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The Second Trilateral Dialogue Initiative (TDI) Workshop

James L. Schoff and Sylvie Zhong

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Introduction

As described in this project's first trilateral workshop report, the dangers posed by North Korea's nuclear and missile programs remain significant, even as countries explore opportunities to improve bilateral relations with Pyongyang in exchange for verifiable denuclearization and resolution of other outstanding issues.¹ Meanwhile, China has been increasing its military presence in the East and South China Seas, as well as its use of economic statecraft throughout the Asia-Pacific region, focusing the attention of U.S. allies and other regional actors wary of rising Chinese influence and coercive power. These developments raise the stakes for effective diplomatic policy coordination and security cooperation between Japan, the Republic of Korea (ROK, or South Korea), and the United States. Trilateral efforts are necessary to help protect their common strategic interests, particularly given persistent Japan–South Korea tension that has reduced bilateral dialogue opportunities between the two countries. Trilateral cooperation can also make a difference in addressing broader foreign policy and regional commons issues.

To support trilateral cooperation and regional peace and security, four policy research and education institutions formed the Japan-ROK-U.S. Trilateral Dialogue Initiative (TDI), and its inaugural workshop was held in January 2019 in Tokyo. The Japan Institute of International Affairs, the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace organized a second workshop in collaboration with the Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security in Washington, DC. This working paper summarizes the key takeaways from the two-day workshop and priorities for further study, involving scholars, policy analysts, and current and former government officials from the three countries.

This workshop was the second in a three-year project consisting of rotating track 1.5 dialogues in each country, accompanied by policy research, publication of findings and recommendations, and outreach to the public.² This track 1.5 dialogue combines financial support from all three countries to support information exchange, collective discussion and analysis, and policy proposals focused on diplomatic coordination vis-à-vis North Korea to promote verifiable denuclearization and peace building that protects shared security interests. Trilateral foreign policy coordination on other pressing regional and global issues is another opportunity to advance mutual interests as a valuable core group within multilateral frameworks in Asia.

Priority areas for trilateral discussion at this second workshop included the role of trilateralism amid an intensifying U.S.-China strategic rivalry, the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision and its future from a multilateral perspective, diplomatic engagement with North Korea, and ways to strengthen trilateral cooperation and apply it to a broader Indo-Asia-Pacific context. Overall, the workshop clarified minor points of disagreement regarding these issues while

confirming solidarity on the general direction and key parameters. It also highlighted certain political and diplomatic challenges, which the Japan-ROK-U.S. TDI will address as the project moves forward.

Setting the Scene

The second TDI workshop convened amid worsening Japan–South Korea relations, which were exacerbated by a new area of bilateral friction. In August 2019 the administration of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe required additional export procedures for key materials that South Korean companies use to produce semiconductors, removing South Korea from Japan’s list of top trusted trading partners.³ Subsequently, South Korea removed Japan from its own white list in retaliation.⁴ Later in August, Seoul also announced that it would not renew its General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) with Japan, an information sharing arrangement covering sensitive information about North Korea’s nuclear and missile activities.⁵ At a time when Pyongyang was testing missiles regularly and the alliance faced other regional security challenges, U.S. policy-makers worried that Seoul’s decision could significantly impair the effectiveness of trilateral military cooperation.

Prospects for U.S.–China relations were mixed as well, trending toward further tension. Right before the TDI workshop, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a new round of tariffs on Chinese products, and the U.S. Navy sailed a warship near the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, dismissing China’s contentious claims and militarization of the area.⁶ Meanwhile, some in Washington were concerned that its two Northeast Asian allies might be going soft on Beijing, as Japan was exploring conditional cooperation with China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and pursuing a state visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping, and leaders in Beijing and Seoul jointly said that they looked forward to improved ties following their protracted disagreement over U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile deployment in South Korea.⁷

Related to all of this was the allies’ consistently stated commitment of attention and resources to the Indo-Pacific region, as seen in the FOIP strategies of the Abe and Trump administrations and South Korean President Moon Jae-in’s New Southern Policy, stressing connectivity and engagement within the region.⁸ This TDI workshop was held a month before the Thirty-Fifth Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Bangkok, a major theme of which was “partnership,” as member states sought to reinforce an ASEAN-centered regional architecture and expanded economic cooperation with all countries. Still, prior to the summit, ASEAN foreign ministers stated that China was the most important dialogue partner for the ASEAN countries, which raised some concern among the United States and its allies that countries in the region were leaning closer toward China and away from the U.S. allies.⁹

Finally, U.S.–North Korea talks were stalled after a late June mini-summit between Trump and North Korean President Kim Jung-Un in Panmunjom, a town just north of the North and South Korean border, although working-level talks briefly resumed soon after this TDI workshop. Having met with the U.S. president twice in 2019—in Hanoi, Vietnam, and in the Korean Demilitarized Zone—Kim made it clear that there will “never be denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula” if Washington adheres to its “hostile policy.”¹⁰ Despite this, there was still hope that further negotiations between the top leaders could continue in the foreseeable future. A few days before the TDI workshop, Moon and Trump met in New York and agreed not to pursue an “offensive stance” against North Korea. Trump also refused to criticize the north’s latest short-range missile launches. Nonetheless, the two leaders mentioned a need to maintain economic sanctions on North Korea and apparently did not discuss ways to offer security guarantees to the north.¹¹

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

Balancing Competition and Cooperation With China

In the TDI’s first session, there was slightly more discrepancy than commonality among the three countries regarding their own bilateral relationships with China, primary issues of concern, and what course to pursue. In fact, there were differences within each delegation as well, underscoring the challenge of forging consensus (if highlighting the value of continued alliance dialogue).

The South Korean side expressed concern about its vulnerability, facing pressures from China and intensified U.S.-China competition. One South Korean participant suggested that “comparatively speaking, Korea has been more vulnerable to China pressure, or so-called sharp power, than Japan and the United States, particularly given the Korean economy’s reliance on trade.” Japan and South Korea are more directly impacted when China tries to impose Beijing’s preferred outcome on contentious bilateral issues, as seen from the economic retaliation for THAAD missile defense deployment and maritime pressure around the Senkaku Islands (internationally recognized as administered by Japan). One Korean participant complained that South Korea is “excessively dependent on trade with China.” It is, in a sense, a “hostage” of its neighbor—Seoul cannot have any leverage against Beijing’s “import offensive” as far as trade is concerned.

Attitudes about how to react to China are not uniform even within the Blue House. One South Korean participant explained why Seoul may be viewed as tilting toward Beijing. For one, some progressive politicians tend to have stronger affinity toward China and even wish to use Beijing as a strategic counterweight to Washington’s unilateralism. For another, conventional foreign policy establishments appear no longer capable of handling key issues, which may be an outcome of the

Blue House's meticulous design. As a result, this participant concluded, "although anxiety about China's coercive power is in fact rising in Seoul, it is sometimes politically difficult to express these views, especially given Seoul's economic vulnerability vis-à-vis Beijing."

With respect to the Sino-Japanese relationship, one Japanese participant stressed that "in the long run, competition is the main undercurrent in Japan-China relations." First, he argued, China is a revisionist power that tries to change the international order, which threatens Japan's security and interests. Second, China has been incrementally changing the status quo, mainly using nonmilitary tools such as paramilitary maritime forces and economic statecraft. Third, China continues to challenge Japan's control over the Senkaku Islands. Nonetheless, although generally agreeing that the competition with China will become "long and complex," the Japanese side also suggested that "there is still room for negotiation and cooperation." China is not a revolutionary power seeking to overthrow the existing order, as pointed out by one participant and accepted by others in the room, "but it does have its own aspirations." Hence, "effective crisis management mechanisms are essential for avoiding unwanted and unexpected confrontation."

It is notable that both Japanese and South Korean participants argued that although some aspects of the Trump administration's China policy are advantageous to them (for example, pressuring China to change behavior and encouraging diplomatic courting of Japan and Korea), the United States' unpredictability has become a major concern, particularly in the economic and foreign policy arenas. As one Japanese participant pointed out, "the unpredictable moves of the current administration can feed misunderstandings and contradictory policy moves, dividing the alliances and benefiting China and North Korea." In addition, there seemed to be a shared recognition (and concern) among South Korean and Japanese participants that the United States is "determined to confront China." For example, a Korean participant quoted their Japanese colleagues in Tokyo: "Japan's approach to China is very different from that of [the United States], which keeps confronting and challenging Beijing—ours is not that simplistic."

Both Japanese and South Korean participants expressed anxiety about the possibility that the two countries could become victims of "proxy competition" between the United States and China, although South Korea's concern seemed the most acute. According to one South Korean participant, "what is happening at this stage is that the U.S. and China keep asking the exclusivity question of 'are you with us or against us'—Korea is a principal victim of proxy competition." Offering examples, another participant stressed that Seoul had agonized over its 2015 decision to join the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, which the United States explicitly opposed; to support the Permanent Court of Arbitration's decision against China's claims to the South China Sea; to accept Washington's demands for boycotting Huawei and other Chinese tech firms; and to support the United States' Indo-Pacific strategy. Drawing a slight contrast, one Japanese participant also said

that “the U.S.-China rivalry or President Trump is not a major factor when Tokyo considers improving its relationship with China.” For Japan, “stabilizing its relationship with China without giving up its vital interests has been a consistent and important policy goal since 2014.” The U.S. side instead focused attention to two broad issues: (1) Huawei and its 5G technology, and (2) the South China Sea.

The participants reached a consensus that neither the FOIP nor the United States’ frequent Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) constitutes a comprehensive U.S. strategy. One South Korean participant said, “the Indo-Pacific strategy of the U.S. appears more like simply a slogan to me.” Disagreement existed among the partners with respect to the effectiveness and necessity of Washington’s “assertive posture” against Beijing. One U.S. government official suggested that “China would not necessarily reduce its militarization and infrastructure building activity in the South China Sea [if we] give up the FONOPs; but the operations do send an important message.” Other participants worried, however, that the FONOPs could make Beijing behave more provocatively in the region. A South Korean participant was concerned that “the current U.S. pressure is more like ‘excluding China out’ instead of ‘changing China and putting it into the system,’ and this may lead Beijing to further believe that it has to hold the ground undoubtedly.” In response to that, a U.S. participant emphasized that “many shifts observed in U.S. foreign policy are in fact mere responses to China’s increasingly assertive behavior.”

A few U.S. participants were worried about the declining appeal of the U.S.-led liberal order around the world. One suggested that “one of the mistakes we have been making in the past few years is treating everything in China as reflecting hardline policy decisions from Xi, not as reflecting the Chinese people’s abiding interest in continuing reforms.” Another shared their disappointment in hearing the allies describe the United States as “unpredictable,” pushing for Washington to return to a more “traditional role” when it comes to global leadership.

Despite all the discrepancies, at the end of the session the participants agreed that different national approaches can also open up avenues for a division of labor among the allied partners in terms of engaging China on certain economic and foreign policy issues, as long as policy approaches are well explained and coordinated among the partners. The group stressed that the three countries need to maintain a united position on shared security issues, crisis management preparedness, and deterrence vis-à-vis China’s attempts at coercive economic diplomacy.

Trilateral Policy Coordination in the Indo-Pacific Region

Sharing overlapping themes of cooperation, peace, coexistence, and prosperity, the three countries took generally similar approaches to the Indo-Pacific region with respect to nonsecurity issues—especially

those related to regional development and infrastructure investment. Nonetheless, some divergences were apparent when it came to managing security challenges.

When discussing Washington's security interests in the region, many U.S. participants stressed freedom of navigation and the protection of "maritime openness." A U.S. government official explained that one of the Trump administration's top priorities has been to expand the United States' routine maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific region, consistent with the U.S. commitment to "fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows." In recent years the United States has increasingly emphasized the right and responsibility of all nations to protect maritime openness, as was pointed out by another U.S. participant. This participant highlighted new multilateral maritime exercises (such as the inaugural U.S.-ASEAN Maritime Exercise in September 2019), the expanded ship rider training for Pacific Islands states, and new joint exercises with partners including Australia, India, France, and the United Kingdom.

Many Japanese participants focused more on the necessity for multilateral security frameworks in the Indo-Pacific region, calling for further security cooperation between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States, as well as cooperation led by combinations of countries other than the United States (while still stressing the country's vital role overall). As some Japanese participants argued, China's maritime expansion can be managed if military balance is maintained. Hence, they suggested that U.S. allies and friendly countries need to add their power and presence to the region to neutralize the increasing military power of China and help maintain status quo. A Japanese scholar proposed three policy recommendations regarding what Australia-India-Japan-U.S. cooperation could contribute. First, it should focus on the linkage of the China-India border and the East China Sea. Second, if India has the will and capacity to increase its presence in the Indian Ocean, Japan and the United States can release themselves from the heavy burden of safeguarding security in that region and deploy more military force in the East and South China Seas. Third, the quadrilateral cooperation could also jointly support Southeast Asian countries around the South China Sea.

While many South Korean participants acknowledged the benefit of U.S.-led minilaterals as an important component of the Indo-Pacific security network, they also expressed reluctance to engage in multilateral security cooperation in Southeast Asia, preferring instead to focus on nontraditional security issues and regional development affairs. As one participant stressed, Seoul will not join minilaterals for maritime capacity building and domain awareness (in the Indo-Pacific region), out of concern that U.S. FOIP strategy is directed against China. They suggested that ASEAN countries were taking a similar position, as described in the *ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific*, which downplayed the security pillar of U.S. FOIP strategy, because it could force them to side against China.¹² Nevertheless, there were also South Korean participants suggesting that "South Korea could exert a certain type of 'positional power' within the U.S.-led alliance network by working to enhance

security cooperation among the spoke states.” One of them also noted that because it is unlikely for Japan and South Korea to restore their soured relationship at any time in the near future, Seoul might consider enhancing its security cooperation with Australia as an alternative.

In spite of divergences on security cooperation, there was still substantial alignment among the countries’ overall goals in the region. According to one U.S. participant, there are multiple areas where all three partners are engaging in similar activities in the Indo-Pacific that would benefit from greater exchanges of information, coordination, and potentially trilateral collaboration. These include investing in digital connectivity, development assistance to the transnational Mekong region in Southeast Asia, infrastructure development, maritime law enforcement training, and cybersecurity capacity building.

In particular, as recommended by a South Korean participant, assigning a role of coordinating the partners’ infrastructure investment to a trilateral coalition could be a starting point: “As the United States, Japan, Australia, and India are increasing their respective and joint infrastructure investments to respond to China’s expansion of influence in the region via its BRI, it would be much more efficient if they could coordinate their respective policies and provide regional states with alternative sources to BRI investment.” Other participants generally agreed on this point, and one added that since all three of the partners are technologically developed countries, they could specialize in coordinating bidding and funding for projects that involve high-tech issues such as smart cities and telecommunications.

The TDI workshop welcomed participants from Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand for this session, and they responded positively to these ideas, as long as they were nonexclusionary. A participant from Singapore noted that “the considerable soft power that you three countries have in Southeast Asia can be translated into much more positive [economic] engagement, as seen from the existing Japan-Singapore partnership for prosperity and the third-country training partnership between the U.S. and ASEAN countries.” Yet a participant from Thailand cautioned that “the alliance and unilateral framework can be perceived by other parties as threatening; therefore, too much competition can lead to distrust and tensions.” The group consistently agreed that “multilateral cooperation in the region should retain the *centrality* of the region.”

As the participants saw various opportunities to coordinate their policies and activities around Southeast Asia more effectively, some different themes emerged regarding how best to approach these issues. For instance, one U.S. government official emphasized the concept of reciprocity, suggesting that establishing fair political and economic relationships has become a hallmark of U.S. strategy under Trump. According to this participant, the administration’s emphasis on reciprocity is grounded in concerns that China is deploying various forms of political, economic, and military coercion to reduce the free choice of its neighbors. This argument was agreed to by many within the workshop.

In addition, some participants (particularly from South Korea) argued that activities in the Indo-Pacific region should not constitute a de facto policy of containment vis-à-vis China. For instance, one of them suggested that “minilateral linkages among only the United States and its allies are susceptible to China’s strong criticism, but this might be ameliorated if the ROK, Australia and Japan were also to engage with China in minilateral settings. Beijing might then perceive minilateral security cooperation less negatively and exclusively anti-Chinese.” Another participant suggested the creation of a trilateral infrastructure investment forum or fund, which could aid the region and also provide diplomatic space for South Korea to collaborate with China on some BRI initiatives without irking Washington.

North Korea Policy Coordination

Group discussion about how best to adapt and coordinate the allies’ North Korea policy was among the most contentious of the day, as participants could not agree on the relative risks and opportunities related to different approaches toward Pyongyang. Some supported a more flexible, long-term approach. For instance, a U.S. government official mentioned that there may be some reconsideration within Washington on a couple of redlines set in Hanoi, including the idea of “a definitive road map.” Nonetheless, many participants argued for a shorter-term focus on continued pressure and demands for sincere steps toward denuclearization. A Japanese participant suggested that “the most important thing is to set up concrete bottom lines and [an] effective time schedule; the second is to look at the options and assess realistically what we can achieve in the short term.” One Korean participant also emphasized that although there have been many quiet discussions on a “plan B” (in case current diplomatic efforts fail), such plans cannot be viewed as an alternative to full denuclearization, which should always be the main objective of negotiations.

U.S. participants seemed to be more concerned about taking concrete steps that are hard to reverse, such as certain exemptions of economic sanctions that currently “raise the costs on Kim’s side significantly and reduce the money that goes to North Korea’s weapons for mass destruction programs.” Other participants understood the need to entice Kim with conditions and benefits as an action-for-action process instead of “putting everything at the beginning.”

Yet one Japanese participant also warned the group about “discussing the wrong issue.” The joint agreement made between Kim and Trump in Singapore included new peaceful relations, security guarantees for North Korea, and denuclearization of the peninsula, among a few other points. As this participant pointed out, if Kim prioritizes sanctions removal, he would have insisted on this in Singapore. The participant suggested that perhaps North Korea’s priority is security assurance instead of lifting economic sanctions. Related to this point, a South Korean and a U.S. participant both expressed concerns about the effectiveness of “enticement,” saying that the truculent and unresponsive

behaviors of North Korea may not be affected noticeably by what the allies are willing to offer. Instead, “it is rational for Kim to give up [nuclear weapons] as late as possible (if ever) to get as much benefit from the allies as possible throughout the process.”

A Japanese participant noted that it is vital for the partners to share and coordinate their threat perceptions based on assessments of North Korea’s capabilities and intentions. Regarding threats from the north, he suggested that “for Pyongyang, success means deterring the United States and South Korea with *sophisticated weapons*; even if North Korean tactical weapons are not threatening to the allies, their links to higher level military escalation still should not be underestimated in the short run.” Many U.S. and Japanese participants expressed alarm at the improvements North Korea has made with its shorter-range missile program and were concerned that missile defenses might not be adequate. They argued that an insecure Japan could weaken the Japan-U.S. alliance’s ability to support South Korea in a north-south conflict, and this could weaken deterrence overall. Another Japanese participant also warned that “if the U.S. power projection from outside of the Korean Peninsula become necessary, North Korea may consider decoupling the geostrategic linkage between the peninsula, Japan, Hawaii, Guam and the U.S. homeland, by using its long-term strategic arsenal.”

The group generally recognized current trilateral missile defense cooperation and information sharing as relatively strong, despite ongoing Japan–South Korea tensions. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this cooperation might be vulnerable to political dynamics within the alliance. For example, one Japanese participant raised the point that the South Korea–U.S. alliance has not shared its joint strategic plans with Japan, and the details of deterrence options against North Korea should not be decided solely by the bilateral alliance between the United States and South Korea—instead, it should be decided through consultations among the three partners. “Theoretically speaking,” according to another Japanese participant, “if Japan does not support the U.S.-ROK alliance, Pyongyang’s strategic calculations would be dramatically improved.” He also said that it should not be taken for granted that Japan supports the bilateral alliance between its two partners, especially if North Korea blackmails Japan with the threat of using its nuclear capabilities.

Planning for possible failure or a collapse of diplomacy with North Korea is also increasingly important. One immediate issue would be whether to return to a maximum-pressure campaign against the north or not. Regarding this, the participants seemed to consistently believe that “under current conditions, it is not viable at all to reinitiate such a campaign.” A related issue would be what kind of role the three partners should seek from China. The partners recognized that apparently China is using negotiations over the North Korea issue to test U.S. commitment to the region, but Beijing should nevertheless be included in the conversations (especially when there is an escalation and more assertive responses might become necessary), either with a unified position or a slightly differentiated but coordinated approach. As a U.S. participant noted, China is not in the same step with the three

allies, and it will not commit to any aggressive actions unless North Korea resorts to highly provocative activities. There needs to be a certain kind of concrete road map that the trilateral alliance develops in advance vis-à-vis the Chinese government.

Regardless of all the divergences, there are clear opportunities to step up trilateral dialogue about future North Korea issues, since the three partners have been coordinating closely on short-term negotiating tactics and bottom lines regarding what they can (or cannot) accept from any initial North Korean deal. Participants in the room all agreed that effective multilateralism is the key to promoting peace and stability on the peninsula, while—as one said—“the ongoing tensions between South Korea and Japan as well as the intensified U.S.-China rivalry have made negotiations with Pyongyang more challenging and given more leverage to Kim.”

Looking into the future, the group believed that a longer time frame for thinking about upgrades to defense and deterrence strategies in light of North Korean advances is also necessary. A U.S. participant suggested that there could also be opportunities for trilateral defense innovation discussions related to new types of missile defenses or antisubmarine warfare, which could apply directly to emerging North Korean threats.

Sustaining Effective Trilateral Cooperation

The deterioration of Japan–South Korea relations throughout 2019 cast a pall over the entire TDI workshop, and by the second day it had become a more central theme of group discussions. One U.S. participant suggested that as domestic politics are driving Japan and South Korea apart, there needs to be the highest-level commitment—which is currently absent in the trilateral cooperation—on each side, since bureaucrats at lower levels may not feel that they have the “political cover” to handle such issues. He raised the example that former U.S. president Barack Obama used to spend some of his personal political capital to encourage Japan and South Korea to work together on security issues. Stressing the spillover effects of cooperation on broader aspects, another U.S. government official said that “it is absolutely critical for the allies to engage in cooperation that goes beyond traditional military affairs that usually happens in the U.S. Department of Defense; such cooperation used to exist during the Obama era.”

Throughout the workshop, both Japanese and South Korean participants expressed concerns and dissatisfaction regarding the possibility that the other partner is treated as a closer ally by the United States, which they believe might adversely affect the balance of trilateral cooperation. As discussed above, some Japanese participants were concerned about Japan being excluded from the development of South Korea–U.S. joint strategic plans on North Korea issues. A South Korean participant also noted that “trilateralism has had a basic structure in which the U.S. serves as a hub and the other

two are spokes; what concerns Seoul the most is that the U.S.-Japan alliance has been strengthening, while the U.S.-ROK alliance has been undergoing uncertain adjustments.” He then suggested that “if Japan is considered as a more important ally than South Korea, South Korea may well have reservations in facilitating the trilateral, security-wise.”

The U.S. “convening” role for trilateralism as a way to help improve Japan–South Korea communication could become more vital over time. A Japanese participant observed that the Korean and Japanese participants “pulled their punches” on the first day of the TDI workshop, when U.S. officials were present, and that if a separate Japan-Korea bilateral meeting had been held, it would have been significantly testier. A U.S. participant also suggested that instead of serving simply as a mediator, Washington should actively encourage Seoul and Tokyo to keep in mind contemporary needs for cooperation, which “serves their own, instead of [the United States’], interests.” Near-term efforts should be focused on protecting current levels of trilateral security cooperation. It might also be possible and beneficial to promote nongovernmental efforts to explore difficult historical periods in a collective way. At least, history cannot be simply ignored if trilateral cooperation is to be sustained, but pursuing this outside of formal government channels might help depoliticize the process.

During the final session of the TDI workshop, the group exchanged ideas on future trilateral meetings and issues that should be addressed further. A South Korean participant pointed out that there are still gaps in perceptions between the South Korean participants and others in the room on issues related to China. Additional dialogue and policy coordination are necessary on the proper approach that Japan or South Korea could take on such issues to maintain the effectiveness of the alliance while avoiding antagonizing China. A U.S. government official said that they understand Seoul does not share some of Washington’s primary geopolitical challenges in Asia. Hence, “the current challenge is to describe a broader role for the trilateral partnership—for Korea, specifically—in a more expansive geopolitical dynamic in Asia.”

Overall, the workshop participants agreed to continue dialogue on issues related to effectively managing the most important geopolitical challenges in Northeast Asia, including appropriately balancing against China’s rise and deterring dangerous North Korean behavior. With regard to strategic competition with China, one topic for future discussion could be mutual support and collective deterrence of Chinese economic coercion, so that decisions about national interests are less susceptible to Chinese pressure. The TDI nations could discuss possible scenarios and options to enhance their sovereignty in this regard, along with crisis management coordination and incentivizing continued intelligence sharing. As the United States enters a presidential election year, and with other leadership changes looming over the horizon in the other two countries, the workshop participants recognized the positive role that trilateral dialogues like TDI can play in promoting mutual understanding, foreign policy coordination continuity, and productive relationships.

Appendix: Second TDI Workshop Participants (all names are listed using the American convention of surnames last)

Japan Delegation

Yuka Koshino, Research Associate, Japan Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies
Tetsuo Kotani, Senior Fellow, Japan Institute of International Affairs
Masashi Murano, Japan Chair Fellow, Hudson Institute
Satoru Nagao, Visiting Fellow, Hudson Institute
Yoshiji Nogami, Vice Chairman, Japan Institute of International Affairs
Shinji Yamaguchi, National Institute of Defense Studies

Japanese Government

Kazutoshi Aikawa, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan
Hideaki Konagaya, Counselor, Embassy of Japan
Yuichi Nakai, Counselor, Embassy of Japan

ROK Delegation

Korea National Diplomatic Academy

Wongi Choe, Professor, Department of International Economy and Trade Studies
Hyeyeong Jeong, Researcher, Department of American Studies
Hyunwook Kim, Professor, Department of American Studies
Joon-hyung Kim, Chancellor, Korea National Diplomatic Academy
Jieun Lee, Researcher, Department of American Studies
Jeonghun Min, Professor, Department of American Studies

ROK External Participants

Jae-Ho Chung, Professor, Seoul National University
Jae Jeok Park, Professor, Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Jong-yil Ra, Distinguished Professor, Gachon University; Former Ambassador to Japan and the United Kingdom; and Former Senior National Security Advisor
Yul Sohn, Professor, Yonsei University

ROK Government

Seoung-ho Cho, Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Hyunji Jung, Second Secretary, North America Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sung-eun Kim, Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Korea

Young Hwan Kim, Minister Counselor, Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Jihyun Lee, Embassy of the Republic of Korea
Sangmin Lee, Director, North America Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

U.S. Delegation

Frank Aum, U.S. Institute of Peace
Katie Botto, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Thomas Cynkin, Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security
Abe Denmark, Wilson Center
Evan Feigenbaum, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Lindsey Ford, Asia Society
Chung Min Lee, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Oriana Mastro, Georgetown University
Steven Meyer, Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security
Douglas Paal, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Jung Pak, Brookings Institution
Laura Rosenberger, German Marshall Fund
James L. Schoff, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
Michael Swaine, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

U.S. Government

Angela Kerwin, Director, Office of Korea Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Juli Kim, Office of Korean Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Evan Morrissey, Office of Korean Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Ted Saeger, Office of Japan Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Randy Schriver, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense

Other Participants

Royal Thai Embassy Representative
Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia Representative
Embassy of the Republic of Singapore Representative

About the Authors

James L. Schoff is a senior fellow in Carnegie's Asia Program. His research focuses on Japan-U.S. relations and regional engagement, Japanese technology innovation, and regional trade and security dynamics. He previously served as senior adviser for East Asia policy at the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense and as director of Asia-Pacific studies at the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis.

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About the Project

The **Japan-ROK-U.S. Trilateral Dialogue Initiative (TDI)** is a collaborative project carried out by the Japan Institute for International Affairs, the Korea National Diplomatic Academy, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the Daniel Morgan Graduate School of National Security to assist trilateral cooperation in support of East Asian peace and security. All four organizations contributed in kind or financial support to make this initiative possible.

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Notes

- 1 James L. Schoff and Paul K. Lee, “Sustaining Strong Partnerships: The First Trilateral Dialogue Initiative (TDI) Workshop,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/25/sustaining-strong-partnerships-first-trilateral-dialogue-initiative-tdi-workshop-pub-78971>.
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