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# The U.S. Rebalance and the Seoul Process

How to Align U.S. and ROK Visions for  
Cooperation in East Asia

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## Introduction

In her first foreign trip as president of the Republic of Korea (ROK), Park Geun-hye met with President Barack Obama at the White House in May 2013 and affirmed that the U.S.-ROK alliance “should continue to serve as a linchpin for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Asia.”<sup>1</sup> The summit touched on many issues regarding the East Asian regional security environment that illustrated a broad commonality of views between the United States and South Korea. Afterward, President Park stated that “there would be synergy” between the two presidents’ signature regional initiatives for achieving these goals: President Obama’s policy of intensifying U.S. involvement in Asia, also known as “rebalancing” (“pivoting”) U.S. priorities to Asia, which was first announced in the fall of 2011, and President Park’s proposal in spring of 2013 for a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), often referred to as the Seoul Process. President Park suggested that she and President Obama could play the role of “co-architects” to construct a combined vision for the region, specifically by addressing functional issues such as nuclear energy and nonproliferation, cooperative development assistance, and regional economic treaties.<sup>2</sup>

For eighteen months following Park’s proposal, South Korea conducted a comprehensive review to identify the main agenda items, character, and focus for the Seoul Process. In October 2014, the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs convened the first meeting to launch NAPCI. The following month NAPCI held a technical meeting in Seoul that brought together regional specialists on nuclear safety, one of the functional issues identified as an area of opportunity for deepened cooperation under the initiative. President Park has sought to leverage the U.S.-ROK alliance in a way that benefits Seoul politically and economically while simultaneously aiding the United States to strengthen interests and influence in the area. As a result, the Park administration has eagerly sought U.S. endorsement and participation in the establishment of NAPCI. Through NAPCI, South Korea aims to define its nascent leadership role within East Asia, even as it acts in concert with the United States to reinforce shared objectives such as nonproliferation and promotion of maritime dispute management mechanisms—goals central to the U.S. rebalancing effort. Likewise, participation in NAPCI provides the United States with an important new regional platform that is exclusively dedicated to subregional cooperation on these issues. Given their overlapping goals of promoting cooperation and strengthening respect for international norms in Asia, Washington should support the Seoul Process under NAPCI and Seoul should support the U.S. rebalance. This support will mitigate the costs of potential failure and impress upon the neighborhood the need to strengthen regional cooperation through these two important efforts.

## The Evolving U.S. Rebalance: From Security to Economic Cooperation

The Obama administration came into office pledging to strengthen its Asian alliances, establish cooperative relationships with emerging Asian powers, and contribute to the strengthening of Asian institutions and adherence to international norms such as freedom of trade and navigation, use of multilateral dispute-settlement procedures, protection of intellectual property rights, and the peaceful, noncoercive resolution of disputes. Based on this framework, the United States signaled that it would reinvigorate its presence in Asia in several ways: by emphasizing coordination with Japanese and South Korean allies on managing relations with North Korea, by reaching out to emerging powers such as China and India to strengthen frameworks for comprehensive dialogue and cooperation, and by joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in 2009 and the East Asian Summit (EAS) in 2011. An explicit effort was made to increase the number of high-level diplomatic trips to and summits in the region, such as establishing a regular summit-level dialogue between the U.S. president and Southeast Asian leaders who are part of ASEAN. The administration reinforced high-level attention to Asia after receiving demands from Southeast Asian countries, Australia, and Japan for a more active U.S. profile in the region to manage China's seemingly assertive moves in the wake of the global financial crisis. Perhaps most dramatically, in 2010 the Obama administration signaled U.S. interest in maintaining freedom of navigation and in the peaceful management of the South China Sea disputes on the basis of international law by showing support for Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam and the Philippines, which had long attempted to persuade China to negotiate a multilateral code of conduct. The U.S. rebalancing strategy tried to counter perceptions that China's rise and the relative decline of the United States were likely to redefine the region's political structure. The strategy also attempted to shape China's trajectory of development by strengthening institutions and norms designed to integrate China into the existing regional order, rather than by letting Beijing redefine regional norms based on its own preferences.

The Obama administration's formal launch of its rebalancing policy came during the president's visit to Asia in November 2011. The policy emphasized three primary components: an economic prong that attempted to jump-start Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations following the ratification of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement in fall 2011; a political prong highlighted by presidential participation in the EAS that exemplified the U.S. emphasis on strengthening norm-based behavior among the countries of the region; and a military prong that involved strengthening U.S. military capabilities in East Asia (despite reductions in overall levels of U.S. defense spending) and making modest adjustments in U.S. troop deployments in the region, such as a rotational deployment of U.S. marines to Darwin, Australia. Alongside strengthening relations with U.S. alliance partners, the Obama administration has opened a comprehensive dialogue process with China with the establishment of a cabinet-led Strategic and Economic Dialogue. This approach is designed to strengthen alli-

ance relationships and reassure alliance partners alongside (and as a basis for) the institutionalization of a comprehensive Sino-U.S. dialogue process.

The initial Asian response to the U.S. rebalancing initiative was generally positive with a few exceptions. Some Chinese analysts expressed concerns that it was a part of a U.S. effort to contain China's rise and that the rebalance was likely to inflame Sino-U.S. competition for influence within Asia. Other Asian countries greeted the rebalance concept warmly, but still expressed skepticism regarding the sustainability of the U.S. commitment to Asia. They were aware of the highly politicized budget debate in Washington that ultimately resulted in across-the-board spending cuts, including U.S. force deployments and future military acquisitions. Some analysts even suggested that the rebalancing policy in its initial manifestations was over-militarized and that it came at the expense of political and economic dimensions of U.S. strategy. There was also some doubt that the rebalance would be sustainable in the second Obama administration, given the seeming lack of cabinet-level attention to and expertise in Asia-related issues.

South Koreans have generally greeted the U.S. rebalancing strategy positively. Particularly, U.S. concerns with several rounds of North Korean provocations in 2010 and from 2012 to 2013 have ensured continued U.S. attention on strengthening deterrence, showing resolve, and assuring the South Koreans that U.S. commitments to the defense of South Korea are credible. South Korean analysts hoped that the U.S. rebalance would serve as a hedge against possible budget or force reductions, which could place a greater defense burden on South Korea or send a wrong message to the North that its threats or nuclear program would be tolerated. However, South Koreans have worried that a renewed U.S. emphasis on Southeast Asia would come at the expense of U.S. resources dedicated to Northeast Asia, while expressing concern that U.S. fiscal pressures would compromise the ability of the United States to meet its defense commitments to South Korea. They have also worried that the U.S. rebalancing policy might be perceived in Northeast Asia, especially in China, as a policy designed to hedge against Chinese interests, rather than as a signal that the United States would give higher priority to its own interests in the region.

#### *PARK GEUN-HYE'S VISION FOR COOPERATION IN NORTHEAST ASIA*

Park Geun-hye's vision for promoting peace and cooperation in Northeast Asia has a long pedigree, growing from policies supported by several South Korean presidents since the end of the Cold War. Her ideas on the need for effective regional cooperation in Northeast Asia and her "trustpolitik" policy that seeks to build trust-based relations with North Korea appear as natural successors to President Roh Tae-woo's (1988–93) proposals for institutionalizing Northeast Asian regional cooperation and his policy toward North Korea known as "nordpolitik." In the late 1990s, President Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003) cast his net wider as a strong supporter of the East Asia Vision Group and as a president who worked hard to pursue mutually beneficial relationships with all four major powers: the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. President Roh Moo-hyun's (2003–2008) efforts to promote Korea as the "hub" of Northeast Asia were institutionalized domestically in a presidential committee to promote Northeast Asian cooperation. During Lee Myung-bak's term (2008–2013), the establishment of the Trilateral Coordination Secretariat (TCS), based in Seoul, marked the institutionalization of regional trilateral cooperation among Japan, South Korea, and China. However,

despite concrete efforts to institutionalize regional cooperation, Lee found greater success in enlarging South Korea's influence and contributions at the global rather than the regional level.

These efforts to increase South Korean influence and to promote institutionalized cooperation in Asia mesh well with the emphasis of the rebalance on boosting the capabilities of U.S. allies. Moreover, Park's vision is in harmony with the United States' open promotion over the past decade of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia as a way to effectively build international norms for the area. The absence of a regional organization to mediate disputes and build cooperation has been a longstanding characteristic of Northeast Asia, despite the establishment of various regional organizations in other parts of the world. One attraction of the establishment of the Six Party Talks over North Korea's nuclear program in 2003 was the idea that this organization might develop into an institution for promoting regional cooperation; the September 2005 Six Party Joint Statement comes the closest of any effort to set the basis for institutionalized subregional cooperation in Northeast Asia.<sup>3</sup> In fact, the Six Party process established a working group to build a Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism, which was designed to serve as a vehicle for institutionalized regional cooperation beyond the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problem.

The idea of a Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative was developed during Park's presidential campaign and has continued since she took office. The goal of the initiative has been to identify and implement steps necessary to address what Park calls the "Asian paradox." The paradox refers to the fact that the region leads the world in economic growth, but it has not yet effectively addressed longstanding security dilemmas and political conflicts that potentially put that growth at risk. Park identifies three main challenges that must be addressed to resolve the paradox: the possibility of an arms race or rising political competition between China and the United States, the failure of Japan to definitively address historical issues tied to its past aggression within Asia, and the failure to establish a stable inter-Korean relationship. However, efforts to overcome the paradox require cooperation from leaders in North Korea, Japan, the United States, and China that may not be forthcoming.

An additional source of regional tension is the ongoing Sino-Japanese conflict over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Although it is understandable that South Korea would not want to be involved in a Sino-Japanese bilateral territorial dispute, South Korea cannot ignore the issue, given that the dispute has contributed to increased regional tensions and the Republic of Korea has its own historical and territorial disputes with both China and Japan. At minimum, South Korea has a stake in managing territorial conflicts in order to avoid spillover effects from heightened tensions or miscalculation between China and Japan. More ambitiously, South Korea is best placed among Northeast Asian countries to build bridges and catalyze cooperative conflict-resolution strategies.

Park's initial presentation of her formula for achieving regional cooperation was sparse on details, so the first task for the Park administration has been to identify the elements and characteristics of a process and agenda for institutionalized regional cooperation. Thus far, the Park administration has focused on functional cooperation over issues including the environment, energy safety and security, pandemics, intellectual property rights, and financial issues. Through this approach, South Korea seeks tangible outcomes derived from cooperation on specific projects as a way of building "top-down momentum based on a bottom-up process," in the words of Vice Foreign Minister Cho Taeyul. South Korea envisions a voluntary and process-driven approach that attempts to build political will to overcome mutual mistrust through the experiences derived from issue-based cooperation. The Park administration also has spoken of the need to eventually shift attention from easy to difficult issues, and the desire to contribute to the strengthening of regional and international norms.

Through this process, South Korea hopes to use pragmatic cooperation on soft security issues as a way of gaining momentum and political will to address hard security issues.

#### *POTENTIAL AREAS FOR DEEPER REGIONAL COOPERATION*

By offering an approach to shared regional challenges that dovetails with U.S. rebalancing efforts, President Park achieves several objectives. First, South Korea has made clear that its proposal to promote institutionalized regional cooperation will be pursued as a complement to the U.S.-ROK alliance, thereby recognizing the essential contributions of the U.S.-led alliances in promoting regional stability. By cooperating with the United States, President Park is attempting to draw Washington into various forms of regional cooperation in which the United States has an interest. The region has already developed institutional cooperation on nontraditional security issues through two primary processes that excluded the United States: the establishment of the Trilateral Coordination Secretariat among China, Japan, and South Korea and the development of the Chiangmai Initiative that enabled currency swaps to minimize the contagion effects of a renewed financial crisis in the region. But South Korea's proposal recognizes that there are additional functional issues of concern in the region in which the United States has an interest and a role to play, including counterterrorism, nuclear safety, and energy security. NAPCI may serve as a particularly apt platform on which to build capacity for these functional issues.

In fact, political cooperation between the United States and South Korea on regional issues serves as a natural complement to defense and security cooperation under the U.S.-ROK alliance, which contributes to both peninsular and regional stability and defends South Korea from aggression. This means not only that the alliance accounts for threats from North Korea, but that strong U.S.-ROK cooperation ensures the sort of peaceful regional environment that solidifies the security of South Korea. Further U.S.-ROK alliance coordination would not envision a new threat other than North Korea, but should recognize the roles and contributions that the U.S.-ROK alliance already plays in preventing new regional conflicts from arising as threats to South Korean security.

Second, South Korea's proposal for a multilateral mechanism to promote regional cooperation is in line with the Obama administration's objective to support regional adherence to international norms on nuclear energy development and nonproliferation, international development assistance, and economic development efforts and trade treaties. In the absence of a multilateral institution in Northeast Asia, there are no mechanisms for moderating state behavior within the region. Creating such an institution requires regional consensus, particularly via efforts by the United States and China to identify, agree on, and adhere to such norms. Promoting cooperation in Northeast Asia will not be a matter of inviting China to meet preexisting standards of behavior; rather, the establishment of multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia will require China's active participation in, buy-in, and consent to the establishment of regional mechanisms for cooperation. Having South Korea lead the charge to define such norms and to meet established standards that are characteristic of similar organizations established in other regions would benefit the United States, especially given that South Korea has an inherent interest in building effective standards for cooperation within the region.

Third, the effective alignment of the U.S. rebalancing policy in Asia and the Seoul Process is likely to have positive effects on U.S.-ROK cooperation in managing North Korea. By elevating the focus on regional stability and institutionalizing regional political and security cooperation measures, the United States and South Korea push other neighbors such as Japan and China to create an environ-

ment that opposes North Korea's destabilizing actions in the region. The alignment of the two approaches strengthens the basis for other states' cooperation with the United States and South Korea in deterring North Korea's provocative behavior, given the negative impact of North Korea's actions on regional stability.

A more closely coordinated U.S.-ROK effort to establish a cooperative security arrangement in Northeast Asia has clear payoffs. The idea of pursuing peace through regional cooperation that Park Geun-hye has put forward is desirable and mutually beneficial to all parties; however, it remains to be seen whether it can be achieved in practice, or whether looming obstacles may ultimately prevent the United States and South Korea from jointly pursuing it.

### *OBSTACLES TO COOPERATION*

Despite the potential benefits of synergy between the rebalance and the Seoul Process, there are also potential obstacles that may ultimately prevent the United States and South Korea from working together on a regional security agreement in East Asia or Northeast Asia. First, geographic differences exist between the U.S. rebalance—which involves East Asia, with a special emphasis on Southeast Asia—and the Seoul Process, which is concerned solely with Northeast Asia. The resulting geographic mismatch does not preclude the United States and South Korea from defining their efforts to coordinate policy as focused solely on Northeast Asia, but it also does not rule out the likelihood that the United States will seek greater South Korean involvement to promote international norms and cooperation with Southeast Asia.

Some have argued that the existence of already-established region-wide institutions such as the East Asia Summit, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, Regional Forum (ARF), and the ASEAN Defense Ministerial Meeting Plus (ADMM+), a subregional mechanism with membership solely from Northeast Asia, is unnecessarily duplicative. But the distinctive characteristics and tensions within the Northeast Asian subregion provide ample proof that tensions within Northeast Asia requiring greater attention can be expected in a regional body dominated by stakeholders from outside the subregion. In the past, it was envisioned that the Six Party Talks would fulfill this role through the establishment of a Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism (NEAPSM), but the stalemate over denuclearization of the Korean peninsula should not be allowed to hold hostage efforts to promote multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Second, China's views of a coordinated U.S.-ROK effort to institutionalize multilateralism in Northeast Asia might serve as a constraint on such cooperation, especially since some Chinese regard the rebalance as a possible U.S. strategy for containing China. Beijing's views on cooperation between the two countries also reflect Chinese perceptions that the U.S.-ROK alliance is a Cold War relic and worries that the United States and South Korea may someday replace North Korea with China as the main object of alliance coordination. China's "new security concept" promoted by Xi Jinping eschews alliances as sources of division and as obstacles to the establishment of an Asian cooperative security regime, but Xi's proposal lacks practical details on how to address existing security dilemmas that breed regional mistrust, while the NAPCI proposal envisages developing trust through cooperation on practical issues.

Chinese analysts have expressed concern that the U.S.-ROK alliance may stray from its original purpose of deterring North Korea. In the past, South Korea has responded to Chinese sensitivities by carefully avoiding concepts such as "strategic flexibility," which might imply a joint U.S.-ROK alli-

ance role in the region (e.g., in the event of a cross-strait conflict between China and Taiwan). On the other hand, South Korea has shown in recent years the capacity to contribute to international stability operations off the peninsula through its participation in counter-piracy exercises in the Gulf of Aden, post-conflict stabilization operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a wide range of peacekeeping operations from East Timor to Lebanon to South Sudan. These capabilities would also be useful in dealing with security challenges in East Asia without arousing Chinese opposition, especially since such activities are unlikely to be pursued exclusively within the context of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

A third obstacle to greater coordination between the U.S. rebalance and the Seoul Process is the perception that the Seoul Process, as it has been defined to date, is weighted toward China at the expense of Japan. This perception has gained traction as a consequence of President Park's prioritization of positive relations with China and her choice of Beijing over Tokyo as her second overseas destination after Washington in the early months of her tenure. Moreover, the seemingly intractable nature of political relations between Japan and South Korea in recent years has been reinforced by President Park's emphasis on the necessity that the Japanese government come to a "correct understanding of history" as a prerequisite for normal political relations between the two countries.<sup>4</sup>

The Obama administration's rebalance policy places a priority on strong relations with its alliance partners, including Japan and South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand. An implicit expectation of the rebalance is that U.S. allies should have good relations with each other. The second expectation of the rebalance is that the U.S.-Japan alliance will benefit from a strong and assertive Japan. However, this view may collide with South Korea's concern that Japan is taking advantage of the U.S. rebalance by renewing its own capacities for self-defense.

The fourth obstacle to greater coordination between the rebalance and the Seoul Process lies in the challenge of aligning South Korean and Japanese visions for promoting regional security cooperation. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has talked about a "strategic diamond" and has emphasized values-based cooperation among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India in an effort to counter China's growing strength and influence, while President Park's initiative has focused on promoting cooperative approaches in Northeast Asia that include China. These two differing strategic views on how to deal with China suggest a contradiction between Japanese and South Korean ideas for promoting regional stability. Therefore, the task of coordinating these two views, or at least of ensuring that they do not compete with each other, places an extra burden on U.S. strategy.

A final obstacle might arise if the Seoul Process is perceived primarily as an extension of the U.S.-ROK alliance rather than as an independent South Korean-led initiative with objectives that coincide with the interests of the U.S.-ROK alliance in promoting regional stability. South Korea is clearly an independent actor with its own security needs, diplomatic influence, and interests within the region. This does not mean that the U.S.-ROK alliance is irrelevant to South Korea's foreign policy; rather, it suggests that the alliance indirectly provides a platform for independent South Korean efforts to promote its interests as a "middle power." South Korean interests are mutually reinforcing and deeply compatible with U.S. interests. Close cooperation with the United States was an important factor in South Korea's modernization, with the United States enabling South Korea's economic development. South Korea's economic success and its geographic position at the center of a dynamic but increasingly tension-filled region require its leadership to promote multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia from a position of confidence that is ultimately based on security provided by the U.S.-ROK alliance.

## Recommendations: How to Attain Synergy Between the U.S. Rebalance and the Seoul Process

The United States and South Korea have a mutual interest in developing a coordinated regional security strategy to promote peace and enhance regional stability in Northeast Asia. Both governments recognize that the U.S.-ROK alliance provides a foundation for pursuing such coordination, and both countries' strategies for building regional stability in Northeast Asia emphasize the importance of close U.S.-ROK cooperation, strong adherence to international norms, and renewed efforts to institutionalize frameworks that limit conflict and enhance regional stability. Moreover, the implementation of the Seoul Process under NAPCI provides a rationale for cooperation that should generate important side-benefits, including the stabilization of the South Korea-Japan relationship and China's participation in an initiative that explicitly accepts the compatibility of alliances with other forms of regional security cooperation. However, some contradictions exist between the two countries' respective approaches, which should be reconciled to more effectively align U.S. and South Korean visions for promoting regional stability. The following recommendations attempt to address these contradictions:

- *The United States should accept invitations to participate in South Korean-sponsored multilateral cooperation projects in Northeast Asia on functional issues such as nuclear safety, counterterrorism, and energy security, as South Korea begins to convene meetings among technical specialists on these issues.* The United States has a direct interest in supporting South Korean-led efforts to build regional cooperation in Northeast Asia. Such an approach is also in harmony with the rebalancing policy's emphasis on building the capacity and confidence of U.S. allies to uphold international norms. By undertaking these efforts, South Korea is using its good offices and convening capacity to generate opportunities for U.S. involvement in the region in ways that benefit and further the broader aims of both countries. Likewise, South Korea should expand the Seoul Process to include initiatives that would induce U.S. participation in projects led by Seoul, taking cues from previous successful international projects such as hosting the exercises for the Proliferation Security Initiative and aiding with financing environmental development as the home base of the UN's Green Climate Fund. The establishment of an additional channel for Northeast Asia-based functional cooperation that goes beyond existing initiatives, such as the Trilateral Coordination Secretariat, will offer new opportunities for U.S. inclusion in the region that otherwise would not be available. Moreover, the South Korean agenda for multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia overlaps to some degree with areas in which the United States seeks to increase bilateral involvement with China, such as on the environment.
- *In return for U.S. support of NAPCI, South Korea should expand the geographic scope of cooperation beyond Northeast Asia to encompass East Asia by exercising greater leadership in region-wide forums*

*such as the EAS and ARF.* Building on her October 2013 and December 2014 summits with ASEAN leaders, in which they expressed support for the Seoul Process, President Park should more actively consider how South Korea can contribute to region-wide cooperation initiatives outside of Northeast Asia. Likewise, the United States should support South Korea's efforts to work regional focus into joint statements, discuss joint aid projects such as the Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI), and encourage continued participation in Southeast Asian multilateral initiatives such as search-and-rescue exercises and cooperation in military medicine.

Many ASEAN leaders would welcome greater South Korean contributions to East Asia-based political cooperation initiatives, which thus far appear to be relatively underdeveloped compared to South Korea's economic cooperation with Southeast Asia. For instance, South Korea has much to offer through expanded regional collaboration with Southeast Asian countries in nontraditional security areas such as training on humanitarian assistance and disaster response, strengthened crisis relief and development funding in the event of natural disasters in Southeast Asia, or promotion of closer cooperation on cybersecurity, counter-piracy, and the prevention of drug and human trafficking. Many of these efforts to promote functional and economic cooperation are already part of the recommendations of the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG) II Report, which outlines practical steps toward realizing an East Asia Economic Community by 2020. South Korea should also expand its bilateral efforts to promote closer political and technical cooperation with leading countries in Southeast Asia and Australasia, such as Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, and Australia. For instance, the scheduling of a regular South Korea-Australia two-plus-two meeting among defense and foreign ministers is a positive development along these lines.

A stepped-up South Korean effort to promote East Asia-based political cooperation is also in line with expectations for the development of South Korea as an emerging middle power in the region. Additionally, it may be more diplomatically palatable in some cases for China, South Korea, and Japan to begin functional cooperation efforts with a focus on Southeast Asia, rather than to start the process in Northeast Asia.

These activities would complement not only the Seoul Process but also the United States' rebalancing. Likewise, a more outspoken presence by South Korea at the EAS on issues like non-proliferation and maritime security would reinforce both countries' regional strategies. Such a move would likely be welcomed by Washington and by leaders in Southeast Asian capitals; not only is promoting the EAS an important part of the rebalancing strategy, but it is also critical to ASEAN's regional strategy.

- *The United States, with its robust alliances with both South Korea and Japan, should encourage South Korea and Japan to stabilize their relationship as an essential prerequisite for and benefit from the establishment of the Seoul Process.* Unless Tokyo and Seoul are able to stabilize their relationship with each other, neither the Seoul Process nor the U.S. rebalance will be able to achieve its objectives. The establishment of a stable framework for Japan-South Korea relations will require both sides to take concrete measures to deal with the past. Japan will need to reaffirm its moral responsibility to surviving victims of Japanese colonial rule and condemn individual expressions denying Japan's wartime responsibilities, while South Korea will have to accept the Japanese government's admissions as sincere. Both sides must also take steps to depoliticize and successfully manage the outstanding territorial dispute over Dokdo/Takeshima Island. Japan should minimize references

to their respective claims in textbooks or through the holding of national and local commemorations naming the island, while South Korean politicians should not use the Dokdo issue as a way of generating anti-Japanese sentiment.

- *Through strategic regional management, the United States and South Korea should work together to assure China of the potential of the Seoul Process as an effective mechanism for promoting Northeast Asian regional stability.* Both the U.S. rebalance and the Seoul Process are premised on the idea that strengthened participation with China can yield an effective, rules-based system for managing security in East Asia. Both the United States and South Korea benefit from China's participation in functional cooperation as a means of reducing distrust, as a way of cooperatively managing regional issues that require Chinese cooperation, and as a mechanism that underscores that alliances are not an obstacle to expanded regional cooperation.

In this regard, one of the region's most pressing needs is to promote regional cooperation to moderate the potential negative effects of a zero-sum security competition between China and Japan on the specific issue of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands conflict and, more broadly, on the Dokdo/Takeshima dispute. Koo Min-gyo of Seoul National University has recommended the establishment of a regional maritime framework in Northeast Asia that begins with sequential delimitation of maritime boundaries, which involves adopting a consensus-based code of conduct; negotiating the principle of baselines and setting up provisional lines and zones based on median lines; modifying the provisional lines and zones as required by historical and legal circumstances; and suspending without prejudice each party's claims in favor of joint development. Based on this intellectual contribution, with strong support from the United States South Korea is well placed to advocate for implementing this sort of step-by-step, rules-based regional approach to maritime management. There is a particularly pressing need to effectively manage maritime disputes involving China, South Korea, and Japan, and South Korea should coordinate an effort to build regional consensus around rules-based approaches to resolve these issues on the basis of Koo's proposal. As the United States and South Korea consider how to align the rebalance and the Seoul Process, both countries have an interest in promoting regional approaches that can serve to buffer any potential Sino-Japanese security competition, especially in the context of future developments on the Korean peninsula that might lead in the direction of Korean reunification.

Each of these four recommendations reflects converging South Korean and U.S. interests in stronger collaboration and the deepening of norms-based multilateral cooperation efforts within East Asia. Despite differences in the scope and focus of the U.S. and South Korean visions, the United States and South Korea have an opportunity to reinforce cooperative efforts between them as the implementation of the rebalance and the Seoul Process unfolds. Given that the U.S.-ROK alliance is now perceived as a linchpin of regional stability, the United States should welcome and support South Korea's initiative to promote trust based on concrete projects designed to encourage multilateral cooperation for moderating potential conflicts among East Asian powers.

## Endnotes

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1. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Remarks by President Obama and President Park of South Korea in a Joint Press Conference," accessed September 10, 2013, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/07/remarks-president-obama-and-president-park-south-korea-joint-press-confe>.
  2. Ibid.
  3. China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the United States participated in the Six Party Talks.
  4. Park Geun-hye, speech delivered at the Independence Declaration Day memorial service at the Sejong Center for the Performing Arts in Seoul, March 1, 2013, <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Policies/view?articleId=106019>. Specifically, the Park administration has objected to efforts within Japan to deny state involvement in coercing women to serve as "comfort women" or sex slaves, insisting that this issue be resolved satisfactorily as a prerequisite to improvement of Japan-South Korea relations.

## About the Authors

**Scott Snyder** is senior fellow for Korea studies and director of the program on U.S.-Korea policy at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), where he served as an adjunct fellow from 2008 to 2011. Snyder is also the coeditor of *North Korea in Transition: Politics, Economy, and Society*, and the editor of *Global Korea: South Korea's Contributions to International Security* and *The U.S.-South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*. He served as the project director for CFR's Independent Task Force on policy toward the Korean Peninsula. He currently writes for the blog *Asia Unbound*. Prior to joining CFR, Snyder was a senior associate in the international relations program of the Asia Foundation, where he founded and directed the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and served as the Asia Foundation's representative in Korea (2000–2004). He was also a senior associate at Pacific Forum CSIS. Snyder has worked as an Asia specialist in the research and studies program of the U.S. Institute of Peace and as acting director of the Asia Society's contemporary affairs program. He was a Pantech visiting fellow at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center during 2005–2006, and received an Abe fellowship, administered by the Social Sciences Research Council, in 1998–99. Snyder received a BA from Rice University and an MA from the regional studies East Asia program at Harvard University. He was a Thomas G. Watson fellow at Yonsei University in South Korea.

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This chapter presents how the US strategic rebalance to Asia is perceived in South Korea and analyzes its policy response. The US strategy is part of Washington's medium- to long-term engagement in... This process is experimental and the keywords may be updated as the learning algorithm improves. This is a preview of subscription content, log in to check access. Copyright information. © The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s) 2016. Authors and Affiliations. Jaeho Hwang. The US rebalance and the Seoul process. Council on Foreign Relations. Kazianis, H. (2013, October 1). How China would fight US and win. The Diplomat: <http://thediplomat.com/2013/10/how-china-would-fight-the-us-and-win/>. McDonald, M. (2018). US hegemony, the "war on terror" and security in the Asia-Pacific. In *Critical Security in the Asia-Pacific*. Manchester University Press. Balancing acts: The US rebalance and Asia-Pacific stability. Sigur Center for Asian Studies. Teresita C, H. B. (2013, March 27). 4. Today we are launching the Seoul Action Plan. We shaped the Plan with unity of purpose to: ensure an unwavering commitment to cooperation We endorsed the policy framework, work processes, and timelines proposed by the FSB to reduce the moral hazard risks posed by systemically important financial institutions (SIFIs) and address the too-big-to-fail problem. This requires a multi-pronged framework combining: a resolution framework and other measures to ensure that all financial institutions can be resolved safely, quickly and without destabilizing the financial system and exposing the taxpayers to the risk of loss; a requirement that SIFIs and initially in particular financial institutions that are globally systemic (G-SIFIs) shoul