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Diplomacy Surrounding the Korean Peninsula and the Future of US Forces in Northeast Asia

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Executive Summary

Although the future course of US-North Korea and inter-Korea negotiations over denuclearization and building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula is hard to predict, it will have an impact on the United States' and its allies' plans for the appropriate posture of US forces in Northeast Asia, particularly US Forces Korea (USFK). This paper hypothesizes that the future posture of US forces in the region could be contingent on the following three elements: whether North Korea perceives US military deployments and joint exercises as integral components of the United States' "hostile policy" against North Korea; whether the South Korean government gives significant weight to inter-Korean reconciliation, to the point where it is willing to trade off certain aspects of its US alliance (e.g., joint military exercises); and the extent to which US President Donald Trump values USFK and the alliance between the United States and South Korea. Determining the best way to adjust US forces in Northeast Asia depends, to a degree, on how negotiations with North Korea unfold.

The possible outcomes of nuclear negotiations with North Korea could be boiled down to three broad scenarios: progress, stagnation, and regression. "Progress" means North Korea's specific, substantive, and verifiable actions for denuclearization significantly reduce the North Korean threat toward the United States and its allies. "Stagnation" means North Korea maintains its commitment to denuclearization of the peninsula, but does not take substantive denuclearization steps. It continues producing nuclear materials and weapons, but refrains from conventional provocations. In a "regression" scenario, North Korea withdraws its commitment to denuclearize, which is likely to coincide with additional nuclear-missile tests. Among these scenarios, the one that could have the most dramatic impact on US military posture in the region would be the "progress" scenario; the others could lead to different, but still dynamic, military adjustment.

In consideration of such factors as the geopolitical location of the Korean Peninsula, potential sources of conflict in Northeast Asia, and the possible impact on US allies, including those outside of the region, this report argues that a US military presence should be retained on the peninsula, even if North Korea completely denuclearizes under a "progress" scenario. The US-Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance could, and should, contribute more broadly to regional security and stability in East Asia, including hedging against an increasingly assertive China.

Such an approach, however, would face many challenges. In the euphoria following a resolution of the North Korea nuclear crisis and reduced military tensions, political and public support for continuation of the US-ROK alliance cannot be taken for granted in either country. Externally, competitors such as China and Russia would actively encourage South Korea to leave the alliance. Combined with the Moon Jae-In administration's current hesitation regarding the idea of a *de facto* trilateral alliance with the United States and Japan, further integration of USFK with the overall US military posture in Asia, which holds Japan as an indispensable component, might make South Korea uncomfortable. Important variables in this dynamic are the state of inter-Korean relations and Chinese behavior in the wake of strategic change on the Korean Peninsula. These will significantly influence the perceived need for, and the political sustainability of, US forces in the region.

If a "stagnation" scenario develops instead, it is tempting to believe that maintaining the status quo of US force posture in South Korea is the safest and most easily managed course of action. This is possible, but such a view discounts a variety of other developments that suggest broader change is afoot in Northeast Asia when it comes to security concerns and alliance relations. Some aspects could encourage a political climate that promotes US force reductions. Conventional inter-Korean confidence-building measures are moving forward, as are preparations for transition of wartime operational control of ROK forces (OPCON transition), even as the Trump administration is demanding larger host-nation-support payments from Seoul.

At the same time, other developments could strengthen arguments for more robust—or at least reconfigured—US military capability in the region. China has been flexing its so-called "sharp power" around Asia, in the form of economic and military coercion, and it is continuing to invest heavily in military modernization. Meanwhile, Japan has expanded the versatility of its Self-Defense Forces (SDF) to play a more substantive logistical-support and regional security role, which could be factored into alliance cooperation strategies going forward. In short, the security and geopolitical environment in Northeast Asia is not static, and should be shaped proactively by the United States and its allies.

This exercise requires allied consultations among the United States, the ROK, and Japan to share information, analysis, and strategy about the regional security

environment. There are three basic scenarios of engagement with North Korea that could influence the US force-posture options for Korea, and Northeast Asia more broadly.[1]

Scenario 1: Progress with North Korean denuclearization

- Comprehensive retrenchment: a significantly retrenched US military presence across the board
- Regional cooperation: a smaller US presence in Korea, but one more mobile and oriented toward regional security cooperation, hedging against China or North Korea

Scenario 2: Stagnation with North Korea

- Naval/Air Force: a reduction of US ground forces and retained air assets, with some additional rotational air and naval presence designed to supplement ROK defense capabilities
- Status quo

Scenario 3: Regression

- Status quo plus: strengthening ROK military links to other US forces in the region and expanding US options to strike North Korean nuclear-launch sites

It should be noted that any change to USFK or the US commitment to Korea (and vice versa) should also take US Forces Japan (USFJ) and US Indo-Pacific Command (Indo-PACOM) into consideration. Most USFK options could involve an increased role for USFJ and Japan's SDF.

In the "progress" scenario, a primary objective for the allies could be to balance against an increasingly assertive China—in particular, to ensure maritime stability and freedom of navigation. A smaller and more mobile USFK could share this role and become more interoperative with regional forces. Such a transformation of USFK, however, could be accompanied by various challenges such as pushback by China, Russia, and possibly even from within South Korea. Therefore, in the short term, promotion of integration among the United States and its allies—in such areas as command, control, and communication (C3) and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), missile defense, cyber, and space—would be a possible first step.

In addition, the transition of USFK into a more integrated part of a regional security network can extend beyond Northeast Asia to include the South China Sea and even the Indian Ocean (consistent with the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDO-PACOM) area of operations). This could accelerate a transformation from a "hub-and-spokes" security framework of the United States and its allies to a broader partnership network in which like-minded countries across the Indo-Pacific region enhance interoperability, and effectively share the burdens of traditional and nontraditional security.

Meanwhile, to advance US force-posture change in the region, competition should be mitigated, and potential conflict should be minimized. Engaging competitors like China and Russia requires political will and viable mechanisms. The creation of a multilateral mechanism to address both security and economic cooperation would be useful. So would joint allied efforts among the United States, South Korea, and Japan at strategic public diplomacy targeting the general public throughout the region. Public diplomacy can be a mechanism to maintain and enhance political and public support for the alliance. The United States and Japan should actively support South Korea when it is under pressure from China with regard to USFK transformation, even as the United States and Japan consider ways to adjust to the possibility of a weaker US-ROK security alliance.

1 These are force-posture options the authors consider most likely, but there are a wide range of options, including no change.

1. The North Korea Nuclear Issue and the Future Security Environment in Northeast Asia

It is difficult to predict the future of US-North Korea and inter-Korea negotiations over denuclearization and a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, but the unprecedented summit diplomacy of 2018–19 is already having an impact on the future posture of US forces in Northeast Asia, particularly in the Republic of Korea (ROK). This is due, in part, to North Korean insistence on tangible steps toward ending what it perceives as the United States' "hostile policy" *vis-à-vis* North Korea, evidenced (it believes) by such elements as economic sanctions and US military deployments or exercises.[2] ROK President Moon Jae-In places a high priority on sustaining momentum for inter-Korean reconciliation, so it is possible that Seoul will be open to a potential reduction of USFK activities in exchange for a certain level of progress in denuclearization and North-South interaction. The Moon administration, working with its US counterparts, is also accelerating plans to take over wartime operational control of ROK forces (so-called OPCON transition), which has been under consideration for more than a decade. Trump's ambivalence toward USFK and his demand for higher levels of host-nation support from South Korea add to the possibility of impending change.[3] The United States and its allies should plan proactively for various scenarios and options, so that they are steering possible transformation—not only of USFK, but also the entire US military presence in Northeast Asia—according to shared strategic objectives, rather than stumbling into them by political circumstance.

Additionally, if there is real progress with North Korean denuclearization—of whatever degree—a certain segment of policymakers, particularly politicians, in both the United States and South Korea would likely consider USFK reductions, boosting the primary role of ROK armed forces, or otherwise accelerating OPCON transition from the United States to South Korea. On the flip side, if a breakdown in negotiation leads to increased tensions, this might prompt defense officials to consider additional measures to bolster deterrence and apply military pressure on North Korea. The upshot is that USFK's role and posture—and, by extension, the role and posture for other components of the US Indo-PACOM theater—could be poised to change more significantly than at any time since the George W. Bush administration and its Global Posture Review. A key variable is how diplomacy surrounding the Korean Peninsula unfolds, and this is likely to be fluid and unstable for some time. Still, the United States and its allies (both South Korea and Japan) should actively consider ways to adjust US force posture in the region in support of desired outcomes.

Although many factors could influence the course of negotiations with North Korea, it is possible to boil them down to three broad scenarios.

Progress: North Korea takes specific, substantive, and verifiable actions toward dismantling its nuclear weapons and programs, as well as its ballistic missiles, significantly reducing the North Korean threat to the United States and its allies. These actions could be broken down into several phases, and might even involve reduction of chemical and biological weapons, as well as conventional-threat reduction or confidence-building measures. "Progress" in this sense could take

2 Despite many past North Korean statements calling on the United States to leave Korea, some analysts argue Pyongyang might not demand withdrawal of USFK as a precondition for denuclearization. They point to comments by former ROK President Kim Dae-Jung, who said then-North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il (the current leader's father) told him at their June 2000 summit meeting, "the United States must continue to stay for stability and peace in East Asia." See Jane Perlez, "South Korean Says North Agrees U.S. Troops Should Stay," New York Times, September 11, 2000, https://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/11/world/south-korean-says-north-agrees-us-troops-should-stay.html. However, current leader Kim Jong-Un's views are not clear, and North Korea's continuing complaints about US-ROK military exercises suggest US force-posture changes would be a part of any denuclearization negotiation with Pyongyang.

3 In his remarks to the South Korean National Assembly in November 2017, President Trump stated, "I say to the North: Do not underestimate us, and do not try us. We will defend our common security, our shared prosperity, and our sacred liberty." On the other hand, at the press conference after his June 2018 meeting with Kim Jong-Un in Singapore, President Trump described US-ROK joint military exercises as "war games" and announced that the United States "will be stopping the war games" while negotiations are happening. He also stated, "we have, right now, thirty-two thousand soldiers in South Korea, and I'd like to be able to bring them back home."

many forms, but, presumably, a basic component of this scenario is that the United States and its allies recognize sufficient progress (or its potential) to warrant taking corresponding steps. It is possible that the allies would accept less-than-ideal denuclearization-verification procedures for the sake of sustaining "progress," so this scenario does not necessarily mean that North Korean nuclear, missile, and conventional military threats have disappeared. Still, it suggests that all parties assume that some sanctions relief and a smaller US force posture in Korea are acceptable.

Stagnation: While North Korea maintains its rhetorical commitment to denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, it does not take substantive steps, instead demanding that the United States take certain (unacceptable) actions first. North Korea does not conduct additional nuclear or missile tests, but continues operating its nuclear facilities to produce nuclear materials and weapons. It maintains production of ballistic missiles, but refrains from conventional provocations. Meanwhile, South Korea is likely to be eager to promote better inter-Korean relations, and the two countries make some incremental gains in conventional confidence building, exempted economic activity, and cultural exchange. Seoul is reluctant to resume US-ROK military exercises. Some members of the South Korean public (and a smaller percentage of Americans) might welcome this "atmosphere of progress," but others in South Korea—and many others in Japan and the United States—could see it merely as North Korea's attempt to drive a wedge in the alliance.

Regression: North Korea clearly withdraws its commitment to denuclearize, and military tensions increase. This would likely coincide with the resumption of additional nuclear or missile tests, and could be accompanied by other provocative moves that effectively shut down inter-Korean engagement.

Among these scenarios, the "progress" scenario (or some aspirational version thereof) would have the most dramatic impact on US military posture in the region. North Korea has insisted on "corresponding measures," and the United States and its allies might be willing to make changes to USFK in exchange for real denuclearization (complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization (or CVID), or what the Trump administration is now calling final and fully verified denuclearization (or FFVD)).[4] The voices of South Korean citizens demanding a so-called "dividend of peace," in the form of a reduction in US military presence, could grow. Even segments of the United States might be enamored with the idea that the country could reduce its financial burden and enjoy more flexible deployment options by shifting its forces from South Korea to other places where the need is deemed greater.[5] Other scenarios could lead to different, but still dynamic, military adjustments that impact the entire region.

It is important for the United States, South Korea, and Japan to proactively consider how they might respond to different scenarios involving negotiations with North Korea, evaluate potential implications, and coordinate their approaches, in order to avoid rushed or ill-advised posture changes that could undermine their security over the long term. Moreover, because these three scenarios are not mutually exclusive (e.g., there could be "progress" in some areas and "stagnation" or "retreat" in others), the United States and its allies should develop a clear understanding of what corresponding measures might be reasonable in exchange for certain North Korean actions. This is true for a wide range of issues not addressed here—including sanctions enforcement, economic engagement, and a possible end-of-war declaration—but it is particularly important for force-posture adjustments (discussed below) that are, in many cases, irreversible.[6]

4 North Korean state-run media have defined the "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" as "removing all elements of nuclear threats from the areas of both north and south of Korea and also from surrounding areas from where the Korean Peninsula is targeted." See "North Korea Media Says Denuclearization Includes Ending 'U.S. Nuclear Threat,'" Reuters, December 20, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2018/12/20/world/asia/20reuters-northkorea-usa-denuclearisation.html. Also, in his New Year's address for 2019, Chairman Kim Jong-Un said that joint US-ROK military exercises "should no longer be permitted, and the introduction of war equipment including strategic assets from outside should be completely suspended." See "Kim Jong Un's 2019 New Year Address," English translation via Rodong Sinmun, January 1, 2019, https://www.ncnk.org/resources/publications/kimjongun_2019_newyearaddress.pdf/file_view.

5 A Chicago Council on Global Affairs Survey from October 2018 showed that 74 percent of Americans support maintaining long-term bases in South Korea, while 54 percent support the partial withdrawal of US troops from South Korea should North Korea give up its nuclear weapons. Karl Friedhoff, "The American Public Remains Committed to Defending South Korea," Chicago Council on Global Affairs, October 1, 2018, https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/publication/american-public-remains-committed-defending-south-korea.

6 Many excellent works regarding a unified Korea and its relations with the alliance and neighboring countries include Sung-Han Kim and Scott A. Snyder, "Unified Korea between U.S. and China: Its Strategic Choices for the Future," International Journal of Korean Unification Studies 27, 1 (2018), 1–27. http://repo.kinu.or.kr/bitstream/2015.oak/9204/1/International%20Journal%20of%20Korean%20Unification%20Studies%20Vol.27%20No.1.pdf.

2. Strategic Significance to Retain USFK and Possible Challenges

Strategic Significance of USFK for US Military Posture in the Region

There are multiple reasons why it is advisable to retain a US military presence in Korea, even if the current North Korea nuclear crisis is resolved on favorable terms and with a corresponding decrease in North Korea's conventional military threat.

Geopolitical location of the Korean Peninsula: Korea is located at a point where major military powers collide. This is the original reason for the tragic division of the nation. This situation did not change with the end of the Cold War; rather, the reemergence of China and Russia as assertive military powers has increased potential military competition and conflict. In particular, when China's enhanced naval power and assertiveness in the maritime domain are considered, it is essential for the United States and its allies and partners—especially Japan—that the southern half of the Korean Peninsula, which is located at the juncture of Sea of Japan and East China Sea, remains allied with the United States.

Potential sources of conflict in the region: Northeast Asia and its surrounding area are filled with uncertainties and potential sources of conflict, such as the East China Sea (including the Senkaku Islands and Taiwan) and the South China Sea. Even after denuclearization, North Korea will continue to be an actor that the United States and its allies need to carefully watch as a potential source of instability in the region.

Possible impact on US allies, including those outside of the region: USFK retrenchment will either reduce US military power in the region (and, to some extent, its deterrence strength) or shift those US assets and personnel to other Indo-Pacific locations, which could be seen by people living there as increasing the burden they face, despite an ostensibly more peaceful security environment. As a result, political pressure could come from two sides (e.g., those preoccupied with Chinese military threats and those anticipating tension—and US footprint—reductions). In addition, if USFK withdraws without sufficient consultation and coordination with the South Korean government (or Japan's, for that matter), this would have a profoundly negative impact on the credibility of US security commitments to allies throughout the world.

It is desirable, and possible, for the US-ROK alliance to contribute more broadly to security and stability in East Asia. Although the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty does not include the same language as the US-Japan version that specifically mentions cooperation to protect both Japan and "international peace and security in the Far East," the treaty does not limit the US-ROK alliance to the Korean Peninsula. In fact, South Korea made difficult and costly decisions to support the alliance and the United States in other parts of the world—such as Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq—and the alliance's regional and global role was highlighted by the two countries' leaders in their 2009 joint vision statement.[7] Subsequent bilateral statements and strategic documents have specifically noted the valuable security role that the US-ROK alliance plays in the region.[8] Although none of these documents mention China explicitly, some

7 "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea," White House Office of the Press Secretary, June 16, 2009, https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/joint-vision-alliance-united-states-america-and-republic-korea.

8 For example, the "47th US-ROK Joint Communique," which was announced in November 2015 by the US secretary of defense and ROK minister of national defense, stated that they "reaffirmed the commitment of the US and ROK presidents to continue to build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope." Furthermore, then-USFK Commander General Vincent Brooks said, before the House Armed Services Committee in February 2018, "our effort to maintain a high state of military readiness is coupled with developing and strengthening relationships within the US-ROK Alliance…to ensure that we have a structure of relationships tailor-made to adaptively respond to the myriad of potential security challenges in the region." Also, a co-author attended a private briefing in December 2018 with a leading ROK general, who claimed that the US-ROK alliance was a "linchpin for Northeast Asia security cooperation and stability," among other examples.

analysts in both countries worry about potential Chinese military coercion, and see continued security cooperation as a useful hedge against an increasingly assertive China.[9] Key questions are whether and how this sentiment should be translated into an actual transformation of USFK, how this relates to the alliance's regional role, and what non-military efforts and resources should work in combination with these moves.

Possible Challenges

Any initiative for a sustained USFK presence—and an even broader regional role, in the case of "progress" scenario—would face many challenges. First, political and public support in the United States and South Korea for continuation of the US-ROK alliance cannot be taken for granted. In the euphoria following an apparent resolution of the North Korea nuclear crisis, especially one with reduced conventional-military tensions, the allies could be driven to reduce USFK's presence, to cut costs and support peace-regime momentum.

The United States, South Korea, and Japan might react differently to changes in the regional security environment. Particularly in South Korea, there is a segment of the population inclined to strike a balance between the United States and China.[10] A resolution of the North Korea nuclear crisis, and a decline of the threat, could further energize and embolden this group.

On top of this, China and Russia will see an opportunity to push for large-scale US military reductions on the Korean Peninsula, including removal of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile-defense system in South Korea, which has been justified primarily as a counter to North Korea's nuclear threat. It is possible for the two countries to encourage alliance decoupling, and to argue that a strong, ongoing US-ROK alliance might be seen as hostile toward them. The pressure could be much greater than what South Korea experienced with China regarding the issue of the THAAD deployment. The United States and Japan, together with ROK and other like-minded countries, should seriously consider options to support South Korea resisting pressure from China, and impose political and economic costs on China for its action. Japan's missile-defense investments could also come under greater scrutiny.

Many South Korean people and politicians are likely to be wary of the idea that the United States, the ROK, and Japan constitute a *de facto* trilateral alliance.[11] This is partly out of concern about China's opposition to such an alliance.[12] This is also because they argue Japan's historical reconciliation efforts have been insufficient and "fears that Japan is reverting to militarism."[13] As a consequence, further integrating USFK with the overall US military posture in the region could make Seoul uncomfortable. Additionally, intense trade friction, or major disagreements about host-nation support between

9 For example, see Evans I. R. Revere, *The U.S. ROK Alliance: Projecting U.S. Power and Preserving Stability in Northeast Asia, Brookings Institution*, July 13, 2016, https://tinyurl.com/y6o3go5r; Abraham M. Denmark, *The U.S.-ROK Alliance and Policy Coordination Toward China, Council on Foreign Relations*, March 19, 2019, https://tinyurl.com/y28cp5lx; and Chung Min Lee, *Prospects for US-South Korean-Japanese Trilateral Security Cooperation: in an Era of Unprecedented Threats and Evolving Political Forces, Atlantic Council*, December 2018 (https://tinyurl.com/y39a4obc).

10 In his speech in March 2005, then-President Roh Moo-Hyun announced, "Korea will play the role of a balancer, not only on the Korean Peninsula, but throughout Northeast Asia." A public poll by SBS News conducted soon after this announcement showed that more than 70 percent of Korean people supported the "balancer" role stated by President Roh. Current President Moon Jae-In frequently discusses "balanced diplomacy" to secure cooperation from China on North Korea issues while maintaining an alliance with the United States. Although there is no public poll to specifically indicate the South Korean public's support for Moon's "balanced diplomacy," a May 2–3, 2018, survey—conducted by Korea Gallup agency in South Korea, and available only in Korean—ranked "diplomacy" as the second-highest ranked field in President Moon's performance (To the question "Do you think President Moon's performance since his inauguration has been good or bad?" 83 percent said "good" for North Korea policy, 74 percent for diplomacy, 55 percent for public welfare, 48 percent for personnel affairs, 47 percent for the economy, and 30 percent for education). It is also worth noting that "conservative" President Park Geun-Hye was one of the few leaders of liberal democratic countries who went to Beijing in September 2015 for the seventieth anniversary of China's victory against Japan in World War II.

11 A survey by Hankyoreh (a Korean news medium) on August 20, 2015, asked experts and lawmakers from both sides of the aisle on the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee and the National Defense Committee the question "What should be South Korea's security strategy amid US-China competition in East Asia?" Two-thirds answered "Inter-Korean cooperation and East Asian Community cooperation," 20 percent answered "Strengthen South Korea-US alliance and join trilateral alliance with US and Japan," and 4.4 percent answered "Maintain equal distance between the US and China." "Real Purpose of Trilateral Alliance with US and Japan? Checking China," Hankyoreh, August 20, 2015, http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/705249.html.

12 One of the "three no's" that South Korea promised at a foreign-ministerial meeting between the ROK and China in November 2017 was "no creation of a trilateral military alliance with the US and Japan." Yeo Jun-Suk, "Gap Exists Between Seoul, Beijing Over THAAD," Korea Herald, November 24, 2017, http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20171124000809.

13 Yul Sohn, "Relocating Trilateralism in Broader Regional Architecture: A South Korean Perspective," in Daniel C. Sneider, Yul Sohn, and Yoshihide Soeya, U.S.-ROK-Japan Trilateralism: Building Bridges and Strengthening Cooperation, National Bureau of Asian Research Special Report #59, July, 2016, file:///D:/Atlantic%20Council/Japan-US%20Program/Fall%202018/After%20AC's%20Comment/special_report_59_trilateralism_july2016.pdf.

Washington and its allies, could complicate efforts to promote closer security cooperation.

In addition, situations outside of the region that require US military intervention, such as a possible resurgence in the "war on terrorism," could impact US public perceptions of USFK. If the United States faces a situation in which military force is urgently needed elsewhere in the world, that could outweigh any argument for reinforcing, or even maintaining, USFK. Despite these and other possible challenges—including a bureaucratic bias for the status quo—it is worth considering the pros and cons of different options available to adjust US force posture in Northeast Asia.

3. Options of "Best Mix" Posture of the United States and Its Allies

Security analysts and defense planners from around Northeast Asia have pondered potential changes to US force posture in the region ever since the mid-to-late 1990s, when questions about North Korea's staying power grew and inter-Korean engagement intensified under ROK president Kim Dae-Jung. Their assumptions and conclusions differ depending on the analysts involved and prevailing circumstances, but key variables are generally China's relative power and behavior, domestic interest in South Korea and the United States for maintaining robust security ties, the state of regional diplomatic relations (including inter-Korean relations), and the strength of the US-Japan alliance.[14] Simplified further, because China's power and behavior have such influence over allies' strategic thinking—either driving them toward closer cooperation or not—it is fair to say that Chinese behavior and inter-Korean relations are probably the most influential variables to consider.

Overlaying these variables are the allies' desired end states, which align generally around a stable balance of power that minimizes conflict and maximizes prosperity, openness, and cooperation, but can diverge on important details. The allies should take stock of these variables and foster bilateral and trilateral dialogue on the feasibility, risks, and potential benefits of various options. The ultimate deciders will be South Korea and the United States, but their choices should reflect national interests of all three countries, namely the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

Allied Intentions: Sharing Information, Recognition, and Strategy

To effectively coordinate Japan-Korea-US interests and policies, it is essential for the three to sustain both bilateral and trilateral systemic mechanisms to share information, recognition, and strategy on the regional security environment, while clearly defining their individual and collective interests with regard to North Korea and their alliance relations. Sufficient discussion on nuclear issues, including extended deterrence, should be included, as even the most optimistic "progress" scenario is unlikely to quickly remove the North Korean nuclear threat.

Ideally, all three countries will reach a common recognition and strategy. But, even when they do not, they should share clear understanding about the source of their differences. What should be avoided is a situation where they publicly claim to have a shared strategy—as is often necessary—and then persuade themselves that they actually have one when they do not. Acknowledged disagreement is better than misunderstanding.

Adapting US Forces Posture in Northeast Asia[15]

USFK and Regional Posture Options

From these consultations, Washington and Seoul will probably recognize that they have three to five broad choices for adjusting their forces, depending on the variables noted above (see Table 1 on page 8). If a North Korean "progress" scenario gains some momentum, accompanied by a moderate-to-benign Chinese posture, one option could be a significantly retrenched US military presence across the board.

A second option in roughly the same scenario—if political leaders push for it—could be a smaller US presence in Korea, but one more mobile and oriented toward regional security cooperation (in close coordination with Seoul, Tokyo, and others). This could provide some reduction of US ground forces—a substantive gesture to North Korea that would also reduce deployment costs—but it might supplement remaining forces

14 For a review of these types of analyses from the mid-1990s until 2004, see Charles M. Perry, Jacquelyn K. Davis, James L. Schoff, and Toshi Yoshihara, *Alliance Diversification & the Future of the US-Korean Security Relationship* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, Inc, 2004), chapter 8; Carl E. Haselden, Jr., "The Effects of Korean Unification on the US Military Presence in Northeast Asia," *Parameters*, Winter 2002-2003, 120–132, https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/articles/02winter/haselden.pdf. The latter also discusses USFK transformation in combination with USFJ in response to reduction of North Korean threat, although it is in the context of Korean reunification.

15 According to the 2018 Military Balance, USFJ consists of approximately 39,950 troops (2,900 in the Army, 11,700 in the Navy, 11,450 in the Air Force, 13,600 in the Marines Corps, and three hundred in the Strategic Command), while USFK consists of 28,500 troops (19,200 troops in the Army, two hundred and fifty in the Navy, 8,800 in the Air Force, and two hundred and fifty in the Marine Corps).

with new air and/or naval forces that would spend time training with partners in the region. This second option provides added security benefits for the allies and can serve as a regional public good, but it might be looked at suspiciously by North Korea, China, and Russia. In fact, this option would be a useful hedge for the allies against a more aggressive China or a backsliding North Korea, which is why it is worth considering despite potential misgivings in Beijing or Pyongyang.

This "regional cooperation" option also has the benefit of allocating allied resources more efficiently through burden sharing, since all the partners face tight budgets, and the US-ROK residual-command relationships would add credibility to mutual-security pledges and foster cooperation with Japan when necessary. In addition, continued close US-ROK security ties and a burden-sharing approach are less likely to stimulate a regional arms race or security dilemma, because no single country needs to spend as much on defense, and the threshold for collective aggressive action is always much higher than for one nation.

A third option, perhaps best suited for a North Korean "stagnation" scenario and continued strong Chinese military investment, might involve reducing US ground forces but retaining significant air assets, and some naval ones, designed to supplement ROK defense capabilities (in sync with some form of OPCON transition implementation). The United States would retain significant military capability on the peninsula, but it gives room for inter-Korean confidence building—as border management shifts completely to the Koreans—and provides Indo-PACOM with more flexible deployment options. This is similar to the second option mentioned above, but is more strongly connected to ROK defense planning and training, with only a secondary focus on regional activity.

Of course, it is natural to argue that the best response to stagnation would be maintaining the status quo, in particular when inter-Korean confidence-building measures do not seem to lead to quick and substantive threat reduction, or if the North Korean threat might even intensify. It should be noted, however, that the "stagnation" scenario could coincide with growing security concerns posed by China or Russia, pointing to a need for a different kind of US regional posture. Or, there might be some adjustment in mission priorities stemming from the current joint-alliance study of its future defense and vision (launched after the 2018 Security Consultative Meeting (SCM)), which could point toward a different USFK force composition. More broadly, a passive approach of maintaining the status quo could fail to get ahead of domestic and geopolitical dynamics that are pushing the United States toward an improved support role on the peninsula, so stagnation does not necessarily mean keeping the status quo.[16]

A North Korean "regression" scenario would presumably involve little to no adjustment on the peninsula, although the United States might take steps to bolster national missile defense and other aspects of extended deterrence in the region. In this sense, in addition to a simple status quo for USFK, there is a "status quo-plus" option that could strengthen ROK military links to other US forces in the region (including Indo-PACOM), and perhaps improve the US ability to strike North Korean nuclear-launch sites quickly from afar, especially given pending US withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Any change to USFK and the US commitment to Korea should also take USFJ and Indo-PACOM into consideration, approaching regional security as an integrated whole that seeks continued deterrence of potential adversaries, reassurance of allies, and maximized capacity and flexibility for the United States to protect its national security interests. All of the USFK options mentioned above would likely mean an increased role for USFJ and Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF), and the SDF is more legally and operationally able to contribute than it was a decade or two ago.[17]

If USFK's presence in Korea is significantly reduced, Japan would become a primary base of operations for any future Korean contingency involving US forces, rather than a transit point for US forces en route to Korea. If the US-ROK security relationship remains close but becomes more regionally oriented with a naval/air focus, the frequency and sophistication of Northeast Asia-based security cooperation activities could increase. If the North Korean threat increases, and if diplomacy between the United States and

16 A particularly dangerous scenario would involve a "stagnation" situation with a wide perception gap between Washington and Seoul (with Seoul being overly optimistic about Pyongyang's intentions) or even US and ROK leaders simply pretending that more progress in threat reduction is being made than is actually the case, slipping into a "comprehensive retrenchment" response for USFK despite undiminished North Korean military capability.

17 Since enacting the Act on Measures to Ensure the Peace and Security of Japan in Perilous Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan in 1999, Japan has taken a series of legislative measures to enable the Japan Self-Defense Forces to support US forces more effectively in implementing the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, including the enactment of the Legislation for Peace and Security in 2015.

Table 1: USFK Options by Scenario[1]

	"Progress" Scenario	"Stagnation" Scenario	"Regression" Scenario
USFK Approach	"Comprehensive Retrenchment" or "Regional Cooperation"	"Naval / Air Focus" or "Status Quo"	"Status Quo Plus"
Roles and Missions	ROK assumes full responsibility for national defense. USFK cooperates on a case-by-case basis when interests overlap, or in concert with other countries. Pledge of assistance if Korea is attacked, and vice versa. Similar to above, but "Regional Cooperation" option involves more regular training for combined operations with ROK forces (mostly off-peninsula), focused on specific missions such as disaster relief, counter-proliferation, maritime security, and possibly others.	Cooperation with Korean forces on regular basis for Korean defense and, to a lesser extent, for certain off-peninsula missions. Mutual security pledge.	Current roles and missions remain in effect, with stepped-up US-ROK investments in deterrence capability (including in the cyber domain), quick-strike capability, and nuclear retaliation.
Force Structure	Virtually none, except to facilitate joint planning and joint exercises. "Regional Cooperation" option involves 2nd Infantry Division withdrawal, possible rotational Marine presence (and limited air and naval). Command support for CJTF missions.	2nd Infantry Division reduced and reconfigured (less heavy, more mobile). Fighter wing remains. Added ISR assets (manned and unmanned), bolstered cyber and electronic-warfare capability, larger rotational naval presence.	2nd Infantry Division remains, plus additional ballistic-missile-defense (BMD) capability, sub visits, F-22s, and ISR.
Command Structure	USFK, CFC, UNC dissolved. Korean command conducts joint planning and exercises with Indo-PACOM and/or a NEA subregional command. "Regional Cooperation" option involves some retained USFK command and planning functions.	USFK remains as OPCON transition is pursued. CFC reconfigures to serve a "supporting to supported" relationship (as per recently agreed to bilateral "guiding principles" for future OPCON. UNC could remain as a vehicle for broader multilateral military support to ROK in case of future conflict, but not an operational command, and no role in border management.	USFK, CFC, UNC retained. Closer CFC/Indo-PACOM cooperation promoted. Limited but official linkage (information flows) to a more operationally oriented USFJ.
USFJ / Indo-PACOM Impact	Continued strong US forward presence in Japan with more robust command presence at USFJ. If North Korea's missile capability is steadily dismantled, then future BMD investments can be curtailed and additional SDF air and maritime assets deployed for East China Sea and SW Island defense. "Regional Cooperation" option could involve transforming USFJ into a NEA subregional command based in Yokota AFB. Okinawa-based Marines could spend part of each year in Korea.	Japan-based and Korea-based US air and naval assets could become more of an integrated force under a NEA subregional command in Japan or Indo-PACOM forward command components in Japan and South Korea. Future BMD investments could be curtailed as long as North Korean nuclear and missile tests remain suspended.	USFJ and Japan's SDF continue to enhance interoperability and combined command capabilities to bolster extended deterrence credibility. Alliance exercises involving prompt long-range US strike options on North Korea could be included, as well as steps to build up consequence-management capability.

1 This table is an updated and modified version of a table previously published in 2004 around the time of the US Global Posture Review and the US-ROK Future of the Alliance (FOTA) initiative. See Perry, Davis, Schoff, and Yoshihara, *Alliance Diversification & the Future of the US-Korean Security Relationship.*

North Korea breaks down, efforts to strengthen deterrence—especially nuclear deterrence—will likely require timelier leveraging of US assets in Japan, in close coordination with Japan's SDF in support. In all three of these situations, Washington should consider transforming USFJ into an operational command of some form (or expanding Indo-PACOM's presence in Japan) to manage the growing integration of certain regional USFJ and SDF missions.

A North Korean "progress" scenario could cause Japan to rethink its recently revised National Defense Program Guideline, which depends on two key factors: how drastically USFK posture changes, and the relative strength of the US-Japan alliance. A strong US-Japan alliance and a continuing US-ROK security relationship—albeit with a smaller USFK—could allow Tokyo to shift assets and future investments away from the North Korean threat and toward defense of Japan's Southwest Islands and security in the East China Sea. This could also happen, to some degree, in a "stagnation" scenario. In contrast, a "regression" scenario would validate Japan's current approach of dividing defense deployments between potential North Korean and Chinese threats, and it would revive Tokyo's consideration of moves to supplement US extended deterrence, including missile defense, counterstrike capability, and consequence management.

Which option Seoul and Washington would choose (in collaboration with Japan) largely depends on their assessments of future scenarios and each country's strategic intention. To facilitate debate about these issues, the following table breaks down some basic options for USFK by scenario and tries to characterize them by roles and missions, overall force structure, command structure, and implications for USFJ and Indo-PACOM. As noted earlier, it is unlikely for one clear-cut scenario to present itself, but the process of discussing how to characterize the various boxes would be a useful alliance exercise.

Required Capabilities

A desirable transformation of USFK and US military posture in the region can be considered from the perspective of required military capability. Except for a simple status-quo approach, all options discussed above require the United States and its allies to consult thoroughly and coordinate their capabilities based on key variables described earlier, and on perceived national interest for optimal efficiency and effect. In a North Korea "progress" scenario, a primary subsequent objective of the United States and its allies should be to balance against an increasingly assertive China, in particular to discourage its maritime expansion, which could disadvantage neighbors or limit freedom of navigation in the region.

Promoting maritime stability and guaranteeing freedom of navigation are roles the United States Pacific Command (now Indo-PACOM) has played in combination with USFJ. Under a situation where North Korea is denuclearized and its conventional threats reduced, a smaller and more mobile USFK could possibly share this role and become more interoperable with regional forces (including those of ROK, Japan, Australia, India, and possibly even China and Russia for certain missions). For this purpose, the current composition of USFK, with the Army playing a major role, could be realigned. Options would include replacing components of the 2nd Infantry Division (ID) now in Korea with a smaller contingent of Marines on a rotational basis, possibly the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) based in Okinawa, Japan. This could enhance regional interoperability and support efforts to reduce training and noise for Okinawa residents. In addition, elements of the US 7th Fleet based in Japan could spend more time in, and conduct more significant training around, Korea. Other configurations are possible.

As discussed above, however, such a transformation of USFK would be accompanied by challenges (such as possible Chinese objection and Korean wariness of being a part of broader US alliance network in the region, particularly a *de facto* alliance among the United States, Japan, and South Korea). Pursuing reinforcement of US forces in the region by incorporating USFK without overcoming or mitigating these challenges would not be feasible, but would run contrary to the effort to keep South Korea on the side of the United States and Japan.

Therefore, in the relatively short term, the United States and its allies must promote integration in the following areas, which would also be relevant broadly in the context of North Korean denuclearization.

- Command, control, and communications (C3)
- Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR)
- Planning and training for defensive and certain cross-domain activities (e.g., missile defense, counter-proliferation, counter-air/submarine, cyber, space); Japan's introduction of the Aegis Ashore missile-defense system and limited standoff capabilities should also be considered in this context.

Among these items, cyber and outer space could be areas where USFK could play a new role in a modified and more integrated US military presence in the region, because they do not necessarily require many personnel or a large area for facilities and equipment, minimizing the burden on the host nation and the threat profile from the neighbors' vantage point. In addition, alliance interoperability in C3 will be a critical part of any successful OPCON transition, and the need for careful surveillance of North Korea to verify compliance with agreements means that ISR will remain important as well.

From Hub-and-Spokes to Partnership Network

Transitioning USFK to become a more integrated part of a regional security network can extend beyond Northeast Asia to include the South China Sea and even the Indian Ocean. This potential arrangement could accelerate a transformation already under way, from hub-and-spokes (US and allies) to a partnership network where like-minded countries across the Indo-Pacific region enhance their interoperability and effectively share the burdens of traditional and nontraditional security.

Countries already at least somewhat involved in such a partnership include Japan, the ROK, Australia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, the United Kingdom, and France. Their individual geopolitical locations would define their expected roles and functions, such as provision of bases for US and partner navies, frequency of exchanges, ISR activities, disaster relief, United Nations (UN) sanctions enforcement, and contribution to counterproliferation and other missions. This expanded network does not necessarily enable relocating the aforementioned functions of USFK to somewhere else in the region, but would make them part of a greater whole and prevent South Korea from being singled out and targeted by competitors.

The actual speed and content of the network expansion could be adjusted, with due respect to preference of the individual partners, some of which might be wary of stimulating a security dilemma with China. To underscore the "public good" objective of this "partnership network," China should be encouraged to participate, although this could be complicated by continued territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

4. Ways and Means to Overcome, Mitigate, and Hedge Challenges

Mitigating the challenges discussed in Section 2, and enabling promotion of possible transformation efforts discussed in Section 3, requires consistent efforts by the United States, Japan, and South Korea. These efforts are multidimensional and essential for a more peaceful and predictable security environment in the region, regardless of the direction of North Korea denuclearization talks.

Mitigating Competition

The core component of these efforts is to mitigate competition in the region and minimize potential conflict. While US and allied force-posture adjustments will, to some extent, hedge against the capabilities of competitors like China and Russia, understanding and trying to shape their perspectives are other key factors in addressing security challenges. Competitors should not only be checked, but also engaged. Effective mechanisms and efforts for this purpose are indispensable components of this strategy for the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Alliance transformation can be deemed a success only when it is combined with these mechanisms and efforts, which are particularly necessary for South Korea, given North Korea bordering both China and Russia.

In addition to bilateral security dialogues, the creation of a multilateral mechanism would benefit all parties involved. If the six-party talks of the United States, South Korea, North Korea, Japan, China, and Russia are revived in some fashion as a means to support and verify the denuclearization process, they could be utilized as a way to provide North Korea with security assurance in connection with an inter-Korean peace regime. The previous iteration of the six-party talks (from 2003 to 2008) included a working group for establishing a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism. Seoul continued to promote this concept during both the Park and Moon administrations, in the form of a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), underscoring its interest in embedding an inter-Korean peace regime within a multilateral security framework.

A multilateral mechanism would be useful to address not only security, but also regional economic cooperation. The northeastern provinces of China (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) and the Russian far east are underdeveloped economically. Despite the central governments' contentious stances toward their neighbors, these regions have their own distinct interests and can be engaged with and integrated into the regional economy, thus helping to mitigate competition. Existing and planned projects—such as the Tumen River Area Development Program, Japan-Russia economic cooperation in far-eastern Russia, and the Russia-North-South Koreas gas pipeline provide specific potential opportunities for such cooperation. Others might be possible.

It is also important to try improving public sentiment in competing nations. Although their regimes are mostly authoritarian, they cannot completely disregard public opinion. Making it difficult for the authorities to foment domestic hostility and use it as a weapon against the allies is important. In combination with economic cooperation, the allies' joint efforts for strategic public diplomacy, including cultural and academic exchanges, would be beneficial. Mitigating competition is not only to overcome challenges accompanying transformation of US forces in the region. Such adjustments and competition mitigation can also be tools for peace and stability in the region. It would be desirable if mitigated competition enabled a less-intense military posture and fostered more security cooperation to maintain regional peace and stability.

It should be noted that competition mitigation is relevant not only to the "progress" scenario, but also to the "stagnation" and "regression" scenarios. These latter two would require China's involvement in the resumption or enhancement of the "maximum pressure" campaign against North Korea to effectively steer the process back toward dialogue. If North Korea clearly breaks its denuclearization commitments and takes "regressive" actions, such as rebuilding its scrapped nuclear-test sites and resuming nuclear and missile tests, it should be possible to gain China's cooperation in imposing sanctions. However, in the "stagnation" scenario, it would be much harder to count on Beijing's cooperation (and possibly even Seoul's). Regardless of how irksome China's stance is to the United States and its allies, it cannot be denied that China is adhering to what it believes to be its own interests. Coordinated bilateral outreach to China among Japan, South Korea, and the United States will be important in this regard, and a five-party subset of the six-party talks could be

a useful mechanism for strengthening mutual understanding and balancing stakeholder priorities *vis-a-vis* North Korea.

Maintaining and Enhancing Support for Alliance

While mitigating the atmosphere of competition, support for maintenance and reinforcement of alliance relationships in the United States, South Korea, and Japan should be actively fostered. This includes public-diplomacy efforts to engage with politicians at all levels of government, business leaders, media, and the public. Moreover, considering how to promote such public diplomacy should be a part of strategic dialogues among the allies. Between Japan and South Korea, it is particularly important to have a shared recognition by political leaders that politically sensitive issues need to be carefully managed, to avoid resorting to provocative words and deeds, and to seek longer-term solutions to historical disagreements. Along with this, trilateral cooperation with the United States should be protected from bilateral arguments, since it is legitimately distinct and serves both countries' national interests. In addition, Washington could provide a goodwill gesture toward South Korea so that the South Korean public may feel a "dividend of peace," such as by allowing host-nation-support reductions in favor of South Korean or Japanese participation in aid to North Korean denuclearization.

Supporting South Korea: Preventing and Hedging US-ROK Alliance Weakening

In transforming, and even maintaining, US alliance posture in the region, active US and Japanese support for Seoul will be important. For example, if efforts to engage with China and mitigate competition are not successful, and China seeks to undermine USFK transformation, South Korean political and business leaders would likely face the most pressure. If China tries an economic bullying tactic like it used against South Korea in response to the THAAD missile-defense system in 2016, the United States and Japan, by involving other like-minded partners, should seriously consider options to support South Korea directly—to sustain public support in Korea for the alliance—and to impose political and economic costs on China for its actions.[18] Part of such a cost-imposition strategy could involve allied supported for an appeal by Seoul to broader Korean nationalism, aimed at driving a wedge between North Korea and China.

Without a reunified democratic Korean Peninsula, a militarily capable North Korea will continue to exist, and South Koreans are likely to want to preserve the alliance for the sake of security. Even if the US military presence in Korea is somehow involved as a part of a denuclearization deal, the arrangement could start with incremental steps that do not affect the core components of CFC and USFK, and all of the earlier arguments for continuing the US-ROK alliance still apply.[19] President Moon has consistently highlighted the enduring value of the alliance, and even said that it should continue forever.[20]

Nevertheless, the possibility of future US-ROK alliance weakening cannot be ruled out categorically, especially if some kind of genuine inter-Korean reconciliation took hold amid declining security threats and benign Chinese behavior. This would likely stimulate reinvigorated US alliance relationships in the region and an increase in allied ISR capacity to compensate for the lost capability of USFK. As in the previously discussed "comprehensive retrenchment" option for USFK, continued strong US forward presence in Japan becomes even more important, and could be supported by a more robust command presence at USFJ.

In addition, it should be stressed that even a weaker bilateral US-ROK security alliance should retain the two countries' valuable economic and political relationship, backed by South Korea's participation in a cooperative regional security framework that features strong US ties with its allies. South Korea should continue to be engaged by the United States and Japan as a close partner, so that it is not totally pulled in the direction of China and Russia. Overall, the best way to prevent and hedge against US-ROK alliance weakening is to pursue the regional competition-mitigation strategies described earlier, while seeking to continue close security cooperation with South Korea.

18 In 2018 a co-author was informed by some South Korean experts, including a senior diplomat, that there was a certain level of resentment toward the United States, due to the perception that the United States was slow or not effective in pushing back against China when it implemented informal economic sanctions against South Korea in response to the US deployment of the THAAD missile-defense system in 2016.

19 A public poll by the *Seoul Newspaper* on May 9, 2018, available only in Korean, indicated that 73 percent of the South Korean public disagrees with the idea that the United States should withdraw its forces from the peninsula in the case of an inter-Korean peace treaty.

20 "Moon Says Korea-US Alliance Should Continue Forever," Yonhap, November 5, 2018, https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20181105009100315.

5. Conclusion

For more than half a century, the US-Japan and US-ROK alliances have played critical roles for maintenance and enhancement of peace and security in Northeast Asia, the entire Asia-Pacific region, and even the world. Continued political and public appreciation for these alliances, however, cannot be assumed. Policymakers in all three countries should regularly reconsider the significance and relevance of their alliance arrangements, and make coordinated adjustments when necessary to meet the demands of a dynamic region—all the while explaining the value of these relationships to the public. Possible future efforts to denuclearize North Korea and reduce military threats on the Korean Peninsula could dramatically affect the ideal configuration of (and political support for) USFK, with important implications for Japan. The growth of China's military capabilities and its behavior will also influence decision-making in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. The United States and its allies should seriously examine the intersections among these strategic parameters and discuss possible future military postures in the region, so that they are prepared to respond positively in close coordination.

The report argues that maintaining the status quo of US force posture in South Korea is the safest and most easily managed course of action, assuming that a dramatic breakthrough with North Korea is unlikely and the environment for South Korean domestic politics might change. This is possible, but such a view discounts a variety of other developments that suggest broader change in Northeast Asia when it comes to security concerns and alliance relations. Conventional inter-Korean confidence-building measures are moving forward, as are preparations for OPCON transition, even as the Trump administration is demanding larger host-nation-support payments from Seoul. At the same time, China has been flexing its sharp power around Asia in the form of economic and military coercion, but also expanding economic engagement and investment throughout the region. Meanwhile, Japan has expanded the versatility of its SDF to play a more logistical-support and regional security role, which could be factored into alliance cooperation strategies going forward. In short, the security and geopolitical environment in Northeast Asia is not static, and should be shaped proactively by the United States and its allies.

This will not be easy. Along with allied efforts to maintain a position of strength, competition mitigation by engaging with potential rivals will also be required, to avoid misunderstanding and promote cooperation. This could include the creation of multilateral security dialogues, as well as economic mechanisms to help resolve disputes. On the domestic side, efforts will be needed, including public diplomacy, to maintain and enhance political and public support toward the alliances.

These activities should lead to more substantive and comprehensive trilateral security cooperation—where strategy, analysis, and information are fully shared, and the US-Japan and US-ROK alliances are perceived and carry on in greater cohesion, which, combined with a partnership network of like-minded countries, would provide a better security environment in the region.

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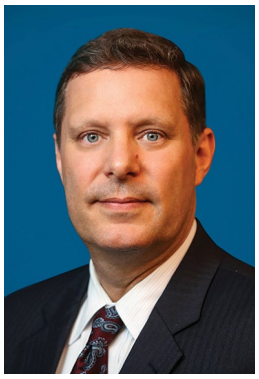

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