

## US-Japan-ROK Nuclear Dialogue Track 2 Statement

Towards a Common Trilateral Approach

11 May 2011

### Introduction

1. In the summer of 2010, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA) Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (CPDNP), and the Asan Institute for Policy Studies joined to form a Track 2 nuclear dialogue between the United States (US), Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK). The overarching purpose was to explore how a trilateral approach, as opposed to one based primarily on bilateral US alliances, might allow the three countries to strengthen nonproliferation efforts and help create a world without nuclear weapons, while also addressing growing regional security challenges, particularly the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) nuclear program and increasing Chinese assertiveness. American, Japanese, and Korean participants met for six days of in-depth, off-the-record discussions on 7-8 September 2010 in Tokyo, 6-7 December 2010 in Seoul, and 28 February-1 March 2011 in Washington, DC. This statement, signed by most but not all of the participants, is the result of these efforts.

2. History did not stand still while the participants prepared for and then began the Track 2 nuclear dialogue. Positive developments such as the issuing of a forward-looking US Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the successful conclusion of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, the adoption of the Nuclear Security Summit Communiqué, and the signing and ratification of New START were accompanied by developments of concern:

- In March 2010, it was reported that China now considers the South China Seas part of its “core national interest”, putting it on the same level as Taiwan and Tibet.
- On 26 March 2010, the ROK Navy corvette Cheonan sank in the Yellow Sea after an explosion ripped it in two. Of the 104 ROK sailors on board, 46 died or remain missing.
  - An ROK-led, international investigating team concluded that, without a doubt, a DPRK torpedo sank the Cheonan.
- On 7 September 2010, a Chinese fishing boat rammed a Japanese Coast Guard vessel near the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands.
  - Japan initially detained the boat's captain, but then released him after a broad and aggressive Chinese response, which included the arrest of four Japanese nationals as well as an unannounced halt of rare earth mineral exports to Japan and other industrial powers.
- On 12 November 2010, the DPRK took nuclear scientist Siegfried Hecker and two Stanford University colleagues on a tour of a uranium enrichment facility at the Yongbyon Nuclear Complex.
  - The Stanford professors reported that the facility housed 2,000 centrifuges and were surprised by its sophistication.
- On 23 November 2010, the DPRK fired approximately 200 artillery rounds at or near Yeonpyeong Island along the Northern Limit Line (NLL) in the Yellow Sea.
  - Two ROK marines and two civilians were killed, while 19 others were injured.

- On 11 January 2011, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted a test-flight of its J-20 stealth fighter shortly before US Defense Secretary Robert Gates met in Beijing with Chinese President Hu Jintao (who reportedly did not know about the test).

China's lack of public condemnation of the DPRK for sinking the Cheonan and shelling Yeonpyeong Island raised serious concerns in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington about its relationship with the DPRK, and deepened the determination of the three allies to work together to respond. These DPRK provocations, as well as China's more assertive actions, threaten security and stability in the region and increase the challenges of making further progress in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.

3. The US, Japan, and the ROK have responded by expanding and deepening their bilateral and, to a surprising extent, trilateral diplomacy and cooperation. In response to the artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island, the US sent the USS George Washington to carry out joint military exercises with ROK naval forces in the Yellow Sea. Subsequently, ROK military officers observed a US-Japan naval exercise (after Japan sent observers to a US-ROK exercise in July). On 6 December 2010 (the first day of this group's Track 2 meeting in Seoul), American Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hosted her counterparts, Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Seiji Maehara and Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Kim Sung-hwan, for the first trilateral diplomatic meeting between the three countries in nearly two years. The resulting Trilateral Statement concluded by "welcom[ing] continued and strengthened trilateral interaction to complement the strong bilateral institutions and discussions that exist among the three nations." On 10 January 2011, Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin held talks about possible intelligence- and equipment-sharing agreements and pledged to "expand as well as deepen exchange and cooperation in defense affairs."

4. Following these demonstrations of increased alliance solidarity, both bilateral and trilateral, the security situation improved, at least for the time being. On 9 December 2010, Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo went to Pyongyang where the two countries, according to the official Chinese news agency, "reached a consensus on the Korean peninsula crisis." Both China and the DPRK continued to call for the resumption of Six-Party talks, and the DPRK said it was willing to engage in direct talks with the ROK. On 12 January 2011, the DPRK opened a diplomatic hot line that had been closed for more than seven months, and shortly after the US-China summit, the ROK agreed to open talks with the DPRK before resumption of the Six-Party talks, a position that China subsequently agreed to. In the China-US Joint Statement on 19 January 2011, US President Barack Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao "expressed concern regarding the DPRK's claimed uranium enrichment program" and "reiterated the need for concrete and effective steps to achieve the goal of denuclearization and for full implementation of the other commitments made in the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks." In January, despite continued tensions between the DPRK and the ROK, the ROK accepted the DPRK's offer for high-level military talks, but on 9 February 2011 the DPRK walked out of these talks.

5. The undersigned strongly endorse increased US-Japan-ROK cooperation on regional security issues. However, security issues do not exist in a vacuum, and trilateral security cooperation will be more likely with greater economic ties and improved bilateral relations that move beyond historical animosities. The Japan-ROK relationship remains the weakest link, and further reconciliation efforts are needed in order to strengthen security cooperation among the three. The government and people of the ROK and Japan retain different views on the historical past, and both governments face obstacles to bilateral security cooperation, such as disagreements over territorial issues, history textbooks, and comfort women. The acknowledgment of the gravity of these issues is the first concrete step towards exploring mutually agreeable ways to overcome them and make joint efforts in enhancing security conditions in the region.

## **Broad Policy Vision**

6. The undersigned believe strongly in the need for positive and comprehensive cooperation, both bilaterally and trilaterally, to ensure security and stability in Northeast Asia. The US, Japan, and the ROK are united by common values – democracy, free market principles, the rule of law, and responsible foreign policy – and remain united in purpose, interests, and collective future.

7. The three allies share the ultimate objective of creating a world without nuclear weapons, while recognizing the need to maintain effective nuclear deterrence as long as nuclear weapons exist. They also recognize the near-term need to coordinate policies to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons or related technology, material, or expertise to state and non-state actors. In Northeast Asia, this means reversing the DPRK's nuclear build-up, preventing any proliferation from it, and limiting DPRK non-nuclear provocations. The US, Japan, and the ROK should also continue to implement the Communiqué and the Work Plan from the 2010 Washington Nuclear Security Summit, while also working to ensure that the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit in Seoul is a success (cooperating with the Fissile Material Working Group and other NGOs to this end).

8. The undersigned support peaceful unification of Korea, which is an important element of peace and stability in Northeast Asia and endorse the language in the 16 June 2009 Joint Vision Statement, agreed to by Presidents Lee and Obama, that the US and the ROK "aim to build a better future for all people on the Korean Peninsula, establishing a durable peace on the Peninsula and leading to peaceful reunification on the principles of free democracy and a market economy." While the ROK should, of course, play the leading role in unification, it is important to foster positive views among concerned countries, including Japan and the US. In particular, groups in Japan should consider polling the Japanese people to better understand their views on Korean unification.

9. The undersigned agree that China's stance will be critical to peace and security in Northeast Asia. A China that assertively pursues its interests in the region with little effort to engage other nations or collaborate in addressing regional challenges will have a destabilizing impact on regional affairs. China's active and positive cooperation is badly needed in addressing regional problems, including the pursuit of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. As the US and Russia continue to reduce their stockpiles of nuclear weapons, China should be involved in working toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. To facilitate Beijing's involvement in the global nuclear weapons reduction process and enhance strategic stability, the US, Japan, and the ROK should intensify strategic dialogues with China at both Track 1 and Track 2 levels.

10. The US, Japan, and the ROK will be in a better position to deal with regional and global challenges if they create a culture of trilateralism based upon mutual respect. A true trilateral culture would consist of three parts: genuine consultation, honest discussions, and actual collaboration. The three countries should seek to instill and practice a culture of consultation that becomes ingrained and second-nature and work to develop a collective action-oriented mechanism. Legacy issues and non-military discussions have their rightful place in this trilateral arrangement, but they should be placed in priority order. Of first and primary importance at this juncture is trilateral deterrence.

11. To deal with nuclear issues specifically, the undersigned propose the establishment of a high-level government forum among the US, Japan, and the ROK to discuss all aspects of nuclear nonproliferation, disarmament, peaceful use and research, as well as nuclear policy and strategy, and to consider ways and means to achieve desired ends. Among other things, such a forum would allow for greater coordination on measures to improve nuclear security, in particular with respect to securing sensitive nuclear materials in the region under a range of possible contingencies. Coordination should also extend to the synchronization of views on strengthening provisions for withdrawal from the NPT, universalizing the Additional Protocol, and other nuclear nonproliferation issues in advance of the 2012 NPT Preparatory Committee.

## **Strengthening Deterrence, Extended Deterrence, and Assurance**

12. On 10 January 2003, the DPRK announced its withdrawal from the NPT, and in 2006 and 2009, the DPRK carried out nuclear explosive tests. DPRK nuclear weapons continue to be a destabilizing force on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia and it remains important to work towards denuclearization. As the DPRK improves its nuclear capabilities, it will likely become even more of a deterrence challenge and proliferation risk – both vertical (increasing its own capabilities) and horizontal (selling sensitive technology to Syria, Iran, Burma, and/or non-state actors). In particular, the looming eventuality of a DPRK nuclear warhead, miniaturized and mated to a ballistic missile, poses a clear and present danger to the national security of the US, Japan, and the ROK. Together, the three must address the multiple deterrence challenges – ranging from the employment of nuclear weapons to nuclear coercion – that a nuclear DPRK presents and establish priorities among them. Preventing non-nuclear aggression and provocations is all the more critical because of the risk that a

conventional conflict could escalate to the nuclear level. The erratic nature of the DPRK regime, intensified by an uncertain leadership succession, might increase this escalatory risk.

13. The US remains resolute in its commitment to defend its allies with nuclear weapons if necessary, but the three allies must acknowledge that nuclear weapons have little or no utility in deterring low- to mid-level provocations and that conventional capability clearly adequate to defeat aggression and respond to provocations is, in itself, important to deterrence. Therefore, the US should focus on strengthening conventional deterrence by maintaining its bases and deployed forces in Korea and Japan and continuing its missile defense cooperation with the two countries. It should assess carefully the preparations for transfer of operational control of military forces exclusively to the ROK, ensuring that if such a transfer occurs, it does not lessen US commitment. Tangible guarantees should be accompanied by a robust and thoughtful discussion of the escalation ladder, nuclear and conventional, in potential conflicts involving the DPRK. Together, the three allies must identify the rungs of the nuclear and conventional escalation and de-escalation ladder. Developing a joint understanding of when to climb up and when to climb down, and building the flexibility for doing so, will give rise to a credible trilateral stance. Looking forward, the three countries should also consider initiating an in-depth policy study on the ways and means to establish conditions under which the policy of “sole purpose” of nuclear weapons could be safely adopted in the Korean Peninsula context.

14. While China appeared to be playing a facilitating role with the DPRK and Iran throughout 2010, China’s behavior in the region seemed increasingly assertive on issues ranging from claims on disputed territories to dealing with DPRK provocations. Its lack of condemnation of the Cheonan incident, the Yeonpyeong shelling, and uranium enrichment revelations implied acceptance of such behavior. The undersigned fully accept China’s emergence as a global and regional power, but believe China needs to accept more responsibility in pursuing regional stability and security. China should also understand that increased assertiveness that threatens the interests of the US, Japan, and the ROK makes the three allies all the more determined to collaborate and prevent China from engaging in such behavior.

## **Preventing DPRK Aggression and Provocations**

15. The US, Japan, and the ROK are concerned with preventing a wide range of hostile actions, from major war to coercive diplomacy to low-level provocations. While the allies have succeeded in preventing major acts of aggression since the Korean War, the DPRK, over the past decades, has committed numerous acts of hostility, including in 1968 when it seized the USS Pueblo and attempted to assassinate Park Chung Hee; in 1983 when it attempted to assassinate President Chun Doo Hwan, which resulted in the deaths of 17 senior cabinet officials; and in 1987 when it blew up Korean Airlines Flight 858. The DPRK gave regional scope to its provocations when it launched the Taepodong over Japan in 1998 and 2009 and ratcheted up non-nuclear provocations to a new level in 2010 by sinking the Cheonan and shelling Yeonpyeong Island – the first attack on ROK territory in over fifty years.

16. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discern the exact calculus in DPRK decision-making, but recent events do provide important context. When the DPRK sunk the Cheonan in March 2010, it apparently believed that the perceived benefits of such a bold provocation, whether taken as part of an internal leadership transition or motivated by the desire to force its way to the center of the world stage, outweighed the potential costs. It may also be the case that the DPRK’s growing nuclear capabilities led it to believe that it could act with impunity at the conventional level. In either case, it is clear that the reactions of the ROK, the US, and Japan to the Cheonan incident were insufficient to alter the DPRK’s calculus because a few months later the DPRK escalated by shelling Yeonpyeong Island.

17. Since then, the allies have demonstrated considerably greater resolve, both diplomatically and militarily. The DPRK protested strongly when the ROK announced it would conduct live-fire exercises near Yeonpyeong and threatened to respond strongly if the ROK carried out its plans. Seoul was undeterred – in part because the killing of innocent civilians during the island’s shelling strengthened public opinion in the ROK behind the Lee government – and carried out its exercise. The DPRK did not retaliate, instead disparaging the exercise. In this instance, it appears that the DPRK determined that the risks of retaliation outweighed potential gains – a decision that may have been influenced by a perceived increase in alliance resolve and solidarity.

18. Going forward, strengthening the credibility of deterrence against non-nuclear aggression and provocations will require that the ROK, the US, and Japan improve their capacity to resist aggression and manifest their resolve to do so if necessary. In addition to actions each nation takes to increase its capabilities and readiness, enhancing deterrence will require closer diplomatic and military coordination and cooperation, both bilaterally and trilaterally. Verbal statements are not sufficient to prevent actors like the DPRK from carrying out acts of aggression unless they are backed by capability, resolve, and action. In the event of further DPRK provocation, there must be a response, and it must be prompt yet controlled, proportional yet consequential. While it is important for the three allies to maintain unity, trilateral coordination must not become an obstacle to quick and decisive action.

19. Preventing DPRK non-nuclear provocations and coercive diplomacy is an important end in itself, but it also contributes to the effort to denuclearize the DPRK by demonstrating that their nuclear capabilities have not eroded the resolve of the ROK and its allies. Through concrete actions, the allies must demonstrate to the DPRK that its nuclear build-up has not provided it with any political leverage that might outweigh the diplomatic and economic isolation that it has incurred through its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

## **Fostering Engagement and Cooperation with China**

20. China is a strong, prosperous, and increasingly powerful member of the Asian-Pacific community, and its actions are critical to regional stability, security, and prosperity. The undersigned believe that the US, Japan, and the ROK all have a stake in China's success and hope that China joins them in creating regional stability and security. As a nuclear-weapon state under the NPT, China also bears an important responsibility for ensuring steady progress towards global nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. A unitary institutional architecture in Asia is neither desirable nor possible. Instead, there should be multiple bilateral, trilateral, and multilateral arrangements in which all nations participate in different ways.

21. The US, Japan, and the ROK are concerned by China's rapid military modernization. China has been developing advanced submarines, fighter aircraft, anti-satellite capabilities, as well as conventional cruise and ballistic missiles, including an anti-ship ballistic missile that could threaten US aircraft carriers. It is also enhancing its intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems and its space and cyber capabilities. These growing capabilities are cause for concern and could pose challenges to the security balance in the region. The undersigned believe it is essential that the US, Japan, and the ROK, both individually and collectively, engage China in a meaningful process of consultation and dialogue to ensure strategic stability and to nurture a favorable environment for nuclear nonproliferation, disarmament, and regional security.

22. China also has a particularly important role to play in resolving the crisis on the Korean peninsula. Because the DPRK is heavily dependent on Chinese material assistance (food and energy) and transportation links, China has greater leverage over the DPRK than any other country. Following the most recent DPRK provocations, China was initially reluctant to engage directly. However, the 9 December 2010 Chinese mission to Pyongyang probably contributed to the DPRK's decision to become more restrained. The Hu-Obama joint statement, which registered China's opposition to the North's uranium-based programs, was also a positive step. In both crisis and non-crisis periods, successfully engaging China will help to prevent provocations and coercive diplomacy by the DPRK.

## **Final Thoughts**

23. The undersigned both applaud and strongly endorse the common objectives stated in the 6 December 2010 Trilateral Statement: "[T]he governments and peoples of Japan, the ROK, and the US share a deep and abiding interest in maintaining peace, prosperity, and stability in the region; expanding the benefits of freer and more open trade; and promoting and protecting freedom, democracy, and human rights worldwide. The three nations shared a common understanding that it is necessary to strengthen...consultation and cooperation with every respective nation of the region, in order to maintain peace and security. The three nations underscored their enduring commitment to building strong, productive, and

constructive relations with China, and to achieving a common objective of creating a peaceful Northeast Asian community of nations.”

24. However, the Track 2 participants would go further than the Trilateral Statement’s concluding remark that it “welcomed continued and strengthened trilateral interaction to complement the strong bilateral institutions and discussions that exist among the three nations.” The three countries should gradually but permanently move from the current bilateral security framework to a truly trilateral understanding, collaboration, and call to action. As a first step, all three countries should expeditiously review what they can do to meet aggression against any of the three within their respective constitutional bounds; each country should then share their conclusions candidly and completely with the others.

25. In the event of an aggression, either nuclear or non-nuclear, against the US, Japan, or the ROK, each country should take all means available to repel such aggression, consistent with constitutional bounds. The three should maximize their security cooperation, aiming to deter and defend against any such aggression, including the following:

- establishing an institutional structure to coordinate diplomatic and military actions;
- expanding cross-servicing agreements;
- strengthening intelligence coordination, especially by police and Coast Guard forces, on illicit trade and transfer of sensitive nuclear technologies;
- holding more joint military exercises;
- examining new theories of integrated defense, inseparability, and/or extended defense to cover allied military forces and facilities in the region and/or ROK, US, or Japanese territory;
- coordinating the management of air and missile defenses, including examining the advantages of increasing or lifting the range on missile development; and/or
- exploring ways for Japan and the ROK to join additional internationally co-developed defense systems.

26. The undersigned believe that trilateralism is more than “interactions,” or a “complement” to bilateralism. Expanding, deepening, and institutionalizing US-Japan-ROK trilateralism can help improve the prospects for peace and security in Northeast Asia, helping to establish the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.

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<u>United States</u>	<u>Japan</u>	<u>Republic of Korea</u>
<i>Clark MURDOCK</i> Senior Adviser Center for Strategic and International Studies	<i>Nobuyasu ABE</i> Director, Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Japan Institute of International Affairs	<i>HAHM Chaibong</i> Director Asan Institute for Policy Studies
<i>Victor CHA</i> Senior Advisor and Korea Chair, CSIS Professor of Government, Georgetown University	<i>Nobumasa AKIYAMA</i> Adjunct Professor Hitotsubashi University	<i>CHEON Seongwhun</i> Senior Research Fellow Korea Institute for National Unification
<i>Ralph COSSA</i> President Pacific Forum CSIS	<i>Hideaki KANEDA</i> Director The Okazaki Institute	<i>HWANG Jaeho</i> Professor, Division of International Studies Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
<i>Brad GLOSSERMAN</i> Executive Director Pacific Forum CSIS	<i>Mitsuru KUROSAWA</i> Professor Osaka Jogakuin University	<i>KIM Hyun-Wook</i> Professor Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security
<i>Michael GREEN</i> Senior Adviser and Japan Chair, CSIS Associate Professor, Georgetown University	<i>Narushige MICHISHITA</i> Associate Professor National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies	<i>KIM Jin-Woo</i> CEO Exquisite Intellect, LLC

United States

*Jenifer MACKBY*  
Fellow  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies

*Walter SLOCOMBE*  
Senior Counsel, Caplin & Drysdale  
Former Undersecretary of Defense for  
Policy

*Scott SNYDER*  
Director, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy  
The Asia Foundation

*Sharon SQUASSONI*  
Senior Fellow and Director,  
Proliferation Prevention Program  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies

*Nicholas SZECHENYI*  
Deputy Director and Senior Fellow,  
Japan Chair  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies

*John WARDEN*  
Program Coordinator, Project on  
Nuclear Issues  
Center for Strategic and International  
Studies

Japan

*Miho OKADA*  
Research Fellow, Center for the  
Promotion of Disarmament and Non-  
Proliferation  
Japan Institute of International Affairs

*Tomohiro OKAMOTO*  
Lt.Gen. rtd, JASDF, JAPAN  
Chief Analyst of Military Affairs,  
Eurasian Research Institute 21

*Hirofumi TOSAKI*  
Senior Research Fellow, Center for the  
Promotion of Disarmament and Non-  
Proliferation  
Japan Institute of International Affairs

Republic of Korea

*KIM Taewoo*  
Senior Research Fellow  
Korea Institute for Defense Analyses

*LEE Jongsoo*  
Managing Director  
Brock Group

*LEE Jung-Hoon*  
Professor  
Yonsei University