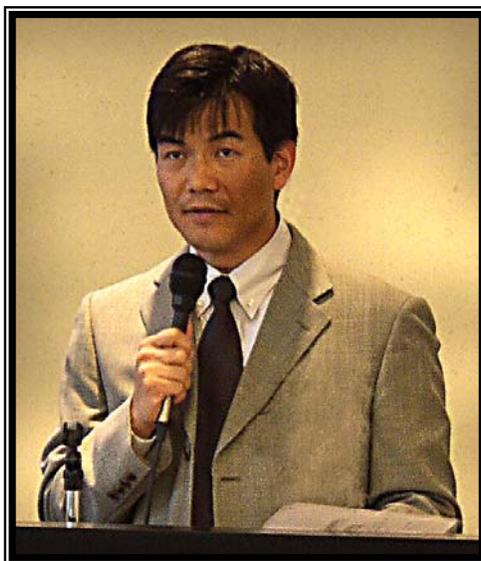


THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION
CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES



**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR JAPAN:
UNIFICATION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA**

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Post-World War II relations between Japan and the Korean peninsula started after the unconditional surrender of Japan in 1945 and the end of the Japanese colonization of the Korean peninsula. After lengthy normalization talks, which were initiated in 1952, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) normalized diplomatic relations in 1965.

Unlike the Rhee Syngman Administration from 1948 to 1960, which was pro-U.S. and anti-Japan, President Park Chunghee, who gave high priority to Korean industrialization and economic growth, promoted economic relations with Japan.¹ The ROK imported parts, intermediary goods and capital goods from Japan and other western countries, which were assembled in the ROK and exported to the United States and other overseas markets. This resulted in remarkable economic growth. The ROK used the Japanese industrial and export policy models with great success; Korean products have been catching up with Japanese goods in overseas markets, even overtaking them in sectors such as electronics, steel, shipping, and semiconductors.²

On the political side, Japanese Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone visited the ROK in 1983, the first incumbent prime minister of Japan to do so; the following year, President Chun Doo-hwan became the first head of state of the ROK to visit Japan. Japan and the ROK have developed broader and closer ties with each other despite territorial disputes over Takeshima,³ historical disputes between the two countries, and other outstanding issues. Security and defense cooperation began in the mid-1990s.⁴ Cultural exchanges were accelerated after President Kim Dae-jung's visit to Japan in 1998. Trade volume between the two countries reached about \$53 billion in 2003, with 3.7 million people traveling between the two countries; only 10,000 people traveled between Japan and the ROK in 1965.⁵

On the other hand, while Japan has had 12 rounds of normalization talks since 1991, it has not established diplomatic relations with North Korea. Trade volume between Japan and North Korea was about \$270 million in 2003.

Current Japanese policy toward the Korean peninsula aims to deepen cooperation at all levels, develop future-oriented relations with the ROK, and normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea after resolving North Korean nuclear, missile and other outstanding issues in a way that will contribute to peace and stability in the region. This policy, which aims to both stabilize the peninsula by avoiding cornering North Korea into behaving irrationally, and to resolve the nuclear and other issues, seems appropriate under the current circumstances on the peninsula. However, since there are several elements that hint at a possible change in the status quo, it is increasingly necessary for Japan to review its policy approach on the premise that the Korean

¹ Kim Ho-Sop, "South Korean Foreign Policy", in Sun-jing Gong and Heita Kawakatsu, ed., *Kankoku no Seiji (South Korean politics)*, Waseda University Press, Tokyo, 1997, pp.136-156

² For South Korean industrial and export policy, see the following: Kazuo Kuramochi, "Kankoku no Tassei (the achievement of South Korea)," in *Gendai Nihon Shakai 3 Kokusai Hikaku 2 (Contemporary Japanese Society 3, International Comparison 2)*, Tokyo University Social Science Institute ed., Tokyo University Press, Tokyo (1992); and Yukiko Fukagawa, *Kankoku: Senshinkoku Keizai Ron (South Korea: On developed economies)*, Nihon Keizai Shimbun Sha, Tokyo (1997).

³ Takeshima is located approximately at N37°9'30", E131°55". It has two main islands as well as several rocky atolls. It occupies a total area of around 0.23 km². For the Japanese government's position on this issue, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/takeshima/position.html>

⁴ For the current status of Japan-South Korea security cooperation, see Jason U. Manosevitz, "Japan and South Korea: security relations reach adolescence," *Asia Survey*, 43 (5), September/October 2003.

⁵ See "Current status of Japan-South Korea relations," Foreign Ministry of Japan, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/korea/kankei.html>

peninsula may be unified within 10 to 15 years. The first element is the significant economic deterioration in North Korea. The country has been suffering serious food and energy shortages, especially in electricity, since the end of the Cold War. This situation creates fertile ground for frustration and indignation both among the public and the ruling class, although economic failure itself may not topple the government considering the regime's tight political controls. Although the government introduced economic reforms in July 2002, they may not be enough to address current economic problems, and introducing further economic reforms could undermine its control over the economy.

The second element is the revival of the North Korean nuclear development program, which included the restart of a 5 mega-watt nuclear reactor at Yongbyon in 2002, possible reprocessing of 8,000 nuclear spent fuel rods into bomb-grade plutonium, and possible development of a uranium enrichment program. Rather than being a strategic advantage, possessing nuclear weapons does not effectively offset the military superiority of the ROK/U.S. forces in Korea nor enhance its diplomatic leverage against the ROK and the United States; rather, these nuclear developments directly conflict with the national security interests of the United States. To make matters worse for North Korea, the revelation of its nuclear program came at a time when Americans changed their collective mind-set about their own security. Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Americans have become more sensitive to and less tolerant of anything that jeopardizes the lives of American citizens. The U.S. government, Republican or Democrat, will be required to act more quickly and decisively than before to protect its own citizens. In 1994, U.S. concern over North Korean nuclear development was mainly directed at nuclear proliferation, a possible regional nuclear arms race and the defense of the ROK. This time, in addition to these concerns, the United States might interpret North Korean nuclear activities as posing a direct threat to its own citizens if there is clear evidence that North Korea has transferred nuclear devices or technology to groups or nations hostile to the United States. Even without such proliferation activities on the part of North Korea, it is unthinkable that the United States will continue to tolerate North Korean nuclear activities over the next 15 years. Although these elements do not specifically suggest how unification will be realized, they at least indicate that the current status may not last for decades. No matter what kind of unification scenarios or processes unfold, Japan may have a unified Korea as its neighbor.

Japan has a huge stake in the form a unified Korea may take. Its political and economic systems, defense posture, and relations with other countries will affect Japan's national security and prosperity. On the other hand, Japan has limited influence over the future of the Korean peninsula. It has almost no role to play in the central unification issues, such as a North-South unification dialogue process, arms control and disarmament of the peninsula, and the conclusion of the peace treaty. Also, the future of the Korean peninsula should be administered by Koreans. However, considering the enormous stake Japan has in the future shape of the Korean peninsula, Japan needs to clarify its national interests in a unified Korea and implement necessary measures to help ensure such interests are met.

The purpose of this paper is to identify Japan's policy priorities and the measures needed to reach them. This paper employs an unorthodox Japanese approach. The orthodox approach begins with a prediction of a unification scenario and process, which would be affected by so many variables, such as what will precede unification, hostilities or reconciliation, roles to be played by the

United States, Japan, the ROK and China, and the military posture of China at the time of unification, that fair projection is impossible.⁶

Instead, this paper will first identify a unified Korea that is desirable for Japan. Second, it will consider what factors will help lead to such a unified Korea. Then, it will consider what Japan can do to help realize a desirable unified Korea. The weakness of this approach is that specific measures proposed may need to be adjusted if the assumptions of this paper change. However, this approach has an advantage in that it can provide Japan with a useful guide to proactive foreign and defense policies. This advantage outweighs the weaknesses of this approach, and policy measures could be reviewed should something unexpected happen.

This paper makes several assumptions: (1) The Asia-Pacific strategy of the United States will continue to emphasize the importance of its bilateral alliances and its engagement policy towards China, and U.S. strategic interests on the Korean Peninsula, namely preserving stability and democracy, will not change; (2) Japan, in line with the United States, will continue its engagement policy towards China; (3) China's political system will remain the same, and its "peaceful rise" policy will not change; (4) the Taiwan issue will not be resolved and no military conflict will take place; (5) Japan will be able to discuss defense and security issues more freely, as it will revise or consider revising Article IX of its Constitution.

Before moving to the next section, it is useful to look at the similarities and differences between German unification and developments on the Korean peninsula. There are several analogies between the two cases, although their histories before the division were very different. The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) under Adenauer's policy of Western integration chose a state system based on freedom, democracy and market economy, and selected a U.S.-centered alliance system, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for ensuring its security. As a result, the FRG had access to capital, technology, and markets of the western allies, and recorded remarkable economic development for decades, surpassing East Germany in terms of economic performance and other indicators of national power. The ROK followed the same path. The size of the ROK economy, which was about half of North Korean economy in 1950, is now 25 times larger than that of its counterpart. Furthermore, both West Germany and South Korea, as represented in Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik and Kim Dae-jung's sunshine policy, emphasized reducing tensions with the other side.⁷

Another similarity is relations with neighboring countries. Western European governments, especially France and Britain, urged caution toward German unification in early 1990 out of fear that a united Germany might dominate European affairs, and emphasized their view that the unification should take place in the framework of the European Community and NATO.⁸ As a result, the united Germany regarded NATO as the core of its security policy and promoted cooperation with France for facilitating European integration and expanding the European Union (EU), which helped to ease concerns among the European nations. In the same vein, the ROK

⁶ Kawashima, Yutaka. 2003. *Japanese foreign policy at the crossroads – challenges and options for the twenty-first century*. Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 46-47.

⁷ See, for example, Manfred Gortemaker, *Unifying Germany 1989-1990*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994; and Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the wall – Germany's road to unification*, Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1993.

⁸ A. Riding, "On Germany, not all is joy," *New York Times*, February 15, 1990, quoted from Konrad H. Jarrausch and Volker Gransow, *Uniting Germany – documents and debates 1944-1993*, Berghahn Books, Providence and Oxford, 1994, 115-116.

has been maintaining its alliance with the United States, and emphasizing the importance of trilateral policy coordination with the United States and Japan, at least on an official basis.

What differentiates the German experience from Korea is the lack of a middle class or political reforms in North Korea. In the German Democratic Republic (GDR), middle class frustration over the one-party system, planned economy, and a restrictive immigration policy, which mounted after the rise of democratic movements in East European countries in the late 1980s, was the driving force behind the fall of the Berlin Wall. Due to the demands by middle class citizens, the first free election was held in the GDR in March 1990; the Christian Democratic Union and other political parties that supported unification were elected, accelerating the German unification process. No such middle-class citizens nor political reforms are observed in North Korea yet.

Another difference is the nuclear situation. Nuclear weapons deployed in East Germany were controlled by the Soviet Union. The nuclear factor was removed from the unification process when FRG Chancellor Helmut Kohl met Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev in July 1990 and obtained his assurance that the Soviet Union would not oppose German unification.⁹ However, North Korea may be developing and possess its own nuclear weapons. North Korean nuclear weapons will have a negative impact on the unification of the Korean peninsula.

1. An Ideal Unified Korea from the Japanese Perspective

In considering the ideal form a unified Korea could take from the Japanese perspective, this paper focuses on three elements: the political and economic systems of a unified Korea, its strategic choices and its defense forces. These three elements form the basis of national policy and define the basic nature of relations with other countries. The third element, the defense forces, is rather technical and will largely be affected by the second element of Korean strategic choice. However, considering geographical proximity, Japan needs to pay attention to this element.

(1) The Political and Economic Systems of a Unified Korea

A unified Korea which shares Japan's political values and economic system is in the Japanese interest. Sharing freedom, democracy, rule of law, and other basic values with a unified Korea will help to maintain long-term stable bilateral relations, to address frictions and disputes between the two countries in a practical and controlled manner, and to further build confidence and trust between the two countries. On the economic side, the ROK is the third largest trading partner of Japan, both in export and import volume. For the ROK, Japan is also its third largest export market and its largest import partner. The total amount of investment in the ROK from Japan is also the third largest (\$131.6 billion as of 2002) following the United States and the European Union. Considering these facts, Japan prefers that a unified Korea maintains a strong capitalist economy.

⁹ German Information Office, *Informationen*, 1990, No.13, Iff. Quoted from Konrad H. Jarrausch and Volker Gransow, *Uniting Germany – documents and debates 1944-1993*, Berghahn Books, Providence and Oxford, 1994, 175-178.

(2) Strategic Choice of a Unified Korea

Japan prefers that a unified Korea will choose to be allied with the United States and allow U.S. forces to be stationed on the Korean peninsula. The major reason for this preference is that maintaining the U.S.-ROK alliance after unification is most likely to ensure regional stability, which is in the interest of Japan.¹⁰ A unified Korea's strategic choices, in theory, are forming an alliance (either with the United States or China), strategic independence, and neutrality.¹¹ In practice, a unified Korea could change its strategic choices quickly, for example, siding with China for a short period of time and then siding with the United States. It also could combine some choices, for example trying to obtain strategic independence while at the same time tilting toward China.

Strategic independence would require a unified Korea to possess a large military force to match those of surrounding countries. These forces would make neighboring countries uneasy, and could lead to an arms race or significant military tensions in the region. If a unified Korea chooses neutrality, it will easily fall under the influence of China. A unified Korea under Chinese influence could lead to a military confrontation with Japan, and probably with the United States. Should a unified Korea try to change its security partner in a short period, it is likely to end up inviting intervention from neighboring countries.

The Korean option of being allied with the United States is the surest way to maintain stability in the region. This is not only because the alliance ensures the security of a unified Korea, but also because this alliance combined with the U.S.-Japan alliance forms a security triangle,¹² leaving no room for contention by neighboring countries, especially a rising China, and to a lesser extent Russia, over the Korean peninsula. It would contribute to an international environment in which China believes that establishing good relations and cooperating with a unified Korea, rather than dominating it, serves the best interests of China. The combined GDP of the United States and Japan is 12 times larger than China, and the two countries are number one and two in terms of science and technology advancement as well. Even if China continues to grow at a higher pace than the two countries, it will take several decades before its power matches the United States and Japan. This approach of "stability by dissuasion" is feasible only when the U.S.-Japan alliance is robust. Fortunately, the two countries are committed to strengthening the alliance.

The Trilateral alliance may have the same stabilizing effect. However, considering Korean mistrust and antipathy toward Japan, and Korean fear that such an arrangement could offend China,¹³ this framework is unrealistic. Two separate bilateral alliances – the U.S.-Korea, and the U.S.-Japan – will meet Korean concern over the possible revival of Japanese militarism. Japan

¹⁰ Yamaji, Hideki. 2004. Future Japanese security policies: contending approaches. In *Brookings Northeast Asia Survey 2003-2004*, eds. Richard C. Bush, et al, 31-49. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution.

¹¹ Paik, Jin-Hyun. 1998. ROK-US Alliance in the Post-Unification Era. In *Managing Change on the Korean Peninsula*, eds. Kim Kyung-Won and Han Sung-Joo, 227-241. Seoul: The Seoul Forum for International Affairs.

¹² For seminal works of U.S.-Japan-Korea trilateral security relationship, see Victor D. Cha, *Alignment despite antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan security triangle*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, (1999); Ralph Cossa, ed., *U.S.-Korea-Japan relations: building toward a "virtual alliance"*, Washington, D.C.: CSIS (1999); *Strengthening U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral relations*, A Working Group Report of the CSIS International Security Program, Washington, D.C.: CSIS, (2002).

¹³ This point was raised by a Korean scholar. See Tae-Hyo Kim, K-J shuttle activities, 1997-1999: retrospect and prospect, in eds. Sang-Woo Rhee and Tae-Hyo Kim, ed., *Korea-Japan Security Relations – Prescriptive Studies*, Seoul: New Asia Research Institute, Seoul, xviii (2000).

also does not want this framework because it might complicate the Japanese decision-making process with regard to a Taiwan Strait crisis, from which a unified Korea will try to distance itself. If a military conflict is initiated by China and the United States responds militarily, the Japanese government will need to make a very difficult decision as to whether it will assist the U.S. forces. Mismanagement of the Taiwan crisis on the Japanese side would jeopardize the U.S.-Japan alliance.¹⁴ If a unified Korea and Japanese ally takes a reserved (neutral) position, it will encourage anti-involvement proponents in Japan to be vocal and complicate Japan's decision-making process.

A multilateral security framework in Northeast Asia will not provide a sufficient sense of security for the nations concerned, although it may be useful to supplement the bilateral alliance system, by building confidence and lessening miscalculations and mistrust among the countries in the region. The international situation in the region is also not yet mature enough to underpin a framework such as a collective security mechanism. For such a mechanism to work properly, if one country becomes aggressive, all other countries must act to restore peace. In reality, if Japan becomes aggressive, all other countries will surely react. However, if China becomes aggressive, for example, against Japan, will Korea and Russia react? Probably not. Therefore, given the regional dynamic, this framework as a collective security mechanism is not yet possible.

Last, allowing U.S. forces on Korean soil is important to ensure the defense commitment of the United States and keep the alliances reliable and workable during peace time, through constant contacts and cooperation between personnel and joint or coordinated solutions to challenges related to alliance management. Furthermore, the physical presence of the U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula will reassure Japan that the ROK sides with Japan. Of course, friction between the U.S. forces and local communities must be avoided as much as possible.

A strategic alliance with the United States does not require that a unified Korea be subservient to the United States or rely solely on the United States for its defense. A unified Korea can maintain its independence, national pride, and sovereignty while allying itself with the super power. It can satisfy its national pride and sense of independence by being responsible for the defense of its own territory and playing constructive roles in international security issues.

(3) A Unified Korea's Defense Forces

Japan does not want to see a unified Korea possess offensive weapons that could threaten Japan, such as medium-range ballistic missiles, long-range bombers, and above all, nuclear weapons. Needless to say, "offensive weapons that could threaten Japan" is a vague concept. Many weapons could be used both for defensive and offensive purposes. Nevertheless, there are certain types of weapons, such as medium range ballistic missiles, that clearly show the hostile intention of one side to the other.

If a unified Korea possesses such weapons, Japan may view it as a potential threat and could take counter-measures. Of course, Japanese perception is largely influenced by the level of trust

¹⁴ Ford, Carl W., Jr. 2000. Future strategic cooperation among the United States, Korea and Japan: an American option, in eds. Sang-Woo Rhee and Tae-Hyo Kim, *Korea-Japan Security Relations – Prescriptive Studies*, 26. Seoul: New Asia Research Institute.

between the two countries. If Japan and the ROK can build trust and confidence to a level as high as those between Britain and France, or France and Germany, we would not have to pay attention to what type of weapons the other side possesses, and this issue would be irrelevant. However, bilateral relations between Japan and the ROK have not yet developed to the level of relations among these three countries. There is lingering mistrust between the two countries. As long as relations between the two countries remain this way, it seems wise to mutually refrain from possessing offensive weapons.

Second, Japan does not want a unified Korea that expands its naval capability and activities without coordinating with the United States. Such an expansion could hamper the activities of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Forces. Japan will welcome a unified Korea, in collaboration with the United States, developing its naval capability to escort its own commercial vessels and working with Japan in a mutually complementary way.

Critics may claim that Japan's interest lies not in realizing unification of the Korean Peninsula, but in maintaining the status quo as long as possible. This argument overlooks two important points. One is that Japanese influence over the future of the Korea peninsula is extremely limited. Japan cannot control whether and when the two Koreas will be united. Second, the kind of unified Korea Japan will have as its neighbor will influence Japanese attitudes. Japan does not welcome a unified Korea that does not share basic values and an economic system with Japan, severs ties with the United States, and is hostile toward Japan. However, when a desirable Korean unification model emerges, Japan will welcome unification.

2. What Factors Will Affect the Future Shape of a Unified Korea?

There are several major factors that affect the future shape of a unified Korea from the viewpoint of the Japanese national interests discussed above. Some factors lie in unification scenarios and processes, and others are observed outside such scenarios and processes. The following chart helps identify such factors.

Table 1: Indicators on Korean unification

Unification Scenario	Explosion	Implosion (Uncontrolled/Controlled)	Reconciliation
Unification Process	ROK-led unification (Absorption, ROK unification plan)		North Korea-led unification (NK unification plan)
Post-Unification Period Basic system	Democracy Market economy	Two governments	Market economy under Socialism
Strategic Choice	U.S. ally	Strategic independence	Neutrality China ally

The left column of the chart lists major items related to Korean unification. A unification scenario is defined as a scenario that triggers movement toward unification. The unification process means a modality by which unification is achieved. A post-unification basic system and strategic choice are the two main Japanese concerns discussed above.

Each row shows the hypothetical spectrum of each item. The explosion scenario is defined as a military attack by North Korea against the ROK. This would take place if North Korea calculates the possible gains and losses of its military option in an irrational way. Uncontrolled implosion is defined as regime collapse without producing an alternative regime, which could follow such events as large scale rioting, a military coup, an assassination or the execution of the North Korean leader. Controlled explosion means regime collapse followed by the establishment of an alternative regime. Reconciliation is defined as the ROK and North Korea beginning a dialogue for unification. There are, of course many possible unification scenarios that fill the gap of these rough indicators, such as explosion cum implosion, incomplete explosion and implosion. However, such detailed scenarios are not necessary for identifying major factors affecting the future shape of a unified Korea

The second row, unification process, is composed of an ROK-led unification and North Korean-led unification. An ROK-led unification would include absorption of North Korea by the ROK,¹⁵

¹⁵ The ROK officially denied it would absorb North Korea in the same way as West Germany absorbed East Germany.

and unification based on the ROK's three phase unification program. North Korean-led unification is unification based on a North Korean unification program, like Kim Il-Sung's proposal for a "Confederal Republic of Koryo" in the 1980s or the "one nation, one state, two governments" formula.¹⁶ It is difficult to predict at this stage which unification scenario will lead to which unification process. For example, explosion may not necessarily result in absorption of North Korea by the ROK, if the ROK refuses to do so at that time.

Hypothetically, the basic system of a unified Korea can be a liberal democracy and market economy, two governments, or a market economy under socialism, although the latter two results are highly unlikely under the current situation. The basic system may be affected by the unification process. An ROK-led unification will lead to a market economy and democracy, while a North Korea-led unification will result in either two governments in one state or a market economy under socialism.

(1) A Unified Korea's Political and Economic Systems: North Korea's Nuclear Capability and the Chinese Stance Toward North Korea

Factors that affect the political and economic system of a unified Korea are an ability to threaten the political and economic system of the ROK, and an ability to obstruct the ROK led unification. The political and economic system of the ROK looks as solid as ever. Its democracy is deep-rooted and its market economy is vibrant and strong. North Korea still deploys two-thirds of its forces along the Demilitarized Zone to inflict serious damage to the ROK. However, they are deterred by the qualitative superiority of the ROK and U.S. forces. Even if the North Korean leader attacks the ROK, the result is obvious – the end of the North Korean regime.

However, North Korean nuclear weapons could make these ROK advantages over North Korea less conclusive. Dozens of North Korean nuclear weapons could offset the conventional military superiority of the ROK and the U.S. forces. They could not only inflict serious damage to the ROK economy but threaten its national survival. Under a unification scenario, depending on the size of its nuclear arsenal, North Korean nuclear weapons would make an explosion devastating, implosion chaotic, and North-South reconciliation difficult. Even if the ROK and North Korea ignore North Korea's nuclear weapons and start negotiating on and moving toward unification, North Korean nuclear capability could obstruct an ROK-led unification. It might be used by the North Korean government to provoke Koreans, both in the North and South, into demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the termination of the U.S.-ROK mutual defense treaty by arguing that the presence of U.S. forces necessitates the possession of North Korean nuclear weapons and obstructs the Korean unification process. It is vital to completely eliminate North Korean nuclear programs before a unification process begins.

Another possible obstruction to an ROK-led unification is Chinese assistance to North Korea during the unification process in which a North Korean unification program and an ROK program compete with each other. China might assist North Korea, if it judges that keeping a North Korean system, irrespective of the current one or a transformed one, rather than having a ROK-led unified Korea is feasible and best serves its interests. As long as China continues to

¹⁶ Ming Lee. 1995. The unification policies of the two Koreas: evolution and prospect. In *Divided Nations – the Experience of Germany, Korea, and China*, ed. Jaushieh Joseph Wu, 117. Taipei: Institute of International Relations.

assist North Korea, an ROK-led unification process is unrealistic. To dissuade China from assisting North Korea in such a way, Japan and other like-minded countries must create an international environment in which China is inclined to think that assisting North Korea is unsustainable, and that forging good relations with an ROK-led unified Korea is in its interests.

(2) Strategic Choice and the Treatment of U.S. Forces: The Role of the United States, Domestic Support for the Alliance and International situations

The strategic choice of a unified Korea is to be made by Koreans. However, several factors will affect their choices. First, the political and economic systems of a unified Korea are the preconditions for its choice of being allied with the United States. It is unthinkable that a unified Korea led by North Korea or a unified Korea under the strong influence of China will make this choice.

Second, the role of the United States during the unification scenario and process will largely influence the strategic choice of a unified Korea. If the United States plays a constructive role for realizing an ROK-led unified Korea, a unified Korea would want to maintain its alliance with the United States. Although there is an argument that a prolonged unification process may raise the possibility that Koreans will demand the United States withdraw its forces from the peninsula,¹⁷ it still seems probable that a unified Korea led by the ROK will support the alliance with the United States and allow U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula, no matter how long the unification process may take. There are several signs to support this prospect. Both the Kim Dae-jung government and the current Roh Moo-Hyun government backed by the leftist Uri Party have expressed their desire to allow the stationing of U.S. troops on the Korean Peninsula after unification. The alliance with the United States is also supported by Korean academics in South Korea as the best choice of a unified Korea.¹⁸ Both governments' efforts to help reduce the burdens placed on the local communities around the U.S. bases in the ROK will help to alleviate the public's negative sentiment against the United States and help to maintain the alliance.¹⁹

Third, domestic support for the alliance both in a unified Korea and the United States will be another factor affecting the strategic choice of a unified Korea. The point is whether the two countries will be able to find a convincing rationale for maintaining the alliance after unification. One possible rationale is regional stability. However, the major regional security challenges aside from North Korea are Taiwan and the South China Sea, both of which are related to China. A unified Korea will try not to offend China because of its geographical proximity. It remains to be seen whether a majority of Koreans will support this rationale. Furthermore, unpredictable changes in external and internal factors, such as North Korean citizens who will comprise around

¹⁷ McDevitt, Michael. 2001. The post-Korean unification security landscape and U.S. security policy in Northeast Asia. In *Korea's future and the great powers*, eds. Nicholas Eberstadt and Richard J. Ellings, 278. Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research.

¹⁸ For example, see Chae-Jin Lee, Conflict and cooperation: The Pacific powers and Korea, in eds. Nicholas Eberstadt and Richard J. Ellings, *Korea's future and the great powers*, Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, University of Washington Press, 76; and Jin-Hyun Paik, ROK-US Alliance in the Post-Unification Era, in eds. Kim Kyung-Won and Han Sung-Joo, *Managing change on the Korean peninsula*, Seoul, 227-241.

¹⁹ On March 29, 2002, the United States and South Korea signed an agreement for the land partnership plan (LPP), which called for U.S. Forces in Korea to close 28 of its 41 major installations and facilities over the next 10 years. The United States and the ROK are discussing the relocation of the Yongsang base in Seoul to the South of the Han river.

30% of the Korean population,²⁰ may generate anti-Americanism in Korea after unification.²¹ If the alliance fails to address a Taiwan crisis or a South China Sea crisis, support for the alliance within the United States may rapidly erode as well. In order to prevent domestic support for the alliance from eroding, common basic values such as freedom and democracy should be emphasized as a rationale for the alliance. Also, forming a group composed of traditional U.S. allies in East Asia may help sustain domestic support for the U.S.-ROK alliance. With such an East Asian alliance, the American public may be able to understand more clearly that there are important allies of the United States in East Asia. Such a group could also alleviate the sense of inequality towards the United States among the Korean public (for further discussion of this concept of an East Asian alliance-based framework, please see page 16).

The last factor that affects the strategic choice of a unified Korea is the international situation during the post unification period, particularly relations between China on one hand and the United States and Japan on the other. If China's national power were to exceed the power of the United States and Japan combined, a unified Korea might be inclined to ally itself with China. If the United States and Japan develop hostile relations with China, a unified Korea would try to distance itself from the United States and Japan for fear of offending China. The U.S.-Japan alliance should be robust and strong and the two countries should maintain cooperative and friendly relations with China in order to shape an international environment that would encourage a unified Korea to make the right choice.

At the same time, how a unified Korea perceives the international dynamic is also important. The ROK tends to see the Northeast Asian security situation as a competition among four major powers, especially Japan and China. For example, the ROK's 1996 Defense White Paper says that the regional security order "will be adjusted and managed by relationships among the US, Japan, China and Russia" and "Japan and China will expand their scope of activities and influence."²² The 2000 White Paper expressed the same view. It said that although Japan and China recognize the priority of economic progress and regional security, progress was offset by the "highly intense tug-of-war for political influence in the region."²³ The 2001 official document said that "[t]he four neighboring powers are seeking to expand their regional influence and modernize their military forces...Russia and China are opposed to US efforts to build a Missile Defense (MD) system, while China and Japan are competing for greater regional influence."²⁴ The ROK also questions the durability of the U.S.-Japan alliance. For example, the ROK government says that "Japan, while still under the umbrella of the US-Japan security alliance, is pursuing an increased military role for its Self Defense Forces as evidenced by enactment of the Emergency Law in June 2003. (emphasized by the author)."²⁵ These faulty assessments of international situations might be inherited by a unified Korea and result in its

²⁰ Gordon Flake, executive director of the Mansfield Center made this point when the author interviewed him on February 26, 2004.

²¹ Park, Young-Ho Park. 2002. U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral relations: A Korean perspective. In *strengthening U.S.-ROK-Japan relations*, A Working Group Report of the CSIS International Security Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 25. Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies.

²² Ministry of National Defense (MND), ROK, 1996. *Defense White Paper*, Part 2, Chapter 4. <http://www.mnd.go.kr/>

²³ MND, ROK, 2000. *Defense White Paper*, Part One, Chapter 2.

²⁴ MND, ROK, 2001. *Defense Data and Statistics*. Incidentally, MND did not publish a white paper in 2002, reportedly because no consensus was reached over how to enemy deal with a phrase "the main" for describing North Korea. It decided not to publish the white paper, instead, to release updated data and assessment every two years.

²⁵ MND, ROK, *Participatory Government Defense Policy*, Part One, Chapter One, 22.

leadership making the wrong strategic choice. Japan, the United States, and the ROK must exchange views on international relations and regional issues to avoid a flawed assessment.

(3) Defense Forces: Threat Perception; Japanese and Chinese Defense Postures

The defense forces of a unified Korea will be affected by its strategic choices, threat perception, the Japanese defense posture, especially after revising Article IX of the Constitution, and the Chinese defense posture.

If a unified Korea chooses to ally itself with the United States, it would not need to possess the offensive weapons mentioned in the preceding section and would be more likely to pursue trilateral naval cooperation with the United States and Japan.

The post-unification defense posture of a unified Korea is likely to be affected by its threat perception. It is difficult to predict the threat perception of a unified Korea because it will be largely affected by the international situation during the post-unification period. However, its threat perception can also be affected by biases or preconceptions, such as historical fears and antipathy toward Japan. Sixty-six percent of the members of the Korean National Assembly in 2002 selected Japan as the biggest potential threat to East Asia, and South Korea listed Japan as the second biggest threat (21%) after North Korea.²⁶ Among the Korean public, South Korea listed Japan as the second biggest threat (21%) after North Korea (54%). It ranked China only as a distant third (8%).²⁷ This data implies that fear of Japan will continue to constitute an important part of the threat perception among Koreans. However, this does not mean that a unified Korea will inevitably see Japan as a threat. The ROK's current security and foreign policies, despite widespread fear of Japan, is moderate and realistic, and emphasizes cooperation with Japan and the United States.²⁸ The Korean perception of Japan will be influenced by such factors as the role of Japan during the unification process and post-unification period, the handling of the sensitive historical issues and other outstanding bilateral issues.

Considering the strong sense of rivalry among Koreans against Japan and their threat perception of Japan, the defense program of a unified Korea will partly be affected by the defense posture of Japan. Japanese defense posture after revising Article IX of the Constitution will especially affect the defense posture of a unified Korea. The ROK has no offensive weapons or power projection capability that threatens Japan, although the ROK may aspire toward such capability.²⁹ Japan is also not allowed to possess offensive weapons designed solely to destroy other countries' territory, such as Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles and long range bombers. If after revising its constitution Japan obtains such weapons, a unified Korea is likely to follow the same path.

The Chinese defense posture could affect the defense posture of a unified Korea. It depends on

²⁶ Chosun Ilbo, February 24, 2002 and Harris Poll #8, January 31, 2001, quoted from Jae Ho Chung, "How America Views China-South Korea Bilateralism", *Brookings Working Paper*, 2002-2003 pp.19-21

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 19-21.

²⁸ On March 4, 2004, the Roh Moo-Hyun government published a book, *Peace, prosperity and national security*, that details its security and foreign policy goals. In the book, the government laid out four basic strategic principles for South Korea's security: peace and prosperity, balanced pragmatism, cooperative self-defense and comprehensive security.

²⁹ Cha, Victor. 2000. The positive and preventive rationales for Korea-Japan security cooperation: The American perspective., In *Korea-Japan security relations – prescriptive studies*, eds. Sang-Woo Rhee and Tae-Hyo Kim, 102. Seoul: New Asia Research Institute.

how menacing Chinese military forces would be to Koreans during the unification process. If China deploys a large number of ground forces along its border with a unified Korea, a unified Korea would need to deploy the equivalent number of forces along the border to defend the country. For a unified Korea, the security dilemma with China would be more pressing and serious than with Japan, because the United States is unlikely to deploy a large number of ground forces on the Korea-China border, and a unified Korea will need to defend its land border on its own.

With regard to naval modernization, the ROK has initiated some modernization measures despite opposition from the U.S. forces in Korea.³⁰ It is developing an “Ocean-Going Navy” for the 21st century, indigenously developing destroyers (three 3000-ton class KDX-I, three 4000-ton class KDX-II, and three 7000-ton class Aegis KDX-III).³¹ In May 2002, the ROK launched its first KDX-II class destroyer, Lee Soon Shin, named after a 16th century Korean hero whose fleet defeated Japan in a sea battle.³² It is also developing 1800-ton class submarines (214-class);³³ according to some reports, the ROK is considering using nuclear-powered propulsion systems for those submarines.³⁴ The official purpose of the modernization effort was to “defend the national interests in the five oceans and perform a role in defending world peace” as declared by President Kim Dae-jung in March 2001.³⁵ However, it remains to be seen whether such modernization is sustainable, and whether the ROK and a unified Korea will be interested in naval role-sharing with the United States and Japan. Kim Dae-jung’s declared aim of naval modernization seems to be too ambitious. According to some analysis, the ROK’s naval capability is still limited to coastal defense,³⁶ and its modernization program is largely a platform-based one.³⁷ Its overall capability, including intelligence and integrated operation of systems, has not reached a level that concerns Japan. It seems too early to judge the direction and future of the ROK naval modernization. It is wise for Japan to closely watch its development, rather than reacting to such developments.

The cost associated with unification could have an impact on the defense forces of a unified Korea.³⁸ Korean forces may move away from a war posture and to defense-oriented posture.³⁹ At this stage, it is hard to predict unification costs, as costs could vary depending on unification

³⁰ McDevitt, Michael. 2001. The post-Korean unification security landscape and U.S. security policy in Northeast Asia. In *Korea's future and the great powers*, eds. Nicholas Eberstadt and Richard J. Ellings, 292. Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research.

³¹ On February 12, 1999, the Ministry of National Defense of Korea announced that the Korean Navy will have three Aegis-class destroyers within 10 years under a medium-term procurement project.

³² *East Asia Strategic Review 2003*, The National Institute of Defense Studies, Japan, p.144.

³³ A news brief by the Ministry of National Defense of ROK on January 20, 2004 said that it is constructing 214-type (1800 ton) submarines after commissioning 209-type (1200 ton) submarines. It is also considering whether or not to acquire next generation of submarines. No decision has been made with regard to the type of its propulsion system.

³⁴ *The Korea Herald*, January 20, 2004.

³⁵ *East Asia Strategic Review 2003*, The National Institute of Defense Studies, Japan, p.144.

³⁶ Cha, Victor. 2000. The positive and preventive rationales for Korea-Japan security cooperation: The American perspective. In *Korea-Japan Security Relations – Prescriptive Studies*, eds. Sang-Woo Rhee and Tae-Hyo Kim, 108. Seoul: New Asia Research Institute.

³⁷ Bracken, Paul. 1998. Naval cooperation in Northeast Asia. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, 9(1): 211.

³⁸ The unification could cost \$200 billion to \$1.7 billion depending on the model and assumptions. See Marcus Noland, et al., 1998, “The Costs and Benefits of Unification,” Institute for International Economics Working Paper, Washington D.C.

³⁹ Mitchell, Derek J. 2002. A blueprint for U.S. policy toward a unified Korea. In *Korean-U.S. Relations in Transition*, eds. Jong-Chung Baek and Sang-Hyun Lee, 27. Seoul: The Sejong Institute.

scenarios and processes. Generally speaking, an independent country tries to maintain its independence at any cost. If a unified Korea feels its national security is threatened, costs would not be a restraining factor. In this sense, its threat perception and neighboring countries' defense posture, rather than unification costs, will affect the defense posture of a unified Korea.

3. Japanese Policy Options for a Unified Korea

The projections outlined in the preceding section indicate that Japan needs to introduce additional policy measures to help shape a favorable and stable international environment for realizing a desirable outcome for a unified Korea. Japan should introduce the following policy approach and measures to realize a desirable unified Korea.

(1) Basic policy approach:

Trilateral policy coordination among Japan, the ROK and the United States

The best policy approach for realizing a desirable outcome for a unified Korea is to keep close trilateral policy coordination among Japan, the ROK and the United States before and after unification. The trilateral coordination can help shape an international environment that would avoid unnecessary competition among neighboring countries over the Korean peninsula and stabilize relations between China, Russia, and the three countries. This triangle could minimize the negative effects caused by unification scenarios (explosion, implosion, and reconciliation), and help achieve the ROK-led unification no matter what unification processes it may follow.

The minimum necessary condition for maintaining this security triangle prior to unification is to share assessments of North Korean nuclear weapons and its implications for regional security, national security of each country, and the international nonproliferation regime. North Korean nuclear weapons pose a serious threat to the national survival of the ROK, and could directly threaten the security of Japan and the United States. It could have a negative impact on early Korean unification. The three countries' governments and their general populations must share this perception. Without this shared perception, a coordinated approach toward North Korea may be difficult to implement if North Korea escalates the current crisis further.

(2) Specific policy measures:

(a) Develop a Japanese blueprint for completely dismantling North Korean nuclear programs, and form a joint action plan with the ROK and the United States

Japan should draw its own blueprint for dismantling North Korean nuclear programs, and closely consult with the ROK and the United States to develop a trilateral joint action plan. In drawing a blueprint, Japan should take note of the following points:

First, a military option such as a preemptive strike by the United States is highly undesirable, and it should be the last resort. This option, no matter how skillfully exercised, could lead to substantial damage being inflicted on the ROK by North Korea and could result in the end of the U.S.-ROK alliance, an outcome which is not in the Japanese interest. Second, however, posing a credible threat to North Korea's regime survival might be necessary in order to achieve the

complete dismantlement of its nuclear programs, if North Korea sees a number of benefits for possessing nuclear weapons, and the current diplomatic efforts were to fail. Third, although Chinese cooperation in resolving this issue is desirable and may be essential for North Korean nuclear weapons dismantlement,⁴⁰ the three countries should not seek Chinese cooperation in a way that will enhance its influence over the future of the Korean peninsula. The three countries should work to form an international consensus for imposition of tougher actions against North Korea, one which China will have no choice but to accept, rather than directly asking China to play a pivotal role in resolving the nuclear issue and the future of the Korean peninsula.

A Japanese blueprint for dismantling North Korean nuclear programs may be composed of three levels. The first level is the current diplomatic effort through the six party talks and possibly a discussion at the United Nations. If North Korea possesses nuclear weapons solely for deterrent purposes, namely ensuring regime survival, this first level of diplomacy might work. Bilateral or multilateral security assurances for North Korea, establishing diplomatic relations with Japan and the United States, and some form of economic assistance to North Korea may be sufficient to persuade North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons.

However, if North Korea perceives a number of benefits in possessing nuclear weapons, the first level of diplomatic efforts could fail. Hypothetically, North Korea's possible benefits are: (a) guaranteeing regime survival, (b) enhancing national pride, (c) using the "nuclear card" to negotiate withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula, attenuating U.S. influence over the Korean peninsula, and realizing a North Korean-led unification, (d) offsetting its conventional military inferiority to the ROK/U.S. forces, and possibly regaining overall military superiority over the ROK, (e) obtaining revenue by exporting nuclear devices and technology, and (f) dissuading the United States from intervening in the Korean peninsula by transferring nuclear weapons to groups or nations hostile to the United States.

If these first level efforts fail, we need to move to level two diplomatic efforts, namely measures that will make the North Korean leader judge that possession of nuclear weapons will not serve his interests. The second level measures may include economic sanctions, including a termination of trade, financial transactions and human flows by Japan, the ROK, and the United States, parallel, if not concerted, efforts by China, Russia, Thailand, India, and almost all members of the international community, enhanced deterrence which will be provided by U.S. forces in Korea and Japan, enhanced defense measures for protecting their own citizens in case deterrence fails and North Korea gambles on its military option, and a detailed exit plan for North Korea to agree to for dismantling its nuclear programs. There may be several combinations depending on the intensity of each measure.

In considering these second level measures, two important conditions for forming the right combination of level two pressure measures are still missing. One is sufficient policy attention by the United States to the North Korean nuclear issue. Right now, the United States' policy

⁴⁰ China, the ROK and Japan are the main trading partners of North Korea. In 2000, North Korean trade volume with these countries was \$490 million (China), \$460 million (Japan) and \$4.3 million (the ROK). In 2003, \$1.02 billion (China), \$720 million (the ROK) and \$270 million (Japan), while the whole trade amount of North Korea was \$2.4 billion. Japanese financial transfer to North Korea in 2002 was about \$40 million on an official basis. However, several hundred million dollars are estimated to be transferred North Korea without reporting to Japanese Finance Ministry. (information source: Japanese Foreign Ministry Homepage, Mainichi Shimbun May 5, 2004, Asahi Shimbun, April 8, 2004)

focus is on Iraq. American political attention and military preparation is essential for creating a credible threat to North Korean regime survival. Japan may need to wait another two or three years before the United States will be able to allocate enough attention and resources to the North Korean nuclear issue. The second condition is the perception of the South Korean public toward North Korea. Right now, the South Korean perception of North Korea and its attitude toward it is a little too soft to support the level two pressure measures that could pose a credible threat to North Korean regime survival. South Korean cooperation is indispensable for creating such measures. As North Korean possession of nuclear weapons becomes more apparent to the ROK people, their perception of North Korea is expected to change and they will be mentally prepared to impose some kind of sanctions against the North. However, it may take several more years before this change takes place. Nevertheless, these missing conditions do not prevent Japan from drawing its own blueprint and discussing it with the ROK and U.S. governments.

Level three is to support a U.S. military action to end the North Korean regime. Although this is highly undesirable, it could be unavoidable if all diplomatic efforts fail and threats to Japan and the United States are imminent and clear.

(b) Extend Support for ROK-led Unification, and Provide Significant Economic Assistance to the Korean peninsula during the Unification Process and Post-Unification

Japanese attitudes and assistance toward the ROK and a unified Korea during the unification process and immediate post-unification period will largely influence the Korean perception of Japan. For this reason, Japan should extend significant assistance to the ROK. Japanese assistance will be very important during the unification process in order to achieve an ROK-led unification. Japanese assistance to North Korea during this process should be implemented after closely consulting and coordinating with the ROK and the United States. Japanese official development aid has traditionally responded to recipient country's requests and focused on helping to develop their basic economic infrastructure (e.g. constructing power plants and roads). However, in the case of North Korea, Japan should focus on helping the North Korean public gain access to the outside information, spreading the notion of democracy, and turning the North Korean economy into a capitalist one. More specifically, Japan can introduce technical assistance programs and invite a number of leaders in such sectors as agriculture, fisheries and light industry, and provide training on technical skills and special knowledge. Japan will be able to help North Korea move toward a market economy as well.

The status of the U.S.-ROK relationship should be an important criteria for Japan's providing assistance to the Korean peninsula. If Japan sees an excessive surge of Korean nationalism demanding the withdrawal of U.S. forces and severing security ties with the United States, Japan should review its assistance policy to the unified Korea. Considering the fact that Japanese politicians in both ruling and opposition parties have become more patriotic, it will be politically difficult to continue generous assistance while there is a clear sign that an undesirable Korea is emerging.

(c) *Exercise Self-Restraint in Japan's Defense Forces*

If Japan does not want a unified Korea to possess the offensive weapons discussed above, Japan should exercise self-restraint – it should not acquire offensive weapons even if the revised constitution allows it to do so, at least until its relations with the ROK develops to the point that the possession of such weapons causes little concern. Japan does not need to possess such offensive weapons as long as it is allied with the United States, and as long as no fundamental change in international relations takes place. Japan's exercising self-restraint with regard to its defense capability will be a clear signal to the ROK that Japan takes Korean concerns toward Japan into account in developing its defense forces and that Japan wants to develop long-term trust with the ROK and a unified Korea. It will also assure other countries in the region that Japan will behave in a responsible and constructive manner, without constitutional restraints. On the other hand, Japan should make sure, after unification, that all nuclear weapons and medium-range ballistic missiles in North Korea are eliminated from the Korean Peninsula.

(d) *Enhance Further Trust with the ROK in Security and Defense*

Japan should address the following points in its security dialogue and defense exchanges with the ROK in the future: first, Japan should focus more on the security order in Northeast Asia, the role of the United States in the region, and the durability of the U.S.-Japan alliance as agenda items in its dialogue with the ROK, and try to share views with the ROK on these points. Second, Japan, from time to time, should convey to the ROK that it harbors no hostility to the ROK and explain in detail the constitutional revision effort and basic thinking behind developments in Japan's defense policy so as not to cause misunderstanding or misperception on the ROK side. This will be an important assurance for the ROK and could affect the Korean threat perception in a positive way.⁴¹ Japan at the same time should pay more attention to the ROK's defense modernization program, including its naval build-up, and its implications for regional security, and explore the possibility of naval role-sharing among the United States, Japan, and the ROK. As Admiral Sumihiko Kawamura suggested, a possible division of labor among the three could be as follows:⁴² the United States could be responsible for overall sea control, and Japan and the ROK responsible for guarding commercial vessels within their territorial waters. These activities could include surveillance, search and rescue operations, and law enforcement. In addition to this role, Japan could conduct surveillance and search and rescue in areas beyond the Exclusive Economic Zones. If the ROK naval modernization is conducted within this framework, Japan would be greatly reassured

(e) *Establish Frameworks for Alliance-Based Security Dialogue and Cooperation*

Alliance-based multilateral frameworks for security dialogue and cooperation are the most effective means for ensuring long-term alliance relations between a unified Korea and the United States, controlling Korean nationalism, and preventing unnecessary defense related friction

⁴¹ Manning, Robert A. and James J. Przystup. Korean unification: Shaping the future of Northeast Asia. In *Managing Change on the Korean Peninsula*, eds. Kim Kyung-Won and Han Sung-Joo, 199-200. Seoul: Seoul Press.

⁴² Sumihiko Kawamura. 2000. SLOC Protection and Korea-Japan Cooperation. In *Korea-Japan Security Relations – Prescriptive Studies*, eds. Sang-Woo Rhee and Tae-Hyo Kim, 195-208. Seoul: New Asia Research Institute.

between Japan and the ROK or a unified Korea. These fora will show to Koreans and people of other countries that the ROK and a unified Korea share basic political values, namely democracy and freedom, with other advanced countries, including Japan. Active participation in such fora will satisfy Korean national pride and help alleviate the current sense of inequality in Korea's relations with the United States. Joint international cooperative efforts by Japan and the ROK or a unified Korea within these fora will help to reassure participants that they are on the same side and share the same values, and that our joint cooperation will be valuable and effective in the international arena.

Such effects cannot be expected in a trilateral framework among Japan, the ROK and the United States. In such a trilateral forum, Korea will likely compete against Japan for greater favor from the United States. Such a competition is the last thing the Japanese want to see.

There are two models for such alliance-based fora. First is the forum composed of major European allies and Asian allies. Members could include the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, the ROK, and Australia. Of course, the objective of this forum is not solely for the benefit of Japan and the ROK. Since the end of the Cold War, a number of official and unofficial security fora have been established, not all of which are valuable for facilitating candid exchanges of views and coordinating policies among members. Despite the fact that the United States and its allies have been the power center of current international relations since the end of the Cold War, the establishment of such a forum has been neglected for a long time. Recently, we saw a rift in the Atlantic alliance over Iraq. The alliance is strong when united. The United States and its allies naturally have many common interests. Now is the right time to initiate such dialogue and policy coordination among the allies. The main agenda of the forum would include pressing security issues such as the war on terrorism, reconstruction of Iraq, global warming, arms exports to China, and economic assistance to developing countries. Once a consensus is reached within this forum, participants will be able to lead the discussion in the United Nations and other international organizations.

The other model is an East Asian alliance-based framework, composed of the United States, Japan, Australia, the ROK, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. This forum would be useful to reassure members that they belong to the same group of liberal democracies, to prevent malfunction within a bilateral alliance from leading immediately to the erosion of domestic support for the alliance, to coordinate defense policies and operations among members, and for the U.S. government to encourage American public support for the continuous defense commitment to and military presence in the region. In the Asia Pacific region, there are a number of regional fora, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, but the United States is excluded from ASEAN-plus-three and the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). This is not healthy, considering the importance of the United States in this region. In the 1990s, countries in the Asia Pacific region tried to establish inclusive security fora for the purpose of engaging China and North Korea. It is about time to establish an alliance-based multilateral forum, which will not offend or isolate those countries. Japan needs to consult with the United States and European countries before proposing this initiative. From a practical viewpoint, establishing these fora is not difficult. Japan already has bilateral security and defense dialogue relations with all the countries mentioned above except the Philippines. Japan should set the timing for all countries to get together at the same time.

(f) *Address History Issues*

The so-called history issues have become diplomatically contentious, not only with China but also with the ROK since 1982, when a Japanese newspaper made a false report that the Japanese “invasion of China” would be rewritten as “advancement into China” in a Japanese history text book. Although most prime ministers since the end of the second World War had visited the Yasukuni shrine (a memorial for service members and others who died while performing official duties since the 1870s) almost annually, Prime Minister Nakasone’s visit to the Yasukuni shrine in 1985 invited criticism and created mistrust from China and the ROK. Similar criticisms were expressed by China and the ROK over the approval of a textbook written by conservative historians as one of many authorized textbooks in 2001, and Prime Minister Koizumi’s visit to the Yasukuni shrine in 2001.

Some Koreans claim the conservative textbook was trying to glorify and whitewash the past. After reading the textbook, I do not believe that the text book harbored such aims; all of its descriptions are based on objective historical facts. Those who oppose the textbook also seem to misunderstand the reality of Japan. With the defeat of the war in 1945, Japan rejected the entire pre-war system. Most academics and teachers stressed pacifism and hated nationalism. As a result, the importance of statehood or contribution to public interests was excessively undervalued. Criticism of this tendency came to the surface in the 1980s. This is a healthy balancing act rather than a sign of the revival of militarism.⁴³ The textbook written by conservative historians should be interpreted as a part of this balancing process.

A commission has been established by both governments, with historians from Japan and the ROK conducting a joint study of the history of Japan and Korea.⁴⁴ This is a welcome effort to narrow the gap in the assessments of history. Since each country (or historian) has its own interpretation and assessment of history, it is difficult to establish a common view of history, especially considering the fact that the ROK has only one state-authorized version of history and Japan has no such official history. Historical science in Japan detests state intervention and stresses the importance of objective historical evidence for forming interpretations and assessments.

Nonetheless, knowing why the Koreans and Japanese take different views of history and checking the evidence that supports their interpretations is critical to making an objective judgment and developing a healthy nationalism in both countries. Although there are several unofficial exchange programs between the two countries, there is no official program to bridge this historical gap. Japan should introduce a program that will invite opinion leaders, politicians and bureaucrats from the ROK and send Japanese counterparts to the ROK to study the roots of each other’s views and their supporting evidence.

⁴³ Hisashi Michigami. 2001. *Nihon Gaikokan Kankoku Funtouki*. Tokyo: Bunshun Shinsho, 149.

⁴⁴ Japan and ROK, following agreements made at summit meetings between the two countries on October 15 and 20, 2001, established a joint history study unit on March 14, 2002, for facilitating mutual understanding on historical facts and perceptions. A joint study report is expected to be presented to the governments in 2005.

(3) Preparing for the Worst Case Scenario

What should Japan do if an undesirable unified Korea emerges, despite all the efforts mentioned above? The worst case scenario for Japan is to have a North Korean-led unified Korea which is allied with China and is hostile to Japan, or to have an ROK-led unified Korea which chooses to be allied with China and hostile to Japan after successfully completing its reunification.

Envisioning the emergence of such a Korea is unthinkable and unrealistic under the current situation. If such a Korea were to emerge, only one option seems left for Japan. That is to militarily confront such a Korea over the Tsushima Straits. Japan in the next 10 to 15 years will be very different from Japan in the last 60 years, because of the constitutional revision. Japan will not hesitate to adopt this option if needed.

5. Concluding Remarks

Three major findings are discussed in this paper. First, the ROK-led unified Korea allied with the United States serves the best interests of Japan. Second, North Korean nuclear weapon programs work against Japanese long-term interests on the Korean peninsula, as well as its short- to mid-term interests. Third, Japan should continue to focus on the security triangle among Japan, the ROK and the United States to secure its long-term interests on the Korean peninsula. These findings endorse the basic policy approach of the current Japanese government. However, Japan also needs to be more proactive in working for the complete dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear programs, and it should introduce additional policy measures aimed at shaping a favorable international environment for an ROK-led unified Korea, and to develop long term trust with the ROK. This paper cannot emphasize enough that the fundamental condition for the successful security triangle is a robust U.S.-Japan alliance. Japan must work hard to strengthen its alliance with the United States. This effort includes exercising the right of collective defense for working more closely with the U.S. forces and making the U.S.-Japan security treaty reciprocal in terms of the exercise of the right of collective self-defense.

Needless to say, it is the ROK that is primarily responsible for Korean unification and the future shape of a unified Korea. Unless the ROK tries to coordinate its threat perception of North Korean nuclear weapons and a means to dismantle the nuclear weapons with Japan and the United States, this security triangle will be difficult to operate and sustain. In the German unification case, West Germany led the unification by emphasizing the importance of NATO and the European Community, and developing positive relations with Russia. The ROK can follow the same path. The lack of a middle class in the North Korean dictatorial state and its development of nuclear weapons make it more necessary than ever for the ROK to maintain its alliance with the United States and trilateral policy coordination with Japan and the United States.

In concluding this paper, let me answer the question, “how long will Japan need the U.S. military presence to maintain its relations with the ROK?” Looking back at developments between Japan and the ROK in the last 40 years, it is no longer unrealistic to expect that the two countries will be able to establish a true trust and friendship in the future. How Japan and the ROK manage Korean unification will be critical to this end. If Japan is able to play a constructive role during the unification process and post-unification reconstruction phase, it could further enhance trust

with a unified Korea. Japan will need the U.S. military presence for a long time in order to build a lasting trust with the ROK, but definitely not forever. Some day in the future, Japan and the ROK will be able to form an “axis of freedom and democracy” in East Asia.