim Jong Un opened the door to diplomacy with a conciliatory New Year’s address at the beginning of 2018. South Korean President Moon Jae-in responded with alacrity, launching a diplomatic process that culminated in an April summit between the two Korean leaders (they met two more times that year.) Emboldened (some say prodded) by Seoul, Trump reached out to Kim and proposed a summit between them. That meeting occurred on June 12 in Singapore and the world is still trying to digest the results. The two men signed the Singapore Declaration, a two-page statement that memorialized their conversation and provided a framework for

relations between their two countries. The declaration called for establishment of a new relationship between the US and North Korea, efforts to build a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, complete denuclearization of the peninsula, and the return of the remains of US soldiers who died during the Korean War.

Participants at the Maui meeting noted the profound change in the direction of the US-North Korea relationship, applauded the reduction in tensions, and backed Trump's willingness to try new approaches to solve this problem. Speakers professed "disappointment," frustration, and confusion in the aftermath of the meeting, however. They were troubled by the lack of detail in the Singapore Declaration – one called it "weak, thin, vague and noncommittal" – and there was near-universal dismay at Trump's decision to suspend military exercises with the ROK; not because the halt would do great damage to alliance defense and deterrence capabilities – it was generally agreed that it would not, at least not in the near term – but because the language he used – calling them "war games" and "provocations" – was that preferred by North Korea and because the suspension was announced without consultation with US allies in Northeast Asia. A ROK participant warned that his country's military was demoralized as a result. Japanese participants were alarmed because security policymakers in Tokyo see Northeast Asia as a single theater and consider their national security to be deeply integrated with that of the Korean Peninsula. They repeatedly called on the US to take no action that might weaken the US-ROK alliance or dismantle USFK structures.

There was near consensus on the need to clarify North Korean intentions and pin down the precise meaning of "the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula." Participants voiced great skepticism that Pyongyang would give up its core nuclear

capabilities, and argued that it would retain that weapon as a pillar of regime defense. One participant offered a Chinese assessment that the North would "cut the grass low, but won't pull out the roots." There was considerable doubt about the significance of North Korean steps to show its commitment to denuclearization – the closing of its nuclear test site and the destruction of a missile engine test site. Suspicions were amplified by reports that the mountain where the test site was located was "sick" (meaning it risked collapse and could not be used anymore), that the engine test site was no longer needed since the North was developing a new type of engine that could be tested elsewhere, and that in any case, none of the decisions was irreversible and alternative sites could be created if needed. It was agreed that Kim Jong Un will draw out the negotiating process as long as possible to maximize benefits he can obtain, to identify and exploit divisions among the allies, and to create conditions for the eventual recognition of the DPRK as a nuclear-armed state. A US participant urged the group to closely read Kim's New Year's speech to grasp his intent. He quoted a senior North Korea official to provide critical context to that leadership's thinking: 10 to 20 years after removal of "the threat," Pyongyang might consider denuclearization. In the interim, the US and the North can talk arms control, "one nuclear weapons state to another."

There was also near consensus that the US has lost "the stick" in its policy toward the North. Given the shift in tone from Washington and the new direction in North-South relations, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to reorient back to a hard line if anticipated outcomes don't materialize. Here

China's role is critical.¹ The resumption of high-level summitry between China and North Korea worried many participants.² They feared that rather than prodding Pyongyang to negotiate or providing a security guarantee to overcome fear of making concessions, Beijing was encouraging the North to take a harder line and is ready to ignore UN sanctions that China always opposed.

Participants worried about the consequences of the new state of relations for deterrence. Some feared that it would be difficult for the US and the ROK to prioritize defense, the modernization of capabilities, and improving readiness when the three principal adversaries – North Korea, South Korea, and the US – are all committed to improving relations. It will be especially hard for South Korean politicians to expend political capital on difficult or divisive defense issues. That reluctance is reinforced by the South Korean public's preference for good relations with the North (which is understandable given the potential consequences of bad relations). ROK views of the North and Kim Jong Un improved markedly over 2018, and President Moon's approval ratings jumped after his summits with Kim. If recent events have created anger among South Korean conservatives, much of it is directed at the US for being susceptible to Kim's blandishments. And while inter-Korean talks on confidence building measures (CBMs) – and implementation of those CBMs – are welcome, there was concern that that process made force improvements impossible as such steps could give Pyongyang an excuse to terminate talks.

¹ Assessments of China are discussed in more detail in a later session.

² Curiously, presentations at this session did not address China-North Korea (or US-Russia)

“
As participants compared desired outcomes from the summit process, they noted that any relief that stemmed from pursuit of diplomacy was tempered by concern that a breakdown in talks would make things worse and could lead to war.
”

Ultimately, there was agreement that the outside world cannot be confident of its assessment and understanding of North Korean decisionmaking. It is not clear why Kim chose diplomacy when he did. Some participants suggested sanctions were beginning to bite, while others countered that the North had accomplished primary objectives for its nuclear program and could therefore explore other options. One South Korean cynically noted that Kim had developed his nuclear weapons and therefore he could give them up – and create more if needed. A Japanese participant warned against overestimating changes in North Korea. Pyongyang “has a history of turning left before it turns right to make changes in its behavior look sharper than they are.” As one US participant warned, Kim thinks he can have better relations with Washington

summitry. The oversights were noted in the discussion, however.

and Seoul, economic development, and nuclear weapons. The policy of the US and its two Northeast Asian allies has been to deny Pyongyang that possibility: they must not waver.

Desired Summitry Outcomes

As participants compared desired outcomes from the summit process, they noted that any relief that stemmed from pursuit of diplomacy was tempered by concern that a breakdown in talks would make things worse and could lead to war. This downside risk, they warned, must be kept in mind. They also worried about another risk: that diplomacy will drive a wedge between the three allies. That risk is even more likely because while all three countries agree on desired outcomes – North Korea gives up its nuclear capability, signs a peace treaty and pursues peaceful relations with its neighbors and the United States – there is disagreement on the best ways to achieve those goals and the compromises that are acceptable as the process unfolds.

For a start, there is profound disagreement between Seoul and Washington (and Japan) on the acceptability of interim steps toward denuclearization. As South Koreans press the US to be more patient, less focused on North Korea's nuclear declaration, and to lower the bar for the regime's denuclearization, Americans and Japanese voice frustration over Seoul's prioritization of confidence building with the North and its seeming readiness to indulge Pyongyang despite the regime's reluctance to make tangible progress toward denuclearization. (Several South Korean participants criticized their government's focus on CBMs rather than denuclearization.) US and Japanese (and some Koreans) worry that Seoul is moving too quickly to build positive relations with

Pyongyang and squandering leverage that might be used against the North if relations deteriorate. A US participant characterized the split in views as a preference by Seoul – along with Beijing and Moscow – to manage the North Korean problem, while Washington and Tokyo are trying to solve it. (In a reminder of the risks just noted, an ROK participant took offense at being lumped in with China and Russia.)

Talks with the North must address nuclear issues, but they must also eventually include other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), missile technologies, and human rights practices; Japanese participants included the abductee issue as well. That is a long list and even the hardest liners concede that progress will be fitful. There must be patience and a readiness to move incrementally, but there is also fear that there may be a readiness to accept talks as an end in themselves. (Some US participants feared that their government has already embraced that position.)

A Japanese participant provided an outline of preferred, acceptable, and unacceptable outcomes. The first includes early (3-5 years) complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization (CVID).³ North Korea would declare all materials and facilities; accept monitoring and foreign dismantling, immobilization, and removal of its nuclear weapons (if not removed, warheads would be put under strict monitoring); all missiles would be dismantled; and all fuel-cycle and related facilities would be shut down and decommissioned. The acceptable scenario is "status quo plus" (and the status quo is unacceptable). It includes a complete nuclear declaration by North Korea and local (rather than foreign) dismantlement. Missiles remain, as do enrichment capabilities, but the North is not allowed to reprocess spent fuel. There is no reduction in the operations or

³ CVID is no longer the preferred US outcome. It has been replaced by FFVD, "final fully verified

denuclearization." While the acronym has changed, US officials insist that the goal has not.

capabilities of the US-ROK or US-Japan alliances, and Japan and the ROK continue to cooperate. China also maintains leverage over Pyongyang. Unacceptable outcomes include a wide range of scenarios, but they yield similar results: the North retains significant nuclear capabilities, US power projection is constrained, Japan is subject to blackmail, and Japan-ROK cooperation is reduced. “No deal [i.e., not reaching a deal] is better than that,” the speaker concluded.

In the discussion, several issues and cleavages emerged. The first, and most important, is the risk of decoupling among the US and its allies as this process unfolds. While there was anxiety about Seoul moving too quickly with North Korea, at our meeting the explicit statements of concern addressed US behavior. As a US participant explained, “the first rule of alliances is don’t surprise your allies. Yet, we are surprising allies.” A Japanese participant added that Trump’s comments in the aftermath of the Singapore summit – his “self-declared success” – locked the countries into negotiations regardless of the reality of those talks, raising questions about the US negotiating position and assessment of negotiations. Fortunately, participants at our meeting could state that “as of today there is no decoupling.” Still, other participants professed to be “very worried” about the US position. Doubts were amplified by US presidential statements that South Korea and Japan should pay more of the cost of dealing with North Korea and for alliance burden sharing: both implied that US allies had different equities in dealing with Pyongyang, which is a step toward decoupling (or is being interpreted as such). Another ROK participant suggested that the risk of decoupling is real, but the potential separation is not between allies but between the political leadership and experts and the public, adding that publics are more concerned with optics than the substance of diplomatic talks.

A second issue is the relationship between a peace treaty or end-of-war declaration and the denuclearization process. There are fears that any such statement would disarm alliance publics about the dangers posed by North Korea – an echo of the decoupling concept just mentioned – or begin a process that delegitimizes the alliances, unravels the US presence on the Korean Peninsula (or perhaps even Northeast Asia) and prevents it from participating in South Korea’s defense. It is important to differentiate between a treaty and a declaration: there was skepticism about the desirability of a treaty at this stage of talks while an end of war declaration was considered “low-hanging fruit” even by some US participants. An ROK participant warned, however, that even a declaration might confuse young South Koreans about the nature of the North-South relationship and competition. (One of the younger ROK participants countered that his peers were not that gullible.) Another South Korean offered the 1991 North-South Declaration as the best model for any such statement.

The third issue was the tension between CBMs and denuclearization. Of course, the former is an integral part of the process to achieve the latter. There is a fear, however, that North Korea is using CBMs to forestall, and even preclude, denuclearization. By this logic, Pyongyang is building confidence with the South to create a sense of progress and denounces US and Japanese calls for more efforts on denuclearization as obstacles to that relationship-building process. This effectively reverses the purpose of CBMs: rather than being a means to strengthen US-NK relations, they become an end in themselves in the North-South relationship. An ROK participant countered that his government understands the stakes and noted that confidence building only includes nonsensitive measures. He then warned against pushing too hard for a declaration since that very issue broke the Six-Party Talks process.

All participants agreed on the need to promote and deepen trilateral cooperation. A priority should be strengthening efforts to ensure that North Korea does not proliferate its nuclear capabilities. The three governments should agree on goals of the North Korea operational plan. Most important, alliance operations and capabilities must not be a bargaining chip in talks with the North. A united front on sanctions is essential if that tool is to retain its effectiveness. ROK and Japanese participants agreed on the need for intensified cooperation between their governments and even their militaries. The flip side of that coordination is agreement on ways to encourage North Korean progress as/if it meets expectations.

“
**...the US and its
partners need an agreed
assessment of the
importance of nuclear
weapons to the North
Korea regime...**
”

Again, the discussion underscored the need for a deeper and more complete grasp of North Korean thinking and logic. It is difficult if not impossible to influence Pyongyang's calculus if we don't understand its decision making. Critically, the US and its partners need an agreed assessment of the importance of nuclear weapons to the North Korea regime; this is essential to accurately assess the prospects for negotiations and, in the worst case, the risk of conflict.

Scenario Move 1

As in previous meetings, the centerpiece of the trilateral extended deterrence dialogue was a two-move tabletop exercise (ITX). This year's scenario examined two divergent paths for relations with North Korea: in the first, negotiations go well (although not with all three countries); in the second, they break down. The two moves were sequential, so that the failure of talks follows heightened expectations of success, theoretically magnifying the impact of a breakdown.⁴ As in the past, participants were divided into national teams with only individuals from that country on each team. They then acted as the national security team, offering advice to the national decision-maker.

In move 1, nuclear negotiations between the US and North Korea were making progress, as were talks between North and South Korea. The North's nuclear declaration included all suspect sites and a couple others that had not been identified as part of the nuclear program, and a nuclear inventory that consists of 45 nuclear bombs, 30 kg of plutonium and 400 kg of highly enriched uranium. The DPRK was willing to accept third-party monitors (such as the IAEA) of nuclear production facilities but it will not allow the US, the ROK, or Japan to inspect them. It would continue to suspend all nuclear and missile tests. It was ready to hand over "legacy" chemical weapons and "residual" fissile material to a third party as a sign of good faith. Pyongyang also indicated readiness to trade strategic weapons if relations with the US, ROK, and Japan improve.

There was no movement in relations between Japan and North Korea. Each team then answered five sets of questions:

⁴ The two complete scenarios are available in Appendix C.

- How does your government assess the North Korean nuclear declaration?
- How do you define CVID (or whatever phrase you use)? Who should lead efforts to pursue this objective? What are preferred roles for the US and its allies in the process? How can the three allies support the CVID process?
- What is your government prepared to put on the table to trade for the DPRK's strategic weapons? Identify three things the other two countries should be ready to trade.
- Given capacity and diplomatic constraints, prioritize: remove nuclear warheads; remove nuclear materials; remove all other WMD; dismantle nuclear production facilities; dismantle missile production facilities; establish verification protocol for nuclear weapons; identify illicit trade networks.
- Name five things the three countries should do together to ensure that their deterrent remains strong. What should they do to strengthen that deterrent?

The *ROK team* deemed the North Korean declaration “good, but not very good” (although there was an acknowledgement that there are elements within the ROK government that would have regarded it much more highly); the quantity of nuclear material declared was less than the assembled participants desired. They were not satisfied with the denuclearization framework: they sought a clear time line with North Korean acceptance of intrusive inspections, led by the IAEA. Denuclearization must also include material, weapons, facilities, and personnel. Verification would be led by the IAEA, with support from the three allies. To encourage the North to give up its strategic weapons, the

ROK was prepared to recognize the Pyongyang government as legitimate – which sounds anodyne but conflicts with the ROK constitution – along with the development of arms control processes in conjunction with the denuclearization process, as well as a North Korean Marshall plan, subject to existing UN sanctions. The ROK team was adamant, however that the US-ROK alliance would not be a subject of negotiation. Economic cooperation, in the form of ROK aid to help the North join international finance institutions (IFIs), was another possible enticement.

From its partners, the ROK would ask Japan to make financial contributions to the North Korean economy. Tokyo could mobilize the Asian Development Bank, help Pyongyang join IFIs, and provide investment and assistance, along with diplomatic normalization. Seoul would ask the US to pursue normalization (and to do so with Congress; they recognized the political difficulties of a process that involves only the executive branch. Congressional buy-in is essential.) The US would also be asked to help the North develop its economy. The US was implored to not take any unilateral action that might shake the US-ROK alliance.

ROK priorities, in descending order, were the removal of nuclear warheads; the removal of missiles; the verification of nuclear materials; dismantling of those facilities; the removal of other WMD, and an end to the illicit trade of WMD and related knowhow. To maintain deterrence, the ROK team sought the maintenance of both USKF and USFJ, with no less than 22,000 troops in each; continuation of the United Nations Command (UNC) structure; and, ROK-Japan maritime domain awareness activity. They sought more institutionalized trilateral cooperation among the allies and endorsed an interagency coordination mechanism to that end. They would continue the ROK government's reform of the national defense

posture with the goal of assuming more responsibility for the country's defense – and acknowledged the need to spend more money to do so. Finally, they repeated that no country should make unilateral moves that could be interpreted as decoupling.

Discussion of the ROK response focused on two points. The first was the degree to which recognition of North Korean sovereignty was a political or legal issue for the ROK. South Korean participants denied that it would be an obstacle to any agreement since Seoul has recognized Pyongyang's de facto sovereignty since 1991.

The second issue was the impact of developments on China. One ROK participant said that Beijing "is the big loser in this scenario," adding that the ROK's commitment to a strong alliance with the US shatters China's hope that peaceful relations with North Korea would undercut the bilateral partnership. Several ROK participants noted that it would be time to consider using US bases in their country for deployments elsewhere in the region. One stated that it is time "to think of the alliance beyond the Korean Peninsula," and pointed to polling that showed that 80 percent of the ROK public backed trilateral cooperation in the South China Sea. This highlighted another ROK participant's suggestion that the three countries should consider different modes of deterrence.

The *Japan team* was far less pleased with the scenario. The North's declaration was considered progress, if only because a list was submitted. Still, it was deemed insufficient, particularly as there was no mention of dismantlement, no mention of missiles or future production, and no monitoring of production facilities. The Japanese made plain their uneasiness with the vagaries surrounding the CVID mantra, and sought a specific definition, one that would include

existing inventories, dismantlement, IAEA verification, and P5 verification. Ultimately, it would include the removal of all scientists and facilities, with continuous verification. They were flexible with how verification would be pursued – it could be the P5 with Japan and the ROK, or the Six-Party Talks members with the UK and France (and Pyongyang excluded) – but the key point is that Japan would have to be involved. Absent Japanese involvement, Tokyo could not be expected to provide financial support for the process. The Japanese team assumed that the US would lead the verification effort, although they confessed to some unease given statements by the US president.

When the Japanese team pondered steps to encourage North Korea to give up its strategic weapons, it first insisted on clarity regarding the definition of strategic weapons. For Japan, that includes all ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons, and WMD. In exchange, Tokyo would be prepared to offer relaxation of indigenous sanctions; humanitarian and economic assistance; and diplomatic normalization. The Japanese team insisted that the abductee issue must be resolved, however: without it, relations cannot be normalized. It is a "strong barrier to what we can offer the North Korean side." The Japanese spokesperson added that the team didn't think that the North was negotiating in good faith. Central to Japanese thinking is the absolute need to maintain stability and security of Northeast Asia. They reject any hasty move that could undermine or endanger peace and stability.

Their priorities, in descending order, include: a verification protocol; nuclear warhead removal; removal of ballistic missiles; removal of all other WMD; dismantling other nuclear production facilities; dismantling missile production facilities; and the end of the North's illicit trade networks.

To maintain and strengthen deterrence, the Japanese sought a strong commitment to alliance relationship under US leadership. This should be done with a leaders summit, and the subsequent creation of a high-level trilateral consultative mechanism to implement their joint declaration. They endorsed trilateral operational planning and trilateral exercises, and they emphasized the need to enhance missile defense (MD) capabilities. Some Japanese want counter-strike capabilities.

The Japanese message was clear. They do not trust the North Koreans. They see no change in Pyongyang's behavior and this scenario looks like history repeating itself – referring to the exhilaration that followed the 2005 Statement by the chairman of the Six-Party Talks. They believe that the North wants to decouple the US from its Northeast Asian allies. As a result, they do not want the US to put anything on the table in this scenario. A Japanese participant strongly urged the US to “not weaken US forces in South Korea, maintain the current level of US-ROK joint exercises, and don't give North Korea negative security assurances without concrete actions.” Other Japanese participants agreed, insisting that CVID has to come first and must not be “enticed.” Another Japanese participant bluntly stated that US concessions in this situation would be “a great defeat for our side.”

The only challenge to the Japanese response came from a Korean, who, while endorsing trilateral cooperation, argued that Korean political sensitivities rendered impossible some of the Japanese suggestions. He urged pragmatism, suggesting that the three countries explore trilateral research on security relations over the horizon.

The *US team* shared the Japanese skepticism of the North Korean declaration – they were “reluctant to take it at face value” – but they

did view it as substantial, significant, and surprising. It was deemed relatively complete in regard to legacy but less so regarding latent infrastructure for the future. For the US, FFVD (final, fully verified denuclearization, the substitute phrase for CVID) includes warheads, materials, production facilities, and the like, as well as delivery systems and their production base. The US omitted chemical and biological weapons, which while important, are not vital to denuclearization. The denuclearization process will be led by the US, but the IAEA will have a role, which would be part of a complex division of labor. Noting that Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) obligations prohibit nonnuclear allies (such as Japan and the ROK) from participating in certain denuclearization activities, those countries could play a role in dealing with chemical and biological weapons.

When contemplating what they would be willing to offer the North to put its strategic weapons on the table, the US team put forth an array of options. On the political list was a peace treaty and negative security assurances. Economic enticements could include sanctions relief, trade, and financial support. Militarily, the group identified no specific steps, but offered two principles: Washington and its allies had to balance the need to “sweeten the pot” with maintaining a strong deterrent, and there should be no offer to end the alliance or withdraw US forces. The key factor is Pyongyang's readiness to do certain things. When it takes concrete steps, the US and its allies should be ready and focus on reciprocity. The US team emphasized that Washington should consider a change or reduction in its military posture only when political objectives are met and material change occurs. As for allies, the US only asked Japan to be more patient on the abductees.

US priorities were nuclear warheads, nuclear materials, verification, production

capabilities, other WMD, and finally the North's illicit trade. The team acknowledged that it was accepting the risk of a latent North Korean military capability

When considering ways to strengthen deterrence, the US team assumed that Pyongyang aimed to split the three allies and thus recommended that the three countries focus on demonstrating trilateral cohesion through consultation, communication (countering the North Korean narrative that the US and its allies are barriers to progress), the development of capabilities to counter Pyongyang's threats, and capacity building that enhances resilience without identifying a particular threat and thus feeding the North Korean tale that the US and its allies are continuing their hostility. In practice, this means a stronger public health system to deal with biological attacks, industrial accidents in the chemical sector, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

After delivering its responses, the US team acknowledged that their deliberations, while representative of those that would likely occur among US national security decision makers, are not definitive. They conceded that the ultimate US decision maker has articulated faith in his own assessments previously, to the point of challenging the conclusions of the US intelligence community. Given that fact, it is difficult to predict what the specifics of US policy would actually be.

Discussion of the US response focused on two issues. The first was the call by the US team for Japan to be more patient in demanding resolution of the abductee issue. Japanese replies were divided. One participant argued that Tokyo cannot deemphasize the significance of the issue to the Japanese public. Another Japanese participant disagreed, warning against an overemphasis on the relationship between abductions and denuclearization. They are

separate issues and Japanese policymakers understand the limits on that concern while pursuing denuclearization. A third Japanese participant agreed with the latter point, but added that Tokyo must therefore be compensated if it is to de-emphasize the abductee issue. At a minimum, Japan must be included in nuclear negotiations and "not left behind."

The second issue was the US assessment of North Korean sincerity and the forces animating the US president's thinking. For example, if North Korea included a military base in its list of nuclear facilities, would that impact US assessments of Pyongyang's intent? A Japanese participant warned that any US concessions must be considered within the framework of the entire range of alliance relationships. For example, he reminded the group that the negative security assurances offered to North Korea in 2005 were part of a larger agreement; as those assurances go to the heart of extended deterrence, to consider them in isolation from the larger set of security concerns would be very troubling to allies. Some participants from the ROK and Japan worried that President Trump was driven by domestic political needs – looking for wins – rather than national security calculations.

TTX Move 2

In the second move, the situation took a turn for the worse. North-South economic talks made progress, but nuclear talks broke down. The North is accused of cheating on its nuclear declaration, and President Trump demands a return to maximum pressure to force DPRK denuclearization, threatening the end of the US-ROK alliance if Seoul does not go along. A Japanese surveillance ship is attacked by North Korea air and naval forces; Pyongyang explodes a nuclear device in the Sea of Japan with no reported casualties. A US team searching for POW/MIA remains in the North is presumed taken hostage. The

teams answered the following five questions:

- Identify five things you want each of the other two countries to do as move 2 ends.
- Identify five things you want the other two countries NOT to do as move 2 ends.
- What message does your government send to Pyongyang at the end of move 2?
- What five military steps do you take in response to these developments?
- How should your government respond to the nuclear detonation?

In this round, the **Japan team** went first. It first declared the North Korea attack on its ship “an act of war,” inferring North Korean intent from a *KCNA* statement issued after the strike and from the circumstances in which it occurred. (The Japanese spokesperson clarified that it would legally issue “a defense order,” but noted that when it made that statement in the TTX two years ago, the significance of that step was not understood by non-Japanese participants. Calling the move a “declaration of war” left no room for misinterpretation.)

Tokyo wants the US to make strong defense commitment to Japan, exercise the right of collective defense, and take joint action with the Self-Defense Force (SDF). The US is expected to retaliate against North Korea, and options should include a surgical strike. The US should commence nuclear presence operations near the Korean Peninsula (bombers and submarines were explicitly identified) and it should back decontamination efforts by Japan. It should support Japan’s efforts to bring the issue to the United Nations Security Council, and Tokyo will demand strong condemnation of and maximum pressure on Pyongyang. Japan will issue suitable warnings and prepare for a noncombatant evacuation order (NEO). It

goes without saying – although it was said – that the US should not withdraw its forces from the Korean Peninsula.

Tokyo wants the ROK to understand the need for a surgical strike – i.e., not object – as well as coordinate on NEO and condemn North Korea. Seoul should not take Pyongyang’s side or attempt to appease the North. China is expected to criticize and condemn North Korea, and Washington should pressure Beijing to do so.

Tokyo will warn Pyongyang that another attack against Japan will result in the end of its regime. As this is only obtainable with US support, the message must therefore be issued with Washington. And yes, Japanese understand that this threatens an all-out counterstrike and will risk escalation. Additional military steps include intensified intelligence collection, search and rescue efforts for the ship that was attacked, stepped up MD activity, coordination and preparation for NEO. The Alliance Coordination Mechanism (ACM) will establish the action plan for joint operations with the US. Japanese participants confessed that they were divided on the need to introduce US nuclear weapons to their soil.

Discussion of the Japanese response highlighted three issues. The first was the legal nature of Japan’s actions. Japanese participants repeated that their reaction was no different from that of two years ago when their team was castigated for a seemingly laconic response to an attack on its territory. Recognizing that non-Japanese participants might not grasp the nuance, they used blunter language this year although the effect was the same. While there was some discussion of the particulars of the attack – was the ship in North Korean waters, was it “an attack on Japanese territory” (and therefore triggered Article 5 of the Mutual Defense Treaty) – the Japanese group decided that they were of secondary importance: the totality of

circumstances made clear that Japan had been attacked, that it had to defend itself, and that it had to prevent additional provocations.

That last concern initiated a second discussion of the nature of the US response, and whether it would risk escalation. Japanese were unanimous in their belief that the US had “to send a kinetic message,” and warned that a failure to do anything “could end the alliance.” (Japanese acknowledged that they had to lead in the defense of Japan and admitted that they could strike North Korea, but added that their capabilities were limited and US help was necessary.) Japanese participants sought a “surgical strike” against North Korea targets, and acknowledged that such a strike might not look restrained to Pyongyang and might risk escalation – perhaps to the nuclear level – by North Korea. They did not change their preference for a strong, decisive response.

This exposed the third theme of the discussion: assessments of the state of deterrence in Northeast Asia. Japanese insisted that North Korea’s nuclear use, even if just a signal without creating casualties, meant that deterrence had failed and the over-riding objective of the US and its allies had to be its re-establishment. Japan (and the US) must prevent another strike and restore the credibility of extended deterrence and extended nuclear deterrence. When asked about the desired Japanese end state at the conclusion of move 2 – end of the North Korean regime or the restoration of deterrence? – Japanese participants demurred, noting that they were unable (on their own) to secure either option. Nevertheless, discussion indicated that the restoration of deterrence was their first priority.

The *ROK team* deemed the events of move two as the worst-case scenario for their country. North Korean brinkmanship risked

decoupling the allies and war and the South Korean participants sought a “very strong response that would lead to peace.” As they contemplated the questions, the team made little differentiation between the US and Japan: when engaging both countries, close consultation was a must. The three countries must work closely together to share information, improve readiness, and demonstrate resolve. That said, they still looked to Washington to deal with China and ensure that Beijing was not an obstacle to the realization of ROK (and US and Japanese) objectives. The ROK team also had a list of “don’ts” for the US: don’t tweet, don’t take unilateral military action, don’t destabilize the ROK economy, and don’t consider a NEO except as a last resort. To Pyongyang, the ROK message was short and clear: Stop these actions. South Korea will not support you.

On the military front, the ROK government would increase readiness, and call to increase the US military presence through fly-bys, the deployment of aircraft carrier battle groups, and additional PAC 3 batteries (but, they added, they would not pay for these steps). The ROK team also said that it would review options for limited strikes or demonstration actions. At the same time, they cautioned against precipitous action, warning that some groups in South Korea would use US military action to call for an end to the alliance. One ROK participant noted that there is a belief among some South Koreans that “it’s better to be red than dead.” The ROK government would assess the status of extended deterrence and steps that could be taken to reinforce it.

North Korea’s nuclear detonation would be met with strong condemnation, and the likely withdrawal of all ROK citizens from the North. Seoul would ask for the safe relocation of all foreigners in the country and would guarantee their safety. While the US and Japan have the right to undertake a unilateral strike against the North – the

assumption is that only the US could take such action, albeit on Japan's behalf – the ROK team urged the group to consult with Seoul first and to put themselves in South Korea's position. Failure to do so could result in a pyrrhic victory.

The ROK presentation highlighted the importance of consultation. South Korean participants acknowledged the need for action by Japan while arguing that unilateral measures would do great – perhaps fatal – damage to the alliance and relations with South Korea. They conceded, however, that public opinion in the ROK might oppose any meaningful action by the three countries together (and likely even just that of the US and Japan, or the US on Japan's behalf) in every situation. A Japanese participant noted that his team had considered trilateral consultations as part of their response but feared that the Moon government would only block them from taking action. Several Japanese participants acknowledged the need for consultation, but they reminded the group that it had to be a two- or three-way process: Tokyo had to be included in any discussions between Seoul and Washington. (Japanese also warned that their government would not consult Seoul regarding the decision to go to war; they would discuss responses, however.)

Discussion also provided insight into ROK thinking about North Korean tactics. South Korean participants argued that North Korea used nuclear weapons to escalate to de-escalate. Pyongyang has no desire to initiate a nuclear exchange. Thus, a nuclear response by the US is not required. Instead, a firm stance would force the North to back down.

As was the case with the US caveat explained above, South Korean participants were confident that national security experts would give similar advice but could not predict to

what extent President Moon or his advisors would follow their recommended courses of action.

The *US team's* response began with a succinct message to Pyongyang: after the nuclear detonation, there would be no return to the status quo ante. The only end state that the US would accept was complete denuclearization. As was stated in the 2014 QDR, no state will be allowed to "escalate its way out of failed conventional aggression." The US possesses a complete menu of military options and it will use them. If the North makes another nuclear demonstration, the US will respond with all its means.

Specifically, the US would increase readiness to the conventional level of war: submarines, marine expeditionary units, and carrier strike groups would be deployed. It would increase readiness for escalatory action outside the conventional domain, stepping up missile defense alert levels in the region and the homeland, augmenting intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and preparing to intercept a space launch.⁵ The US would step up efforts to enforce the Northern Limit Line and begin consultations with the ROK and Japan on NEO.

While the first US priority is to de-escalate the situation, US planners would be preparing escalatory options. (The US team did not articulate a particular response to the attack on the Japanese ship, but would wait for Tokyo's request, adding that they would back Japan.)

The nuclear detonation was deemed a demonstration, not a test, and the US response would unfold within the DIME (Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic) framework. Diplomatically, the

⁵ A North Korean satellite launch is part of the scenario.

US would go to the UNSC, to try to turn world opinion against North Korea. A critical part of this effort would be getting China to condemn and punish Pyongyang. As part of the information component, it would indicate readiness to both escalate and de-escalate, while providing public and private assurances to allies that it would meet its obligations and to consult on all actions and strategies. While the US would signal nuclear resolve as part of the military response – the team endorsed the deployment of nuclear bombers to Guam and F15Es, but without their nuclear weapons - it would not seek to accelerate or accentuate the nuclear dimension. Finally, on the economic front, Washington would press for the restoration of sanctions and get authority to stop vessels at sea and stop the flow of financial assets through China.

Washington wants its allies to mobilize their forces in conjunction with those of the US, and unite in the imposition of sanctions. They would be asked to avoid any unilateral action without consultation among the three parties, and they would be encouraged to be strong against the Chinese. Seoul would be asked to suspend infrastructure cooperation with the North, and it would be told that the ROK cannot conduct business as usual or merely urge Pyongyang to return to the status quo ante. Tokyo would be asked to stand up the ACM, consult with the US on the response to the vessel sinking and develop a single message on Japanese abductees and US hostages. (Allies were also warned to not expect the US to clean up or simplify its messaging. Communications would likely remain imprecise and periodically impulsive. Tweets would continue.)

The US team emphasized that nothing should take place without genuine consultation. This is one of the key takeaways from this exercise and one that all three teams understood and endorsed. Trilateral cohesion will be essential in the face of likely efforts by Pyongyang,

Beijing, and Moscow, to divide the three allies and partners.

The discussion honed in on the core questions of this project: Did North Korea's nuclear use even as a demonstration vice combat action mean that deterrence had failed and, if so, what should be done to re-establish deterrence and reassure US allies? Japanese participants were virtually unanimous in declaring the North Korean detonation a failure of deterrence, and demanded a quick and strong US response to reassure them that the alliance retained meaning and value. Japanese participants argued that the US response outlined above – lacking kinetic action against North Korean targets – was too weak. One insisted that the Japanese public would demand a stronger response: failure to do so, given Tokyo's decision to forego the development of certain weapons in the belief that the US would use them on Japan's behalf, could trigger a reassessment of those decisions. (One ROK participant agreed, arguing that a failure of the US to strike back after the North Korean nuclear detonation would mean the collapse of extended nuclear deterrence. It would embolden Pyongyang and pressure US allies to acquire their own nuclear capabilities.)

US participants rejected the assertion that their response was weak. First, they insisted that the US end state – the denuclearization of North Korea – was an unequivocal position and one that allies should support. Unfortunately, despite its simplicity, it took some explaining to get allied participants to grasp the US objective – no North Korean nuclear weapons – which underscored the vital importance of clear and simple messaging. Second, US participants argued that a strong initial response increased chances of escalation by the North against Seoul or Tokyo. Therefore, it's better to begin with strong demands and leave the escalation option open than to commence with that response given the risk of destruction and

devastation. In other words, the US is prepared to let Pyongyang decide how it will denuclearize – by its own actions or by defeat in conflict – but there is no alternative to denuclearization.

The US team was asked whether North Korean capabilities influenced its response. Bluntly put, allies worry that Pyongyang’s growing nuclear capabilities might deter Washington in a crisis. The US reply was unequivocal: North Korean nuclear capabilities never came up in the discussion of how to respond. This nevertheless validates a conclusion from last year’s meeting: emphasizing the “game changing” nature of North Korean capabilities – specifically, the mating of a nuclear warhead with an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of threatening the US homeland – sent the wrong message to allies (and adversaries). While the US no longer speaks about the North Korean threat in those terms, damage lingers. US alliance managers should take that into account and be prepared to address that concern.

More deeply, there was intense debate over whether the North Korean nuclear detonation constituted a failure of deterrence. While there was agreement that the threshold for nuclear use had been lowered (which has global implications) and should be restored, there was no consensus on whether the explosion was a deterrence failure. One US participant argued that demonstration explosions are signals of weakness, not strength, because they reveal a reluctance to cause casualties and risk escalation. They are, in this interpretation, a bluff. Others challenged that benign assessment, charging that the North had made a provocative action that threatened the peace. Still others noted that US resolve was undiminished and that the readiness to defend its interests and those of its allied was strong as ever. Effective deterrence is a function of an adversary’s belief that it can achieve its objectives

through nuclear use. By that benchmark, North Korea has not only failed to secure its objectives but will be forced to give up its nuclear capability. If it believes that nuclear weapons make it stronger, that belief is mistaken. A rational actor will reach the same conclusion and deterrence remains strong

“

The North Korea-China relationship has returned to normal after several years of virtual suspension.

”

China’s role

Our final session focused on the role that China plays as events unfold in Northeast Asia. Assessments of Beijing’s behavior is refracted through its relationship with the principle actors in the region. While most attention focuses on Pyongyang’s relations with Seoul and Washington, equally important has been outreach to Beijing. The North Korea-China relationship has returned to normal after several years of virtual suspension. One speaker concluded the Kim Jong Un has adopted the template of his father, Kim Jong Il, by shoring up that partnership before moving forward with South Korea and the US. Analysts differ on whether Kim is using China to “get the upper hand” in talks with Seoul and Washington (and China is content to let him do so to maximize its leverage) or whether Beijing is directing Kim and benefitting from concessions he wins. Either way, China is signaling that it has interests on the Peninsula and it must be a player in any deal. While participants agreed that China sought to preserve its influence in the North, they also

agreed that Beijing could not dictate outcomes in Pyongyang.

The US looks to China to facilitate North Korean denuclearization, either by encouraging North Korea to pursue that path or by enforcing UN sanctions that reduce Pyongyang's options. President Trump has signaled that he expects China to work with him to achieve his objectives and appears ready to punish Beijing if it does not. The more adversarial tone that colors the US-China relationship has complicated decisionmaking in Beijing. It is now harder to insulate Korean Peninsula policy from the broader set of issues that bedevil US-China relations and a longstanding Chinese dilemma has intensified: if the US and North Korea are too antagonistic, then Beijing's foreign policy options are reduced, but if the relationship is too warm, then China risks being marginalized on the Peninsula. China must fear that Pyongyang will reach a deal with Washington that reduces Beijing's influence on the peninsula.

At the same time, there has been an important shift in thinking in Seoul about its relationship with China. While the Moon government agrees with Beijing about the nature of relations with North Korea and priorities in dealing with Pyongyang, views toward Beijing have hardened following heavy-handed Chinese actions in responding to decisions by the Seoul government that it does not like. The attempt to punish the ROK for agreeing to deploy Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) batteries against Chinese wishes has generated real anger in South Korea. South Korean views of Xi Jinping are plummeting and he is becoming, for them, one of the least popular leaders in the region: he rivals Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo in unpopularity. As one ROK participant explained, China is now seen, by both conservatives and progressives, as part of the problem, not the solution, on the Korean Peninsula. Some ROK

participants argued that this new attitude toward China creates opportunities for trilateral security cooperation; at a minimum, it should encourage ROK-Japan reconciliation to help Seoul protect its interests on the Peninsula.

Views of China are hardening in all three countries, although Japan was already quite skeptical of Beijing and the other two countries are in large measure catching up. One Japanese participant noted North Korea has for two decades been the public justification for Tokyo's defense buildup and that any resolution of "the North Korea problem" will require Japan to instead more openly focus on China in its defense planning. Given the outsize role of the US in Japanese thinking and planning, the shift in US thinking about China and the move to replace engagement with strategic competition is welcome.

The attempt to understand policy toward China prompted a discussion of the Indo-Pacific strategy, a much analyzed but little understood concept. While the US-China relationship is increasingly competitive, it is not openly antagonistic and most participants agreed that regional countries should not be – and are not being – forced to choose between the West and China. At a minimum, the Indo-Pacific strategy seeks to counter Chinese influence and aims to defend the existing rules-based order as a means of doing so. The question is whether countries that choose to embrace the strategy can agree on a characterization of Chinese behavior and whether their ambitions have been realized. (ROK participants evinced some annoyance at being excluded from discussion and implementation of the Indo-Pacific concept and sought a future role in it, although the alliance still comes first for them.)

Looking ahead

Forces at work on Northeast Asian security dynamics have the potential to transform the region. The US, Japan, and South Korea must anticipate those changes and shape their evolution in ways that enhance their security and protect their national interests. While governments must do the heavy lifting, unofficial dialogues like this one can play a vital role in that process. The trilateral extended deterrence dialogue promotes candid and frank discussions; the length of this process has promoted familiarity among participants, which allows them to get past talking points and have substantive discussions without getting hung up on longstanding animosities between Japan and South Korea that have hampered bilateral and trilateral cooperation.

Reassurance, a perennial problem, is increasingly problematic as North Korean capabilities improve and the US sends contradictory signals of commitment. The allies' demand is open-ended – “understand how we feel and come up with something to make us feel safe,” implored one ROK participant – which allows for creative thinking to meet that need, but it also means that all actions are subject to multiple interpretations and challenge.

One important means to that end is a decision-making process that is consultative and empowers all participants. A sense of

buy-in and respect for partners' equities goes a long way to assuage concerns about US commitment. Meetings like the trilateral extended deterrence dialogue can play a crucial role in that process. This project has won high marks from participants and key stakeholders in all three capitals are eager to meet and discuss its results. When we do, they invariably encourage us to continue this trilateral dialogue process. There is still much work to be done.

There were several recommendations for future meetings. They included

- Focusing on China as the subject of deterrence;
- Using alliance teams rather than national ones;
- Exploring how deterrence postures will adjust if the denuclearization process is long (for example, a decade in duration);
- Exploring tensions in trilateralism as Pyongyang pursues relations with the three countries at different speeds;
- Paying more attention to gray zone deterrence problems.

Brad Glosserman is deputy director of and visiting professor at the Center for Rule-Making Strategies, Tama University, and senior advisor (nonresident) for Pacific Forum.

APPENDIX A

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Royal Lahaina Resort, Maui, August 6-8, 2018

AGENDA

Monday, August 6, 2018

6:30 PM **Opening Dinner**

Tuesday, August 7, 2018

8:00 AM **Breakfast**

9:00 AM **Introductory remarks, by Bob Girrier**

9:15 AM **Session 1: Diplomacy – Assessing “Spring Summitry”**

Were the Summits, particularly the Trump-Kim meeting of June 12, successful? Why or why not? What standards do you use to assess success or failure? What factors facilitated “Spring Summitry” on the Korean Peninsula? What were the benefits, opportunities, costs, and risks of the “Spring Summitry” approach? Specifically, as of now, what are the consequences and implications for deterrence?

Chair: Ralph Cossa

Speakers: Evans Revere, Young Ho Kim, Mataka Kamiya

10:45 AM **Coffee break**

11:00 AM **Session 2: Desired Summitry Outcomes**

Where do the US-DPRK and North-South summitry processes go from here? Where does Japan’s Summitry fit in? What is each country’s desired end-goal with North Korea? What is the differentiation between *preferred* and *acceptable* end-goals for each country? What end-goals are unacceptable? What is the best strategy to achieve preferred/acceptable goals? What strategy (and tools) should be written off? What should be the immediate next-steps and longer-term actions for each country? What is each country’s assessment of the major opportunities and challenges for progress? Specifically, how do we maintain deterrence and defense as we reduce tensions? [The overall intent here is to see if all three sides have a common or at least complementary definition of success.]

Chair: Ralph Cossa

Speakers: Lisa Collins, Kang Choi, Nobumasa Akiyama

- 12:30 PM **General briefing on the TTX, by Brad Glosserman**
- 12:45 PM **Session 3: Group breaks out, gets boxed lunch in breakout rooms; each group prepares answers to TTX Round 1 questions on catastrophic success with North Korea**
- 2:45 PM **Session 3A: Plenary – Round 1 Assessment**
 Plenary reconvenes to provide answers to questions and how each group reached those conclusions. After each presentation, the group is questioned by others on process and outcome.
- Chair: Brad Glosserman
- 5:00 PM **Session adjourns**
- 6:30 PM **Dinner**

Wednesday, August 8, 2018

- 8:00 AM **Breakfast**
- 8:30 AM **Session 4: Group break out and prepares answers to TTX Round 2 questions on catastrophic failure with North Korea**
- 10:30 AM **Coffee Break**
- 10:45 AM **Session 4A: Plenary – Round 2 Assessment**
 Group reconvene in plenary to provide answers to questions and how each group reached those conclusions. After each presentation, the group is questioned by others on process and outcome.
- Chair: Brad Glosserman
- 12:45 PM **Lunch**
- 2:00 PM **Session 5: What is China’s Role?**
 How does each country assess the role played by China? In particular, what has been the impact of the Kim-Xi summits on the broader dialogue process? Looking over the horizon, how does each country regard the role of China in Northeast Asia, vis-à-vis North Korea, and more generally? What happens to each country’s relationship with China (and to the Beijing-Pyongyang relationship) if there is progress with North Korea? What happens if there is no progress? How does all this impact deterrence? More generally, what has been the impact of various US policy pronouncements (e.g., the 2017 US *National Security Strategy* and 2018 US *Nuclear Posture Review* and *National Defense Review*, etc.) on the prospects for Sino-US cooperation? How do you anticipate

the US-China relationship will evolve and what will be its impact on Korean Peninsula developments?

Chair: Ralph Cossa

Speakers: Scott Snyder, In-Bum Chun, Tetsuo Kotani

4:00 PM **Session 6: Conclusions/Recommendations and next steps for the Dialogue, chaired by Bob Girrier**

A discussion among the trilateral participants on various conclusions; next steps for trilateral security cooperation, and specific topics to address in our future meetings.

5:00 PM **Meeting adjourns**

APPENDIX B

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Royal Lahaina Resort, Maui, August 6-8, 2018

PARTICIPANT LIST

Japan

- 1. Nobumasa AKIYAMA**
Professor
Hitotsubashi University
- 2. Yusuke ARAI**
Director for National Security Policy
Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 3. Akira IGATA**
Visiting Graduate Professor, Center for
Rule-making Strategies
Tama University
- 4. Ken JIMBO**
Professor
Keio University
- 5. Matake KAMIYA**
Professor of International Relations
National Defense Academy of Japan
- 6. Yoichi KATO**
Senior Research Fellow
Asia Pacific Initiative
- 7. Tetsuo KOTANI**
Senior Research Fellow
The Japan Institute of International
Affairs (JIIA)

- 8. Taketsugu SATO**
Senior National Security Correspondent
The Asahi Shimbun
- 9. Sugio TAKAHASHI**
Chief, Policy Simulation Office
National Institute for Defense Studies
(NIDS)
- 10. Hideshi TOKUCHI**
Senior Fellow
National Graduate Institute for Policy
Studies (GRIPS)
- 11. Michito TSURUOKA**
Associate Professor
Keio University

ROK

- 12. Kang CHOI**
Vice President
The Asan Institute for Policy Studies
- 13. In-Bum CHUN, Gen. (Ret.)**
Retired
ROK Army
- 14. Gibum KIM**
Associate Research Fellow, Center for
Security and Strategy
Korea Institute for Defense Analyses
(KIDA)

- 15. Taewoo KIM**
Professor, Dept. of Military Science
Konyang University
- 16. Young Ho KIM**
Director-General
Research Institute for National Security
Affairs (RINSA), Korea National
Defense University (KNDU)
- 17. Hyung-Joo LEE**
Senior Analyst
ROK Defense Intelligence Agency
- 18. So-hee MOON**
Third Secretary
ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 19. Soonkun OH, Commander (Navy)**
Military Strategy Branch
J5 ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff
- 20. Jee-Kwang PARK**
Vice President of Education and
Training
Sejong Institute
- 21. Chang-ho SOHN**
Director, Policy Analysis Division
ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- 22. Ho Chang SONG**
Visiting Scholar
Johns Hopkins SAIS

US

- 23. Elaine BUNN**
Strategic Consultant
- 24. Bill CHAMBERS, Maj. Gen. (Ret.)**
Policy Analyst
Institute for Defense Analyses

- 25. Paul CHOI**
Strategist, US-ROK Combined Forces
Command
US Department of Defense
- 26. Lisa COLLINS**
Fellow, Office of the Korea Chair
Center for Strategic and International
Studies (CSIS)
- 27. Ralph COSSA**
President Emeritus and WSD-Handa
Chair in Peace Studies
Pacific Forum
- 28. Donald CRIBBS, CAPT (USN)**
Division Chief, Asia Pacific
US Defense Threat Reduction Agency
(DTRA)
- 29. Taylor T. Ferrell, Col (USAF)**
Chief
US Policy Division, USFK J5 and UNC
Policy Division, United Nations
Command U5
- 30. Robert P. GIRRIER, RADM USN
(Ret.)**
President
Pacific Forum
- 31. Brad GLOSSERMAN**
Senior Adviser
Pacific Forum
- 32. Candy GREEN**
Foreign Policy Advisor
US Indo-Pacific Command
- 33. Robert GROMOLL**
Director, Office of Regional Affairs,
Bureau of International Security and
Nonproliferation
US Department of State

34. Jacqueline HEARNE, MAJ (US Army)
Japan Country Director
US Indo-Pacific Command

35. Chuck HERBERT, CAPT (USN)
Chief of Plans CCMD Support -
CWMD Fusion Center
US Special Operations Command

36. Heather KEARNEY
Asia Pacific Strategic Planner/Analyst
Lead, Strategy & Campaign Plan
Division
US STRATCOM

37. Matthew KROENIG
Associate Professor of Government and
Foreign Service
Georgetown University

38. Grace PARK
Office of Strategic Stability and
Deterrence, Bureau of Arms Control
US Department of State

39. Crystal PRYOR
Program Director and Research Fellow
Pacific Forum

40. Evans REVERE
Nonresident Senior Fellow
Center for East Asia Policy Studies
Brookings

41. Brad ROBERTS
Director, Center for Global Security
Research
Lawrence Livermore National
Laboratory

42. Shelita ROBINSON
Strategic Planner, Global Futures, PPGF
US Defense Threat Reduction Agency
(DTRA)

43. James ROSS, LTC (US Army)
Alliances Branch Chief
US Indo-Pacific Command

44. David SANTORO
Director & Senior Fellow, Nuclear
Policy
Pacific Forum

45. Shane SMITH
Senior Research Fellow, CSWMD
National Defense University

46. Brent STRONG, CAPT (USN)
US Defense Threat Reduction Agency
(DTRA)

47. Scott SNYDER
Senior Fellow for Korea Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Young Leaders

48. Brent BOND
MA Student, Diplomacy and Military
Studies
Hawaii Pacific University

49. Lami KIM
Lecturer, Dept. of Politics and Public
Administration
University of Hong Kong

50. Kalani STEPHENS
BA Student, Asian Studies &
Economics
University of Hawaii at Manoa

51. Ayumi TERAOKA
PhD Student
Princeton University

52. Daichi UCHIMURA
Associate
Kroll Inc.

Staff

53. Jesslyn CHEONG

Senior Program Manager
Pacific Forum

54. Keoni WILLIAMS

Director, Young Leaders Program
Pacific Forum

APPENDIX C

US-ROK-Japan Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Royal Lahaina Resort, Maui, August 6-8, 2018

Case Study 1: Happy Days

It is mid-October. President Donald Trump met North Korea's Kim Jong Un at the United Nations General Assembly, the two men exchange letters and have a relationship characterized as "full of mutual respect" and "the potential for real friendship." Trump has an invitation to visit Pyongyang "to take the US-DPRK relationship to the next level," a meeting that is expected soon.

Nuclear talks have commenced and working groups have been established. The DPRK has dismantled a missile test site to show commitment to the denuclearization process. US-ROK joint military exercises have not been held since Trump announced their suspension at his press conference following the Singapore summit. A draft of the statement from the next Trump-Kim summit has been developed and it includes

- Pyongyang's list of nuclear facilities – all suspect sites and a couple others that had not been identified as part of the nuclear program – and a nuclear inventory that consists of 45 nuclear bombs, 30 kg of plutonium and 400 kg of highly enriched uranium.
- DPRK willingness to accept third-party monitors (such as the IAEA) of nuclear production facilities but it will not allow the US, the ROK, or Japan to inspect them.
- Continued suspension of all DPRK nuclear and missile tests.
- Pyongyang's readiness to hand over "legacy" chemical weapons and "residual" fissile material to a third party as a sign of good faith. The North argues that IAEA approval will permit it to rejoin the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and re-establish its right to a peaceful nuclear energy program – which it intends to exercise.
- DPRK readiness to trade strategic weapons if relations with the US, ROK, and Japan improve.
- US assurance that it will respect North Korea's sovereignty, that it will not work to undermine North Korea's security, and that it will not attack North Korea with conventional or nuclear weapons.

The search for the remains of US soldiers missing from the Korean War continues. Over fifty sets of remains were returned to the US in early August, and teams have been readmitted to the North to resume their work. A second return of remains is expected in a few weeks.

North-South relations are proceeding. The two sides have exchanged drafts of a peace treaty to officially end the Korean War, and are working to narrow differences. The North has withdrawn artillery units from the DMZ, and soldiers have been demobilized. South Korean propaganda broadcasts have stopped. Guard posts on the DMZ have been vacated and equipment removed.

Family reunions have resumed: a round was held in September and another is scheduled for December. The two sides have set up working groups for economic cooperation.

Japan's relations with the DPRK have been untouched. There have been working-level meetings, but Pyongyang insists that the abductee question has been resolved and says that the most important issue is normalization of relations. North Korea demands financial compensation of \$10 billion, and an apology for the annexation and colonization of the Korean Peninsula.

1. How does your government assess the North Korean nuclear declaration?
2. How do you define CVID (or whatever phrase you use)? Who should lead efforts to pursue this objective? What are preferred roles for the US and its allies in the process? How can the three allies support the CVID process?
3. What is your government prepared to put on the table to trade for the DPRK's strategic weapons? Identify three things the other two countries should be ready to trade.
4. Given capacity and diplomatic constraints, prioritize: remove nuclear warheads; remove nuclear materials; remove all other WMD; dismantle nuclear production facilities; dismantle missile production facilities; establish verification protocol for nuclear weapons; identify illicit trade networks.
5. Name five things the three countries should do together to ensure that their deterrent remains strong. What should they do to strengthen that deterrent?

Round 2: Fire and Fury Redux

It is January 2019. A peace treaty was signed – by the two Koreas, the US and China – as 2018 ended to demonstrate that “a new era has begun on the Korean Peninsula.” Family reunions have been held and there is talk of institutionalizing them. North-South talks on building North Korea infrastructure are progressing. China and Russia say that Pyongyang is honoring its commitments, and agree that the North is entitled to a nuclear energy program as well as a satellite capability.

Nuclear talks broke down after charges that North Korea's nuclear declaration was incomplete. Intelligence indicates the existence of labs and nuclear storage facilities that Pyongyang denies. Forensic analysis strongly suggests that the North under-reported the size of its nuclear arsenal, perhaps by as much as one-third. Discussion of a verification protocol has stalled; the North is demanding strict reciprocity for each inspection. North Korea also insists that any deal must allow it to retain the right and the capacity to develop a peaceful nuclear energy program. It also announces that it will launch a satellite as that capability is necessary for a 21st century economy.

Donald Trump believes that Kim Jong Un lied to him. He has warned that North Korea can only be forced to denuclearize and calls for renewed sanctions. He insists that the South terminate all cooperation agreements. He tweeted that “If the ROK will not back me on nukes, then it does not need US military support. TIME TO BRING OUR TROOPS HOME!”

There has been no high-level diplomatic contact between Japan and the DPRK. Pyongyang says that is impossible “given Tokyo's unflinching hostility” to North Korea, a hostility evident in new defense documents that continue to identify it as Japan's top security threat.

While on routine patrol surveilling the North, a Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force intelligence ship is accused of entering North Korean waters and is fired upon by two North Korean vessels and two fighter aircraft. Preliminary reports indicate that there are no injuries to crew although the ship sustains superficial damage. Meanwhile, a team of US experts searching in North Korea for remains of US soldiers from the Korean War has not communicated with US officials for three days; they usually check in daily.

After reports of a huge detonation in the Sea of Japan, North Korea confirms that it exploded a nuclear device as a reminder of the power that it retains and the consequences of a breakdown of the nuclear and peace talks. North Korea's *Korean Central News Agency* (KCNA) releases a statement saying that the incident is "a reminder of the eternal vigilance that the glorious forces of the Motherland must maintain in the face of implacable hostility of Japanese aggressors and their masters, and proof that our power has not and will never shrink. North Korea has gone above and beyond what could be expected of it and now demands a genuine show of commitment by the United States and others to show their commitment to peace"

1. Identify five things you want each of the other two countries to do as move 2 ends.
2. Identify five things you want the other two countries NOT to do as move 2 ends.
3. What message does your government send to Pyongyang at the end of move 2?
4. What five military steps do you take in response to these developments?
5. How should your government respond to the nuclear detonation?