



# **Promoting Security Cooperation and Trust Building in Northeast Asia**

## **The Role of the European Union**

**edited by Nicola Casarini**



Edizioni Nuova Cultura



# PROMOTING SECURITY COOPERATION AND TRUST BUILDING IN NORTHEAST ASIA

THE ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

*edited by*  
*Nicola Casarini*



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# Introduction

*Nicola Casarini*

Northeast Asia is today one of the world's most dynamic economic areas, accounting for almost half of all global growth. Yet, relations between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have been strained due to a variety of issues, ranging from World War II apologies and the interpretation of history to territorial disputes between the three nations.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, China's rise takes place outside – and in potential opposition to – the US system of alliances while North Korea's (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK's) missile and nuclear programmes continue to be a threat to regional peace.

US defence agreements with Japan and South Korea have been a factor for stability in the region over the last few decades.<sup>2</sup> The Asia “pivot” devised by the Obama Administration (2009–16) was intended to strengthen Washington's alliances in Asia, support the emergence of multilateral security frameworks and keep China in check. The new US administration of Donald Trump is showing contempt for multilateralism and institutions, preferring instead bilateral bargaining and power relations. This leaves the European Union (EU) as the only global actor that continues to support regional integration and trust building in Northeast Asia – an area still beset by competing nationalisms.

The region has reached a level of economic interdependence similar – if not superior – to that of Europe. It is the political climate

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<sup>1</sup> See Atanassova-Cornelis in this volume.

<sup>2</sup> Victor D. Cha, *Powerplay. The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2016.

between the countries – which has worsened in recent years, due to historical as well as territorial and maritime disputes – that hinders deeper cooperation and the elimination of the root causes of conflict. This split is often referred to as the “Asian paradox”.

The region’s security environment has worsened in 2017 due to North Korea’s firing of several ballistic missiles – some of them targeting US bases in Japan<sup>3</sup> – while Washington began deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) platform in South Korea. The latter is intended to defend against an eventual North Korean attack, but its roll-out angered Beijing, which perceives the THAAD as a US attempt to enhance radar monitoring of China’s missile systems.<sup>4</sup> It is a situation that borders on war – and which calls for innovative ideas and initiatives to integrate regional economic interdependence with political cooperation so as to avoid an escalation of tensions, as the new ROK President Moon Jae-in declared after his election on 10 May 2017.<sup>5</sup>

## 1. ALTERNATIVE VISIONS OF NORTHEAST ASIA

The question of how to combine regional economic interdependence with political cooperation has received a fair amount of attention from scholars and practitioners alike. A growing body of work maintains that peace and security are inextricably interlinked with the deepening of regional cooperation and trust building.<sup>6</sup> Region-

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<sup>3</sup> “Pyongyang Claims Its Missiles Were Part of a Drill to Hit US Bases”, in *Deutsche Welle*, 7 March 2013, <http://dw.com/p/2YkBu>.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Harris, Demetri Sevastopulo and Charles Clover, “US Missile Shield Drives Wedge between South Korea and China”, in *Financial Times*, 8 March 2017.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance President Moon Jae-in’s speech at Berlin’s Old City Hall, 6 July 2017, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170707000032>.

<sup>6</sup> See Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, “Regional Cooperation: A Tool for Addressing Regional and Global Challenges”, in Secretariat of the International Task Force on Global Public Goods, *Expert Paper Series Seven: Cross-Cutting Issues*, Stockholm, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006, p. 179-244, <http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/f58a06403d3945f6b056da1b34087e73/globalpub->

al integration can be defined as the process whereby “the governments of nation-states decide to hand over some decision-making capacity” in order to establish a “degree of supranational authority beyond the nation-state within a particular geographical region”.<sup>7</sup> Regional cooperation, on the other hand, is a multidimensional and complex practice involving “a rich variety of state and non-state actors, which often come together in informal networks and multi-actor coalitions operating at different levels of the world system”.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the concept of trust – applied in the context of Northeast Asia – has been defined as the “power to force an agent taking part in diplomatic relations to choose institutionalized relations to seek out more benefits”.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, “trust” becomes an “indispensable asset that is required to foster cooperation [and is] essential for a community to prosper by elevating the level of efficiency of various forms of transactions that take place within [that] community”.<sup>10</sup> The concept of trust is thus at the centre of the positive relations that are needed in order to build cooperation and integration. While the European Union is undoubtedly the most advanced experiment in regional integration and trust building thus far, Northeast Asia stands at the opposite end of the spec-

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lic-goods-cross-cutting-issues; Ellen L. Frost, *Asia's New Regionalism*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 2008; Ali M. El-Agraa, “Economic Rights and Regional Integration: Considering the EU and ASEAN Charters within the Perspective of Global Regional Integration”, in *Journal of Economic Integration*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (December 2009), p. 634-660, <http://dx.doi.org/10.11130/jei.2009.24.4.634>.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Diez, Ingvid Bode and Aleksandra Fernandes da Costa, *Key Concepts in International Relations*, London, SAGE, 2011, p. 187. See also Antje Wiener and Thomas Diez (eds.), *European Integration Theory*, 2nd ed., Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009; Thomas Diez and Nathalie Tocci (eds.), *The EU, Promoting Regional Integration, and Conflict Resolution*, Houndmills, Palgrave, 2017.

<sup>8</sup> Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, “Regional Cooperation”, cit., p. 183.

<sup>9</sup> Ihn-hwi Park, “Northeast Asia and the Trust-building Process: Neighboring States’ Policy Coordination”, in *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (December 2013), p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Yun Byung-se, “Park Geun-hye’s Trustpolitik: A New Framework for South Korea’s Foreign Policy”, in *Global Asia*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall 2013), p. 10-11, <https://www.globalasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/462.pdf>.

trum when it comes to the institutionalization of these concepts.

In recent years, however – and amid growing political tensions – the leaderships of China, Japan and the ROK have outlined their visions of regional security and trust building. China’s plan was announced by President Xi Jinping at the meeting of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building measures in Asia (CICA) in Shanghai on 21 May 2014. According to the Chinese President, CICA – whose 24 members include all the Central Asian nations plus countries like Russia, the ROK, Thailand, Iran and Turkey (but not the US) – should become a “security dialogue and cooperation platform” and “establish a defense consultation mechanism”, including the creation of a security response centre for major emergencies.<sup>11</sup> President Xi’s vision of a new, multilateral security mechanism for Asia would thus pass through CICA, of which Japan is not a member but just an observer.<sup>12</sup>

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has outlined his own vision for Asia in a number of speeches – in particular, one delivered at the 13th Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on 30 May 2014.<sup>13</sup> Abe envisions an Asian security framework centred on the US system of alliances, in which Japan plays a key role. The main difference between China’s and Japan’s plans rests, unsurprisingly, on the role of the United States. While President Xi’s vision emphasizes the uniquely – and exclusively – “Asian” nature of his security concept, Prime Minister Abe sees the US as having a central role to play.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Xi Jinping, *New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation*, Remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, Shanghai, 21 May 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1159951.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml). See also China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *The 4th Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) Summit Held in Shanghai...*, 21 May 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/yzxhxzyxrcshydsf/t1162057.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/yzxhxzyxrcshydsf/t1162057.shtml).

<sup>12</sup> For more details on China’s approach to regional security, see Silvia Menegazzi in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> Shinzo Abe, *Peace and Prosperity in Asia, Forevermore*, Keynote address at the 13th IISS Asian Security Summit “Shangri-La Dialogue”, Singapore, 30 May 2014, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page4e\\_000086.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/nsp/page4e_000086.html).

<sup>14</sup> On Japan’s concept of regional security, see Axel Berkofsky in this volume.

South Korea's vision lies somewhere in between. After becoming ROK President, Park Geun-hye unveiled her security concept – the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) – in a speech to a dedicated joint session of the US Congress on 7 May 2013. Her proposal called for Northeast Asian nations to enhance cooperation, first on “soft” security issues (such as climate change, terrorism prevention, cyber technology and nuclear safety) before expanding the trust-building process to more sensitive areas.<sup>15</sup> NAPCI could be considered as an expanded version of Park Geun-hye's “Korean Peninsula trust process” – or *Trustpolitik*, as it was commonly referred to. By trying to establish “mutually binding expectations based on global norms”,<sup>16</sup> *Trustpolitik* would aim to promote greater exchanges and cooperation between the two Koreas with a view to building confidence and reducing tensions in the area.<sup>17</sup>

While recognizing the distinctive characteristics of Northeast Asia, NAPCI took inspiration from Europe's experience. On a number of occasions, Park Geun-hye made explicit reference to the history of European integration and to Franco–German reconciliation. On 26 March 2014, for instance, at a summit in Berlin, President Park and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the history of Franco–German rapprochement as well as Germany's reunification and their possible relevance, respectively, for Northeast Asia in general and the Korean Peninsula in particular. Two days later, in Dresden, the ROK President gave a speech entitled “An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula”, in which she proposed to the DPRK that “we jointly establish an ‘inter-Korean exchange and cooperation office’” tasked to advance reunification.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Si Hong Kim in this volume.

<sup>16</sup> Park Geun-hye, “A New Kind of Korea”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011), p. 14, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/northeast-asia/2011-09-01/new-kind-korea>.

<sup>17</sup> For more details on South Korea's *trustpolitik*, see Antonio Fiori in this volume.

<sup>18</sup> Park Geun-hye, *An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula*, Dresden, 28 March 2014, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=118517>.

In the same speech, President Park explicitly linked the trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula to NAPCI by saying, “We could also build on the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative to address North Korea’s security concerns through a multilateral peace and security system in Northeast Asia.”

NAPCI would thus aim at achieving two objectives: (1) the easing of tensions between the two Koreas; and (2) the creation of the conditions for a “grand reconciliation” between China, Japan and South Korea, which might pave the way for a vast free-trade zone among the three powers as a step towards overcoming the so-called “Asian paradox” and addressing North Korea’s nuclear threat. In this plan, the US would maintain the role of an external security balancer.

Park’s initiative would therefore have been a virtual compromise between Xi’s and Abe’s visions, as it included elements considered essential by both. By proposing deeper economic integration between Northeast Asia’s main powers as a preliminary step towards political integration, NAPCI would address China’s desire to maintain an Asian focus on any process leading to a possible multilateral security framework. However, by keeping the US involved as an external security balancer, the initiative would also take into consideration Japanese concerns over a rising China, making sure that US military forces continued to guarantee regional security.

Since South Korea’s Constitutional Court ruled to formally end impeached President Park Geun-hye’s term in office on 10 March 2017, the future of NAPCI has been thrown into question. However, the new ROK President, Moon Jae-in, elected on 10 May 2017, has declared on a number of occasions his commitment to engage North Korea as well as to promote regional cooperation and trust building. We should thus expect NAPCI to be rebranded in order to suit the new political landscape. The concepts of reconciliation, regional cooperation and trust building are likely to continue to guide Seoul’s foreign policy. In the last two decades, in fact, South Korea has been at the forefront of regional initiatives and mediation efforts regardless of which president was in power there.

The Obama Administration gave lukewarm support to NAPCI. Washington continues to rely on its military alliances with Japan



and South Korea, while seeking to keep China in check. This position has been reinforced by the incoming Trump Administration. The new US President has made clear his preference for bilateral relations, as well as his distrust for multilateralism and regional integration, a stance reiterated during his first meeting with the ROK President on 30 June 2017.<sup>19</sup>

The European Union, on the other hand, has come to bolster South Korea's initiatives (including NAPCI) unwaveringly. Not only is the EU untrammelled by binding military alliances in the region but the drive for integration and reconciliation is also very much part of its "DNA", while also being one of its foreign-policy objectives.<sup>20</sup> As stated in the joint declaration in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the European Union and the Republic of Korea, issued on 8 November 2013, "The EU supports the ROK's Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula and welcomes the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative [...] as a way of building dialogue and trust in the region."<sup>21</sup>

The EU has chosen – and rightly so – to support South Korea's initiatives, which it considers more comprehensive and forward-looking than the proposals put forward by China – whose plan shows a tendency to dominate the region – or by Japan – whose insistence on its military alliance with the US makes it difficult to achieve the process of reconciliation and trust building.

Seoul's efforts at regional mediation are not new. For instance, NAPCI built on the process of trilateral cooperation, which was based on the annual Trilateral Summit of the heads of state and government of China, Japan and South Korea. The Trilateral Sum-

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<sup>19</sup> The White House, *Remarks by President Trump and President Moon of the Republic of Korea Before Bilateral Meeting*, Washington, 30 June 2017, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/06/30/remarks-president-trump-and-president-moon-republic-korea-bilateral>.

<sup>20</sup> For more details on NAPCI and the EU, see Michael Reiterer in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> Joint Declaration in Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the European Union and the Republic of Korea (15875/13), Brussels, 8 November 2013, p. 2, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/139428.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/139428.pdf).

mit was first proposed by the ROK in 2004, as a meeting outside the framework of the ASEAN + 3 (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China, Japan and South Korea) – itself a by-product of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) – with the three major economies of Northeast Asia having a separate forum to themselves. The first summit took place in Fukuoka (Japan) in December 2008 when the three countries met to discuss regional cooperation, the global economy and disaster relief. Since then, they have established more than 60 trilateral consultative mechanisms, including almost 20 ministerial meetings and over 100 cooperative projects.<sup>22</sup> In September 2011, the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) was launched: based in Seoul, the TCS is an international organization whose goal is to promote peace and prosperity between China, Japan and South Korea. On the basis of equal participation, each government covers one third of the overall operational budget.

From 2012 to 2015, however, no Trilateral Summit took place due to separate disputes over historical grievances as well as maritime territorial claims. Nevertheless, the process has continued at the ministerial, business and civil-society levels, indicating that important sections of the three societies remain committed to regional cooperation and trust building. On 1 November 2015, the sixth Trilateral Summit was held in Seoul, during which Chinese premier Li Keqiang, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and ROK President Park Geun-hye agreed to meet annually in order to work towards deepening trade relations and to pursue the Six-Party Talks (SPT) over the DPRK's nuclear-weapons programme.<sup>23</sup> Since then, however, no further summits have taken place owing to the aforementioned disputes.

Nonetheless, given the current geopolitical situation, the need for regional cooperation and trust building in Northeast Asia has

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<sup>22</sup> For more details on the trilateral cooperation process, see Si Hong Kim in this volume.

<sup>23</sup> See the website of the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs: *The Sixth Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit*, 2 November 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page3e\\_000409.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page3e_000409.html).

rarely been more pressing. Pyongyang has launched almost 30 missiles since 2015, while the Trump Administration has aired the idea of pre-emptive strikes against North Korea's military installations. Washington has also begun the deployment of the THAAD in South Korea, straining relations with China, which sees the missile shield as a game-changer for the region's strategic balance and its own military capabilities. With the Trump Administration showing a preference for bilateral relations and a brazen distrust of multilateralism and institutions, the EU is today the only notable international actor that continues to support the drive towards regional cooperation and trust building.

## 2. EUROPE'S CONCERN FOR NORTHEAST ASIA'S SECURITY

The EU has growing interests in Northeast Asia. It is, today, China's biggest trading partner, the third largest for Japan and the fourth most important export destination for the ROK. Almost a fifth of the EU's global external trade occurs with these countries, with which bilateral agreements have already been signed or are being negotiated. In 2010, Seoul and Brussels signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). In March 2013, the EU and Japan formally announced the launch of parallel negotiations on a Strategic Partnership Agreement and an FTA, which could be completed in 2017. In November 2013, Brussels and Beijing opened negotiations on a bilateral investment agreement that – if successful – could pave the way for an FTA. It is, therefore, in Europe's strategic interest to support cooperative and peaceful relations among Northeast Asian nations.

Since the mid-1990s, EU policymakers have made a clear linkage between a possible escalation of tensions in East Asia and Europe's own prosperity. Back in 2001, the European Commission argued that the EU's economic well-being could be jeopardized not only by market turbulences in the region – as during the financial crisis of 1997–8 – but also by political instability.<sup>24</sup> European concerns for

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<sup>24</sup> European Commission, *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced*

Northeast Asia's security were included in the European Security Strategy adopted by the European Council in Brussels on 12 December 2003. The ESS stated that "problems such as those in [...] the Korean Peninsula impact on European interests directly and indirectly",<sup>25</sup> adding that nuclear activities in North Korea are of "concern to Europe".<sup>26</sup> In a speech in July 2005, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, at that time the EU Commissioner for External Relations, stated that "security in the Far East is a topic of direct concern to European interests. It is part of the overall global responsibility for security and stability that lies at the heart of the EU's role in foreign policy."<sup>27</sup> The Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia, adopted by the Council of the EU in December 2007 (and updated in 2012), acknowledge the strategic interest of the Union in the preservation of peace and stability in the area.<sup>28</sup> More recently, Federica Mogherini, the high representative of the Union for foreign affairs and security policy, in her speech at the Shangri-La Dialogue 2015 (the 14th gathering of the Singapore-based, annual high-level conference on Asian security, organized by the International Institute for Strategic Studies), declared that

there are more goods and services travelling between Europe and Asia than across the Atlantic. [...] We are one of the major investors in this continent, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, and the biggest development donor. But our engagement with Asia goes well beyond trade, investment, and

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*Partnerships* (COM/2001/469), 4 September 2001, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52001DC0469>.

<sup>25</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, p. 11, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Benita Ferrero-Waldner, *Security in the Far East*, Speech at the European Parliament (SPEECH/05/421), Strasbourg, 6 July 2005, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_SPEECH-05-421\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-05-421_en.htm).

<sup>28</sup> Council of the European Union, *Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia*, 15 June 2012, point 4, [http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST\\_11492\\_2012\\_INIT](http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST_11492_2012_INIT).

aid. It's political. It's strategical. And it needs to develop more also in the security field.<sup>29</sup>

But besides the rhetoric involved in such declarations, what has Europe done, in practice, to contribute to security and trust building in Northeast Asia?

The EU's contribution to regional security has mainly taken the form of support for the relevant international, multilateral fora. For instance, with the establishment of the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM) in 1996, a “track-two” has been initiated that also includes a multilateral security dialogue on various levels between the EU and Asia. The ASEM countries have repeatedly vowed their commitment to work together on issues such as conflict prevention, arms control, disarmament and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). At the ASEM-3 in Seoul in 2000, both the EU and Asian nations stated their explicit concerns with regard to the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, issuing the Seoul Declaration for Peace on the Korean Peninsula in which they supported implementation of the South–North Joint Declaration, including humanitarian issues. Back in September 1997, the EU, through the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), became a member of the Korean Energy Development Organization (KEDO), created to implement the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Until 2006, the Union – through the European Commission – was a member of the Executive Board of KEDO, whose goal was to construct two light-water reactors to replace the North Korean graphite-moderated reactor and reprocessing plant at Yongbyon, which had been producing a large amount of plutonium. The aim of the KEDO project was clear: to deter further nuclear proliferation and to maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. From 1997 to 2006, the total amount invested by the EU in the KEDO project reached almost 120 million euros.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Federica Mogherini, *Speech at the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2015*, Singapore, 31 May 2015, <http://europa.eu/!BT66hU>.

<sup>30</sup> For more details on Europe's engagement towards the Korean Peninsula, see

In May 2001, the EU established diplomatic relations with the North Korean regime. Today, many EU countries entertain official ties with the DPRK. Since 1995, over 366 million euros in aid has been provided in the form of food aid; medical, water and sanitation assistance; and agricultural support. In 2011, the EU provided 10 million euros in emergency aid following a severe food crisis in the North. Concurrently, the EU and its member states have adopted sanctions against Pyongyang following the country's 2003 decision to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the nuclear tests in 2006; 2009; and, more recently, in 2016 and 2017.

Europe's engagement with Northeast Asia goes well beyond trade and development aid, to include high-tech, political, security and defence-related policy areas. New capabilities have been added to the EU's foreign-policy "toolbox" in recent years, making it possible for Brussels to engage Northeast Asian nations in a way that would have been unthinkable only a few years ago.

### 3. THE EU'S NEW CAPABILITIES

The creation of the European External Action Service (EEAS) has fostered the political and security dimension of the Union's relations with Northeast Asia. Since 2010, an EU-China High Level Strategic Dialogue has been in place between the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR) and the Chinese State Councillor responsible for foreign affairs. Since 2011, there has also been a regular dialogue between the Union's HR and the Chinese Defence Minister, paralleled by a dialogue on military affairs between the Chair of the EU Military Committee and his/her counterpart in the People's Liberation Army (PLA). In March 2013, the EU and Japan announced the launching of negotiations for a Strategic Partnership Agreement that would also upgrade political relations. Since 2011, an EU-Korea High-Level Political Dialogue has been in place between the EEAS Deputy Secretary-General and

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Ramon Pacheco Pardo in this volume.

South Korea's Vice-Foreign Minister. The ROK is also the first EU partner to have signed agreements in the three key areas of political, trade and security cooperation in EU-led crisis-management operations.

The EU also has an annual political dialogue with Pyongyang. This is an integral part of the Union's policy of critical engagement towards the DPRK, through which it conveys all the issues of concern to the EU and the international community: non-proliferation of nuclear/WMD and ballistic missile programmes, regional stability and security, and respect for human rights.

Europe is mainly a civilian power in Northeast Asia. The EU does not have troops or military alliances there. However, some EU member states have retained a certain level of military involvement in the region. France, for instance, has an operational military presence in the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific, with troops that can be deployed in Asia at relatively short notice. Some EU member states collaborate with Japan and the ROK in the NATO framework – while France, Germany, Italy and Spain have developed bilateral security and military ties with China, including joint military exercises involving humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, search and rescue, and medical response. Moreover, the EU is developing space and satellite-navigation capabilities (mainly civilian) in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Union signed an agreement for the joint development of Galileo (the EU-led global navigation-satellite-system alternative to the GPS) with China in 2003 and with South Korea in 2006, while cooperation with Japan occurs mainly at the industrial level. Galileo became operational at the end of 2016. The satellite network's ground stations are currently being developed across the Asia-Pacific region in EU territories (mainly French Polynesia), while discussions are under way with the Asian partners in the Galileo project for building joint ground stations and receivers. Besides the commercial dimension, Galileo allows the EU to promote its own civilian-controlled satellite network that could continue to operate even if the American GPS (which is Pentagon-controlled) is switched off. This form of cooperation allows the Union to establish



a foothold in the region's evolving aerospace industry, with its related security implications.

Finally, the EU has acquired first-hand experience in dealing with Iran's nuclear dossier – something that could also be useful for handling North Korea. The successful framework agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue reached by the P5 + 1 – i.e. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States plus Germany<sup>31</sup> – with Teheran in July 2015, and the role played by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the EEAS in the negotiations, have given Brussels the confidence and ability to effectively play a role in resuming talks on the North Korean nuclear dossier – if the concerned parties so wished.

On the issue of the North Korean nuclear dossier, Europe is essentially a bystander. This has not, however, prevented the EU or its member states from imposing sanctions on Pyongyang.<sup>32</sup> The EU relies on the Six-Party Talks to advance the non-proliferation dossier on the Korean Peninsula; the process comprises the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the United States. Their talks remain technically operational but, in practice, they have been dormant since 2009, after the DPRK's second underground nuclear test.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, the US-led international effort has resorted to UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions, which have become increasingly comprehensive, having also been endorsed by China, North Korea's major ally. The harshest sanctions have, however, failed to halt or even reduce the pace of Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programmes.<sup>34</sup>

China leads the SPT together with the US, and has a close relationship with the DPRK regime. Beijing has long played an important role as North Korea's benefactor, which it will be difficult to renege on. The 1961 Sino–North Korean Mutual Aid and Cooperation Friendship Treaty, promising Chinese military aid to North Korea in

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<sup>31</sup> The P5+1 is often referred to as the E3+3 by European countries.

<sup>32</sup> Mark Fitzpatrick, "North Korean Proliferation Challenges: The Role of the European Union", in *Non-Proliferation Papers*, No. 18 (June 2012), <https://www.sipri.org/node/3244>.

<sup>33</sup> See Moosung Lee in this volume.

<sup>34</sup> See Lorenzo Mariani in this volume.



the event of an attack, is valid until 2021. China is also the North's largest trade partner – accounting for almost 60 percent of the DPRK's imports, more than 40 percent of its exports and the bulk of North Korean oil and gas supplies. While Beijing thus has leverage over Pyongyang, it remains to be seen whether – and to what extent – the Chinese Government is willing to push the Kim Jong-un regime to fundamentally change its behaviour. UN sanctions on North Korea have, indeed, no hope of achieving their intended aim without Beijing's full cooperation.<sup>35</sup>

Since taking office in 2013, President Xi Jinping has firmly pushed for adherence to the goal of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. An op-ed published in the *People's Daily* in mid-July 2015, after the P5 + 1 countries reached an agreement on the Iranian nuclear dossier, stated, "the facts show that dialogue and negotiation were the only correct and effective path to appropriately resolve the Iran nuclear issue",<sup>36</sup> pointing to the applicability of the positive outcome on Iran for the North Korean nuclear issue. Some Chinese experts in fact seem optimistic that the outcome of marathon negotiations on Iran have given a "signal of hope" for the potential success of similar tactics vis-à-vis the DPRK.<sup>37</sup> The P5 + 1 countries were also able to cooperate with Iran in limiting Tehran's ties to Pyongyang, thus reducing the number of nuclear allies available to the Hermit Kingdom.

At the height of the negotiations on Iran's nuclear dossier, Pyongyang in fact reached out to the EU. In January 2014, Hyon Bak Hong (ambassador of the DPRK to the United Kingdom) visited the EEAS headquarters in Brussels for informal talks on a wide range of issues, including the nuclear file. The North Korean regime had been following closely the EU's role in coordinating the Iran talks, and the visit of the North Korean envoy to Brussels served to find out

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<sup>35</sup> Donald Kirk, "Stumbling Block?", in *South China Morning Post*, 3 December 2016, p. 14, available also online: <http://www.scmp.com/node/2050784>.

<sup>36</sup> "China's Top Paper Says Iran Deal Shows Talks, Not Sanctions, Work", in *Reuters*, 15 July 2015, <http://reut.rs/1IZkpwX>.

<sup>37</sup> Interviews, Beijing, April 2016.

whether the Union would be able to play a role in defusing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Obviously – such was the response of the officials attending the meeting – any move by the EU in that direction could only happen if and when the DPRK made substantial progress on the issues of concern to the Union and the international community, including the acceptance by the North Korean regime that resuming talks would mean addressing the question of denuclearization.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, any involvement of the EU in the North Korean nuclear dossier needs to be discussed with the concerned parties – in particular, China, which has traditionally been reluctant to have the Europeans play a larger role for fear of strengthening the position of the US. It is worth remembering that the administration of George W. Bush agreed initially to include the EU as part of the SPT, but that Beijing had reservations over the issue. Today, however, the circumstances are different. The successful framework agreement on the Iranian nuclear dossier reached by the P5 + 1 countries with Tehran, including the role played by the EU High Representative and the EEAS on the issue, have had a positive effect on Chinese policymakers. A possible role for the EU as facilitator of dialogue on the North Korean nuclear dossier is no longer excluded by the Chinese. Instead, this time, opposition to Europe's involvement in helping to resume talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula could come from the Trump Administration, which distrusts multilateral negotiations and institutions – and has shown contempt for the EU.

The countries that are part of the SPT would gain from the soft-power approach of the EU. The Europeans could bring to the table their experience in negotiating with Iran and in convening the group of the P5 + 1 countries – a format that has many similarities with the Six-Party Talks. Moreover, the European Commission's previous involvement in the KEDO project – as well as Europe's experience of the joint, and safe, management of nuclear resources, as in the case of EURATOM – could also provide useful tools and resources.

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<sup>38</sup> Personal consultation with members of the Ashton Cabinet, February 2014.

The EU does not have binding military alliances in the area, and is a neutral actor vis-à-vis the region's outstanding territorial and maritime disputes. It is largely perceived as a trading and civilian bloc endowed with a whole range of soft-power capabilities. On the one hand, these elements make the EU ineffective at playing power politics in the region; on the other, these same elements make the Union a well-suited actor to promote regional security and trust building – through mediation, dialogue and capacity-building measures.

The EU also represents a formidable example of political reconciliation between former foes. The Helsinki Final Act – signed in 1975, at the height of the Cold War – shows that cooperation is possible even with an enemy armed with nuclear weapons. Northeast Asia could benefit from a regional, multilateral security organization such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and/or the Western European Union (WEU) as a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. All the above elements are part of Europe's foreign-policy toolbox. This represents the real – and distinctive – political added value of the EU for security and trust building in Northeast Asia – and on the Korean Peninsula in particular.

#### 4. THE SCOPE OF THIS BOOK

This book contributes to current debates on Northeast Asia's evolving security dynamics, including the role of the EU in promoting regional cooperation and trust building. The chapters have been written by a select group of European and Korean experts with the aim of shedding light on some of the initiatives being developed in Northeast Asia to promote regional cooperation and trust building. At the same time, they also examine the distinctive role that Europe has been playing in supporting some of these plans, including discussion of how – and to what extent – the EU's approach differs from that of the United States. The authors presented their initial ideas

at the conference: “Trust Building in North East Asia and the Role of the EU”, organized by the Istituto Affari Internazionali – with the kind support of the Korea Foundation – in Rome in October 2016. Subsequently, all the papers went through three rounds of revision before being published first online as IAI Working Papers and afterwards as individual chapters in this volume.

In the first part, the authors provide an overview of the key features of Northeast Asia’s regional order, including the perspectives on security being put forward by the leaderships of China, Japan and South Korea in the last few years. The first chapter, by Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, examines the dynamics of competition and cooperation in Northeast Asia and how they shape the security order there. Her contribution also pays close attention to what these current trends mean for the interests and role of the European Union in this region. She argues that Northeast Asia is a region characterized by tremendous economic dynamism and growing socio-economic interconnectedness. At the same time, regional tensions and conflicts remain a defining feature of Northeast Asia’s strategic landscape. The eleventh president of the Republic of Korea, Park Geun-hye, aptly described these regional dynamics as the “Asian paradox” – the growing disparity between deepening economic interdependence and a lack of progress in politico-security cooperation.

Atanassova-Cornelis maintains that strategic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, exacerbated by unresolved historical issues and mutual distrust, underpin the power-based and competitive approaches to regional security order in Northeast Asia. The region still lacks institutions that can alleviate tensions and security dilemmas. At the same time, growing economic interdependence and common concerns in the area of Non-Traditional Security (NTS) continue to drive trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and China. Importantly, these three neighbours share an understanding that trust is a prerequisite for a stable regional order. The path to community building in Northeast Asia, while still uncertain, remains open – and this is good news for the EU.

The following chapter, by Silvia Menegazzi, focuses on China’s regional security policy, arguing that Beijing’s readiness to behave

as a responsible power is evident. China appears willing to comply with rules and norms sponsored by the international community vis-à-vis condemning nuclear proliferation – i.e. supporting UNSC resolutions against North Korea. Regionally, however, China perceives the United States' engagement in the peninsula, and more broadly in Northeast Asia, as a direct threat to the principles of non-interference and sovereignty. Thus, China's regional strategy towards the Korean Peninsula may not be driven simply by North Korea's denuclearization, or by achieving the unification of the two Koreas. Rather, it sees stability as a way of pre-empting any further involvement of the United States in the region, as well avoiding any type of regime change in North Korea.

The chapter by Axel Berkofsky examines the position of Japan, arguing that since his re-election in December 2012, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese Government that he leads have invested significant resources in strengthening the country's defence capabilities. They also intend to provide Japan's military with the legal and constitutional frameworks needed to more actively and substantially contribute towards security cooperation with the United States – as formulated in the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1960. Constitutional reinterpretation, the adoption in 2015 of new national-security laws and new US-Japan Guidelines for Defence Cooperation, and the ongoing expansion of Tokyo's regional security and defence ties (bilateral and multilateral), all testify to this approach. By contrast, Berkofsky maintains that far fewer Japanese resources and energy will be dedicated to South Korean-sponsored initiatives such as the NAPCI or other similar undertakings, for a number of reasons. These include its current poor relations with Seoul, disagreements over the interpretation of Japanese World War II militarism, and the nationalism and historical revisionism endorsed and practised by Abe's government. Moreover, North Korea's most recent nuclear tests have unequivocally demonstrated that its nuclear programme is not up for negotiation. This is not least because Pyongyang's nuclear-threat potential remains its only tool for exerting pressure on countries in and beyond the region.

In his contribution, Nam-Kook Kim argues that given the compli-

cated situation in Northeast Asia, establishing a broad framework for trust building and regional cooperation, including in the identity domain, will be no easy task. It thus becomes essential to increase exposure by encouraging travel to neighbouring countries and investments targeting the younger generations, as such efforts will reduce negative stereotypes and rhetoric. In the areas of traditional cooperation in economy and security, Kim argues in favour of free-trade agreements, as these could be the basic step for enhancing levels of intraregional trade; they can subsequently be expanded to customs unions and, perhaps, a full-blown single market. In the area of sociocultural cooperation, the Campus Asia programme and an effort to establish an Asian Human Rights Court would represent ideal opportunities to promote democratic individuality within multicultural diversity, by universalizing local practices and localizing global norms. Such a process would eventually contribute to the realization of an Asia of citizens beyond an Asia of states. Cooperation in areas such as the economy, security and sociocultural issues – with detailed programmes and principles – could thus, according to Kim, support and help foster a regional community with a shared identity and common interests in Northeast Asia – and such a community will be in a better position than the current one to deal effectively with North Korea's nuclear threat.

The second part of the volume takes a closer look at North Korea's missile and nuclear developments, and at future prospects for inter-Korean dialogue. In his chapter, Lorenzo Mariani assesses the advancements of 2016, defined by the author as truly a pivotal year for the DPRK's nuclear programme. The numerous tests carried out demonstrated Pyongyang's technological progress, the diversification of its stockpile and an improved operational capability. Since the beginning of 2017, Kim Jong-un's rhetoric has become more aggressive and self-assured as he fired a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), which could potentially target the United States, on 4 July 2017. Never in the past was Kim able to be so confident; he has consolidated his hold on power, established his strategy of parallel development and set out the path for the establishment of his country as a *de facto* nuclear power.

Mariani maintains that North Korea's nuclear and missile advancements risk jeopardizing the Asia-Pacific region at a time of transition in both the United States and South Korea. Notwithstanding the North Korean breakthrough, however, the election of a new ROK president may herald a new era of engagement, as the administration of Moon Jae-in seems to be intent on resurrecting the "Sunshine Policy" of the 1990s in an attempt to give new life to the *Trustpolitik* put forward by former ROK president Park Geun-hye. The main issue with Park's approach was that North Korea would never accept denuclearization as a prerequisite for dialogue. In a strategic environment such as Northeast Asia's, in which the United States' nuclear umbrella covers Tokyo and Seoul, North Korea lives with an acute security dilemma: survival is its very first priority. Its nuclear programme provides survival through deterrence. Thus, from the DPRK's viewpoint it makes no sense to give up its only assurance of deterrence prior to the beginning of any talks. According to Mariani, a new policy based on trust must be welcomed, but it should take the interlocutors' viewpoints into consideration.

Analysis of the achievements, and pitfalls, of Park's *Trustpolitik* forms the focus of the following chapter by Antonio Fiori, who explains how the forced ejection of the former ROK President from office also represented an epitaph for the unsuccessful *Trustpolitik* strategy that, in the hopes of Ms. Park at the beginning of her mandate, was to represent a "constructive" turning point and a fresh impetus to relations between Seoul and Pyongyang. In reality, the continued provocations by the North Korean regime in recent years have led large parts of the South Korean policymaking elite and public opinion alike to wonder whether *Trustpolitik* has produced a positive outcome at all. According to Fiori, the focus on unification as a goal, more than as a long-term process, undermined the possibilities for cooperation and dialogue on the peninsula. Starting from the *daebak* narrative of unification, moving to the Dresden speech – with all its geographical and historical implications – and finally to the creation of the Unification Preparatory Committee, the overall discourse that was sent to the other side of the 38th parallel



was that of an inevitable “absorption” of the North into the South, after the likewise inevitable fall of the regime in Pyongyang. This scenario has always been seen as a positive outcome by a part of the conservative South Korean political side; however, it cannot be considered as an indication of a trust-oriented policy from Seoul, and it inevitably leads to a closure by Pyongyang of any contact and to an increase of military tension on the peninsula.

While the era of *Trustpolitik*, along with the political career of its creator, has expired, the same cannot be said of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), as explained by Si Hong Kim in his chapter. In 2013, when President Park took office, her team studied the Helsinki Process in order to draw lessons for its possible application to Northeast Asia. During the Park Administration, the basic lineaments of South Korea’s foreign and security policy were threefold. The first was the Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process, which would start from securing peace, proceed through economic integration and finally reach political integration in inter-Korean relations. The second was NAPCI, a process that sought to build an order of multilateral cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. The third approach was the Eurasia Initiative, which aimed for continental-scale cooperation between East Asia and Europe.

According to Si Hong Kim, to realize the goals of NAPCI – or any forthcoming, transformed version of the regional-security dialogue – it would be necessary to implement a step-by-step process and a rules-based approach. The challenge here lies in how to construct such a reality despite the numerous obstacles present in the region. It is in this context that the European experience can be of value for the region’s policymakers. The EU in fact advocates economic interdependence and supports confidence-building measures in Northeast Asia through a multilateral approach, as the following chapters discuss in more detail.

The third part of the volume examines the role of the EU in promoting security cooperation and trust building in Northeast Asia. In his chapter, Ramon Pacheco Pardo discusses the EU’s policy regarding Korean Peninsula affairs since the 1990s. The EU had a seat



at the table in DPRK-related discussions through its participation in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the organization in charge of implementing the Agreed Framework signed by the US and the DPRK in 1994, and – towards the end of the decade – developed its own independent policy through the normalization of diplomatic relations between most EU member states and Pyongyang. Brussels itself officially established relations in 2001. The EU's pro-engagement policy matched President Kim Dae-jung's "Sunshine Policy" and President Bill Clinton's rapprochement towards the Kim Jong-il regime in the late 1990s. North Korea welcomed this approach by the Union, which was implicitly presented as an example to the United States.

Pacheco Pardo argues, however, that the EU became secondary in Korean Peninsula affairs as the second North Korean nuclear crisis began in October 2002, and KEDO was subsequently wound up. Brussels was excluded from the Six-Party Talks launched in August 2003, and was reduced to providing diplomatic support to the talks. Following the interruption of the SPT – technically discontinued, as we saw above, since 2009 – and an increasing number of missile and nuclear tests by the DPRK, the EU has continued to support deterrence measures such as various rounds of UNSC sanctions. Nonetheless, Brussels' Korean Peninsula "toolkit" still has a place for diplomacy – both bilateral and multilateral – something that can give the EU an independent voice in Korean Peninsula affairs while contributing to bringing stability to Northeast Asia.

In the following chapter, Moosung Lee adopts an almost opposite "take" on the ability of the EU to contribute to Korean Peninsula affairs. Lee argues, in fact, that there are sceptical views that despite the EU's continued interest in the North Korean nuclear issue, its role and impact will turn out to be at best indirect and at worst marginal. There are two reasons behind this prognosis. The first is related to the Union's lack of political will, given also its past experience of failure to deliver desired outcomes under the KEDO programme. Moreover, its lack of will is also related to EU member-state politics, which determine the scope and type of its foreign policy. What this means is that although the EU pursues a common

foreign and security policy, this is intergovernmental in nature and the remit for action also depends on where the “lowest common denominator” of member states lies.

The second reason is that as the attitude of the EU is critical, so are those of the participating parties to the talks. In principle, the participants in the SPT would not necessarily deny the value and experience of the EU since it has been successful in addressing regional conflicts within the context of regional cooperation and integration. However, when it comes to the question of its direct participation as a dialogue partner, their positions remain somewhat reserved. For instance, the US, both as a contributor and a problem-solver in the current crisis, does not see the EU as a direct stakeholder – and nor does China. In addition, North Korea’s attitude towards multilateralism also matters. For North Korea, the EU must be an agreeable partner for dialogue as compared to the US, but – given the ulterior motives behind the DPRK’s participation in the SPT, and its fundamental suspicion regarding the so-called unbiased role of multilateral frameworks – the effectiveness of the EU’s contribution may be open to question.

In the final chapter, Michael Reiterer strikes a more positive note as to the potential role of the EU in promoting security cooperation and trust building on the Korean Peninsula and in the surrounding region. Reiterer maintains that notwithstanding the impeachment of former President Park, the NAPCI – or something similar to it – will outlive her presidency as striving to build trust and confidence will remain a crucial task for any future ROK government. As in the past, the name of the project might change but the policy might remain valid, despite – or, rather, because of – mounting tensions. In this context, continuity across various administrations would facilitate trust building and the eventual preparation for meaningful talks. Cooperating more closely, or even merging, with other formats in order to achieve synergies in the interest of establishing/maintaining lines of communication is a possibility worth considering.

Reiter argues that the EU is ideally positioned to support current – and future – South Korean initiatives. Based on the EU’s experience of voluntary regional governance (which is a fundamental ra-

tionale for the EU's own peace and development in the twenty-first century), its Global Strategy commits the EU to "promote and support cooperative regional orders worldwide, including in the most divided areas". The latter qualifier certainly applies to the Korean Peninsula, which is also the forum for simultaneously promoting non-proliferation. Thus, critical engagement in order to spin the thin thread of communication leading to talks forms part of an integrated approach to this conflict, which has a global dimension.

In the end, all the contributors to this volume agree that Northeast Asia has reached a tipping point, as mounting tensions on the Korean Peninsula and the more muscular attitude of the new US administration of Donald Trump increase the likelihood of war. In these circumstances, new ideas and approaches are needed and the EU may provide both. Although the authors have different opinions as to the ability and effectiveness of the Union to play a meaningful role in defusing tensions on the Korean Peninsula, all agree that Europe's experience in political reconciliation between former foes provides a useful reference point for imagining a peaceful future for the region. The Helsinki Final Act – signed in 1975, at the height of the Cold War – shows that cooperation is possible even with a nuclear-armed adversary. More importantly, the creation of a regional, multilateral security body such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) would provide Northeast Asia with a possible template for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation. It also indicates that political will – coupled with open dialogue and diplomatic efforts – could bring peace and stability to even the most troublesome spots. A peaceful Korean Peninsula is possible – and the EU is ideally placed to contribute to it.



## PART I

### ASSESSING REGIONAL ORDER: THE PERSPECTIVES OF CHINA, JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA



# 1.

## Northeast Asia's Evolving Security Order: Power Politics, Trust Building and the Role of the EU

*Elena Atanassova-Cornelis*

Northeast Asia<sup>1</sup> is a region characterized by tremendous economic dynamism and growing socio-economic interconnectedness. At the same time, regional tensions and conflicts remain a defining feature of Northeast Asia's strategic landscape. The 11th President of the Republic of Korea (South Korea, the ROK), Park Geun-hye, has aptly described these regional dynamics as the "Asian paradox" – the growing disparity between deepening economic interdependence and a lack of progress in politico-security cooperation.<sup>2</sup> Against this backdrop, this paper examines the dynamics of competition and cooperation in Northeast Asia, and how they shape security order. The paper also pays close attention to what these current trends mean for the interests and role of the European Union (EU)<sup>3</sup> in this region.

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<sup>1</sup> The region is defined as including South Korea, North Korea, Japan and China, as well as the US as the main extra-territorial power.

<sup>2</sup> Yun Byung-se, "Park Geun-hye's Trustpolitik: A New Framework for South Korea's Foreign Policy", in *Global Asia*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall 2013), p. 12, <https://www.globalasia.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/462.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> In this paper, Europe refers to the European Union as a regional entity and the two references are used interchangeably.

## 1. NORTHEAST ASIA'S STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTIES

Countries in Northeast Asia, and more broadly in the Asia-Pacific region, face two major uncertainties, which are directly related to the changing geopolitical environment in Asia.<sup>4</sup> The first uncertainty is associated with the rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and concerns the PRC's mid- to long-term regional strategic objectives and behaviour. The second uncertainty is about the future role of the US, notably the sustainability of its regional security commitments and engagement in Asia, as well as the future course of Sino-American relations. These two fundamental uncertainties underlie the more specific short-term anxieties of Northeast Asia's regional players.

At present, China-associated worries in the Asia-Pacific region are largely driven by the PRC's advances in the maritime security sphere – especially its perceived assertiveness since 2010 in pressing its territorial claims in the East China Sea (ECS) and South China Sea (SCS), as well as its naval modernization. Geopolitical and power considerations in Northeast Asia are major sources of tensions in the ECS disputes. These considerations fuel Sino-Japanese rivalry and exacerbate these nations' mutual strategic distrust, which is underpinned by historically based animosities and competing nationalisms. Explicit or implicit concerns about possible Chinese aspirations for regional maritime domination and hegemony have been expressed by the US, Japan and South East Asian countries, especially by some of the claimants in the SCS disputes. Notably, the United States' own uncertainties about its ability to defend allies and friends in Asia have become more explicit as Chinese power has grown. China-associated anxieties in the US are now increasingly focused on the PRC's naval power and, in particular, its behaviour in regional maritime disputes.

Seoul, however, does not share Tokyo's and Washington's "China

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<sup>4</sup> Elena Atanassova-Cornelis and Frans Paul van der Putten, "Strategic Uncertainty and the Regional Security Order in East Asia", in *E-International Relations*, 24 November 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/?p=59783>.



threat” perceptions, and is wary of antagonizing Beijing by joining a US-Japanese anti-China coalition.<sup>5</sup> To be sure, the normally cordial Korean-Chinese relations do experience their own jolts due to competing sovereignty claims over the Ieodo Rock, and the ROK’s repeated complains about illegal fishing by Chinese trawlers in South Korea’s waters off the Korean Peninsula’s west coast. Yet, it is Japan (rather than China) that South Korea perceives as a threat to its security, despite its shared concerns with Tokyo about missile and nuclear developments by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea, the DPRK).<sup>6</sup> Japan’s sovereignty claims to Dokdo Islands (known as Takeshima in Japan) and its expanded security role under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, especially in the maritime domain, have largely driven the ROK’s recent naval modernization beyond peninsular defence. Additionally, persistent historical grievances feed mutual antagonism between South Korea and Japan, hampering their bilateral security cooperation.

Questions about Washington’s willingness and ability to sustain its Asian-Pacific engagement in the context of China’s growing regional influence, and amid economic and fiscal constraints in the US (especially cuts in defence spending), have increasingly been raised in various Asian capitals. For the US allies in Northeast Asia – Japan and South Korea – the future course of US-China relations is an even more critical question. On the one hand, they are worried about a more pronounced US-China power struggle and its outcome. Indeed, both Japan and South Korea are economically interdependent with the PRC, but reliant on the US for security protection against the DPRK’s military threat (and Japan, additionally, against the prospect of a more hostile China). On the other hand, Tokyo and Seoul each fear a reduction of US presence in the region. This could result from the discontinuation of Barack Obama’s “re-

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<sup>5</sup> Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, Ramon Pacheco Pardo and Eva Pejsova, “Pride and Prejudice: Maritime Disputes in Northeast Asia”, in *EUISS Reports*, No. 23 (April 2015), <http://www.iss.europa.eu/publications/detail/article/pride-and-prejudice-maritime-disputes-in-northeast-asia>.

<sup>6</sup> Christian Wirth, “‘Power’ and ‘stability’ in the China-Japan-South Korea Regional Security Complex”, in *The Pacific Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (2015), p. 553-575.

balance” under the new Donald J. Trump Administration and/or the US’ inability to maintain its Asian commitments, or from Washington’s decision to accommodate Beijing in the long term. The latter aspect reflects regional uncertainties associated with the ongoing transition towards a post-US regional security order (that may or may not be dominated by China).<sup>7</sup> To be sure, both South Korea and Japan favour positive Sino-US relations for the maintenance of regional stability in Northeast Asia. Yet, they are wary of a joint US-China regional leadership that might disregard their respective security interests: in the case of Japan, in the ECS territorial disputes, while for the ROK, on the issue of Korean unification.

China’s short- to medium-term concerns about the US have primarily been related to that country’s perceived “strategic encirclement” of the PRC as part of its rebalance. Beijing has also strongly objected to Washington’s greater involvement in the ECS and SCS issues under the Obama Administration. In the long run, China also fears possible regional exclusion as a result of the US’ strengthened role in various multilateral arrangements (e.g. the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, TPP). However, this particular Chinese concern might subside under the incoming Trump Administration, which is likely to scale down US engagement in the multilateral arena.

Although geographically located far from the region and uninvolved in Northeast Asia’s geopolitics, Europe does have direct stakes in Asian security. Indeed, the EU has extensive economic interests in the region and seeks stability of the maritime commons, which are critical for European exports and imports. The PRC, Japan and the ROK are the Union’s second, seventh and eighth largest trading partners respectively. A more pronounced US-China or Japan-China power competition in the region, or a major escalation of the maritime territorial disputes, would adversely affect international trade and jeopardize the safety of Asia’s shipping lanes. Additionally, North Korea’s policies not only destabilize Northeast Asia,

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<sup>7</sup> Elena Atanassova-Cornelis and Frans Paul van der Putten, “Strategic Uncertainty and the Regional Security Order in East Asia”, cit.

but the DPRK's potential proliferation of nuclear weapons, technology and materials may also have direct security implications for Europe's own neighbourhood.

## 2. COMPETITIVE SECURITY DYNAMICS

One of the implications of Northeast Asia's strategic uncertainties for the security behaviour of its regional players is the intensification (albeit to varying degrees) of power-based and competitive security practices in the region.

A common response to such uncertainties by Japan and the ROK – in particular, to ensure the continuity of US defence commitments – has been a reinforcement of their respective bilateral security ties with the United States. In the case of the US-Japan alliance, the most notable development was the adoption in 2015 of the Revised Defense Guidelines for Cooperation. These guidelines expanded the substantive and geographical scope of joint missions, including those involving maritime security, seeking to make the alliance a major contributor to peace and stability both in the Asia-Pacific region and globally.<sup>8</sup> The bilateral agreement was in line with Prime Minister Abe's policy of "proactive pacifism." This policy has been largely a response to uncertainties associated with the rise of China and has promoted a more active security role for Japan, pursued both jointly with the US and alone.

South Korea, too, has sought a strengthening of its military alliance with the US in order to reduce the risks of possible US "abandonment." Unlike Japan, Seoul's primary concern has been the DPRK's military threat. North Korea under Kim Jong-un has continued to escalate tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and has conducted several missile tests and three nuclear tests that violate UN resolutions. As a result, the ROK and the US have decided to deploy in South Korea, in 2017, the US-made Terminal High-Altitude Area

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<sup>8</sup> Japan Ministry of Defence, *Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation*, 27 April 2015, [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d\\_act/anpo/shishin\\_20150427e.html](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/anpo/shishin_20150427e.html).

Defense (THAAD) missile system. While this advanced defence system is said to be intended only for countering threats from the DPRK, for China this decision has been controversial. Beijing has strongly opposed the deployment of THAAD, fearing that the system's radars would be able to detect and track the PRC's own strategic missiles. A perception of US containment of China and distrust of American regional strategic objectives have underpinned these Chinese concerns.

The issue of THAAD, and the resulting security dilemma in which South Korea finds itself as a result of Sino-US rivalry, complicates Seoul's delicate balancing act between maintaining a strong alliance with Washington and developing a cordial relationship with Beijing. While South Korea seeks to deepen its security ties with the US in order to deter the DPRK, it also needs China's cooperation in addressing the denuclearization of the North.<sup>9</sup> Equally important, the PRC is the ROK's largest trading partner and the two have a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that entered into force in 2015 – the first FTA in Northeast Asia, in fact. The hallmark of South Korea's approach towards China has been economic and diplomatic engagement. This approach has also formed the basis of Seoul's multilateral initiative designed to engage the other regional stakeholders – such as Japan, the US and the DPRK – as part of President Park's *Trustpolitik* in Northeast Asia (discussed later in this paper).

Unlike South Korea, Japan has placed a strong emphasis on strategic diversification away from China (and, by extension, from Northeast Asia) as a way of reducing the risks of possible Chinese domination in Asia. Defined as a “strategic pivot South,”<sup>10</sup> Tokyo's policy has focused on enhancing its bilateral economic, diplomatic and defence ties with nations geographically located south of Japan's primary sphere of geostrategic interests. These have included some of the claimants in the SCS disputes, such as the Philippines

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<sup>9</sup> Elena Atanassova-Cornelis, Ramon Pacheco Pardo and Eva Pejsova, “Pride and Prejudice: Maritime Disputes in Northeast Asia”, cit.

<sup>10</sup> Corey J. Wallace, “Japan's Strategic Pivot South: Diversifying the Dual Hedge”, in *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2013), p. 479-517.

and Vietnam, as well as Indonesia, Australia and India. Japan's difficult political relations with South Korea, and the two countries' strategic divergence on China, have additionally contributed to Tokyo's shift away from Northeast Asia and towards the broader Asia-Pacific region – the latter move being manifested in Japan's embrace of ASEAN-led multilateral frameworks as a means of constraining the PRC's regional influence through “institutional balancing.”<sup>11</sup>

As far as China is concerned, in order to avoid isolation in Northeast Asia amid fears of US containment it has paid a great deal of attention to maintaining a stable and positive relationship with South Korea. This has included regular high-level summits, economic engagement and seeking a common stance with Seoul on Japan-related historical grievances. Beijing has also sought to reinforce the image of China as a “responsible” major power seeking the DPRK's denuclearization by supporting the various UNSC resolutions on North Korea. The THAAD issue now appears to be a major challenge to these PRC-ROK relations.

Finally, regional geopolitics is further complicated by the ambivalent attitudes of China, Japan and the US towards Korean unification, which stems from their diverging strategic interests and competition for influence on the Korean Peninsula. This competition has now sharpened due to the uncertainties associated with the region's transitional security order. As a result, Seoul often feels alienated and suspicious of the strategic motivations of Northeast Asia's major powers.

### 3. COOPERATION AND TRUST BUILDING

Despite the geopolitical tensions and lingering mutual distrust, South Korea, Japan and China simply cannot ignore the powerful forces of regional integration. Indeed, a critical driver of trilateral

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<sup>11</sup> On the concept of “institutional balancing”, see, Kai He, “Contested Regional Orders and Institutional Balancing in the Asia Pacific”, in *International Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 2 (February 2015), p. 208-222.

cooperation in Northeast Asia has been the high level of economic interdependence between the three neighbours, as well as the shared objectives of achieving economic growth and prosperity. Furthermore, the uncertain strategic environment in the region also acts as a strong force for cooperation. A number of security challenges in Northeast Asia – notably in the realm of non-traditional security (NTS) – require a joint response, and one undertaken by the regional players themselves rather than their relying on external powers. Trilateralism reflects this shared understanding, which means moving beyond bilateralism and the US-led alliance system.<sup>12</sup>

Indeed, South Korea, Japan and China share many common concerns that fall outside the divisive area of “high politics.” Importantly, by focusing on the issues that unite the three players, NTS cooperation provides opportunities for trust building, and thereby for jointly addressing regional strategic uncertainties. In this regard, such an approach to regional cooperation, which utilizes institutions as drivers of mutual confidence and trust, has been defined as a “uniquely Northeast Asian” way of creating institutions.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, common NTS concerns include security challenges not confined to national borders; hence, their successful management requires strong regional cooperation. The US-led alliance system is not suitable for tackling such issues.

Trilateral NTS cooperation – for example, in the areas of environmental protection, disaster prevention and the tackling of infectious diseases – has gradually evolved alongside the power-based and bilateral security practices discussed earlier. Focusing on economic, financial and NTS concerns, three-way summits have been institutionalized in the region since 2008. The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat was established in Seoul in 2011.<sup>14</sup> This trilateralism is

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<sup>12</sup> Jaewoo Choo, “Non-Traditional Security Cooperation and Northeast Asian Regional Order”, in Elena Atanassova-Cornelis and Frans Paul van der Putten, eds., *Changing Security Dynamics in East Asia. A Post-US Regional Order in the Making?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 171-190.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>14</sup> For more information, see the official website: <http://www.tcs-asia.org>.

underpinned by the region's high level of economic interdependence, which has, since 2013, driven the South Korea-Japan-China FTA talks. The sixth trilateral summit, in 2015, was particularly significant as it took place after a two-year period of interruption due to diplomatic tensions. The resulting 2015 Joint Declaration for Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia stressed the leaders' joint commitment to stabilizing regional relations, pursuing economic integration and institutionalizing further trilateral collaboration.<sup>15</sup>

Building upon the already existing practices of trilateralism, President Park's *Trustpolitik* seeks to both deepen and expand their scope, in terms of issues, participants and objectives. The concept itself represents a vision and a foreign-policy tool of the Park Administration, and promotes a new order of long-lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia centred on increased cooperation built on trust.<sup>16</sup> In this context, the administration has proposed the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) as "a roadmap for implementing *Trustpolitik* at the regional level."<sup>17</sup> Emphasizing informality and dialogue, NAPCI seeks a reinforcement of functional cooperation on NTS issues and the socialization of regional players through interaction; it is hoped that this process will foster mutual trust and, ultimately, lead to collaboration on "high politics" issues.<sup>18</sup> Based on the principles of engagement, inclusiveness and multilateralism, NAPCI has been welcomed by Japan and China as well as being endorsed by the US and the EU.

Europe's own policies towards Northeast Asia reflect the main features of the evolving trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and China. The EU has pursued an engagement strategy towards each of these three players through extensive economic ties and bilateral strategic partnerships. Europe has a political dia-

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<sup>15</sup> Joint Declaration for Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia, Seoul, 1 November 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page1e\\_000058.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page1e_000058.html).

<sup>16</sup> Yun Byung-se, "Park Geun-hye's *Trustpolitik*", cit.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Michael Reiterer, "The NAPCI in the Volatile Security Environment of North-East Asia: Which Role for the European Union?", in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2015), p. 573-589.



logue with the PRC at various levels; has institutionalized its cooperation with the ROK by concluding, in 2010, an FTA and a political agreement; and is currently negotiating similar agreements with Japan. Brussels has extensive cooperation experience with Tokyo, and is enhancing its collaboration with Seoul on NTS issues, including climate change, energy security and non-proliferation. Building trust through functional cooperation, and gradually expanding the scope of engagement, has been the hallmark of the EU's approach towards each of the three players. NAPCI is reminiscent of this approach.

#### 4. APPROACHES TO REGIONAL ORDER

As this paper illustrates, the dominant approaches to regional security order in Northeast Asia remain very much power based and bilateral. Japan and South Korea are each responding to strategic uncertainties in ways that facilitate a strong and enduring regional role for the US centred on bilateralism. For China, the strengthening of American-led alliances is perceived as a threat to its own interests and as a symptom of US-led containment. Beijing seeks to maintain a favourable balance of power by reinforcing its own deterrence capabilities, as well as by trying to court South Korea with economic incentives and convergent policies on North Korea. The competitive dynamics associated with Northeast Asia's geopolitics reinforce the role of bilateral alliances, strategic alignments and military capabilities for maintaining a stable regional order.

At the same time, these power-based security practices have been accompanied by approaches to regional order building that underscore economic cooperation, common security interests and multilateralism. Both Tokyo and Seoul seek to include China in (economic) order building and to jointly tackle NTS challenges, while continuing to support US engagement in Asia's "hard" security issues. Beijing, too, promotes trilateral cooperation with its neighbours and encourages multilateral approaches for addressing the North Korean issue. Despite the continuing geopolitical ten-



sions, the trilateral summit (resuscitated in 2015) and the ROK's NAPCI are subtle indicators that the logic of community building is "at work" – which, in itself, is a critical factor for generating trust.

The EU has major economic stakes in Asia. Therefore, it has a strong interest in promoting regional cooperation and a stable regional order in Northeast Asia, conceptualized along the lines of community-building logic. Its support for institution-building activities in other parts of the world has been an important policy objective for Brussels, for strong institutions are regarded as the primary means for achieving sustainable peace. Being concerned about potential instability in Asia, the EU is wary of the dominance of power-based approaches to regional order.

In Northeast Asia – a region with a high concentration of material power and a high trust deficit – the EU does enjoy a certain advantage. It lacks "hard" power and its involvement in the region's traditional security issues is minimal. The Union is thus not party to regional geopolitical rivalries, nor does its involvement exacerbate regional security dilemmas. On the contrary, it is perceived by South Korea, Japan and China as a model of regional reconciliation and integration. The EU also enjoys positive relations with each of these three players.

Sharing a great deal with the European experience and emphasizing inclusiveness, NAPCI, by its very nature, is conducive to an expanded EU role in regional order building in Asia. In this context, Brussels can really make a difference by bringing its own experience to bear. It should seek to reinforce Northeast Asia's existing functional cooperation on NTS by providing concrete examples of European cross-border policies – for example, in the areas of energy, nuclear security and environmental protection.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the EU already has extensive bilateral cooperation with South Korea, Japan and China on a number of NTS issues. This places it in a favourable position to share its knowledge, acquired in the European context, and thereby foster regional trilateralism in the region's less sensitive areas. At the same time, promoting historical reconciliation in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Northeast Asia may prove to be a more challenging task for Brussels. The main reason for this is that historical disputes in the region are intertwined with its competitive power dynamics and the unresolved North Korean issue. Yet, even in this more sensitive area, the EU's expertise in confidence and institution building could be used to stimulate the, still nascent, community-building approaches to regional order in Northeast Asia. The resuscitation of the trilateral summit and the advancing economic and NTS cooperation between South Korea, Japan and China suggest that some of the critical aspects of the European experience are indeed relevant in the Asian context. These include, notably, the understanding that political leadership plays a major role in regional reconciliation, while the pursuit of common security approaches is indispensable for regional peace and prosperity. It is in these areas that the EU can, and should, be a source of inspiration for Northeast Asia's players.

## CONCLUSION

Strategic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, exacerbated by unresolved historical issues and mutual distrust, underpin the power-based and competitive approaches to regional security order in Northeast Asia. The region still lacks institutions that can alleviate tensions and security dilemmas. At the same time, the growing economic interdependence and common concerns in the area of NTS continue to drive trilateral cooperation between South Korea, Japan and China. Importantly, these three neighbours share an understanding that trust is a prerequisite for a stable regional order. The path to community building in Northeast Asia, while still uncertain, remains open – and this is good news for the EU. Ultimately, however, it is up to the regional stakeholders themselves to choose which path to follow.

## 2.

# China's Foreign Policy in Northeast Asia: Implications for the Korean Peninsula

*Silvia Menegazzi*

## 1. CHINESE INTERESTS IN NORTHEAST ASIA

Northeast Asia is a region rife with political-economic paradox.<sup>1</sup> On the one hand, nuclear and missile proliferation threatens the security complexes of all the major actors with interests in the region (i.e. China, South Korea, Japan and the United States). On the other hand, the process of economic integration reached unprecedented levels in the last decade. In 2016, according to International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates, China, Japan and South Korea combined accounted for a 20 percent share of world GDP (projected GDP).<sup>2</sup>

Northeast Asia is currently one of the main strategic nodes at a global level, and its economic interdependence is comparable with that of the European Union or the United States. Since the beginning of the 1990s, China's foreign policy towards Northeast Asia has been characterized by a series of political initiatives known as "peripheral diplomacy" (周边外交, *zhoubian waijiao*). The main intention has been for China to present itself as a rising regional pow-

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<sup>1</sup> Kent Calder and Min Ye, *The Making of Northeast Asia*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> See Statistic Times' *List of Countries by Projected GDP*, based on IMF *World Economic Outlook October 2016*, 21 October 2016, <http://statisticstimes.com/economy/countries-by-projected-gdp.php>.

er interested more in cooperation than confrontation. At present, and in contrast with past practice, China has become a constructive participant in its approach towards regionalism – albeit while retaining its “Chinese characteristics.”<sup>3</sup> Specifically, and as distinct from the situation in the mid-1990s, China’s practice of regionalism has undergone two major changes: geographically, as its strategies are no longer confined to Asia; and politically, as it no longer sees itself as a revolutionary state but as an active participant in and contributor to the existing regional mechanisms, and with a Great Power identity.

The One Belt One Road (OBOR), a project launched in 2013 with the intent to hold together Beijing’s geostrategic ambitions and economic goals around the world and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), a new multilateral development bank established in 2015, are just two of many initiatives inaugurated by China, attesting to its new approach to global governance and international affairs.

China is particularly keen to play an increasing role at an international level. However, it also intends to maintain a highly strategic profile in Northeast Asia. Policymakers in Beijing recently characterized relations between the three main countries in the region (China, Japan and South Korea) as the “four-wheel drive”: politics; economics and trade; people-to-people exchanges; and sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> This approach aims to boost the economic development of the East Asian region, while also guaranteeing security interests, peace and stability.

In parallel with the political narrative designated to deal with Northeast Asia, China’s policy towards the Korean Peninsula is rooted in four key areas. On 4 July 2014, the Chinese President delivered an important discourse at the Seoul National University. In

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<sup>3</sup> Zhang Xiaotong and Li Xiaoyue, “China’s Regionalism in Asia”, in *The Asan Forum*, 23 May 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/?p=3758>.

<sup>4</sup> China’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Wang Yi: Overcome Difficulties, Eliminate Disturbances, Accumulate Consensus and Focus on Cooperation*, 24 August 2016, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1392010.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1392010.shtml).

his speech, Xi highlighted the fact that China's regional policy towards the Korean Peninsula rests strategically in both economic and political terms. In particular, Chinese interests are driven by four major objectives: (1) economic integration and development; (2) long-term political interests; (3) peaceful unification between South and North Korea; and (4) public diplomacy.<sup>5</sup>

However, in the eyes of the international community Beijing still plays a very ambiguous role towards the peninsula. In fact, China continues to occupy a distinctive position among the major-power narratives involved in the region – as compared, for example, with that of Japan. Furthermore, the People's Republic of China (PRC) appears to be the only country to maintain strong ties with both Seoul and Pyongyang. For China, dealing with South Korea in the context of political and economic cooperation must be framed within the broader context of its interests in the region, as well as how it thinks about its foreign-policy principles and practices.

Consequently, China's regional strategy towards the Korean Peninsula may not be driven simply by North Korea's denuclearization, or by achieving the unification of the two Koreas. Rather, it sees stability as a way of pre-empting any further involvement of the United States in the region, as well avoiding any type of regime change in North Korea.

## 2. CHINA'S RESPONSE TO PYONGYANG'S NUCLEAR STRATEGY

Since the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) restarted its nuclear programme in 2002, China has manifested an unprecedented attitude of positive constructiveness. The first signs of condemnation were made clear on 25 October 2002, when then-President Jiang Zemin, during a meeting with US President George W. Bush in Crawford, Texas, highlighted the importance of a nuclear-free

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<sup>5</sup> China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *President Xi Jinping Delivers an Important Speech in ROK's Seoul National University*, 4 July 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/xjpzxdhgjxgsfw/t1172436.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/xjpzxdhgjxgsfw/t1172436.shtml).

peninsula. From July 2003, when Vice Minister Dai Binguo began nuclear talks with Pyongyang, Moscow and Washington, until April 2009, when North Korea launched a long-range rocket (Kwang-myongsong 2), followed by ROK's second nuclear test on 25 May 2009, China tried hard to persuade North Korea to cease its proliferation missile programme.

Unofficial discussions about sensitive issues often go unnoticed in the PRC. However, there has been an intense debate among Chinese scholars about China's policy towards the Korean Peninsula – and, in particular, about the latter's nuclear development programme. Major actors involved include party and military think tanks, such as the China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) and the China Institute for Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) – organizations with strong links to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA).

Specifically, analysts and political scientists in the West dealing with China's North Korea strategy see the Chinese academic community as divided into two broad schools: traditionalists and revisionists.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the former are inclined to contextualize China's role as a “mediator” in Northeast Asia – thus encouraging North Korea's normalization path into international affairs – the latter believe that China is ready to pursue a more proactive foreign policy in the region. In essence, the revisionists believe that because international security challenges have become far more complex, it is now time for China to change its engagement policy towards North Korea vis-à-vis the strategic role that it plays in the region.<sup>7</sup>

The academic debate, as played out among Chinese scholars and international experts, goes hand in hand with the official policy sustained by China over the last two decades. In the first stage, from 1994 to 2002, Beijing pursued a cautious policy of non-intervention. In the second stage, from 2002 to 2009, China recognized the principle of non-intervention, as well as the growing security

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<sup>6</sup> Carla P. Freeman (ed.), *China and North Korea. Strategic and Policy Perspectives from a Changing China*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

threat posed by ongoing developments in North Korea's nuclear programme. This resulted in Beijing becoming more active and the establishment of the Six-Party Talks' (SPT) framework. Since 2009, China's position has changed yet again. Beijing's interests are no longer driven by the need to achieve denuclearization on its proximate borders; rather, it is now strategically guided by the need to further strengthen security dynamics in Asia.<sup>8</sup>

While useful, timeframe analyses alone cannot explain the motivations behind China's foreign-policy behaviour vis-à-vis Pyongyang's nuclear strategy. In its quest for a "new" identity as a global power, China, today more than ever, is caught in the dilemma of whether to (1) opt for a low-level, but highly strategic, engagement with Pyongyang; or (2) adhere to, and comply with, the rules and norms sponsored by the international community, thus condemning and openly objecting to Pyongyang's nuclear development.<sup>9</sup> As such, Chinese reactions towards Pyongyang's nuclear programme should be further contextualized in the light of the delicate balance at play between China's interests and identity.

Notwithstanding harsh criticism expressed by leaders and political elites in Beijing towards North Korea's nuclear plans, China's position remains ambivalent. Chinese leaders are caught between cutting political and economic ties with North Korea, thereby potentially contributing to its implosion, and continuing to provide food and energy facilities to Kim Jong-un's regime. In the latter situation, they risk harsh treatment at the hands of the international community, which accuses China of not being able to maintain appropriate standards for the second largest economy in the world.

heng Yongnian, a Chinese political scientist and Director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, be-

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<sup>8</sup> Jin Canrong and Wang Hao, "Evolution of China's Policy toward the North Korean Nuclear Issue", in Alain Guidetti (ed.), "World Views: Negotiating the North Korean Nuclear Issue", in *GCSP Geneva Papers*, No. 12 (May 2013), p. 20-23, <http://www.gcsp.ch/download/2719/71302>.

<sup>9</sup> Nele Noesselt, "China's Contradictory Role(s) in World Politics: Decrypting China's North Korea Strategy", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 7 (2014), p. 1307-1325.

believes that identity issues are still worth discussing when analysing China's position on the Korean (nuclear) crisis, i.e. the moral dilemma rooted in China's past. In this sense, there are two main factors that can help us to understand China's behaviour: first is China's reluctance to play the game of "Great Power politics" vis-à-vis other countries in Northeast Asia; second, according to China's foreign-policy principles and in consequence of what has just been stated, leaders in Beijing are confronted with the need to avoid interfering in the DPRK's nuclear development.<sup>10</sup> This is due to China's historical experience following Western interference in its domestic affairs in the eighteenth century. Furthermore, and notwithstanding moral dilemmas and historical experiences, China remains deeply concerned about security stability in Asia. Leaders in Beijing fear that North Korea's entry into the fray will result in a replication of the Middle East situation throughout the entire peninsula.

China does not want to play the same role as that played by the United States in the Middle East. Furthermore, it has to be ready to fully engage with the nuclear crisis and fulfil the responsibilities needing to be borne by a Great Power. It should therefore manage its "backyard problem" on its own.<sup>11</sup> In the aftermath of North Korea's fifth nuclear test – on 9 September 2016 – China and the United States agreed to strengthen cooperation in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in order to respond to North Korea. China approved the UNSC resolution,<sup>12</sup> yet Chinese Premier, Li Ke-qiang, took the opportunity once again to reiterate the country's opposition to the United States deploying the "sade" THAAD missile system in South Korea.<sup>13</sup> Xi Jinping told his counterpart, Park

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<sup>10</sup> Zheng Yongnian, 中国与朝鲜核危机 (China and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis), in *Lianhe Zaobao* (United Morning Paper), 20 September 2016, <http://www.zaobao.com.sg/node/668413>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> US Security Council, *Security Council Strengthens Sanctions on Democratic Republic of Korea, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2321 (2016)*, 30 November 2016, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12603.doc.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Feng Chongzhi, 不要误读中国关于朝核完整统一的三句话 (Do Not Misun-



Geun-hye, that the deployment of the THAAD anti-missile system would not only be a threat to China's national security – i.e. it might track China's military capabilities – but it could potentially intensify disputes in the region.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. REACTIONS TOWARDS KOREAN PENINSULA UNIFICATION

China's initial engagement in the North Korean nuclear crisis dates back as far as March 1993, when China opposed US-inspired UN sanctions over North Korea's pulling out of the Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, more recently, China's foreign policy towards the Korean peninsula has gone beyond denuclearization strategies and included implications for Northeast Asia in the light of a future unification on the Korean Peninsula.

China's envisioned strategy vis-à-vis the unification process of the two Koreas involves two different scenarios: either a South Korea-led unification process or an independent unification. As far as the official position is concerned, leaders in Beijing will support unification on the Korean Peninsula if, and only if, it is based on a peaceful process. Yet, with regard to North-South unification, China recognizes that a "South Korea-led process" might result in a growing threat vis-à-vis the security situation in Asia. Beijing leaders might feel threatened by Korean unification under the Republic of Korea (ROK), due to the completely different geopolitical situation in Northeast Asia that would result, i.e. an increase in the number of US troops being deployed on China's proximate borders.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, policymakers in Beijing recognize that it was specifical-

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derstand China's (Three) Statements on the Korean Nuclear Crisis), in *China.com.cn*, 26 September, 2016, [http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/201609/26/t20160926\\_16262853.shtml](http://views.ce.cn/view/ent/201609/26/t20160926_16262853.shtml).

<sup>14</sup> John Ruwitch, Ben Blanchard and Jack Kim, "Xi Tells South Korea that China Opposes THAAD Anti-missile Defense: Xinhua", in *Reuters*, 4 September 2016, <http://reut.rs/2c4ZEFd>.

<sup>15</sup> Georgy Toloraya, "Preparing for North Korea Unification?", in *38 North*, 9 June 2016, <http://38north.org/?p=9446>.

ly the development of North Korea's nuclear strategy that allowed the United States to pursue a more proactive foreign policy in the region. In this sense, if considering a long-term perspective, a South Korea-led unification process might also further contribute to reshaping the US-ROK security alliance, and, consequently, the removal of US troops from the peninsula.<sup>16</sup> However, doubts persist in views vis-à-vis the process leading towards Korean Peninsula unification if driven exclusively by an ROK initiative. For this reason, another possible solution could be proposed: a "peaceful and independent unification" (自主和平统, *zizhu heping tongyi*).<sup>17</sup>

A divided Korean Peninsula provides an excuse for foreign powers to intervene in the internal affairs of both South and North Korea, as evidenced by the military presence of the United States, but China clearly does not support the presence of US troops in the region. Furthermore, the current split and open confrontation between the ROK and DPRK is behind China's ineffectiveness to maintain genuine partnerships with both sides. Similarly, over time, China has attached great importance to its neighbouring diplomacy. However, because of confrontation between South and North Korea, it still faces growing and difficult challenges in the region, which are unlikely to be resolved by peaceful means. China is keen to support the idea that North Korea should abandon the development of its nuclear programme if, and only if, South Korea weakens its ties with its abiding ally, the United States. Last but not least, confrontation between the two sides enhances the possibility of war and conflict in the region, and China is particularly concerned to maintain security stability in Asia.<sup>18</sup>

To conclude, from a Chinese perspective, the Korean unification process remains a domestic issue, as yet unsolved because of

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<sup>16</sup> Bonnie S. Glaser and Yun Sun, "Chinese Attitudes toward Korean Unification", in *International Journal of Korean Unification*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2015), p. 71-98.

<sup>17</sup> Wang Junsheng, 朝鲜半岛自主和平统一应成为中朝韩共同战略目标 (The peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula Should be a Common Strategic Objective for the Two Koreas), in *China.com.cn*, 6 June 2016, [http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion\\_55\\_150055.html](http://opinion.china.com.cn/opinion_55_150055.html).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

the lack of mutual trust between the two Koreas. Both North and South Korea should, therefore, follow the objective of “matching methods and goals” (目标与手段匹配, *mubiao yu shouduan pipei*), which would entail reaching a high level of cooperation vis-à-vis the goal of integration.<sup>19</sup> First and foremost, they should establish long-term objectives and shared scientific knowledge about the future of the unification. Second, when talking about a unified Korea, methods to deal with the unification process should be based on variety and flexibility, meaning that the two Koreas should have a common strategy in terms of political, military and economic objectives, whereby the interests at stake to both parties should be guaranteed. Third, North and South Korea would have to combine high-level pragmatism while sharing the same goals vis-à-vis strategic interests in Northeast Asia.<sup>20</sup>

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the escalation of the second North Korea nuclear crisis, the security complex of Northeast Asia seemed under threat. Notwithstanding UNSC Resolution 2270, adopted in March 2016, North Korea carried out its fifth and biggest nuclear test on 9 September 2016. Under Xi Jinping's administration, China maintained an ambiguous stance, as it appeared that China did nothing about the nuclear test despite the fact that it said it would. Chinese leaders (re)affirmed their strong opposition towards the development of North Korea's nuclear programme. The Chinese Premier, Li Ke-qiang, reached an agreement in the UNSC with the US President, Barack Obama, to increase cooperation and law enforcement following North Korea's fifth nuclear test. Nevertheless, as reiterated in a recent editorial in the *Global Times*, observers should not

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<sup>19</sup> Wang Xiaobo, 朝鲜半岛统一的症结, 变与不变 (The crux, changes and “unchanges” of the Korean peninsula's reunification), in *Dongjiang Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (2016), p. 47-53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

expect China to adopt tougher sanctions against Pyongyang in the near future.<sup>21</sup> China has already suspended the transport to North Korea of auxiliary materials for the manufacture of nuclear weapons, but it is unlikely to ban overland transportation (marine trade) to North Korea (as, in fact, Resolution 2270 requires). This is because although Chinese leaders are deeply concerned about maintaining security and stability in Northeast Asia, China's economic interests at stake in the Korean Peninsula clearly matter too. Similarly, the dilemma faced by China vis-à-vis North Korea's nuclear proliferation is profoundly embedded in the identity that the PRC intends to promote at a regional and global level.

Globally, China's willingness to behave as a responsible power is evident. Thus, it appears willing to comply with rules and norms sponsored by the international community vis-à-vis condemning nuclear proliferation, i.e. supporting UNSC resolutions against North Korea. Regionally, however, China perceives the United States' engagement in the peninsula, and more broadly in Northeast Asia, as a direct threat to the principles of non-interference and sovereignty. Although progress has definitely been made on the question of how China intends to deal with the issue of North Korea, leaders in Beijing are keen to avoid Great Power politics dynamics while also ensuring China's economic interests in the region.

At best, one could say that China has embraced the North Korea issue by taking two steps forward and one step back. From a South Korean perspective, China's constructive behaviour towards the Korean unification process appears to be comforting. However, to China, the unification process should be peaceful – i.e. avoiding further involvement by the United States or a regime-change-style ROK-led unification. Chinese leaders believe that major changes on the Korean Peninsula might strongly destabilize the security scenario in Northeast Asia. Interference by a third party, i.e. the United States or the ROK – or, even worse, a bilateral joint operation be-

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<sup>21</sup> Zhao Yusha, "China Not Expected to Ban Land Transport to North Korea: Analysts", in *Global Times*, 22 September 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1007607.shtml>.

tween the two – is expected to be perceived by China as a menace to Northeast Asian security. To the Chinese leadership, unification remains an internal issue that should be solved by the two Koreas alone. South Korea must implement cooperation and dialogue with leaders in Beijing about security on the peninsula. Furthermore, it should support China's efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks (SPT).

Although it is true that China has acted ambiguously many times with regard to North Korea, one should not forget China's past and present commitment to the SPT involving all parties. In this light, South Korea could potentially put further pressure on the international community well beyond the United States in order to solve the nuclear crisis and to support and relaunch existing multilateral initiatives – as happened, for instance, with Iran's negotiation process. The recent victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential election underlined the inevitable necessity to rethink security dynamics in Asia. The possibility that a Trump-led US administration might bring into question, in the not too distant future, the nature and long-term durability of the alliances maintained by Americans in Northeast Asia (chiefly, those with Japan and South Korea) may be more real than is currently anticipated.



### 3.

## Japan's Approach to Northeast Asian Security: Between Nationalism and (Reluctant) Multilateralism

*Axel Berkofsky*

Since his re-election in December 2012, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the Japanese Government that he leads have invested significant resources in strengthening the country's defence capabilities. They also intend to provide Japan's military with the legal and constitutional frameworks needed to more actively and substantially contribute towards security cooperation with the United States – as formulated in the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1960. Constitutional reinterpretation, the adoption in 2015 of new national-security laws and new US-Japan Guidelines for Defence Cooperation, and the ongoing expansion of Tokyo's regional security and defence ties (bilateral and multilateral) all testify to this approach. By contrast, far fewer Japanese resources and energy will be dedicated to the South Korean-sponsored Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI). Tokyo's interest in NAPCI will continue to remain marginal at best, for a number of reasons. These include its current poor relations with Seoul, disagreements over the interpretation of Japanese World War II militarism, and the nationalism and historical revisionism endorsed and practised by Abe's government. Frankly, Tokyo is not missing a great deal by showing so little interest in assigning more resources to NAPCI as a regional-security instrument. All NAPCI contributors are aware that the Initiative has not – as was envisioned by Seoul – been able to resume result-oriented, multilateral (i.e. with North Korea's participation) negotia-

tions on Pyongyang's nuclear programme, leading to the North's denuclearization. Indeed, North Korea's most recent nuclear test has unequivocally demonstrated that its nuclear programme is not up for negotiation. This is not least because Pyongyang's nuclear-threat potential remains its only tool for exerting pressure on countries in and beyond the region.

## 1. CONSTITUTIONAL REINTERPRETATION AND NATIONAL-SECURITY LAWS

In summer 2014, the Japanese Government led by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared as its top priority a reinterpretation of the war-renouncing Article 9 of Japan's constitution.<sup>1</sup> This constitutional reinterpretation proved controversial in Japan, and the government was forced to push it through parliament in late 2014. It allows Japan's military – its Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), established in 1954<sup>2</sup> – to execute the right to collective self-defence as formulated in Chapter VII, Article 51 of the UN Charter. In 2015, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), led by Abe, adopted a legal framework allowing the country's armed forces to execute this right, by implementing a set of new national-security laws. To be sure, even after this process, Japan's military is not authorized to execute the collective self-defence right in the way that most other countries' armed forces are allowed to. It is permitted to use force together with, for example, the US for the exclusive purpose of defending

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<sup>1</sup> Constitutional re-interpretation to enable Japan to become what is referred to as "normal country" (*futsu no kuni* in Japanese) in terms of security and defence policies has in essence been promoted by the Liberal-Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) since it started to govern in Japan in 1955. Since then, the LDP has *de facto* uninterruptedly governed in Japan. Only from 1993-1994 when the country was ruled by an eight-party coalition excluding the LDP for 11 months and from 2009-2013 when the country was ruled by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), was the LDP out of power.

<sup>2</sup> "Self-Defence Forces" as opposed to "real" armed or military forces Japan's war-renouncing constitution does the country not allow to maintain.



Japanese territory. That means that we will not – for the foreseeable future – see Japan's armed forces fighting alongside soldiers of other countries overseas (e.g. in the framework of UN-sanctioned multinational military missions) It also means that Japan's armed forces will remain unable to execute the right to collective self-defence as part of multinational military operations such as the UN-mandated war in Afghanistan.

At home, Japan's new national-security laws (taking effect from March 2016) are controversial, and have alarmed those who argue that they violate Article 9 of the constitution. Regardless of this issue, they do not – as is typically feared and argued in Beijing – stand for a re-emergence of Japanese militarism. Rather, they offer confirmation that Tokyo's defence and security policies will remain strictly non-offensive and defence-oriented. Furthermore, and equally importantly, this constitutional reinterpretation and its attendant national-security laws will not allow the acquisition and deployment of offensive military capabilities that would enable Japan to attack another country.<sup>3</sup> One of the laws adopted in September 2015<sup>4</sup> amends ten existing security-related laws. It lifts restrictions on the country's armed forces, including the ban on executing the right to collective self-defence. A second piece of new legislation comprises a permanent law allowing Japan to deploy its JSDF overseas to provide logistical support for UN-authorized multilateral military operations.<sup>5</sup> While proponents of Japan's security laws point out that they were debated for more than 200 hours in parliament in summer 2015, their opponents counter that the Prime Minister brushed aside informed opposition to the security

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<sup>3</sup> The issue of equipping the country with offensive military capabilities including nuclear weapons makes it into Japan's policy agenda every once in a while.

<sup>4</sup> The laws first passed the Lower House of the Japanese Parliament in the summer of 2015 and then the Upper House in September of the same year.

<sup>5</sup> See Reiji Yoshida and Mizuho Aoki, "Diet Enacts Security Laws, Marking Japan's Departure from Pacifism", in *The Japan Times*, 19 September 2015, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2015/09/19/national/politics-diplomacy/diet-enacts-security-laws-marking-japans-departure-from-pacifism-2>.

legislation as irrelevant.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Abe chose in June 2015 to dismiss as immaterial the concerns of three prominent constitutional-law scholars who had concluded that the national-security laws were unconstitutional and in violation of Article 9. Ironically, it had been the Abe Cabinet that first appointed these constitutional scholars in the first place.

## 2. THE PROBLEM WITH JAPANESE NATIONALISM AND REVISIONISM

Prime Minister Abe is a convinced nationalist and revisionist. He belongs to or leads a number of groups advocating a fundamental reinterpretation of the nature and extent of Japan's World War II militarism.<sup>7</sup> Abe is the grandson of Nobusuke Kishi, a controversial Japanese Prime Minister of the late 1950s,<sup>8</sup> who in the post-war years became known as the most committed promoter of the US-imposed constitutional revision of 1947.<sup>9</sup> Shinzo Abe has apparently made it his task to complete his grandfather's self-imposed mission to revise Japan's postwar constitution. In the 1990s, for example, he joined the LDP's History and Deliberation Committee. This revisionist body denies that Japan's Imperial Army mas-

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<sup>6</sup> See e.g. "Abe's 'Stain'", in *The Economist*, 26 September 2015, <http://econ.st/1iNW1EV>. For further details on Shinzo Abe's revisionist thinking and policies see also Christopher W. Hughes, *Japan's Foreign and Security Policy under the 'Abe Doctrine'. New Dynamism or New Dead End?*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

<sup>7</sup> See Richard Katz, "Abe not Placating the Right; He is the Right", in *East Asia Forum*, 13 January 2014, <http://wp.me/poZN0-ako>.

<sup>8</sup> (Very) controversial as Kishi was as Japan's Munitions Minister since 1941 (in the cabinet of militarist Prime Minister Hideki Tojo) responsible for forcing thousands of Korean and Chinese to work as slaves in Japanese factories and mines during World War II. After the war, Kishi spent time in Sugamo Prison in Tokyo as "Class A war crimes" suspect. He was released from prison in 1948 without having been tried and indicted as criminal of war.

<sup>9</sup> On the history of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, see also Axel Berkofsky, *A Pacifist Constitution for An Armed Empire. Past and Present of Japanese Security and Defence Policies*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2012.

sacred up to 200,000 Chinese civilians during its six-week-long occupation of the then Chinese capital, Nanjing, in 1937. Later, Abe headed the Group of Young Diet Members for the Re-Thinking of Japan's Future and History Education. The group claims that Tokyo's World War II militarism did not constitute a "war of aggression" but rather a "war of liberation," freeing Asian countries from Western colonialism.

When Abe became Prime Minister for the second time in 2012,<sup>10</sup> he appointed several revisionist colleagues to his Cabinet. Many of them were members of the so-called "League for Visits to Yasukuni Shrine," a group of politicians and scholars promoting visits to the controversial shrine in central Tokyo.<sup>11</sup> Abe himself has, in the past, been a frequent visitor to this Shinto site, the resting place of 14 convicted Japanese war criminals. His last visit, in December 2013, triggered diplomatic crises with both South Korea and China. Finally, many of Abe's current ministers belong to the revisionist institute Nippon Kaigi ("Japan Conference"). Amongst other things, this organization campaigns for an end to Japan's so-called "apology diplomacy" and demands the reinstatement of the Japanese Emperor as head of state.<sup>12</sup> Today, Abe and his like-minded followers continue to insist that constitutional revision is necessary in order to enable Japan to regain its "self-respect," "dignity" and "independence" – as the country's postwar constitution was drafted by "foreigners," i.e. the occupying US in 1947.

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<sup>10</sup> Abe was – with a great majority – re-elected in December 2014, taking advantage of the country's currently very weak political opposition in disarray. The LDP now controls a third majority in both chambers of the Japanese Parliament (the Lower House and the Upper House), which enables the party to overrule any opposition against LDP-drafted bills submitted to the Parliament.

<sup>11</sup> While Japanese politicians visiting the shrine typically maintain their visits' purpose is to honour Japan's war dead, to the outside world the shrine is a symbol for Japanese World War II militarism.

<sup>12</sup> Who was degraded from "head of state" and commander-in-chief of Japan's Imperial Army to "symbol" of state with no political powers when Japan was in 1946 under pressure from the occupying US *de facto* obliged to adopt a constitution that was drafted by the staff of General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan.

### 3. (A DEGREE OF) JAPANESE-KOREAN RECONCILIATION

Unsurprisingly, the Abe Government's historical revisionism has recently had a negative impact on prospects for regional-security cooperation – in both bilateral (Japanese-South Korean) and trilateral (Japanese-US-South Korean) forums. However, over the course of 2015, it seemed as if the demands of *realpolitik* had caught up with Japan's Prime Minister. He decided to undertake a serious effort to sustainably improve Japan's relations with South Korea. Additionally, he had, in 2012, planned to revisit Japan's official apology for its wartime aggression, made by then Prime Minister Tomoiichi Murayama in 1995. However, in March 2015, Abe changed his mind and confirmed that Japan would adhere to Murayama's official apology, which unambiguously referred to Japan as a World War II "aggressor." At the same time (in March 2015) Abe also acknowledged that South Korean women had been forced to prostitute themselves for Japan's Imperial Army during the latter's occupation of the Korean Peninsula. ("Forced" as opposed to having voluntarily chosen to "work" in brothels set up by the Japanese occupiers, as Abe and other historical revisionists had at times suggested.) Based on this fundamental change of mind, Tokyo and Seoul reached an agreement in December 2015 to settle the "comfort women"<sup>13</sup> issue after Abe officially apologized on behalf of Japan. He also agreed to set up a 1 billion yen (8.5 million dollars) fund for the surviving 46 South Korean forced prostitutes.<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, by January 2016, one member of Abe's Cabinet was apparently no longer able to suppress his revisionist instincts.

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<sup>13</sup> Up 200,000 women from South Korea (but also from the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan and the Netherlands) were forced to prostitute themselves in what Japan's Imperial Army at the time referred to so-called "comfort stations," i.e. Japanese-run brothels for the "comfort" of Japanese soldiers. Some Japanese nationalists and revisionists claim until today that not only Japan but also countries during past wars ran such brothels. Something, as it is at times cynically argued among Japan's nationalists and revisionists, was "normal" practice during wars.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. "Japan and South Korea Agree WWII 'Comfort Women' Deal", in *BBC News*, 28 December 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35188135>.

Japan's Foreign Minister, Fumio Kishida, reverted to a stance that, seemingly deliberately, damaged prospects for Japanese-South Korean agreement. He publicly maintained that the term "sex slaves" was not appropriate when describing what Japan's Imperial Army had forced South Korean women to do during World War II.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Kishida is not the only member of Abe's Cabinet who believes that this term is not applicable to what many, mainly South Korean, women were obliged to undergo in Japanese so-called "comfort stations" in occupied Korea. The above-mentioned South Korean-Japanese agreement of December 2015 did not end the controversy over the "comfort women"/"sex slaves" issue. On 28 December 2016, South Korean activists installed a bronze "comfort women" statue outside the Japanese Consulate in the South Korean city of Busan. Tokyo argued that this action violated the December 2015 agreement. In response, it temporarily recalled its Consul General in Busan and its Ambassador in Seoul at the beginning of January 2017. The Japanese Government also suspended a currency-swap agreement and postponed a high-level bilateral economic dialogue.<sup>16</sup> The fragile Japanese-South Korean reconciliation process suffered another blow when Japan's controversial, revisionist Defence Minister, Tomomi Inada, together with a group of Japanese lawmakers, visited the Yasukuni Shrine in late December 2016. Ironically – indeed, sadly – the visit took place one day after Abe, together with outgoing US President Barack Obama, visited Pearl Harbor with a promise that "Japan would never again wage war."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Reiji Yoshida, "Japan's Foreign Minister Challenges Term of 'Sex Slaves' for 'Comfort Women'", in *The Japan Times*, 18 January 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/01/18/national/politics-diplomacy/japans-foreign-minister-challenges-use-of-sex-slaves-term-for-comfort-women>.

<sup>16</sup> See "Japan Recalls Korean Envoy over 'Comfort Women' Statue", in *BBC News*, 6 January 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38526914>. The statue in Busan is by far not the only one of such statues in South Korea (there more than 30 in the country) and the Japanese government decided to withdraw its envoys when Seoul did not take action on Japanese complaints about the statues.

<sup>17</sup> See Reiji Yoshida, "Defense Chief Inada Disrupts Abe's Historic Moment

#### 4. JAPANESE SECURITY POLICIES: DEFENSIVE-ORIENTED, BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL

These developments in Japan's security and defence-policy agenda do not point to any plans for the country to transform itself from an officially "pacifist" nation to a "militarist" one, threatening regional peace and stability. Nonetheless, Chinese policymakers and scholars continue to (groundlessly)<sup>18</sup> fear such an outcome. Tokyo is however, currently expanding bilateral and multilateral regional-security and defence ties with India, Australia, Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines. It is doing so in order to, amongst other goals, counterbalance aggressive Chinese expansionism in disputed territorial waters in the East and South China Seas. The expansion of defence ties with India, in particular, has been high on Abe's security-policy agenda over recent years. This mutual interest has led, amongst other things, to the adoption of a joint security declaration.<sup>19</sup> This agreement covers cooperation on cyber security, the 2009 establishment of a Japanese-Indian "2 plus 2" dialogue (between respective ministers of defence and foreign affairs), and joint maritime-defence and coastguard exercises.

Trilateral US-Japan-India defence ties have also been institutionalized through the establishment of the US-Japan-India Trilateral Dialogue of 2013.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, the 2015 revision of the US-Japan

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by Visiting Yasukuni", in *The Japan Times*, 29 December 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/12/29/national/politics-diplomacy/defense-chief-inada-takes-yasukuni-heels-pearl-harbor-visit>.

<sup>18</sup> Numerous conversations with Chinese policymakers and scholars in 2015 and 2016 confirm deep-seated Chinese concerns about a return of Japan becoming an aggressive regional military power. However, many Chinese policymakers and scholars are fully aware that constitutional re-interpretation and the adoption of national security laws do in reality and in no way stand for a return to Japanese World War II-style Japanese militarism.

<sup>19</sup> In 2008, the so-called Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation between Japan and India.

<sup>20</sup> Kei Koga and Yogesh Joshi, "Japan-India Security Cooperation", in *The Diplomat*, 17 July 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=12352>.

Guidelines for Defence Cooperation<sup>21</sup> further proves that Tokyo remains committed to coordinating and conducting its security and defence policies (both regional and global) within the framework of its bilateral security alliance with the US. These revised defence guidelines<sup>22</sup> foresee the expansion of Japan's role and competencies vis-à-vis US-Japanese military cooperation in the case of a military conflict in or beyond the region. Admittedly, there is currently a high degree of uncertainty amongst Japanese foreign-policymakers as to whether, and to what extent, US President Donald Trump might wish to change the nature and extent of Washington's security alliance with Tokyo. On the election campaign trail, Trump announced that, with him as US President, Japan would have to shoulder more of the burden of securing peace and stability in Asia through their bilateral security alliance. The alliance, Trump seemed to indicate, would have to become less asymmetrical – not only would the US be obliged to defend Japan in the case of attack but also vice versa: Japan would – in the case of an attack on the US, through the US-Japan Security Treaty – be obliged to defend the US unconditionally. The level of contribution that Trump envisages would most probably go far beyond that which Japan currently authorizes itself to provide, even after its aforementioned constitutional reinterpretation.

Constitutional reinterpretation and the adoption of new national-security laws have also prompted debate on whether Japan's navy could, or should, join US so-called "Freedom of Navigation Operations" (FONOPs) in the South China Sea. This is all the more important when seen against the backdrop of Chinese territorial expansionism in both the East and South China Seas. While the US currently conducts South China Sea FONOPs alone, in June 2015 Japanese Admiral Katsutoshi Kawano, Chief of the Joint Staff of Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF), declared that Japan's navy – its Maritime Self-Defense

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<sup>21</sup> See Ankit Panda, "US, Japan Agree to New Defense Guidelines", in *The Diplomat*, 28 April 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=53891>.

<sup>22</sup> Before 2015, the guidelines were last revised in 1997. The 1997 already mentioned US-Japan military cooperation in what was referred to as "areas surrounding Japan" and at time Beijing feared that one of such "areas" were the Taiwan Straits in the event of a US-Sino military conflict over Taiwan.



Force (JMSDF) – could consider conducting joint patrols with the US Navy “depending on the situation.”<sup>23</sup> In April of the same year, Washington and Tokyo had, in fact, already reportedly discussed the possibility of conducting joint patrols in both seas.<sup>24</sup> Jointly patrolling the East and South China Seas could prove easier said than done, however, as Tokyo would have to adopt further specific laws in order to authorize its navy to conduct such operations. Furthermore, this adoption would not be the only obstacle that Tokyo would have to overcome. Japan’s naval capacities are also an issue, in view of the fact that many of the country’s naval and coastguard vessels are currently engaged in patrolling Japanese territorial waters close, and not so close, to home (e.g. in the East China Sea, around the Japanese-controlled Senkaku Islands). Beijing is clearly very worried about Tokyo authorizing its military to execute the aforementioned right to collective self-defence in the East China Sea. After all, Japan’s SDF, together with the country’s well-equipped and state-of-the art coastguard forces, are now authorized to come to the aid of US military units when jointly defending Japanese-controlled islands in the East China Sea. Such measures are intended to counter Chinese attempts to “re-conquer” or occupy the Japanese-controlled but contested Senkaku Islands. Beijing calls these islands “Diaoyutai,” and itself claims sovereignty over them.<sup>25</sup> Tokyo’s new-found ability to make an active contribution to defending Japanese-controlled territories away from its mainland has undoubtedly had an impact on Beijing’s strategy to establish “dual control” over the contested East China Sea islands. China has, over recent years, sought to establish this sort of dual control through frequent intrusion into Japanese-controlled territorial waters around the islands.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See Franz-Stefan Gady, “Japan’s Top Military Officer: Joint US-Japanese Patrols in South China Sea a Possibility”, in *The Diplomat*, 26 June 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=59041>.

<sup>24</sup> Prashanth Parameswaran, “US-Japan Joint Patrols in the South China Sea?”, in *The Diplomat*, 1 May 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=54332>.

<sup>25</sup> Article 5 of the US-Japan Security Treaty *de facto* obliges Washington to defend Japanese-controlled territory and territorial waters.

<sup>26</sup> Japanese law prohibits Japanese citizens from setting foot on the islands,



## 5. JAPAN AND NAPCI

As a South Korea-sponsored multilateral institution supported by the US, Japan, China, Russia and Mongolia, the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) was initially intended by Seoul to help defuse tensions on the Korean Peninsula. This, however, has turned out to be a case of wishful thinking, as recent North Korean missile and nuclear tests have decisively demonstrated. Unless Pyongyang fundamentally changes its policies, NAPCI's impact on attempts to resume negotiations on North Korea's denuclearization is non-existent. (And any such change currently seems highly unlikely unless and until Beijing decides to interrupt, or indeed terminate, its economic, financial and energy aid to the North.) Admittedly, NAPCI is not exclusively aimed at achieving sustainable peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. However, given that it is a South Korean initiative, such localized security issues obviously form its central priority. Japan participates in NAPCI meetings, but the relevance of the initiative for Japanese regional security-policy planning must be described as very limited. In Japan (and, without doubt, also elsewhere in and beyond Asia), NAPCI is not perceived as having produced results relevant to national and regional security. From a Japanese perspective, it is not only North Korea that stands in the way of the Initiative having a tangible impact on attempts to manage and defuse the threat posed by the North's missile and nuclear programmes. Tokyo complains that China's trade and investment ties and energy and financial aid provided for Pyongyang allow North Korea to continue to ignore UN sanctions and continue the development of its missile and nuclear programmes. From a Japanese perspective, China – due to a number of geopolitical and regional strategic considerations – does not exert enough (or indeed any) political or economic pressure on Pyongyang to terminate its missile and nuclear programmes.

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which are since 1895 and Japan's victory over China in the Japanese-Sino War of 1894/1895 under Japanese control. From 1945-to the very early 1970, the Senkaku Islands were administered by the US and then (together with Okinawa) returned to Japan.

## CONCLUSIONS

Japan – like South Korea – will continue to invest heavily in regional missile-defence systems in view of recent North Korean missile and nuclear tests. Tokyo’s very recent announcement (2017) to invest an additional 118 billion yen (1 billion dollars) in the deployment of joint US-Japan missile-defence systems and installations<sup>27</sup> is evidence of this. As detailed above, Japan under Prime Minister Abe will, above all, continue to invest resources in defending Japan militarily from North Korea (and China). It will not necessarily devote further resources to seeking to get Pyongyang back to the negotiation table – in the framework of NAPCI, or any other multilateral structure for that matter. Furthermore, its bilateral security alliance with the US will remain at the very centre of Japan’s security and defence-policy strategies. This will, by default, assign a lower priority to multilateral talks or negotiations on regional security with a Japanese contribution. To be sure, a forum like NAPCI has the “advantage” of being an informal arena that is not aimed at obliging interested parties and contributors to make binding security-policy commitments. That *de facto* means that NAPCI – like any other formal or informal security forum – can exist in a security environment in which the US is engaged in expanding ties with its current and (potential) future military allies: Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and Vietnam. Japan, however, at least for now, does not seem eager to take advantage of NAPCI’s informal character in order to become more deeply involved in the forum. Finally, Japan under Prime Minister Abe is probably also not overly enthusiastic about supporting NAPCI because it is a South Korean, rather than a Japanese, initiative. In other words: for a country run by a nationalist and revisionist leader like Shinzo Abe, it must be – obviously for the aforementioned “wrong” reasons (nationalism/revisionism) – very difficult to accept a South Korean leadership role in a regional security initiative such as NAPCI.

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<sup>27</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, “Japan Approves Modest Defense Budget Hike”, in *The Diplomat*, 23 December 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=101375>.

## 4.

# Trust Building and Regional Identity in Northeast Asia

*Nam-Kook Kim*

### 1. TWO PRINCIPLES OF TRUST BUILDING IN NORTHEAST ASIA

The United States (US) recently increased the level of its engagement in East Asia through its decision to deploy the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system in South Korea. China perceived this move as altering the strategic balance in the region, and resisted it fiercely in order to protect its security interests. China doubts the will of the US to maintain a positive and stable relationship, and complained about the US' breach of routine practice with regard to the containment of security competition in East Asia. South Korea and the US insist that THAAD is a defensive measure in response to nuclear threats from North Korea. Yet, this trend has resurrected former Cold War dynamics by encouraging a return to the "triangular alliances" of that era – that is, with the US, Japan and South Korea on one side, and China, Russia (then, the USSR) and North Korea on the other. In retaliation for the THAAD deployment, China broke off all military communications with South Korea and threatened its neighbour with economic repercussions. The worsening bilateral relationship between South Korea and China has coincided with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of official diplomatic relations between the two nations. The desire to repair relations and limit the damage looks unlikely to succeed in the short-to-medium term.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Han-kwon Kim, "China's Foreign Policy in 2017 and its Influence on ROK-China Relations" (in Korean), in *China Watching*, No. 17 (2016).

Even among members of these traditional alliance systems, conflict and discord is present. The legacy of World War II and the use of “comfort women” by Japan during its occupation of Korea and other territories remains a source of tension. South Korea and Japan are experiencing difficult times with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s refusal to acknowledge Japanese responsibility for the plight of “comfort women” in South Korea and elsewhere, and his aggressive efforts to return Japan to the status of a “normal state” in terms of its military capabilities and posture. Furthermore, North Korea continues to threaten regional stability with its nuclear weapons and ballistic-missile capabilities. Although the US, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea have agreed on the goal of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, their approaches differ as to whether to prioritize denuclearization itself or the securing of peace treaties. Given this complicated situation in Northeast Asia, establishing a broad framework for trust building and regional cooperation, including in the identity domain, is no easy task.

Identity entails a sense of belonging or an underlining recognition of commonality. It is generally based on shared values. Understanding “who we are” and “what we want” requires reconciliation – and the compatibility of individual identity, based on individual needs, with group identity, based on membership of a community. Many factors comprising identity are constructed through social interactions with others, giving it a contingent character that changes according to time, place and the type of environment where individuals live. However, identity is also based on biological traits as important symbols that distinguish individuals and groups.<sup>2</sup>

According to a survey conducted by the East Asia Institute in South Korea together with the Japanese non-profit organization (NPO) Genron in 2015, the proportion of South Koreans with a negative perception of Japan was as high as 76.6 percent in 2013, 70.9 percent in 2014 and 72.5 percent in 2015. The proportion of Japanese people with a negative perception of South Korea increased

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<sup>2</sup> Nam-Kook Kim, “Identity Crisis and Social Integration under Globalization in Korea”, in *Korea Observer*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Spring 2013), p. 31-54.

from 37.3 percent in 2013 to 54.4 percent in 2014, and still reached 52.4 percent in 2015.<sup>3</sup> Another survey, conducted by Japan's *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper in 2014, shows similar results of high and mutually negative perceptions in the three countries. The proportion of people having a negative perception of China among Japanese respondents was 51 percent, and of South Korea, 34 percent. Among Chinese respondents, 74 percent said they disliked Japan, while 67 percent of South Koreans had a negative perception of their Japanese neighbours.<sup>4</sup>

In the *Asahi* newspaper survey, people were also asked to give their impressions regarding threats to peace in East Asia. No less than 63 percent of Japanese respondents chose territorial disputes, 48 percent opted for Chinese military force and 38 percent highlighted conflict in the Korean Peninsula as threats. Chinese respondents chose Japanese military force by a proportion of 49 percent, territorial disputes by 36 percent and the existence of US military forces by 34 percent. Among South Korean respondents, 58 percent picked territorial disputes, 50 percent chose conflict on the Korean Peninsula and 35 percent opted for Chinese military force. In addition, 47 percent of Japanese respondents, 88 percent of Chinese and 97 percent of South Koreans remarked that historical matters, including past wars and the colonial legacy, have not yet been resolved.<sup>5</sup>

Such levels of mistrust have reinforced nationalism and national identities, and interrupted the emergence of a regional identity that takes into account the commonalities but also the differences

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<sup>3</sup> The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, *The 3rd Japan-South Korea Joint Public Opinion Poll (2015)*, May 2015, [http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion\\_polls/archives/5251.html](http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion_polls/archives/5251.html); Han-wool Jeong, "Misunderstandings in the Mutual Perceptions of Citizens from South Korea and Japan and Finding Solutions for Improving Relations", in *EAI Working Papers*, June 2015, [http://www.eai.or.kr/type/panelView.asp?idx=13948&code=eng\\_report](http://www.eai.or.kr/type/panelView.asp?idx=13948&code=eng_report).

<sup>4</sup> *Asahi Shimbun* Special Public Opinion Poll (04/07/14), <http://mansfieldfdn.org/program/research-education-and-communication/asian-opinion-poll-database/asahi-shimbun-special-public-opinion-poll-040714>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

between East Asian nations. If some identities are given and others are chosen, one should classify essentialist factors that are given while discouraging negative and divisive connotations of these identities. Instead, one must find non-essentialist factors that can be chosen and encourage the positive influence of these factors for the sake of regional cooperation. The latter factors could be represented by the concept of “interest”. This could include common economic interests or common environmental interests in the region.

A functional approach, one that largely follows the European experience, gives priority to interests over identity in matters pertaining to regional integration. Such an approach does not seek to produce citizens of a political community but rather consumers of mutual economic benefit. If there were no consensus on this fundamental point, talk of an East Asian community would simply mean supporting integration for the sake of integration. Such a blinkered concept of community easily collapses when circumstances change. Consequently, there needs to be adequate discussion regarding purposes and goals, targets and strategies through which integration can be achieved. Therefore, interests also need to be balanced by identity. Otherwise, the concept of an East Asian community, with its many conflicts, would break down even before it reaches the goal of integration.<sup>6</sup>

The Genron NPO-East Asia Institute survey yielded two interesting findings that could be employed to lower negative perceptions among the populations of East Asian nations. The first factor is whether an individual has travelled to the other country. Among South Koreans who have visited Japan, the dislike figure is 60.1 percent compared with 76.8 percent among those who have not. Likewise, among Japanese who visited South Korea, the proportion of respondents who had a negative perception of South Korea stood at 48.1 percent compared with 53.9 percent among those who have not. The second factor is age: younger generations – in both South

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<sup>6</sup> Nam-Kook Kim, “European Experience for East Asian Integration: Ideas, National Interests, and the International Circumstance”, in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (June 2009), p. 295-312.

Korea and Japan – display lower negative perceptions than older respondents. Among South Koreans, these negative perceptions appear to be decreasing with every generation: 88.4 percent of those in and over their sixties, 79.8 percent of those in their fifties, 74.2 percent in their forties, 59.7 percent in their thirties and 55.9 percent of those in and under their twenties. Likewise, in Japan, the proportion of people who had negative perceptions of South Koreans ranged from 54.9 percent of those in and over their sixties to 58.5 percent of those in their fifties, 50.3 percent in their forties, 47.8 percent in their thirties and 47.5 percent of those in and under their twenties.<sup>7</sup>

These results demonstrate the value of people-to-people interactions and the need for increased interchange and investment targeting the younger generations in an effort to build cross-national networks and contacts. Current developments in East Asia are once again being dominated by the state, with the North Korean nuclear crises and tensions in the South China Sea demonstrating the continued relevance of the nation state. In this context, East Asia could seek to foster greater intra-personal solidarity among its citizens who share an attachment to democratic individuality while also acknowledging cultural diversity as a way to venture beyond essentialist nation-state identities. By encouraging networking and cross-border solidarity, one could build an “Asia of citizens” rather than an “Asia of states”. Otherwise, East Asia will face the problem of today’s Europe. The EU’s development requires the creation of “European citizens” but has actually only produced consumers as a result of its “interest”-based approach. In other words, the statist shortcut that Europe adopted in the 1950s has left a negative legacy, in which the EU must now “invent” European citizens who voluntarily participate in the self-government of a regional community. What East Asia eventually needs is not consumers but citizens; not integration for the sake of integration, but integration based on a consensus of goal and method.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, *The 3rd Japan-South Korea Joint Public Opinion Poll (2015)*, cit.

<sup>8</sup> Nam-Kook Kim, “European Experience for East Asian Integration”, cit.

In this context, two principles for trust building in Northeast Asia can be advanced: (i) identity balanced by interest, and (ii) an “Asia of citizens” beyond an “Asia of states”. These principles can be applied to favour trust building in such areas as economic, security and sociocultural cooperation. Below, the analysis will examine the following: the “Asian paradox” and the statement made by Japan’s prime Minister Shinzo Abe in terms of the balance between identity and interests; multilateral security cooperation in Asia from the viewpoint of the European experience; and the Campus Asia programme and Asian Human Rights Court as means to encourage regional sociocultural cooperation in terms of realizing an “Asia of citizens” beyond an “Asia of states”.

## 2. THE “ASIAN PARADOX” AND EAST ASIAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION

“Asian paradox” refers to the situation in East Asia, in which continuous conflicts are ongoing in the political and security domain despite a relatively high level of economic cooperation and interdependence in the region. This concept is helpful for understanding the asymmetrical relationship between politics and economy in the case of South Korea, China and Japan, where economic relations are robust but coexist with high levels of diplomatic tension.<sup>9</sup> However, this term is in fact based on a false premise; there is no proper ground for applying the term “paradox” to the specific context of East Asia.

To begin with, it is not entirely correct to refer to the imbalance

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<sup>9</sup> Young-kwan Yoon, “The Asian Paradox”, in *Project Syndicate*, 4 November 2014, <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/apec-summit-xi-abe-meeting-by-yoon-young-kwan-2014-11>; Sang-ho Song interview with Peter J. Kazenstein, “Memory Politics Contributes to Asian Paradox”, in *The Korea Herald*, 31 December 2014, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20141230000703>; Nur Hassan Wirajuda, Keynote speech at the Friends of Europe conference “The Asian Paradox: Rising Wealth, Lingering Tensions” Brussels, 10 November 2015, <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/?p=3361>.



between political and economic relations as a “paradox”; the European experience demonstrates how economic integration tends to generally precede political integration. In the case of Europe, since economic cooperation began with the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, it took approximately 40 years for the EU to be launched, in 1992, as a political union. Furthermore, Asian levels of economic integration are not sufficiently high to justify the term “paradox” to describe the imbalance between the economic and political dimensions of regional interactions.

For instance, levels of East Asian integration are still at the “first” stage (that of negotiating free-trade agreements), given that the stages of economic integration are divided as follows. First, the lowest stage of integration is based on reaching free-trade agreements by eliminating tariffs among countries in a region; second, at the customs-union stage, tariffs among the members are abolished while they seek to negotiate common external tariffs for countries outside the region; third, the stage of a single market guarantees the free movement of labour, capital, goods and services; and lastly, the stage of an economic union adjusts economic policies among members through the adoption of a common currency and central bank, etc.<sup>10</sup> The reality behind the primary stage of integration in East Asia reveals that the degree of intra-regional trade is much lower among the 16 East Asian countries, accounting for 44.5 percent of total trade as of 2011, than in the EU context, where levels reach 62.6 percent.<sup>11</sup> Thus, there exist in East Asia far higher incentives for pursuing an economic structure centred on exports toward countries outside the region than for seeking economic integration within the region.

However, an even stronger critique of the “Asian paradox” re-

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<sup>10</sup> Michelle Cini and Nieves Pérez-Solórzano Borragán (eds.), *European Union Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>11</sup> Seong-dae Cho and Byung-ki Mun, “Intra-Regional Trade in East Asia: Need to Overcome Excessive Concentration on Intermediate Goods and External Dependency”, in *IIT Working Papers*, No. 14-02 (October 2014), <http://www.kita.org/about/iitView.do?id=&no=1610&searchWrd=&pageIndex=7>.

lates to the fact that by assuming a certain kind of direction that has not yet been tested (i.e. integration), this concept sets out regional integration as a premise that should be attained in its own right, while regarding politics as an obstacle to this goal. The regional order in East Asia has emerged from 2,000 years of Chinese hegemony, followed by 100 years of Japanese hegemony, and is currently experiencing a situation in which China is attempting to restore its hegemonic position. Contrary to the case of Europe, which has achieved regional integration through multilateral relations in the absence of an overwhelming hegemonic state, the future of East Asian integration is likely to be subject to the influence of China or Japan. Because of this, the US has never supported regional integration in Asia. Recently, while the external balance of East Asia has been maintained by the US – which supports Japan in order to counterbalance China – internally, countries in the region tend to prefer the state of “anarchy” under which each of them holds autonomy in the absence of an agreed hierarchical order.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, the reason why relatively little progress has been made towards East Asian regional integration is linked to the fact that, besides the low degree of intra-regional trade dependence, countries in the region consider the current levels of autonomy to be the best guarantor of their interests – and thus do not want to risk any changes to the status quo. As revealed in the course of the recent European crisis, regional integration provides a stable framework for peace but at the same time restricts the autonomy of member states and can even force these to abandon discretionary policy measures. In other words, integration following the logic of the market economy, which the “Asian paradox” concept assumes is positive *a priori*, can also lead to a sacrifice of political ideals such as democratic accountability and independent sovereignty. In the end, movements calling for regional integration that consider solely economic interests without a clear agreement on

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<sup>12</sup> Nam-Kook Kim, “Justifying Grounds for Multicultural Policies in Korea: Universal Human Rights versus Benefits of Diversity”, in *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 6-7 (2014), p. 6-7.

purpose, subject and method need to be balanced and reinforced by the participation of citizens who share regional identity as well as democratic values.

### 3. THE ABE STATEMENT AND INHERITED RESPONSIBILITY

On the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe delivered a statement claiming that post-war generations today exceeded 80 percent of the country's population. Consequently, these citizens should not be predestined to apologize for the actions of their ancestors.<sup>13</sup> The logic behind this argument seems strong at first; it denies the succession of responsibility for the war and insists on its expiration. The logic of retributive justice, seeking to make amends for wrongdoing, is relatively private in character compared with that of distributive justice, which aims to reallocate resources. Compensation is simple when both offenders and victims are still alive. But the issue of so-called "inherited responsibility" is raised when both offenders and victims are deceased.

At least two conditions need to be met for a private compensation to become a problem at the societal level, and for the related responsibility to be inherited. First, there needs to be a recognition that we, in the present day, are affected by the social losses that were inflicted in the past or by the social gains enjoyed by the offenders who carried them out. For instance, American slavery and Japanese wars of aggression still have an influence on the descendants of both offenders and victims. Past discrimination that denied the human rights of black people has left their descendants with an inescapable stigma, whereas most white US citizens are today the recipients of benefits that American society has gained from the forced labour of black people. In the same manner, Japan's colonial

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<sup>13</sup> Shinzo Abe, *Statement on the 70th Anniversary of the End of the War*, 14 August 2015, [http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97\\_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html](http://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/statement/201508/0814statement.html).

rule and war crimes, such as the mobilization of “comfort women”, have had significant impact on its victims and their descendants while its proponents and their descendants continue to enjoy the benefits of a social development achieved on the basis of colonial exploitation.

The second condition for the inheritance of responsibility concerns the issue of whether individuals of the present day share a specific kind of identity in order to shoulder the burden of a negative legacy, which is, in turn, related to the destiny of the political community that has undergone this particular historical trajectory. Protests by Japanese citizens against new security bills that would allow the exercise of the right of collective self-defence reveals that the country has not fully come to terms with the legacy of the war. Indeed, Japanese society still experiences conflicts and internal tensions over the war’s legacy. In particular, the actions of more conservative Japanese politicians and movements demonstrate the contradictory behaviour that is constraining post-war generations from moving into a new era. On the one hand, conservatives seek to preserve memories of the war through visits to the Yasukuni Shrine – which honours war criminals, amongst others – while on the other they insist that post-war generations should not shoulder any responsibility.<sup>14</sup>

In light of these two conditions, regarding the influence of social losses and gains and the sharing of identity among individuals in relation to their community, the insistence on there being no obligation for Japanese post-war generations to apologize is premature. Of course, over time, the legacy of this aggressive conflict will decrease, and with it so will the intensity of current debates on the shared responsibility of post-war generations, including in the identity domain. The statement by Prime Minister Abe focussed on this dimension of retributive justice. However, Japan’s leader misunderstands the concept of retributive justice as an issue of phys-

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<sup>14</sup> Mi-kyung Kim, “Why Is There No Regional Court in East Asia? Regional Judicial Institutions and Regional Integration in East Asia” (in Korean), in *Asea yŏn’gu* [The Journal of Asiatic Studies], No. 158 (October 2014), p. 40-71.

ical time, and distorts the meaning of collective political responsibility as if Japanese citizens are asked to shoulder an indefinite and personal sense of guilt.

More fundamentally, the Abe statement on denying the inheritance of war responsibility is connected to the so-called “throwing off Asia” or “de-Asianization” policy, which attempts to evade demands for an apology by circumventing Asia and trying to deal directly with the West. Since the de-Asianization policy was first suggested by Shigeru Yoshida, Japan’s first post-war Prime Minister, the “One Asia” policy of 2009 by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama marked the only case of Japan declaring itself a member of Asia and “returned” to Asia.<sup>15</sup> Japan is now not only strengthening its alliance with the US and denying the succession of war responsibility towards Asia, but is even making an attempt to revise its pacifist constitution. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution is not only a domestic concern but also an international provision, established during the arrangement of a post-war order, which contains promises made to neighbouring countries in Asia as well.

#### 4. THE HELSINKI ACCORDS AND THE MULTILATERAL SECURITY-COOPERATION REGIME IN EAST ASIA

The Helsinki Accords were signed in 1975 with the objective of pursuing security cooperation and peaceful coexistence between the members of US-led NATO and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact.<sup>16</sup> The Accords are now considered a “prelude” to the end of the Cold War

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<sup>15</sup> Shigeru Yoshida, *The Yoshida Memoirs. The Story of Japan in Crisis*, London, Heinemann, 1961; Ichiro Hatoyama, *Hatoyama Ichiro kaikoroku* [Hatoyama Ichiro Memoir], Tokyo, Bungei Shunju Shinsha, 1957.

<sup>16</sup> Igor I. Kavass, Jacqueline Paquin Granier and Mary Frances Dominick (eds.), *Human Rights, European Politics, and the Helsinki Accord. The Documentary Evolution of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, 1973-1975*, New York, William S. Hein & Co., 1981-1995.

and a trigger for the fall of regimes across the Eastern bloc. During the mid-1970s, however, no one could have predicted the fall of Communism, and the Cold War standoff seemed to constitute a stable status quo. Therefore, in signing the Accords, Eastern bloc countries at the height of the Cold War were generally unmindful of a possible overthrow, for the agreement also included clauses on the mutual respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Nevertheless, the Helsinki Accords are praised for triggering the fall of Communism by providing “oxygen” for the expansion of anti-establishment movements and the growth of civil society within the Eastern bloc countries – not only through guaranteeing respect for sovereignty and territory but also through the 10 cooperative principles that included issues such as human rights and liberty, and confidence-building measures in the fields of military, economic and humanitarian interaction. South Korea’s recent Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) and the “Trust-building Process on the Korean Peninsula” are both modelled after the Helsinki Accords.<sup>17</sup> However, East Asian countries, well aware of the unintended consequences of the Accords (i.e. the fall of the Eastern bloc regimes), will be much more hesitant to participate in a similar process to NAPCI unless specific incentives are guaranteed.

Why, then, did NAPCI stop working – if not fail outright? Of course, it is not solely the fault of South Korea, but that country bears the greatest responsibility. We can apply the interest-and-identity formula to help explain this failure. In terms of interest, NAPCI was not effective enough to protect the interests of regional countries in areas such as respecting sovereignty, guaranteeing territorial integrity and providing economic benefits. In terms of identity, NAPCI had no detailed programme of building up regional identity in order to replace the exclusive national identity of each country. Someone may argue that NAPCI has simply meant North Korea’s relinquishing of its membership of the Six-Party Talks. One can suggest many formu-

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<sup>17</sup> Michael Reiterer, “The NAPCI in the Volatile Security Environment of North-East Asia: Which Role for the European Union?”, in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2015), p. 573-589.

las for talks in seeking out a solution in East Asia. Under any kind of negotiation, however, the most decisive factor should be domestic trust building between the two Koreas. Negotiation between North Korea and the US on a peace-treaty and denuclearization policies would come next. Finally, discussion on the respective interests of China, Japan and Russia should be added. However, one can see the unfortunate development by which South Korea lost its leverage as an independent actor, giving up many channels in economic and social cooperation – not to mention security cooperation with North Korea. As a result, South Korea has now become only a “dependent variable” as a sub-partner of the US-Japan alliance alongside a shift in the international order of “Great Powers”.

To build a multilateral security-cooperation regime, East Asia may follow the European experience of the Helsinki Accords, which were developed through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) in the early 1970s (leading to the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975) and, finally, through the establishment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 1995. Any successful “experiment” for East Asia will need to foster shared identity and find common interest as well, with specific incentives that diminish the concern of some more hesitant countries. One possible security regime might be based on a common agreement that military force alone cannot guarantee the security of the region. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994, remains the only regional conference in which North Korea has regularly participated, and could therefore serve as a basis for such development. The search for common ground in identity and interest is a matter for the countries of the region themselves. It also requires favourable international circumstances outside the region – especially the support of the US – which remain a crucial condition for such efforts.

According to Christopher Hemmer and Peter Katzenstein, US policy toward Europe in the early stages of the Cold War proceeded under a combination of identity and material factors.<sup>18</sup> US policy-

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<sup>18</sup> Christopher Hemmer and Peter J. Katzenstein, “Why is There No NATO in



makers perceived Europe as belonging to the political community that the US was obliged to help. The strong economic links between the two parties also provided ample material incentives for cooperation. These collective-identity and material incentives made possible a multilateral approach in the post-war establishment of NATO, and thus eventually helped the emergence of a regional community in Western Europe. In contrast, the US viewed Asia at the time as weak and backward, so its goal was not multilateral cooperation among equals but one of unilateral US dominance. The belief that Asians were not only foreign but also inferior helped push US policymakers to support unilateral or bilateral, rather than multilateral, policies in the region.

Whereas the conflicts of the Cold War era were symmetrically maintained among states holding monopoly over physical power, new types of war include cultural and identity conflicts, mixed in with the struggles of economic inequality and intangible forms of terror – indiscriminate as to place and target. These low-intensity and low-cost wars, fuelled by small arms and rudimentary bombs, are expanding globally, feeding on widespread fear and hatred. While the shadow of Cold War still hangs over the Korean Peninsula, we can find partial solace in the fact that the heavy purchase of arms and high military spending there remain under the control of states – thus making any negotiation procedure for a multilateral security regime relatively straightforward.

## 5. THE POSSIBILITY OF AN ASIAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Asia is the only region in the world without a representative regional court of human rights. Compared to the early human rights courts established in Europe in 1959, in America in 1979 and in Africa in 2004, it is evident that Asia is somewhat lagging in this dimension. Some suggested causes of the delay include the geographical size

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Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism”, in *International Organization*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (Summer 2002), p. 575-607.



and cultural diversity of the continent – comprising as it does 60 percent of the world's population, or 4.4 billion people. Some also point to the relatively large number of countries with low levels of development or the proliferation of authoritarian regimes as possible explanations.

More fundamentally, the lack of an Asian Court of Human Rights is related to the level of regional integration in the continent. Asia could follow similar steps to those taken in Europe, where the European Council, founded in 1949, adopted the European Convention on Human Rights, which led to the creation of the European Court of Human Rights. However, with the current hegemonic competition between Japan and China being externally balanced by the United States, members of the Asian community tend to favour autonomous and non-hierarchical organizations over creating binding, cooperative institutions that require concessions and a change to the status quo.

Three possible routes towards a court of human rights in Asia can be explored. The first is by geographically or culturally adjacent sub-regions, such as South East Asia or Central Asia, creating sub-regional human rights institutions and expanding upon them. The second is by developing a new human rights institution based on existing regional, cooperative institutions such as the East Asia Summit, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation or the ASEAN Regional Forum. The third is by developing a court of human rights grounded in existing human rights institutions in Asia, such as the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions or the Association of Asian Constitutional Courts and Equivalent Institutions.

The importance of an Asian Court of Human Rights lies in its potential to provide a mediating forum for regionalizing universal norms and universalizing regional cultures. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which works as a set of grounding principles for a universal human rights norm, provided universal and abstract rights and intentionally disregarded cultural differences. Fear of cultural relativism existed among the founding members at the time, as there was concern that the hard-won gains made

since World War II would be lost if these human rights principles were not framed as being applicable globally. In lieu of this universality, the norms of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights bear the consequence of having to resort to courts of human rights in different regions with different cultures and traditions for adequate interpretations and implementations.

A unique characteristic of the 1948 Universal Declaration and the two following covenants in 1966 is that they provided the grounds for a new debate on human rights with individuals as the main subject instead of states. In this regard, regional courts of human rights are also important in securing the rights of individuals guaranteed by these covenants. While individuals challenge government policies that violate their own rights from the bottom-up, regional courts of human rights can seek universal values and principles by providing top-down comparisons and verifications, having a moderating impact on states.

East Asian political situations are, once again, being reorganized state-centrally with the North Korean nuclear crises and the current tensions in the South China Sea region. In any case, it is important to deviate from state-centric reasoning and instead achieve democratic individuality while tolerating cultural diversity. Meanwhile, the tendency to legitimize inhumane regional cultures under the name of cultural self-determination or to degrade the ways of life pursued in other regions under the name of universality must be contained. An Asian Court of Human Rights can be an important institutional resource in overcoming an “Asia of states” and instead move toward achieving an “Asia of citizens”.

## 6. THE CAMPUS ASIA PROGRAMME AND SOCIOCULTURAL COOPERATION

The Collective Action for Mobility programme of University Students in Asia originated in a 2009 decision at a summit meeting of Chinese, South Korean and Japanese leaders. Participants agreed on this student exchange programme, and launched 10 consor-

tiums of Campus Asia as a pilot project in 2011 – lasting for five years, until 2015. It aimed to raise younger generations who shared common East Asian values under a common curriculum, and thereby to achieve a common good for East Asia as a whole.

There is also the Waseda Initiated Campus Asia programme, which aimed to cultivate a shared identity classified as Asian beyond national borders through university networks and personnel exchanges. This programme received exclusive financial support from the Japanese Government from 2012 to 2016. Five member universities – Waseda, Korea, Beijing, Tamasek and Nanyang Technological University – joined and targeted the establishment of an East Asian University Institute by 2020, to train specialists for East Asian peace and prosperity.

While economic and security areas form the traditional dimension of cooperation under the dominant nation-state system, sociocultural cooperation is a more future-oriented goal sought in the context of increased globalization. Globalization has often been understood in terms of its emphasis on economic and instrumental rationality while disregarding efforts towards the common good and democratic governance and denying the independence of political spheres in which justice and legitimacy are sought. In East Asia, globalization brings about challenges in two important ways: one is the deconstruction of state-centred identity; the other, reciprocal verification of locality as well as universality in the arena of individual rights.

The deconstruction of state-centred identity in East Asia encompasses the urban citizenship of global cities in China, local place-making through administrative services in Japan, tensions between local authority and migrants in South Korea and the emergence of a new middle class in contrast to the traditional system of patronage in Malaysia. In the realm of locality versus the universality of individual rights, gendered migration in a manner disadvantageous to women, foreign domestic workers chain of international care work, the ratification of a migrant workers' convention, the human rights declaration of ASEAN 2012 and efforts toward an Asian Human Rights Court would all constitute junctures where locality

meets universality on the challenge of how to localize global norms and to universalize local practices.<sup>19</sup>

As part of these trends on the deconstruction of a state-centred regional order and locality versus the universality of individual rights, the role of university education will be important in nurturing East Asian citizens who will voluntarily participate in the self-government of a regional community. Imagine a new East Asian community that shares the values of individual dignity within multicultural diversity, along with the emergence of new, cross-national networks in which the social majority as well as minority can achieve both individual rights and civic responsibility worthy of the regional community. University education can also guide younger generations along a path between emotional attachment and rational reflection in constructing a new regional identity. Regional integration through personnel-exchange programmes aims to eventually unite people who share an attachment to patriotism as democratic individuals without the exclusivist notions of nationalism. The result of such effort goes beyond an “Asia of states” and eventually targets and seeks to foster an “Asia of citizens”.

## CONCLUSION

With complicated historical animosities and low levels of intraregional trade, fostering shared identity and finding common interests in East Asia is no easy task. It thus becomes essential to increase exposure by encouraging travel to neighbouring countries and investments targeting younger generations, as such efforts will reduce negative stereotypes and rhetoric.

In the areas of traditional cooperation in economy and security, free-trade agreements will be the basic step for enhancing the levels of intraregional trade; they can subsequently be expanded to

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<sup>19</sup> Nam-Kook Kim (ed.), *Multicultural Challenges and Sustainable Democracy in Europe and East Asia*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

customs unions and, perhaps, a full-blown single market. Recent business trends show that outsourcing of cheap labour tends to decrease over time. This situation would constitute a variable in deciding the level of intraregional trade. ARF, following the model of the Helsinki Accords, can be a basis for a multilateral security-cooperation regime in East Asia – but it requires specific incentives that mitigate the fear of some hesitant countries, which are aware of the unintended historical consequences of the Accords. It also needs favourable international circumstances – especially, the support of the United States. Conflicts in the South China Sea and North Korea's nuclear crisis alter the regional order, in which states prefer an “anarchic” situation under the China–Japan power balance, with the support of the US. This order will eventually be influenced by compromise over the long-term interests of the US and China.

In the area of sociocultural cooperation, the Campus Asia programme and an effort to establish an Asian Human Rights Court would represent a good opportunity to promote democratic individuality within multicultural diversity, by universalizing local practices and localizing global norms. It would eventually contribute to the realization of an Asia of citizens beyond an Asia of states. The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) – which was established in 2011 by South Korea, China and Japan, with a vision to promote peace and common prosperity – can also serve as a stable base from which to build a crisis-management mechanism for natural disasters and transnational human-security issues such as crime, pollution and climate change. The TCS – with resources including staff, budget and infrastructure – is very important in achieving preventive diplomacy, with discussions occurring under its aegis on a regular basis. It increases predictability in conflict management. Generally speaking, institutions tend to operate so as to reinforce their aims and influence under a system of path dependency. So, institutionalizing various human initiatives is always important. Cooperation – in areas such as the economy, security and sociocultural issues – with detailed programmes and principles will support and help foster a regional community with shared identity and common interests in Northeast Asia.



## PART II

### EVOLVING SECURITY DYNAMICS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA





## 5.

# Assessing North Korea's Nuclear and Missile Programmes: Implications for Seoul and Washington

*Lorenzo Mariani\**

North Korea's (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK's) nuclear and missile capabilities have developed well beyond the primitive nuclear programme that triggered the first United Nations sanctions in May 1993. After more than ten years since the country's first nuclear test, carried out in October 2006, Pyongyang's military breakthroughs of 2016 confirm that the regime will shortly present a serious challenge not only to regional powers but likely also to the US mainland. Indeed, for the first time since the end of the Korean War Pyongyang seems to be on the verge of developing the technological abilities, both in terms of warheads and ballistic missiles, that would allow the regime to pose a direct threat to US territory.

These achievements prove, on the one hand, the success of the *Byungjin* ("parallel development") strategy launched by Kim Jong-un in 2013, which has allowed the country to expand its nuclear and missile programmes and to partially recover its economy after the devastating 1990s famine. On the other hand, the international sanctions, aimed at squeezing North Korea's weak economy and forcing the regime to return to the negotiating table, have failed to

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halt or even reduce the pace of the country's military development. Over the last few years, US-led international efforts have increasingly resorted to UN Security Council sanctions, which have now become wide-ranging and comprehensive, having also consistently been actively supported by China. However, even if Beijing has adopted a less lenient approach vis-à-vis its historical ally it has so far proved to be unwilling to fully implement the sanctions. China's primary goal is to maintain stability in North Korea since it represents a strategic buffer zone against the US military presence in the region and, as has been demonstrated on a number of occasions, it has used the cover of humanitarian aid to bypass its own sanctions on Pyongyang.<sup>1</sup>

The US was seriously concerned about North Korea's military developments to the point that, during the 2016 electoral campaign, both vice-presidential candidates, Michael Pence and Tim Kaine, claimed to be in favour of possible pre-emptive strikes against North Korean military facilities in order to eradicate the problem.<sup>2</sup> The United States is not the only regional actor that has begun reconsidering the idea of a direct confrontation: South Korea (the Republic of Korea, ROK), Washington's long-term ally, which remains under direct threat from Pyongyang, shows a similar trajectory. After the failure of President Park Geun-hye's *Trustpolitik* and of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), as well as Park's recent impeachment, more confrontational options have been advanced in Seoul. These range from extending military exercises and anti-missile defence to developing nuclear weapons in South Korea. Since a political transition is taking place in Washington and a presidential election is approaching in Seoul, the future currently appears uncertain: the new US administration will have

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<sup>1</sup> See Hong Nack Kim, "China's Policy Toward North Korea Under the Xi Jinping Leadership", in *North Korean Review*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (September 2013), p. 83-98. A different viewpoint is outlined in Sun Ru, "Beijing and Pyongyang: a 'Special Friendship' Facing the Final Curtain", in *ISPI Analysis*, No. 297 (May 2016), <http://www.ispionline.it/en/node/15072>.

<sup>2</sup> Anna Fifield, "North Korea is 'Racing towards the Nuclear Finish Line'", in *The Washington Post*, 8 October 2016, <http://wapo.st/2dBYuBE>.

to set a fresh course in order to deal with a nuclear-armed state while maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

This paper aims to assess the DPRK's latest achievements in nuclear and missile technology, and examine the effectiveness of the responses put forward by the US and South Korea – including discussion of the strategic options being examined by the new leaderships in Washington and Seoul.

## 1. THE *BYUNGJIN* POLICY AND ITS STRATEGIC SUCCESS

The advent of the DPRK's new leader, Kim Jong-un, meant the establishment of a new strategic posture. On 31 March 2013, during a plenary session of the Party Central Committee (PCC), the young leader announced the beginning of a transition from his father's *Songun* ("military-first") strategy to new strategic policy guidelines based on the parallel development of economic and military capabilities.

The introduction of minor agricultural and labour reforms allowed a real income growth that has lifted the living standard for a segment of the population, both in cities and the countryside. Agricultural production has been relieved thanks to a reduction in the size of collective farms and, because of lowered controls over the redistribution system, farmers are now allowed to retain a larger part of their harvests. Kim Jong-un seems prepared to tolerate a minimum of entrepreneurial activity – even in the cities, where managers are reported to now have some degree of freedom since they can set salaries and privately manage human resources. The level of growth in 2016 has suffered from setbacks, such as China's decision not to admit North Korea into the Asian Infrastructure Development Bank (AIIB) because it was not able to present a "snapshot" of its economy and finances. Nonetheless, this improvement is sufficient to prove the invalidity of a basic assumption about North Korea: the regime is not on the verge of collapse, and it has partially recovered from the deep crisis of the 1990s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Hayes and Roger Cavazos, "'Yes I Can!' Byungjin and Kim Jong Un's

The second pillar of the “parallel development” strategy is a renewed focus on nuclear development. While the *Songun* approach placed the DPRK’s entire military apparatus at the centre of the state’s economic effort, the *Byungjin* strategy gives priority only to the nuclear sector, which requires a much lower budget commitment than the conventional army (only 2-3 percent of the North’s GNP, according to some estimates).<sup>4</sup> The year 2016 witnessed the materialization of *Byungjin* in the form of two nuclear tests and more than a dozen missile tests. These demonstrated North Korea’s capability to test thermonuclear warheads (September 2016 test) and intercontinental ballistic missiles (Taepodong), as well as to launch missiles from ground facilities (Musudan, Nodong), submarines (Pukkuksong-1), and from mobile platforms (Hwasong-6). The various missiles could carry not just nuclear warheads but also chemical and biological weapons. In order to properly grasp the magnitude of North Korea’s 2016 achievements, it is important to analyse its arsenal in more detail. The following sections will review the North Korean armoury and its tests.

## 2. THE GROWING NUCLEAR THREAT

Because of the DPRK’s isolation, it is difficult to analyse and quantify the advancement of its nuclear programme. In this regard, the main source of information is the North Korean government itself, whose reliability can be questioned. The lack of data regarding the number and the efficiency of plants and centrifuges currently used by Pyongyang for the realization of weapons-grade uranium (WGU) makes it difficult to estimate with certainty the number of warheads already completed. In 2012, a RAND Corporation report concluded

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Strategic Patience”, in *NAPSNet Special Reports*, 29 March 2016, <http://nautilus.org/?p=47135>.

<sup>4</sup> Georgy Toloraya, “Byungjin vs the Sanctions Regime: Which One Works Better?”, in *38 North*, 20 October 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/10/gtoloraya102016>.

that North Korea's nuclear capability is much lower than it looks, but it is inflated by the higher ranks of the regime.<sup>5</sup> This "bluff" hypothesis has both an internal and an external purpose. Internally, the North Korean regime is mainly concerned with convincing its elites, and especially its military, that it is creating a powerful state, which seems to be essential for regime survival.

Externally, the strategy is twofold: in addition to deterrence, the traditional purpose of any nuclear programme, Pyongyang also aims to gain bargaining leverage vis-à-vis the United States, its main security threat, and American allies in Northeast Asia. The objective, allegedly, is not the deployment of nuclear facilities during a conflict but the avoidance of the conflict altogether: the North Korean missile programme is intended for strategic leverage and political reasons, and not as a reliable operational tool for wartime use. However, while the "bluff" hypothesis could be used to accurately describe Kim Jong-il's "nuclear diplomacy", the divergent posture adopted by the country's new leader calls this view into question.

According to 2015 estimates, North Korea's current stockpile is composed of 6-8 plutonium-based warheads and 4-8 devices fashioned from uranium.<sup>6</sup> The country is nowadays considered to be self-sufficient for every stage required for the creation of nuclear weapons, as it can rely on industrial-scale uranium mines, processing plants for conversion and refinement, a fuel-fabrication plant, a nuclear reactor and a reprocessing plant. As demonstrated with the latest tests, North Korean engineers have acquired solid expertise on how to process plutonium-239 and highly enriched uranium (HEU), and how to stock fissile materials. However, the future growth of the country's nuclear arsenal will depend primarily on North Korea's ability to expand its uranium-enrichment programme. To date, it has been estimated that the country is able to

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<sup>5</sup> Markus Schiller, "Characterizing the North Korean Nuclear Missile Threat", in *RAND Technical Reports*, 2012, p. 16, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical\\_reports/TR1268.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR1268.html).

<sup>6</sup> Joel S. Wit and Sun Young Ahn, "North Korea's Nuclear Futures: Technology and Strategy", in *North Korea's Nuclear Futures Series*, February 2015, p. 17, <http://38north.org/2015/02/nukefuture022615>.

produce 6 kg of plutonium per year.<sup>7</sup> The three tests carried out under the Kim Jong-un leadership demonstrate that the young leader has decided to distance himself from his father's nuclear strategy, regarded as more cautious and willing to use the arms race only as a diplomatic tool. With the advent of Kim Jong-un the number of tests has grown exponentially, reaching its peak in 2016, and, as was confirmed by international observers, the latest two nuclear tests highlighted remarkable technological advancements.<sup>8</sup>

On 9 January 2016, Pyongyang announced that it had detonated its first thermonuclear warhead. Although the news met with general scepticism, the possibility cannot altogether be excluded that the regime has acquired the capability to build a two-stage bomb. According to US scientist Siegfried Hecker, it is unlikely that a real hydrogen fusion bomb was tested; however, it is possible that North Korean engineers managed to miniaturize the bomb by using "hydrogen" components (probably hydrogen fuel) to boost the explosion.<sup>9</sup>

This warhead's reduced size would allow it to be placed on middle-to-long range missiles that might reach not just South Korea and Japan but also the US Pacific military base in Guam. The second nuclear test, however, raised more concern. This weapon, detonated on 9 September 2016, demonstrated that the process of warhead assemblage has reached a level of standardization that will allow safer and speedier future production.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the ability to miniaturize plutonium-based warheads, as demonstrated by the latest test, brings with it more serious strategic implications. In the near future, North Korea will be able to house this kind of weapon

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Beth Nikitin, "North Korea's Nuclear Weapons: Technical Issues", in *CRS Report for Congress*, No. RL34256 (3 April 2013), p. 21, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL34256.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Georgy Toloraya, "Biyungjin vs the Sanctions Regime: Which One Works Better?", cit.

<sup>9</sup> Steve Fyffe, "Hecker Assesses North Korean Hydrogen Bomb Claims", in *CISAC News*, 7 January 2016, <http://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/node/220361>.

<sup>10</sup> Charles P. Vick, "Warhead Miniaturization", in *GlobalSecurity.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/dprk/nuke-miniature.htm>.

on both its medium-range and intercontinental ballistic missiles. The latest nuclear test is also believed to have had important implications for the Kim Jong-un regime's strategy. Park Young-Ja from the Korean Institute for National Unification (KINU) maintains that the new test marks a shift from the regime's initial short-term need to consolidate its hold on power (2012-16) to a middle-term goal (2016-20) of imposing North Korea's nuclear status "as a fait accompli".<sup>11</sup>

### 3. THE MISSILE PROGRAMME

While the two most recent nuclear tests have caused most international concerns, the missile programme overall should not be underestimated: the credibility of any weapon of mass destruction (be it nuclear, chemical or biological) is based on the precision and reliability of its host country's missile capability. The development of long- and medium-range ballistic missiles has been one of Pyongyang's major goals since the early 1960s, when the country officially started its indigenous ballistic-missile programme. The programme had a dual purpose for the regime: while the creation of a cheap, indigenous arsenal was essential to counteract and discourage the US and South Korean threat, at the same time the export of ballistic missiles represented one of the most important sources of foreign hard currency for the country. Despite the fact that over the last few decades the DPRK managed to adopt a substantial stockpile of ballistic missiles, its missile programme has proved slow to adapt to the strategic needs of the country. Major achievements occurred during the power-transition period following the death of Kim Jong-il and the adoption of the *Byungjin* policy, when the research programme was focused on the implementation of four

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<sup>11</sup> Park Young-Ja, "Fifth Nuclear Test, in Line with Strategy for Pro-longed Ruling of Kim Jong-un Regime", in *KINU Online Series*, No. 16-25 (13 September 2016), p. 6, <http://lib.kinu.or.kr/DLiWeb20/components/searchir/viewer/frame.aspx?cid=1477492&type=FILE&id=18064>.

strategic goals: the development of a new road-mobile missile, the production of a submarine-launched missile, the implementation of the dual-use space programme and the development of solid-fuel rocket technology.<sup>12</sup> Seen from this perspective, 2016 has marked the real turning point for the missile programme.<sup>13</sup>

North Korea has carried out missile tests many times in the past, but they were not as frequent as in 2016 and the regime had previously never advertised them as prominently. A total of 21 missiles were launched on 14 different occasions last year (with multiple tests sometimes being carried out), the majority of which were regarded as successful – not just in Pyongyang, but also by international observers.<sup>14</sup> The Hwasong-6, Nodong, Musudan, Taepodong and Pukkuksong-1 tests demonstrated that the regime has reached the capability to successfully launch medium- and long-range missiles from the ground and from the sea, as well as the ability to design a relatively precise trajectory for them. Moreover, in the aftermath of the latest nuclear test, the DPRK claimed to have acquired the ability to transport a miniaturized warhead in a missile. Therefore, it is important to consider the North Korean arsenal in detail in order to gain a clearer picture of its recent achievements and current capabilities.

### 3.1 *Hwasong-6*

More than seven years after its last launch, on March 2016, the DPRK restarted firing and testing of the Hwasong-6 from TELs (transporter erector launchers) mobile stations. The Hwasong-6 is a short-range tactical ballistic missile equipped with a liquid-pro-

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<sup>12</sup> Joel S. Wit and Sun Young Ahn, “North Korea’s Nuclear Futures: Technology and Strategy”, cit.

<sup>13</sup> Geoff Brumfiel, “Why Analysts Aren’t Laughing at these Silly North Korean Photos”, in *Parallels*, 21 March 2016, <http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2016/03/21/470976577>.

<sup>14</sup> Amanda Macias, “‘Mr. Kim Has Missile Lust, And He’s Not Giving Up’: A Timeline of North Korea’s Brazen Missile Tests So Far in 2016”, in *Business Insider*, 29 October 2016, <http://read.bi/2eesF09>.



pellant engine. The missile was derived from Soviet Scud-B technology; however, during the indigenization process, which commenced in 1988, North Korean engineers managed to extend the reach of the rocket, increasing its maximum range capacity to 500-600 km.<sup>15</sup> Even if this missile is not a newcomer, it represents one of the most important tactical assets for the regime today, since it is one of the most reliable and efficient ballistic missile in the military stockpile.

### 3.2 Nodong

The Nodong is a medium-range ballistic missile that belongs to the first stage of the North Korean missile programme. As with the DPRK's other ballistic missiles, the Nodong was built with the aid of a technological transfer from the Soviet Union and the assistance of China. The single-stage missile is an enhanced version of the Soviet Scud-C; it is assessed as having a range of 1,300 km and a maximum payload of about 1,200 kg.<sup>16</sup> The Nodong can be launched from mobile stations, and in ground-launched scenarios it does not require concrete slabs. These two key factors are strategically relevant since they allow concealment of the location of offensive positions, thus avoiding the possibility of being targeted by pre-emptive strikes.

Two years after its last launching test, the DPRK restarted its Nodong testing programme on 18 March 2016, when two missiles were fired and one of them travelled almost 800 km before landing in the sea off the country's eastern coast.<sup>17</sup> Tensions soared when a second test was carried out on 19 July that year, in response to the South Korean decision to proceed with the installation of the

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<sup>15</sup> "Hwasong-6 Missile", in *GlobalSecurity.org*, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/world/dprk/hwasong-6.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman et al., *The Korean Military Balance. Comparative Korean Forces and the Forces of Key Neighboring States*, Washington, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), July 2011, p. 125-126, <https://www.csis.org/node/27430>.

<sup>17</sup> Jack Kim and Ju-min Park, "Defiant North Korea Fires Ballistic Missile Into Sea, Japan Protests", in *Reuters*, 19 March 2016, <http://reut.rs/1RptL4x>.

THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile shield. The DPRK subsequently fired two Nodong on 3 August, managing to break into Japan's exclusive economic zone with one of the missiles.

### 3.3 Musudan

The Musudan (also called Hwasong-10, or BM-25) is a ground-launched intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) indigenous to North Korea. The one-to-two stage missile uses a 4D10 liquid-propelled engine that allows it to cover a range of 2,500-4,000 km, and has an estimated payload capacity of 500-1,200 kg. The Musudan can be armed with single high-explosive or nuclear warheads.

Until April 2016, when the first test was carried out, there was some scepticism among analysts about the actual state of progress in the development of this ballistic missile.<sup>18</sup> The Musudan was displayed for the first time on October 2010; however, the photographic analysis conducted by several international observers concluded that the missiles paraded in Pyongyang were mere mock-ups.

The Musudan was tested for the first time on 15 April 2016 (the "Day of the Sun", the birthday of founding supreme leader Kim Il-sung), but the launch turned out to be a failure.<sup>19</sup> The test was followed by other two fiascos on 28 April and 31 May. On 22 June, one Musudan successfully reached an altitude of 1,000 km and travelled 400 km, ending its flight in the East Sea.<sup>20</sup> The Musudan is still in its experimental stage and the reliability of the missile, especially during the launch phase, remains highly uncertain – as was demonstrated by its two failed test launches, occurring on 14 and

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<sup>18</sup> Michael Elleman, "North Korea's Musudan missile effort advances", in *IJSS Voices*, 27 June 2016, <http://www.iiss.org/en/iiss-voices/blogsections/iiss-voices-2016-9143/june-2c71/north-koreas-musudan-missile-effort-advances-5885>.

<sup>19</sup> Ju-min Park, "Failed North Korea Missile Launch Prompts Chinese 'Saber-Rattling' Jibe", in *Reuters*, 15 April 2016, <http://reut.rs/1qt2LLD>.

<sup>20</sup> Choe Sang-hun, "North Korea's Successful Missile Test Shows Program's Progress, Analysts Say", in *The New York Times*, 22 June 2016, <https://nyti.ms/2mCNbN7>.

20 October 2016. Nonetheless, the successful launch demonstrated that North Korea is in the final stage of the development of a missile that could be capable of reaching not only regional targets but also the US military outpost in Guam.

### *3.4 Taepodong*

Under the supervision of Chinese and Russian engineers in the early 1990s, the DPRK initiated the development of two indigenous intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) – namely, the Taepodong-1 and the Taepodong-2. These devices, however, have always been presented as non-military rockets. The missiles were probably assembled using pre-existing technologies borrowed from the Nodong, Musudan and Hwasong programmes, and existing literatures agree on the fact that medium-range missile design might have been used in the Taepodongs' first or second stages.

The Taepodong-1 is a two-stage liquid-fuel-propellant ICBM that can cover almost 1,500 km. The missile was tested for the first and last time on 18 August 1998 in its satellite-launch configuration, but failed to place into orbit its Kwangmyongsong-1 satellite. The Taepodong-1 programme was halted shortly thereafter, in order to favour the development of a new intercontinental missile with a greater range.

On 5 July 2006, the DPRK attempted to launch its second ICBM prototype, called Taepodong-2, but the missile failed about 40 seconds into its flight. Following this demonstration, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) enacted Resolution 1695 aimed at stopping North Korea's missile programme and restraining the import of military technologies to the DPRK.<sup>21</sup> In 2009, under the name of Unha-3, the Taepodong-2 was fired again in its space-launch configuration, and it flew for almost 3,800 km before landing in the Pacific Ocean. The regime carried out other two space launches, in April and December 2012.

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<sup>21</sup> UN Security Council, Resolution 1695 (2006), 15 July 2006, [http://undocs.org/S/RES/1695\(2006\)](http://undocs.org/S/RES/1695(2006)).

A month after its successful fourth nuclear test, which was carried out on 9 January 2016, Pyongyang once again raised international concerns when a Taepodong missile was used to place in orbit the Kwamongsong-3 satellite. This latest test reflected the ambitions and technical advances of the North Korean ICBM programme, which, if combined with the ability to miniaturize nuclear warheads, will provide the regime with more bargaining power.

### 3.5 *Pukkuksong-1*

In October 2014, satellite photographs of the Sinpo South Shipyard revealed that the DPRK was preparing its SINPO-class submarine in order to test a new prototype of submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM).<sup>22</sup> The first launch took place in May 2015, but it is still not clear whether the missile was fired from a submarine or, as is more likely, from a submerged barge. The little information leaked after the test made it possible to reconstruct some of the main features of the missile, called Pukkuksong or Kn-11. Similarly to other North Korean equipment, the Pukkuksong has a Russian design and has probably been derived from the Soviet R-27/SS-N-6 SLBM. This two-stage ballistic missile is equipped with a solid-propellant design that reduces its range to 900 km but offers a significantly shorter launch and reload time. The missile can host either high-explosive or nuclear warheads.

Despite its limited range, this missile proved to be strategically relevant when, in a 24 August 2016 test, a Pukkuksong was shot into Japan's air identification zone. Although the missile will not be ready before 2020, it will represent a significant tactical response to the THAAD system that the US wants to install in South Korea. With the Pukkuksong-1, it will not be difficult for North Korean submarines to circumvent the THAAD's radar, which provides a limited 120-degree field of view, and hit the missile-defence system

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<sup>22</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., "North Korea: Test Stand for Vertical Launch of Sea-based Ballistic Missiles Spotted", in 38 North, 28 October 2014, <http://38north.org/2014/10/jbermudez102814>.

from behind. Furthermore, the US missile shield is not designed to intercept intermediate-range ballistic missiles but has been tested only against medium-range devices.

#### 4. WHAT OPTIONS FOR SOUTH KOREA AND THE UNITED STATES?

The Park Geun-hye presidency started off in 2013 with a pledge to engage in dialogue with North Korea: "Through a trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula [...] I will move forward step by step to build trust between the South and the North on the basis of credible deterrence."<sup>23</sup> The advent of Park's *Trustpolitik* brought back hope of a resumption of the stalled nuclear talks. To implement *Trustpolitik*, Park proposed the creation of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), a multilateral forum through which to overcome the security deficit in Northeast Asia and build an atmosphere of cooperation – focusing first on non-security issues, with the aim of discussing territorial disputes and denuclearization in the long run.<sup>24</sup>

Both NAPCI and Park's *Trustpolitik* have dramatically failed to restart talks and cooperation with North Korea, or to stop the expansion of the DPRK's nuclear and missile programme. The Pyongyang regime, boosted increasingly in confidence with its nuclear tests, consequently lowered its need for dialogue and cooperation with South Korea. Seoul responded by increasing military exercises with the United States and closing doors to cooperation: in February 2016, the Kaesong Industrial Complex – which employed 50,000 North Korean workers and 800 South Korean staff – was

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<sup>23</sup> Park Geun-hye, *The Full text of the 18th Presidential Inauguration Speech*, 25 February 2013, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=105853>.

<sup>24</sup> Lee Sang-Hyun, "The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI): A Vision toward Sustainable Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia", in *The ASAN Forum*, 15 December 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/?p=4646>.

shut down in response to the nuclear and missile tests, and it has not been reopened at the time of writing.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, any attempt to revive *Trustpolitik* has been blocked by Park Geun-hye's impeachment in December 2016. Today, both the political and the strategic scenario are less favourable to Seoul than at any time over the past decade. The ROK's democratic institutions are proving weak and unable to provide a strong response to North Korea's nuclear and missile achievements. Given the failure of *Trustpolitik*, several strategic options have been raised – all of which may spur crises in Northeast Asia.

The first option is to enhance the nuclear protection of South Korea by deploying the THAAD system on the Korean Peninsula. This system is designed to intercept theatre missiles during late, mid-course or final-stage flight, flying at high altitudes within and even outside the atmosphere. This allows it to provide broad area coverage against threats to critical assets such as population centres and industrial resources as well as military forces – hence, its designation. The missile shield would be effective in preventing attacks carried out with short- or medium-range missiles such as the Hwasong-6 or the Nodong, which are the designated carriers for biological and chemical strikes.

The United States and South Korea have long discussed the possibility of deploying THAAD, but they finally opted for its implementation after the latest, groundbreaking North Korean nuclear test.<sup>26</sup> However, while internal disagreement in Seoul is diminishing, vocal opposition has been raised from Beijing, which regards the THAAD as being directed not against North Korea but against China. Chinese claims have pointed out that with a radar range of 1,000-2,000 km, the shield is designed to shoot down missiles at a relatively high altitude, well beyond the geographical limits of the Korean Peninsula. Thus, the *People's Daily* insists, "it is ridiculous to use the THAAD mis-

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<sup>25</sup> J.H. Ahn, "S.Korea Temporarily Closes the Kaesong Industrial Complex", in *NK News*, 10 February 2016.

<sup>26</sup> Ankit Panda, "THAAD Coming to South Korea 'As Soon As Possible'", in *The Diplomat*, 29 September 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=95338>.

sile defense system to 'deter nuclear threats from DPRK'".<sup>27</sup> Despite the defensive nature of THAAD, China fears that the anti-missile system deployment, if integrated with the US missile-defence network, would hinder its own ability to retaliate in the event of nuclear coercion or war.<sup>28</sup> China has responded to the ROK-US decision by undermining Seoul's business ties with Beijing, hoping to coerce it to step back. However, with the new US Secretary of Defence, James Mattis, reaffirming the THAAD decision in early February 2017, the main fear is that the missile-defence deployment will prompt a military response from China and trigger an arms race in Northeast Asia.<sup>29</sup>

A second, more radical, option is to respond to the nuclear threat by developing South Korea's indigenous nuclear programme. The ROK attempted to secretly build a nuclear-weapon programme under President Park Chung-hee in the 1970s, but since its discovery the United States has worked to prevent a nuclear South at all costs.<sup>30</sup> However, in September 2016, after the latest DPRK nuclear test, the most conservative wing of the South Korean political spectrum called for "a radical new approach".<sup>31</sup> A few members of the Saenuri Party, the majority conservative party in Seoul, formed the "Nuclear Forum", in which they advocated for withdrawal from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the development of nuclear armaments in order to deal with Pyongyang's direct threat to South Korean territory.<sup>32</sup> More MPs have since joined the Nuclear Forum,

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<sup>27</sup> Zhong Sheng, "Directed Against China: New Site for U.S. THAAD Missile Deployment in South Korea", originally published in *People's Daily*, 1 October 2016, <http://wp.me/p2vCQD-nhCr>.

<sup>28</sup> Robert Cantelmo, "THAAD Could Spark a Dangerous Arms Race in East Asia", in *The Diplomat*, 22 July 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=89878>.

<sup>29</sup> Bruce Harrison, "Mattis Pumps up THAAD, But China Likely to Keep 'Bullying' Korea", in *The Diplomat*, 3 February 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/?p=104002>.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Hayes and Chung-in Moon, "Park Chung Hee, the CIA, and the Bomb", in *NAPSNet Special Reports*, 23 September 2011, <http://nautilus.org/?p=4320>.

<sup>31</sup> "Radical New Approach Needed to Deal with N.Korea", in *The Chosunilbo*, 12 September 2016, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2016/09/12/2016091201423.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/09/12/2016091201423.html).

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Kim, "Saenuri Wants a Nuclear South", in *Korea JongAng Daily*, 13 September 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.as>



increasing its membership to 31, especially after China threatened retaliation over the deployment of THAAD. The United States, as previously stated, has vowed to prevent any nuclear escalation in the Asia-Pacific region by extending its nuclear umbrella over its allies, including South Korea, as the THAAD decision confirms. However, the election of new American president Donald Trump, who during the electoral campaign had claimed that Japan and South Korea should provide for their own security, might further fuel the hopes and the size of the Nuclear Forum.<sup>33</sup> Although the new US President has retreated on his threat to allow nuclear proliferation, the idea of nuclearizing South Korea has emerged in Seoul. If the current trend is not reversed, the nuclear option may gain ground. In 2016, according to a Japanese non-profit organization (NPO) Genron survey, 59 percent of South Koreans gave a positive answer when asked, "Should South Korea possess nuclear weapons?"<sup>34</sup>

The ROK's third strategic option concerns the use of conventional military forces, whose balance is overwhelmingly in favour of Seoul over Pyongyang. South Korean sea, land and air forces demonstrate a much higher level of development and technological sophistication than their Northern counterparts.<sup>35</sup> Key components of the South Korean military strategy, as well as central pillars of the US-ROK alliance, include the presence of US forces on Korean territory and joint US-ROK military exercises. And yet, doubts have arisen as to whether these two practices will continue in the future. First, the US troop

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<sup>33</sup> Jeffrey Lewis, "Did The Donald Suggest South Korea Build The Bomb? No, But That Might Be the Outcome Anyway", in *38 North*, 8 December 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/12/jlewis120816>.

<sup>34</sup> The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, *The 4th Japan-South Korea Joint Public Opinion Poll (2016)*, August 2016, p. 30, [http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion\\_polls/archives/5305.html](http://www.genron-npo.net/en/opinion_polls/archives/5305.html); Daniel Bob, "Encouraging Japan to Go Nuclear Won't Denuclearize North Korea", in *38 North*, 24 January 2017, <http://38north.org/2017/01/dbob012417>.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, Charles Ayers and Aaron Lin, *The Conventional Military Balance in the Koreas and Northeast Asia*, Washington, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 2 August 2016, <https://www.csis.org/node/37532>.



presence in South Korea cannot be taken for granted, due to South Koreans' protests and the costs associated with the maintenance of standing armies overseas, which has been a key foreign-policy theme of the Trump campaign. One analyst, in a blog of *The National Interest*, recently argued that the withdrawal of US troops, in addition to easing the burden on the US military budget, would transform the threat environment that Pyongyang exploits to develop its nuclear programme.<sup>36</sup> Counterarguments stress the US troops' role in keeping stability and ensuring the status quo, by countering North Korean adventurism and preventing South Korean unilateralism.<sup>37</sup>

The 2017 round of military exercises between the United States and South Korea, which traditionally elicits alarm in Pyongyang and criticism in Beijing, will run through 30 April 2017.<sup>38</sup> There is the risk, however, that the Trump Administration will reduce the frequency and magnitude of these joint exercises, replacing them with a faster THAAD deployment. The end of joint drills might trigger South Korea's fear of abandonment, stiffen Chinese retaliation over THAAD and embolden North Korea in its nuclear programme; consequently, the chances of Seoul "going nuclear" would increase.

## CONCLUSION

2016 was truly a pivotal year for the DPRK's nuclear programme. The numerous tests carried out demonstrated Pyongyang's technological advancement, the diversification of its stockpile and an

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<sup>36</sup> Doug Bandow, "Leaving Korea Would Unburden US Troops and Help South Korean Economy Grow Up", in *The Skeptics blog*, 6 July 2016, <http://national-interest.org/blog/the-skeptics/leaving-korea-will-unburden-us-troops-help-south-korea-grow-16866>.

<sup>37</sup> Khang Vu, "The Ultimate Nightmare: U.S. Withdrawal from South Korea", in *The National Interest*, 10 July 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-ultimate-nightmare-us-withdrawal-south-korea-16904>.

<sup>38</sup> Terri Moon Cronk, *U.S., South Korea Launch Annual Foal Eagle Exercise*, 3 March 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1102331/us-south-korea-launch-annual-foal-eagle-exercise>.

improved operational capability. Since the beginning of 2017, Kim Jong-un's rhetoric has become more aggressive and self-assured as he promises the firing of a new ICBM that can potentially target the United States.<sup>39</sup> Never in the past could Kim be so confident; he has consolidated his hold on power, established his strategy of parallel development and set the track for the establishment of his country as a *de facto* nuclear power.<sup>40</sup>

North Korea's nuclear and missile advancements risk jeopardizing the Asia-Pacific region at a time of transition in both the United States and South Korea. In Seoul, the North Korean breakthrough and the failure of *Trustpolitik* have revived more confrontational approaches, including the proposal to develop South Korea's own nuclear weapons. The deployment of the THAAD system risks disrupting relations with China. Finally, joint US-ROK military exercises will need to be confirmed by the new US administration. Donald Trump faces a stronger North Korea, which is more likely than ever to become a serious threat to US territory.<sup>41</sup> It will therefore be the US President's task to formulate – in consultation with his Asian allies, and in particular South Korea – a new strategic approach to the DPRK's nuclear threat without jeopardizing that particular order and stability in Northeast Asia that has guaranteed economic growth and prosperity in the last few decades.

Park's effort to engage Pyongyang in a relationship based on mutual trust has not met with success. The main issue with Park's approach was that North Korea would never accept denuclearization as a prerequisite for dialogue. In a strategic environment such as Northeast Asia's, in which the United States' nuclear umbrella covers Tokyo and Seoul, North Korea lives with a very high security di-

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<sup>39</sup> Cha Du-hyeogn, "Kim Jong Un's New Year's Day Speech: What Did We Learn?", in *NK News*, 2 January 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Park Young-Ja, "Fifth Nuclear Test, in Line with Strategy for Pro-longed Ruling of Kim Jong-un Regime", cit.

<sup>41</sup> Geoff Dyer, "The Time for 'Strategic Patience' Is Over. Donald Trump Must Confront North Korea", in *The National Interest*, 26 December 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/the-time-strategic-patience-over-donald-trump-must-confront-18864>.

lemma: survival is its very first priority.<sup>42</sup> Its nuclear programme, as previously explained, provides survival through deterrence. Thus, from the DPRK's viewpoint it makes no sense to give up its only assurance of deterrence prior to the beginning of any talks. A new policy based on trust must be welcomed, but it should take the interlocutors' viewpoints into consideration.

As for the United States, Donald Trump's ambiguity does not permit easy predictions about his approach to North Korea. He should, in any case, avoid the previous administration's approach. Barack Obama's "strategic patience" policy, which was based on the erroneous assumption that the DPRK regime was on the verge of collapse, granted Pyongyang precious time to implement its nuclear programme. While the US was pushing for multilateral sanctions, Kim Jong-un consolidated his hold on power and concentrated resources on the nuclear programme. Trump should start with the idea that North Korea is more stable than is often claimed, as the events of 2016 have demonstrated. The new president should also welcome a trust-building approach, dropping demands for denuclearization as a prerequisite for talks.

In this regard, the deployment of THAAD does not help but rather lowers the possibility of building a climate of strategic trust. South Korea has legitimate concerns that the US should address. However, the new missile system provokes not only Pyongyang but also Beijing, which sees its nuclear-response capabilities curtailed by THAAD's interaction with the broader US nuclear umbrella. The Northeast Asian trust deficit will thereby only worsen.

Finally, Trump and the other actors must take into account the new role of China. Beijing today is not just Pyongyang's patron: under President Xi Jinping, it has assumed a global and regional leading role. China's self-assumed new role requires it to undertake more responsibility and actively make an effort to diminish frictions on the Korean Peninsula. In the past, China presented itself as the only viable interlocutor on behalf of North Korea. More recently,

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<sup>42</sup> Van Jackson, "Why North Korea's Fifth Nuclear Test Is Not Like the Others", in *Beyond Parallel*, 12 September 2016, <http://beyondparallel.csis.org/?p=447>.

by supporting sanctions, China has become a more impartial stakeholder in the issue. However, the sanctions regime has dramatically failed to stop North Korea (partly due to China's non-compliance). China rightfully deserves an important role in the resolution of North Korean nuclear questions, but its involvement should take place within the context of a different kind of engagement – not confrontational but trust-building.

## 6.

# Wither the inter-Korean Dialogue? Assessing Seoul's Trustpolitik and Its Future Prospects

Antonio Fiori

On 9 March 2017, shortly after 11 am, the chief justice of the Constitutional Court, Lee Jung-mi, started reading the verdict that forced President Park Geun-hye from office. The president's actions had "seriously impaired the spirit of [...] democracy and the rule of law", the judge said, adding that Ms. Park's "actions betrayed the people's confidence. They are a grave violation of law, which cannot be tolerated".<sup>1</sup> This pronouncement not only put an abrupt and ignominious end to Park Geun-hye's experience as president, but also represented the epitaph of the unsuccessful *Trustpolitik* strategy that, in the hopes of Ms. Park, at the beginning of her mandate, was to represent a "constructive" turning point and a fresh impetus to the relations between Seoul and Pyongyang. In reality, the continued provocations by the North Korean (the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, DPRK) regime in recent months have led large parts of the South Korean (the Republic of Korea, ROK) policymaking elite and public opinion alike to wonder whether *Trustpolitik* has produced a positive outcome. The concept at the base of Park's policy was represented by "trust" – hence, the neologism used to identify this strategy was *Trustpolitik*: a concept largely used in the Korean context but seldom translated into a

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<sup>1</sup> Justin McCurry, "Park Geun-hye: South Korean Court Removes President over Scandal", in *The Guardian*, 10 March 2017, <https://gu.com/p/645j6/stw>.

specific political approach, given the high level of animosity between the two Koreas.

Since the end of World War II and the division of the Korean Peninsula, the two states have entered a phase of tough confrontation. Its peak was reached with the outbreak of the Korean War (1950-3), a condition that is still technically unresolved on the peninsula since a peace treaty has never been ratified. After the armistice, tension between Pyongyang and Seoul decreased, passing from open war to overt enmity, to competitive coexistence. Hostility, however, remained as the fundamental, inherent characteristic of the relationship between the two Korean states, which soon found themselves in a condition of strategic rivalry.<sup>2</sup> Hence, the need to put in place a process of mutual trust building – aimed at reducing tension and military confrontation, and toward a long-term process of national reconciliation and reunification – becomes a crucial point.

The first part of this paper examines the concept of “trust” in the international relations (IR) literature, proposing a framework against which to evaluate Park’s *Trustpolitik* – the latter, discussed in the second part of this study. The final section tackles the question of Seoul’s proactivity towards Pyongyang, asking whether – and to what extent – the South Korean leadership has been able to adopt an engagement policy with a pure sentiment of trust as its basis.

## 1. TO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST: THAT IS THE QUESTION

Given that trust is one of the so-called “social emotions” – that is, emotions that require the appreciation of the mental state of other people in contrast to basic emotions, like happiness or sadness,

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<sup>2</sup> Strategic rivalry can be defined as a relation in which the actors regard each other as competitive – roughly in the same capabilities league – and threatening – one of the two countries, or both, must have done physical harm to the other in the past, or project some probability of doing such harm in the present or future. These situations are highly unstable and can degenerate into overt enmity or even real conflicts. See Karen Rasler, William R. Thompson and Sumit Ganguly, *How Rivalries End*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

which only require the awareness of one's own somatic state – the role that it plays in the development of social relations is greatly relevant. Trust is always seen as an outcome of a relationship between two or more social actors, the creation of which depends on the nature of the relationship itself. From this perspective, the role of the actors in creating – or not creating – and in defining the relationship plays a crucial role in every process of trust building. Despite the vastness of the literature on trust in the social sciences, three common features emerge: risk, interdependence and positive expectations.<sup>3</sup>

Every relationship based on trust implies a risk. This risk directly arises from uncertainty about the actions that the other actor will undertake, as a reaction to our own behaviour. The insecurity that arises from uncertainty is a prerequisite for trust, which, in this sense, can be considered as an instrument to overcome diffidence and danger.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, if the interests of the two actors involved in the relationship coincide, then trust is no longer necessary. If both actors aspire to the same result, it is certain that both will act harmoniously towards that mutually desirable goal. When uncertainty disappears, the risk vanishes as well – and the actors no longer need a strategy to overcome it.

Second, for the realization of a relationship based on trust, a certain degree of interdependence must exist between the actors. The trustworthiness of our counterpart becomes relevant only if the realization of our objectives depends, to a certain extent, on the actions and on the cooperation of the other party.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, trust is not the only basis for a relationship. There are several other func-

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<sup>3</sup> Christel Lane, "Theories and Issues in the Study of Trust", in Christel Lane and Reinhard Bachmann (eds.), *Trust Within and Between Organizations. Conceptual Issues and Empirical Applications*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2008, p. 1-30.

<sup>4</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money*, London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Partha Dasgupta, "Trust as a Commodity", in Diego Gambetta (ed.), *Trust. Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Oxford and Cambridge, Basil Blackwell, 1988, p. 49-72.

tional equivalents to trust for overcoming the risk-problem that lies in the unpredictable behaviour of the counterpart. The most common of these is power.<sup>6</sup> In an asymmetrical relationship, in which one actor can take advantage of a higher degree of relative power, the weaker side can be forced to act in accordance with the interests of the stronger party. In this way, the uncertainty surrounding the behaviour is overcome, and so is the risk that trust implies. Obviously, a situation of this kind is based on dependence and on a strong power asymmetry, and has nothing to do with trust. If we take into consideration the global system and the relations among states, the relevance of power as a functional equivalent to trust becomes evident. Interdependence, on the other hand, means that there is no significant asymmetry of power between the parties, and thus no one party can impose its will on the other. In this case, power cannot work as a functional equivalent of trust to overcome risk and uncertainty. The vital interests of both parties must be taken into account during the relationship, to reach a positive-sum game in which both parties achieve a favourable result.<sup>7</sup>

The third characteristic for a trust-based relationship deals with the expectations that each party holds regarding the behaviour of the other. Due to the impossibility of completely overcoming risk, both parties must believe that the other actor will not try to take advantage of this uncertainty. In every situation of this kind there is always the risk of exploitation, the risk of cheating, with one party pretending to act in a trustworthy way and then betraying the goodwill of the other for its own interest.<sup>8</sup>

All these three basic characteristics of trust, especially the last one, are closely related to the nature of the relationship between two actors. Trust is not an essential circumstance in relations between social actors, nor is it a necessary condition for the creation

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<sup>6</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power. Two Works*, Chichester, Wiley, 1979.

<sup>7</sup> Elinor Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity and Reputation", in Elinor Ostrom and James Walker (eds.), *Trust and Reciprocity. Interdisciplinary Lessons from Experimental Research*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 2003, p. 23-83.

<sup>8</sup> Christel Lane, "Theories and Issues in the Study of Trust", cit., p. 11.



of cooperation, which can also emerge without trust.<sup>9</sup> However, if an actor decides to overcome the *paradox of trust*,<sup>10</sup> by putting in place a process of trust building, it must adopt a proactive stance toward the creation of a system of repeated and sustainable interactions, in order to guide these interactions toward the creation of trust. After adopting a proactive posture, there are various strategies that an actor can put in place to build trust. The paradox of trust lies precisely in the fact that the more it is lacking, the more it would be necessary.

The necessity of a trust-building process emerges especially in contexts characterized by overt enmity or strategic rivalry between the parties, in which mistrust and suspicion prevail. The 70-year-old dispute on the Korean Peninsula can definitely be considered as part of this framework.

## 2. PARK GEUN-HYE'S TRUSTPOLITIK

*Mutual trust* has represented a recurrent catchphrase as a foundation for a new course in inter-Korean relations: it started to make its appearance in the early 1970s, and has resurfaced several times over the last four decades in the public, political narrative of South Korean governments. In 1972, mainly because of the changing conditions in the balance of power in East Asia – marked by the rapprochement between the People's Republic of China and the United States, and the unfolding of the “Nixon Doctrine” – the two Koreas signed the so-called North-South Joint Statement, in which they agreed on three principles – non-interference, peace and national unity – as a basis for the future process of reunification and

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<sup>9</sup> For a complete analysis of the emergence of cooperation without mutual trust, see Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, Basic Books, 1984, p. 73-105.

<sup>10</sup> Trust becomes more important in the relations not based on trust, especially between enemies and rivals. In these cases, the focus is on the processes of trust building, more than on the definition of trust, to overcome suspicion and create mutual trust between the parties.

the management of inter-Korean relations. The main goal was to enhance mutual understanding and reduce tensions and mistrust between the parties. In the early 1990s, by maintaining the same specific goal of introducing cooperation and trust between the two Koreas, the first elected South Korean president, Roh Tae-woo, introduced a policy named *Nordpolitik*. Finally, during the “progressive decade” (1997-2007), presidents Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun made efforts to create a new pattern of relations between Seoul and Pyongyang based on mutual trust, cooperation and economic exchanges. The “Sunshine Policy”, as the new approach was defined, was built around a paradigm of *constructive engagement*,<sup>11</sup> and had the explicit goal of enhancing mutual trust and reducing uncertainty and tension between the parties through constant dialogue and exchanges. The conciliatory experience brought about by the Sunshine Policy was definitively closed both by the election of Lee Myung-bak, a conservative president who singled out Pyongyang’s denuclearization as the main requirement for any kind of engagement, and by North Korea’s aggressive stance, culminating in some major incidents that completely closed the doors to any form of dialogue.

Park Geun-hye’s election, in 2012, nourished the hope that relations between the two Koreas could experience a positive renaissance. This time, in fact, the idea of trust was placed at the centre of the new policy, defined as *Trustpolitik*, which was introduced for the first time in the autumn of 2011 in an article entitled “A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust between Seoul and Pyongyang”, published in *Foreign Affairs* magazine.<sup>12</sup> Ms. Park, at the time a leading

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<sup>11</sup> The constructive engagement approach is not based on a *quid pro quo* logic, like conditional engagement in which the incentives from one side are strictly related to a prior change in the behavior of the counterpart, rather its rationale lies in engaging the other party through a series of positive inducements and thus creating a situation of interdependence and a minimum level of mutual trust between the parties.

<sup>12</sup> Park Geun-hye, “A New Kind of Korea”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011), p. 13-18, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/northeast-asia/2011-09-01/new-kind-korea>.

candidate for the presidency, tried to lay out the theoretical and historical contexts of that unfamiliar principle, and how it would eventually be translated into actual policy should she become head of state.

According to Park's new policy, building trust – defined by the South Korean Foreign Minister as “an asset and public infrastructure for international cooperation” without which “sustainable and genuine peace is not achievable”<sup>13</sup> – was a necessity not only for healing inter-Korean rivalry but also to improve the conditions of the fragmented Northeast Asian security scenario. For this reason, beyond the Korean Peninsula, Ms. Park's *Trustpolitik* contemplated an initiative to foster security cooperation in Northeast Asia – which would take the form of the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) – with the aim of solving what she called the “Asian Paradox”, representing, in practice, a sort of disconnection “between growing economic interdependence on the one hand, and backward political, security cooperation on the other”.<sup>14</sup> NAPCI, launched in May 2013 during Park's visit to Washington, D.C., aimed at transforming the existing structure of mistrust and confrontation into one of trust and cooperation, starting with building a consensus on softer, yet equally critical, issues such as climate change, environment, disaster relief and nuclear safety.<sup>15</sup> In this way, cooperation would gradually develop among regional players, contributing to solutions to more serious security issues such as territory and history disputes.<sup>16</sup> A process of this kind can be considered as a strategy for creating mutual trust through incremental

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<sup>13</sup> Yun Byung-se, “Park Geun-hye's Trustpolitik: A New Framework for South Korea's Foreign Policy”, in *Global Asia*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Fall 2013), p. 8-13.

<sup>14</sup> Park Geun-hye, *Address to the joint Session of the United States Congress*, Washington, 8 May 2013, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=111940>.

<sup>15</sup> Sheen Seong-ho, “Dilemma of South Korea's Trust Diplomacy and Unification Policy”, in *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (2014), p. 97-122.

<sup>16</sup> Yun Byung-se, “Park Geun-hye's Trustpolitik: A New Framework for South Korea's Foreign Policy”, cit., p. 12.

learning, which could eventually evolve into an institution-based trust-building process.

As highlighted in the pages of her *Foreign Affairs* article, one of Park Geun-hye's main goals during the electoral campaign was to differentiate her approach, with regards to the DPRK, from the policies adopted by previous ROK governments, both progressives and conservative. Neither the Sunshine Policy, which in practice only attenuated Pyongyang's provocative stance, nor Lee Myung-bak's isolationist posture, which reinvigorated North Korea's aggressiveness – as demonstrated by the two nuclear tests and three long-range missile tests carried out by Pyongyang since then – proved entirely successful. Park Geun-hye's dilemma as president of the Republic of Korea originated precisely from the fact that neither *constructive engagement* – without preconditions – nor pressure had achieved the expected goals: for this reason, she sought a “middle-way” approach. In this context, perceived provocations from the North – such as missile launches or nuclear tests – not only would not be tolerated but would also ignite a strong response from the South; however, according to the principle of *Trustpolitik*, confidence and cooperation would be the ultimate aim in the construction of the relationship between the two sides. Against this backdrop of incremental gains, several inter-Korean initiatives would be realized – among them the provision of humanitarian assistance to the North, the enhancement of economic cooperation between the two nations and the creation of new trade and investment opportunities. Park Geun-hye also proposed the employment of proactive measures to enhance mutual trust – in, for example, separating humanitarian issues from political ones. South Korea should also expand infrastructures in order to improve North Korea's electric power, transportation and communication networks; support Pyongyang's acceptance into international financial institutions; strengthen trilateral economic cooperation with the participation of Russia and China; support the internationalization of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC); jointly develop North Korea's natural resources; and upgrade social and cultural exchanges.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Sheen Seong-ho, “Dilemma of South Korea's Trust Diplomacy and Unifica-

The establishment of “South-North Exchange Cooperation Offices” in the two capital cities should be the cornerstone for the accomplishment of these measures and, as Park suggested, the culmination of this process could be the holding of an inter-Korean summit, the first since October 2007. Harsh reality, however, frustrated the good intentions of candidate Park.

In December 2012, only a week ahead of presidential elections in the ROK, Pyongyang successfully put into orbit a Kwangmyong-song-2 satellite, mounted on a Unha-3 rocket. Subsequently, in February 2013, two weeks before Park Geun-hye officially took office, the DPRK conducted its third underground nuclear test. These two events dramatically undermined the possibility of reviving inter-Korean dialogue – as remarked on in Park Geun-hye’s inaugural presidential address. However, calling on the North to use its energies in a more constructive way instead of on nuclear and missile development, the new South Korean President invoked the necessity to “move forward step by step to build trust between the South and the North on the basis of credible deterrence”.<sup>18</sup> President Park’s words occasioned a harsh response from Pyongyang: between March and April 2013, in fact, the North abrogated all agreements on non-aggression between the two states, including the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Peninsula,<sup>19</sup> and suspended operations in the KIC, the only surviving vestige of the Sunshine Policy, by withdrawing all its employees. The complex was reopened only after several months of negotiations, in September 2013, with the signing of the new formula of “pro-

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tion Policy”, cit., p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Park Geun-hye, *The Full text of the 18th Presidential Inauguration Speech*, 25 February 2013, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=105853>.

<sup>19</sup> Under the Joint Declaration, South and North Korea agree not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons; to use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes; and not to possess facilities for nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment. See: Joint Declaration of South and North Korea on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, 20 January 1992, <http://www.nti.org/49TAR>.

gressive normalization”, which some considered proof that the new policy was achieving some positive results.<sup>20</sup>

While citing small, conciliatory measures between the two sides on the peninsula – such as reopening the KIC and organizing preliminary talks on holding a new round of family reunions in August and September 2013 – as steps towards establishing inter-Korean trust, the whole process of building trust between the two nations remained, for the new South Korean administration, dependent on a real commitment to denuclearization by the North. Tensions also remained high due to the annual joint South Korea-United States military exercises in February 2014, seen by Pyongyang as a rehearsal for an invasion of the North. The following month, North Korea tested two Nodong (Rodong in DPRK’s spelling) mid-range missiles and, soon after, exchanged artillery fire with the South across the Yellow Sea. The clash followed a warning from Pyongyang that it might test a “new form” of nuclear weapon, possibly referring to a miniaturized warhead placed on a ballistic missile.<sup>21</sup> Rounds of artillery shell near the Northern Limit Line (NLL) and missile launching continued in the following months, possibly in an attempt by the new North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, to consolidate his power against growing popular discontent over the country’s worsening economic conditions. In that moment, Pyongyang’s use of military threats conspired to jeopardize Park Geun-hye’s *Trustpolitik* strategy, seriously undermining its practicability and recommended proactive stance.

During 2014, President Park gave two very important speeches about inter-Korean policy. The first one, on the occasion of her first New Year’s press conference, on 6 January, talked about a possible unification of the peninsula. Building the foundations for an “era of unification”, she declared, was one of the two major tasks of the

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<sup>20</sup> Cho Jong-ik, “2 Years on: Park Geun Hye’s North Korea Approach”, in *Daily NK*, 27 February 2015, <http://www.dailynk.com/english/read.php?catald=nk00400&num=12928>.

<sup>21</sup> Choe Sang-hun, “North Korea Vows to Use ‘New Form’ of Nuclear Test”, in *The New York Times*, 30 March 2014, <https://nyti.ms/2m4irGn>.

administration in 2014, and in so doing the key state tasks of “laying a foundation for peaceful unification” should be implemented with specific policies.<sup>22</sup> At the same press conference, when asked by a reporter about further clarification, President Park affirmed “unification is like hitting a jackpot (*daebak*)”,<sup>23</sup> a Korean term meaning huge success or breakthrough. Nonetheless, “jackpot” also had a negative valence, reminding people of gambling, as the Blue House (the presidential mansion) spokesman, Min Kyong-uk, asserted.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, soon afterward, the idiom was modified and the more temperate expression “bonanza” became the preferred official translation. In order to make a symbolic gesture toward the North, President Park proposed holding reunions of families separated by the division of the peninsula at the end of the Korean War, which began to take place in February 2014 at the Mount Kumgang resort. Pyongyang’s reaction to the South Korean “jackpot” statement, however, was not positive, since it was interpreted as the umpteenth attempt at eliciting a sudden regime change in North Korea.<sup>25</sup>

On 28 March 2014, President Park was invited by Dresden University of Technology to receive an honorary doctoral degree. There, in a city significantly located in the former East Germany (German Democratic Republic, DDR), she gave a speech entitled “An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula”.<sup>26</sup> In her talk,

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<sup>22</sup> South Korean Ministry of Unification, *2014 White Paper on Korean Unification*, February 2013, p. 5 and 37, [http://eng.unikorea.go.kr/download.do?file-name=40085\\_201407311000072610.pdf](http://eng.unikorea.go.kr/download.do?file-name=40085_201407311000072610.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Park Young-ho, “South and North Korea’s Views on the Unification of the Korean Peninsula and Inter-Korean Relations”, in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, No. 61 (February 2014), p. 303-323, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Park-Young-Ho-paper.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Chang Jae-soon, “Park’s Office Chooses ‘Bonanza’ for Korean Word ‘Daebak’”, in *Yonhap News Agency*, 20 February 2014, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2014/02/20/79/0200000000AEN20140220008300315F.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Choi Hyun-jun, “N. Korea Criticizes Pres. Park’s Comment about Unification Being the ‘Jackpot’”, in *The Hankyoreh*, 21 January 2014, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/620709.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/620709.html).

<sup>26</sup> Park Geun-hye, *An Initiative for Peaceful Unification on the Korean Peninsula*,



Park Geun-hye pointed to four “barriers” that should be dismantled in order to open up a new future on the Korean Peninsula: military confrontation, mutual distrust, social and cultural differences between Seoul and Pyongyang, and the rupture of diplomatic relations between North Korea and the international community that kept the communist regime isolated.<sup>27</sup> These barriers, according to Park, could be dismantled by enhancing cooperation and exchanges between the two Koreas in order to recover mutual benefits and homogeneity. Against this backdrop, she advanced three propositions for a peaceful reunification: (i) resolution of humanitarian issues for the people of North Korea; (ii) infrastructure building for the co-prosperity of the Korean people; and (iii) recovery of homogeneity between North and South Korean people.

In addition, she re-proposed to North Korea the construction of an international peace park in the demilitarized zone (DMZ); however, this proposal was quashed by Pyongyang, which declared that it was not possible to give any thought to its implementation while the situation between the two countries – officially still at war – remained unaltered. Later that year, in her address to commemorate national liberation on 15 August, President Park also suggested opening channels for meeting and communication between people of both Koreas, based on environmental cooperation, the livelihood of the people and cultural reciprocation. North Korea was upset by Park Geun-hye’s words, and immediately released a declaration from the National Defence Commission (NDC), defining the groundwork for reunification through economic exchanges and humanitarian aid as the “daydream of a psychopath”.<sup>28</sup> Once again – re-

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Dresden, 28 March 2014, <http://www.korea.net/Government/Briefing-Room/Presidential-Speeches/view?articleId=118517>.

<sup>27</sup> Lee Gee-dong, “The Dresden Unification Initiatives and the Inter-Korean Relations”, in *Journal of Peace and Unification*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Spring 2014), p. 141-146.

<sup>28</sup> Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), “NDC Spokesman Blasts Park Geun Hye’s ‘Dresden Declaration’”, in *Korean News*, 12 April 2014, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2014/201404/news12/20140412-01ee.html>; AFP, “Pyongyang Slams South Korean President’s Reunification Speech”, in *South China Morning Post*, 12 April 2014, <http://bit.ly/2nG4WuY>.



ferring to President Park's declaration, according to which the German model could be taken as an example for a virtuous unification of the peninsula – North Korea replied that this was a paradigm of the “West *absorbing* the East”, and disparaged the proposal – billed as the “Dresden Declaration” – as a “nonsense, full of hypocrisy and deception”.<sup>29</sup> The DPRK spokesman urged Seoul to abide by earlier agreements, stressing that all these previous documents gave priority to addressing the issue of easing military confrontation.

Despite Pyongyang's agitated response, South Korea's preparatory steps aimed at easing a reunification process were not frozen and became more pronounced with the launch of a Unification Preparatory Committee in July 2014. This committee, headed by the President herself and composed of vice-chairmen representing each government office and private consultants, should aim to “help bolster people's interest in the reunification, as it will explore ways to realize the much envisioned reunification”.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, however, Park not only reaffirmed that her country's national defence had to represent a top priority but also that any kind of provocation coming from the North could not be accepted and had to be counterbalanced.

A further attempt at dialogue, without any significant political result, was carried out in October 2014 under the impulse of North Korea, when a high-level delegation from Pyongyang arrived in South Korea for the closing ceremony of the Asian Games, organized in Incheon. On that occasion, two of the highest-ranked North Korean officials, Hwang Pyong So and Choe Ryong Hae, met with South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae and the chief of the National Security Council, Kim Kwan-jin. Owing to the conciliatory and friendly attitude, the meeting ended with the commitment to hold a new round of inter-governmental talks – however, these achieved no specific or concrete result.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Choi Hyun-soo, “Unification Preparatory Committee Due Today”, in *The Korea Times*, 14 July 2014, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/07/116\\_160995.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2014/07/116_160995.html).

<sup>31</sup> Katharine H.S. Moon, “North Korea's Incheon Landing,” in *Project Syndicate*, 9 October 2014, <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/north-korea->

The enthusiasm that had characterized the period from August 2013 to July 2014 started to decrease from that autumn. After the launch of the new committee, President Park began to neglect the “North Korean problem” and to put aside her efforts towards *Trust-politik*. The creation of a new presidential board that had to pursue new, concrete policies toward reunification shifted the focus of the ROK Government toward unification itself, more than on the process needed to achieve it. The difference between “unification as a process” – previously pursued by South Korean administrations, with positive response from Pyongyang – and “unification as the inevitable outcome” began to hinder the possibilities of dialogue between the two Koreas.

In the summer of 2015, tension started to rise again: on 4 August, two South Korean soldiers were maimed after stepping on landmines allegedly planted near one of the South’s military guard posts by North Korean soldiers who had sneaked across the border; Seoul’s immediate reaction materialized in the resumption of loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts across the border for the first time in 11 years. Such broadcasts, which often bitterly criticized the North’s government, had been suspended in 2004 as part of efforts at reconciliation. North Korea followed up with an ultimatum that gave the South 48 hours to dismantle its loudspeakers, but the South’s defence ministry dismissed the threat and said that the broadcasts would continue. On 20 August, the North fired a single artillery round over the border, followed minutes later by several more in the direction of one of the South’s loudspeaker units; the shells fell short of the South’s side of the DMZ, and the South Korean military retaliated by firing multiple shells. The confrontation ended with the North expressing regret over the wounding of the South Korean soldiers and Seoul agreeing to refrain from propaganda broadcasts.

The year 2016 witnessed an assertive push from North Korea: beyond the fourth (in January) and the fifth (in September) nuclear tests, Pyongyang has repeatedly launched missiles, seriously

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s-peace-offensive-at-the-asian-games-by-katharine-h-s-moon-2014-10.

undermining stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The international community has firmly condemned these aggressive actions, and new rounds of sanctions have been imposed by the United Nations Security Council and by single nations. At that point, however, *Trustpolitik* had already shown all its weaknesses and could be confined to the history books.

### 3. SEOUL PROACTIVITY: “WAITING FOR GODOT”

The relevance of a proactive management of relations in the process of trust building between hostile actors is pivotal. The three strategies of trust building place a strong emphasis on the necessity of one actor taking the leading role in the process in order to guide it toward the desired results. All the three main features of trust in the social sciences – risk, interdependence and positive expectations – need the influence of a proactive stance by one or both actors. In order to reduce the risk that directly originates from the uncertainty of the counterpart's response to our own behaviour, we need to implement an actual strategy to achieve the goal; similarly, if our objective is to induce positive expectations in the other actor, we must show our positive attitude through actions. From this perspective, trust building should not be considered as a “wait-and-see” policy – as it has been in the last few years with *Trustpolitik* – in which one actor declares its goodwill and then waits for a first move from the other side.

The proactive attitude, despite a certain degree of uncertainty in specific aspects of the relations between North and South Korea, was already present in Park Geun-hye's electoral programme. The expansion of infrastructures to improve North Korea's electric power, transportation and communication networks; the support for North Korea's socialization into international financial institutions; the strengthening of trilateral economic cooperation with the participation of Russia and China; the support for the internationalization of the KIC; as well as the proposal to jointly develop North Korea's natural resources and upgrade its social and cultural

exchange are all examples of this attitude. However, since the very beginning of the Park presidency, it had already become clear that the practical implementation of these projects would be more complicated than their mere announcement. The negative posture of Pyongyang after its third nuclear test and the reaction of the international community certainly played a role in the worsening of the situation; after these events, the Park Government was not able to take the initiative and lead the subsequent development of inter-Korean relations in the sense of building mutual trust. The common characteristic of almost all the inter-Korean meetings held in the last three years is that they have been put in place to solve contingent specific issues, caused by a first move from Pyongyang.

The pattern that has characterized almost every inter-Korean contact since Park Geun-hye took office shows a lack of strategic proactivity from the South Korean side. The detailed planning of *Trustpolitik*, as explained during the electoral campaign, seemed to disappear under Pyongyang's "solicitations". Indeed, the real driver for inter-Korean relations in recent years – for better or for worse – has been Kim Jong Un's regime. Since February 2013, when the third underground nuclear test took place, the initiative has remained in North Koreans' hands, while South Korea limited itself to mere reaction. From that moment onward, the same old framework of highs and lows, crisis and rapprochement has remained constant. The timing of the crisis seemed perfectly designed, and had the effect of forcing Seoul to adapt its behaviour to that of Pyongyang, rather than proposing new solutions after the long stalemate that characterized the last years of Lee Myung-bak's presidency. This situation has been favourable for North Korea, which in this way could "buy" valuable time on issues of fundamental importance. First of all, as happened after the failure of the Six Party Talks (SPT), Pyongyang's nuclear programme benefited from the deadlock and – despite the sanctions, which have proven to be largely ineffective – it continued almost undisturbed. In addition, the young Kim Jong Un, involved in a difficult internal "struggle" for the consolidation of his power after the succession, could take advantage of inter-Korean relations for political purposes. He showed himself not only as a strong

and solid military guide – as in the case of the nuclear and satellite tests, or when North Korea responded to the South Korean-US joint military drills by firing missile and artillery shells – but also as a forward-looking political leader when he opened the door to co-operation and dialogue, as it happened with the 2014 New Year's Speech, the two rounds of family reunions and sending senior official envoys to Seoul.

The lack of “strategic proactivity” from South Korea has thus undermined the opportunity to create mutual trust on the peninsula. The declaration of intent was not enough to induce a change in the North Korean leadership. Its failure was, however, highly predictable. The process of trust building, in fact, is not a strategic priority for Pyongyang, whose primary interest clearly remains the survival of the regime. The strengthening of its military deterrent fulfils this task. On the one hand, it strengthens the defence of the country against external threats, while, on the other hand, it gives the regime major negotiating leverage should a new window of opportunity create the conditions for a fresh round of negotiations with Seoul and/or other regional actors. Furthermore, a periodic increase in tension on the peninsula serves to hold the attention of regional actors, and the international community as a whole, toward the Korean issue, giving North Korea more chances to obtain aid and assistance from third parties through international negotiations. Finally, if the South does not put forward proactive and structured proposals, the North avoids being placed in politically uncomfortable situations and acts accordingly; if the “ball is never in Pyongyang's court”, the regime can avoid taking the political responsibility of reacting to South Korean inputs.

Seoul, on the contrary, has a strong incentive for lowering tensions on the peninsula; this is precisely one of the reasons why Park Geun-hye decided to bet on the trust-building process during her electoral campaign. The ROK is a fully developed, rich country, and the costs of an open conflict on the peninsula would be even more burdensome for it than for the North – not to mention the fact that the Seoul Capital Area, with its 25 million people, is located just a few kilometres from the border, where Pyongyang has positioned

thousands of artillery units. Moreover, a rise in tension on the peninsula always has negative economic and financial effects in the South. Finally, inter-Korean relations are, in general, important for South Koreans when they vote for a new President. The collapse of Lee Myung-bak's popularity was also influenced by his negative management of relations with Pyongyang, which increased tension on the peninsula. It was for exactly this reason that Park decided to propose a new course of relations based on trust, instead of on closure and intransigence.<sup>32</sup>

Hence, trust can be considered a "strategic asset" more for South than for North Korea; moreover, to actively pursue it the government in Seoul is expected to put in place a strategic and consistent policy. *Trustpolitik*, as described during the electoral campaign, could have been considered a good effort in this direction; however, as the evidence shows, it has proved far more fragile than expected, and highly vulnerable to pressures coming from Pyongyang. The positive results that it did achieve were not managed in the sense of being incorporated into an overall, strategic plan for the long term. Two rounds of family reunions took place, a strongly desired result for Seoul, but these did not lead to any further development aimed at making such meetings a regular occurrence. These inter-Korean meetings did not lead to tangible results and, above all, they did not originate any process of "institutionalization of the dialogue", which is necessary for addressing issues that might bring a general improvement in the relationship between North and South.

## CONCLUSION

In inter-Korean relations, there are always two actors who originate a series of interactions, and, consequently, the behaviour of both parties always contributes to the outcomes of those interac-

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<sup>32</sup> Kang Tae-ho, "Park Geun-hye's North Korea Policy", in *The Hankyoreh*, 8 January 2013, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/568744.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/568744.html).

tions. As was clearly shown in the first months of Park's presidential mandate, the actions of the counterpart have a great weight on the final results, and also on the political possibilities open to each part. Nevertheless, given a certain degree of interdependence between the two Koreas, the action of the South Korean Government has done little to tame the risk that arises from uncertainty, or for the positive expectations that are necessary for the creation of trust.

The focus on unification as a goal, more than as a long-term process, undermined the possibilities for cooperation and dialogue on the peninsula. Starting from the *daebak* narrative of unification, moving to the Dresden speech – with all its geographical and historical implications – and finally to the creation of the Unification Preparatory Committee, the overall discourse that was sent to the other side of the 38th parallel was that of an inevitable “absorption” of the North into the South, after the likewise inevitable fall of the regime in Pyongyang. This scenario has always been seen as a positive outcome by a part of the conservative South Korean political side; however, it cannot be considered as an indication of a trust-oriented policy from Seoul, and it inevitably leads to a closure by Pyongyang of any contact and to a necessary increase of military tension on the peninsula. This has been amply demonstrated by the recent development of inter-Korean relations.

The time of *Trustpolitik*, along with the political career of its creator, has expired. The 19th South Korean presidential election is scheduled to be held on 9 May 2017 and candidates have started to surface. Judging from the polls, Moon Jae-in, the head of the main opposition party who lost to Park Geun-hye in the 2012 election, seems to enjoy the highest approval rating in the country.<sup>33</sup> Moon, chief of staff to late president Roh Moo-hyun (2003-8) whom he accompanied to Pyongyang for the second historical inter-Korean meeting in 2007, seems not to have lost his faith in the conciliatory approach envisioned in the Sunshine Policy. In line with this

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<sup>33</sup> Choi Ha-young, “Moon Jae-in’s Approval Rating Hits New High”, in *The Korea Times*, 27 February 2017, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/02/356\\_224754.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2017/02/356_224754.html).

vision, Moon has declared that the final word on the deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) system in South Korea should be left to the next ROK government, whereas Washington has already taken the deal for granted. In addition, the progressive presidential candidate has highlighted the need to reopen the KIC and has assured that, if elected, the first country he will visit is North Korea.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the task of the next South Korean president will be very difficult. The hope is that he or she will bear in mind the flaws of *Trustpolitik* and will opt for a more pronounced engagement policy with a pure sentiment of trust as its basis, which can convince Seoul of the necessity to be a proactive player. The gauntlet has been thrown down.

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<sup>34</sup> James Pearson, "Moon Rising? South Korea Presidential Hopeful Quietly Takes Stage", in *Reuters*, 22 December 2016, <http://reut.rs/2hwwQ50>.



## 7.

# NAPCI and Trilateral Cooperation: Prospects for South Korea-EU Relations

*Si Hong Kim*

Security in East Asia is experiencing critical and turbulent times. Stakeholders in the region are looking for interest-driven solutions rather than the idealistic and constructive norms of international relations. This means that there might be a new kind of “Cold War”, with consequent intense escalation of disputes between Japan, the two Koreas, China and the US. The highest chances for confrontation arise from Sino-American relations, which most sharply manifest the aforementioned paradox of increasing economic relations alongside hegemonic struggle.

From the very beginning of her term in office, Park Geun-hye promoted a policy of so-called *Trustpolitik*, which entails a threefold mechanism. Modelled after the Helsinki Process, this strategy seemed a realistic prescription given that there had been no multilateral fora in East Asia thus far.<sup>1</sup> Following the typical features of middle-power diplomacy,<sup>2</sup> South Korea eagerly participated in diverse international

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<sup>1</sup> Ki Joon Hong, “Institutional Multilateralism in Northeast Asia: A Path Emergence Theory Perspective” (in Korean), in *North Korean Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Despite of conceptual ambiguity, middle powers are defined by their global orientation, which tends to pursue multilateral solutions and to embrace compromise positions in international disputes. As to the middle power Korea, see: Sung Mi-Kim, “South Korea’s Middle-Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges”, in *Chatham House Research Papers*, June 2016, <https://www.chathamhouse>.

organizations such as the UN, ASEAN + 3 (ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea) and the G20 forum.

However, it appears that this forum cannot progress any further as planned because of the intensification of superpower competition and North Korea's incessant nuclear provocations. Recently, President Park even mooted, albeit cautiously, a possible regime change in Pyongyang that might lead to the eventual collapse of North Korea itself. However, a series of scandals at home have resulted in her own impeachment, and there is a strong possibility that "regime change" might actually be imminent in the South. This means that the next administration should prepare an alternative to the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) in order to address security concerns in Northeast Asia.

Against this backdrop, this paper intends to analyse the achievements of NAPCI and draw comparisons with China, Japan and Korea (hereafter, CJK) trilateral cooperation. It will then discuss how the EU and European countries, as well as ASEAN, can contribute to confidence building in the East Asian region in general, and the Korean Peninsula in particular. The final section presents prospects for South Korea-EU relations, with the aim of finding some feasible solutions to the current difficult situation.

## 1. NAPCI: PAST ACHIEVEMENTS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

In 2013, when President Park took office, her team studied the Helsinki Process in order to draw lessons for its possible application to Northeast Asia. The basic lineaments of South Korea's foreign and security policy are threefold. The first is the Korean Peninsula Trust-building Process, which starts from securing peace, proceeds through economic integration and finally reaches political integration in inter-Korean relations. The second is NAPCI, a process that

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org/node/23415; Scott A. Snyder (ed.), *Middle-Power Korea. Contributions to the Global Agenda*, New York, Council on Foreign Relations Press, June 2015, <http://www.cfr.org/asia-and-pacific/middle-power-korea/p36623>.

seeks to build an order of multilateral cooperation in the Northeast Asian region. The third approach is the Eurasia Initiative, which aims for continental-scale cooperation between East Asia and Europe.<sup>3</sup>

In Northeast Asia, there is a growing need for cooperation. Asian economies are surging ahead and assuming a central place in world affairs. This region accounts for around 20 percent of the global economy. However, this situation only exacerbates the so-called “Asian paradox” in Northeast Asia, with its increasing economic interdependence but underdeveloped political and security cooperation. For instance, the region lacks mechanisms for effective multilateral cooperation to deal with inter-state disputes in territorial and maritime issues.<sup>4</sup>

NAPCI was a key element of the *Trustpolitik* pursued by the Park Administration in order to solve the Asian paradox. It is a future-oriented effort, intended to replace the environment of conflict and discord in the region with one of dialogue and cooperation. The Initiative does not focus on the immediate establishment of a body for multilateral cooperation; rather, it places more emphasis on the long-term process of constantly fostering small yet meaningful forms of cooperation. It aims to gradually encourage a change in the perceptions and attitudes of countries in the region, with the ultimate goal of developing a shared understanding and a form of multilateral security cooperation.<sup>5</sup>

The Initiative takes a primarily “bottom-up” approach. It attempts to consolidate political will and foster dialogue and cooperation on “soft” security issues – such as the environment, cyberspace, energy security, disaster management, nuclear safety, drugs and health. These are relatively less sensitive than their “hard”

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<sup>3</sup> Sang-hyun Lee, “Challenges and Strategies for Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative”, in *Current Issues and Policies*, No. 2013-12 (December 2013).

<sup>4</sup> Choi Jong Kun, “A Critical View of the Park Geun-hye’s Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative and Suggestions for Success” (in Korean), in *Unification Strategy Forum*, No. 54 (February 2014), p. 28-29, [http://ifes.kyunghnam.ac.kr/kor/PUB/PUB\\_0106V.aspx?code=PRI140219\\_0001](http://ifes.kyunghnam.ac.kr/kor/PUB/PUB_0106V.aspx?code=PRI140219_0001).

<sup>5</sup> Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *NAPCI. Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative 2016*, March 2016, p. 4, [http://napci.net/eng/images/sub/eng\\_book.pdf](http://napci.net/eng/images/sub/eng_book.pdf).

security counterparts, and do not represent a significant burden for the participating governments. Simultaneously, it also adopts a “top-down” approach, seeking to ensure that once political will is created through regular high-level meetings between governments, this will facilitate functional cooperation on specific issues.<sup>6</sup>

Since NAPCI was one of the main foreign-policy initiatives of the Park Administration, it was advertised through initiatives in the public and private sector. Firstly, South Korea’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has been eager to promote the Initiative to regional stakeholders – in particular, to the countries participating in the Six-Party Talks, including the US and China. NAPCI fora were also held, under the auspices of South Korea’s Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS) and MOFA. These fora gathered Seoul-based ambassadors and representatives of international organizations such as the UN, NATO and the EU, in order to promote an enhanced and deeper understanding. The 2014 forum discussed matters of nuclear safety, energy security, cyberspace and the environment.<sup>7</sup> The following year, together with the aforementioned “soft” security issues, some “hard” ones were introduced, such as confidence building measures (CBM).<sup>8</sup> Given the currently strained relations between political leaders in Northeast Asia, it is difficult to further develop the top-down approach; NAPCI could therefore be an alternative to unlock this “frozen” situation.

Despite the lack of a major breakthrough overall, NAPCI’s achievements in fostering international consensus and inter-governmental consultation, and in advancing cooperation on specific issues, have been notable. To secure the support of the international community, the South Korean Government has held NAPCI briefing sessions in many countries in the region, actively pursuing high-level and

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *ROK Holds a High-level Meeting on Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation*, Seoul, 28 October 2014, <http://www.mofat.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/engreadboard.jsp?typeID=12&boardid=302&seqno=314469>.

<sup>8</sup> Sejong Institute, *2015 NAPCI Forum Report*, December 2015, <http://napci.net/eng/news/article.php?st=&idx=259>.

summit diplomacy. Such efforts have also served to further deepen understanding in remote countries such as Germany, France, the UK, Canada, Australia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Furthermore, international and regional organizations such as the UN, the EU, ASEAN, NATO, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the East Asia Summit (EAS) have expressed their willingness to actively take part in the Initiative. The holding of Track 1.5 diplomacy meetings, inviting experts from diverse international organizations, was also helpful. Seven key “soft” security agendas that represent common threats in the Northeast Asian region were also identified: nuclear safety, energy security, the environment, cyberspace, health, drugs and disaster management.<sup>9</sup>

However, thus far, meaningful achievements have not been reached despite the diverse efforts made by this Initiative. Nor have tensions lessened – if anything, conflicts in the region have escalated. For instance, North Korea’s nuclear-development programme has been the major obstacle with which the Initiative has had to try and deal. Since President Park is now in the process of impeachment, there is no clear sign of an arena to which NAPCI could contribute. Recently, the South Korean Government proposed a Five-Party Cooperation exercise, which excluded North Korea, with a view to drawing concrete results. There has been some objection from the Chinese side, but the South Korean Government continues to hold dialogues with concerned parties in order to put pressure on the North Korean regime.

## 2. NAPCI AND TRILATERAL COOPERATION

While the South Korean Government proposed NAPCI, the trilateral-cooperation process has developed via the ASEAN + 3 scheme. Trilateral cooperation between China, Japan and South Korea (CJK)

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<sup>9</sup> Scott Snyder and Woo Jung-yeop, “The U.S. Rebalance and the Seoul Process. How to Align U.S. and ROK Visions for Cooperation in East Asia”, in *CFR Working Papers*, January 2015, p. 3-4, <http://on.cfr.org/2lrpWUW>.

is an important pillar of cooperation in the Northeast Asian region.<sup>10</sup> Officially started at the leaders' breakfast meeting on the sidelines of the 1999 ASEAN + 3 Summit, this cooperation gradually proved itself a worthwhile vehicle until it gained new momentum by holding its first independent summit in 2008.

As of now, China, Japan and South Korea have staged more than 20 ministerial meetings, over 60 governmental consultative mechanisms and numerous cooperative projects. Despite current political and security frictions, the three leaders have continued to express their unwavering support for cooperation in order to build permanent peace, stability and prosperity in Northeast Asia. At the 6th Trilateral Summit, held on 1 November 2015 in Seoul, they agreed to further develop cooperation by supporting CJK's established mechanisms as well as developing and implementing new projects.<sup>11</sup> The leaders also recognized that the deepening of trilateral cooperation contributes to enhancing bilateral relations, and agreed to make joint efforts to achieve the common goal of building regional trust and cooperation.<sup>12</sup>

The three nations have, in fact, been deepening their economic and trade cooperation for a considerable period, after a Trilateral Joint Research on a CJK free-trade agreement (FTA) from 2003 to 2009 and the Joint Study for a CJK FTA in 2010-11. These efforts led to the launching of the CJK FTA Negotiation in November 2012.<sup>13</sup> Recently, in June 2016, the 10th round of CJK FTA negotiations was held in Seoul. The three countries play a central role in the various

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<sup>10</sup> Andrew Yeo, "China, Japan, South Korea Trilateral Cooperation: Implications for Northeast Asian Politics and Order", in *EAI Issue Briefings*, NO. MASI 2012-07 (6 November 2012), [http://m.eai.or.kr/eng/sub03\\_04\\_02.asp?code=eng\\_report&idx=11660](http://m.eai.or.kr/eng/sub03_04_02.asp?code=eng_report&idx=11660).

<sup>11</sup> Bai Shi, "Trilateral Cooperation Reboot: China-Japan-South Korea dialogue resumes after freeze thaws", in *Beijing Review*, No. 46 (12 November 2015), [http://www.bjreview.com/World/201511/t20151109\\_800042129.html](http://www.bjreview.com/World/201511/t20151109_800042129.html).

<sup>12</sup> Joint Declaration for Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia, Seoul, 1 November 2015, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/a\\_o/rp/page1e\\_000058.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page1e_000058.html).

<sup>13</sup> Min-Hua Chiang, "The Potential of China-Japan-South Korea Free Trade Agreement", in *East Asia*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (September 2013), p. 199-200.

mega-FTAs, and the CJK FTA will further accelerate regional economic and trade cooperation.

The Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) has been a major achievement as an institutional base. This intergovernmental organization was established to contribute to the further promotion of cooperative relations between the CJK countries. Upon signature and ratification of the joint agreement, the TCS was inaugurated in Seoul in September 2011. The Secretariat General has a two-year term, and the post is filled by rotation.

There are similarities and differences between NAPCI and trilateral cooperation. The two processes have objectives and values in common, in that they are seeking peace and cooperation in the Northeast Asia region. Irrespective of political vicissitudes between the three countries, trilateral cooperation has been able to play a leading role in consultations between their governments and in efforts to identify prospects for cooperation. In this regard, NAPCI and the trilateral-cooperation process can be complementary.

Both are in the initial phase of dealing with issues of “soft” and non-traditional security in order to mitigate the disruptive effects of excessive nationalism in East Asia. The main difference between the two structures is that while NAPCI was proposed by South Korea alone, trilateral cooperation has developed (through long years of meetings and consultations) via the ASEAN + 3 framework. If the two other countries – i.e. China and Japan - were to show no great interest in the South Korean initiative, NAPCI would lack meaningful resonance. This is all the more so when we consider the state of current inter-Korean relations, which show escalating conflicts and tensions rather than dialogue, cooperation or confidence building. Nonetheless, multilateral cooperation in the region is certainly helpful in lessening tensions and highlighting some possibility of future regional-identity formation. Historical and territorial disputes occasionally hinder meaningful development in CJK cooperation, but the TCS’ institution building should be regarded as decisive for the development of better relations between the parties.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See Shin Bong-kil remarks on NAPCI, in: Trilateral Cooperation Secretari-

### 3. THE EU AND ASEAN AS REFERENCE FOR NAPCI

As previously stated, European integration has been an important reference for the formation of NAPCI. President Park expressed the idea of NAPCI on the 69th anniversary of South Korea's liberation, in 2014, in the following terms:

just as Europe pioneered a framework for multilateral co-operation through the European Coal and Steel Community, later going on to establish the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM), I propose that we create a consultative body for nuclear safety in Northeast Asia. Korea, China and Japan would spearhead the effort, with participation open not only to the United States and Russia but also North Korea and Mongolia.<sup>15</sup>

Multilateral security cooperation in Europe also began with economic affairs and later expanded incrementally to encompass a wide range of issues – even including disarmament, one of the most sensitive of all “hard security” matters. That process was the result of concerted efforts by regional countries to resolve political tension and military conflict, and to take the path of coexistence. The fact that the Helsinki Process, which has contributed to detente in Europe, was launched in the depths of the Cold War, when hostility and distrust among countries were at their most prevalent, offers an extremely valuable lesson for Northeast Asia today.

As far as ASEAN is concerned, there are more differences than similarities with NAPCI. NAPCI shares the same goal of promoting regional peace and security as other multilateral mechanisms in the region. In terms of membership, agenda and the proposed way forward, the Initiative takes into consideration the particular char-

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at (TCS), *International Forum for Trilateral Cooperation 2015. Final Outcome Report, Challenges and Opportunities – Ushering into a New Era*, Tokyo, 3 April 2015, p. 9, [http://en.tcs-asia.org/bbs/link.php?bo\\_table=publication&wr\\_id=34&no=1](http://en.tcs-asia.org/bbs/link.php?bo_table=publication&wr_id=34&no=1).

<sup>15</sup> Korean Presidency, *Address by President Park Geun-hye on the 69th Anniversary of Liberation*, 18 August 2014, <https://shar.es/1U1NhQ>.



acteristics of Northeast Asia, seeking to foster a mechanism for multilateral cooperation tailored to the region.<sup>16</sup> In fact, NAPCI focuses on dialogue and cooperation between China, Japan and Korea, as opposed to such initiatives as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) or the EAS, in which the countries of South East Asia take the lead in discussions.

NAPCI seeks to initially address “soft” security issues, discussions on which entail less of a political burden than their “harder” counterparts. There are therefore differences in the scope of its agenda compared with that of the ARF, which deals with both “hard” and “soft” security issues,<sup>17</sup> or the EAS, which encompasses a comprehensive range of issues including political and economic ones. Since the region encompasses significant differences in social and political systems as well as cultural agendas, the emphasis is on cultivating a habit of dialogue and cooperation rather than adopting specific norms and regulations. Through networks of diverse non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts from academia, the Initiative promotes collective efforts to nurture a culture of cooperation in the Northeast Asian region.

#### 4. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH KOREA-EU RELATIONS

Bilateral relations between South Korea and the EU have been remarkable in every sense during the past decade or so. Both parties agreed to a major FTA, which later became a model for other FTA deals. South Korea and the EU also rewrote the Framework of Agreement (FA), which had originally been signed in 1996 and was considered outdated in various respects. The new FA entails

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<sup>16</sup> Bae Ki-hyun, “ASEAN Regional Forum as a Reference Point: Progress and Limitations of NAPCI’s Institutional Designs”, in *Korea Observer*, Vol. 47 No. 2 (Summer 2016), p. 388.

<sup>17</sup> Chairman’s Statement of the 23rd ASEAN Regional Forum, “Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic ASEAN Community”, Vientiane, Laos, 26 July 2016, <http://asean.org/chairmans-statement-of-the-23rd-asean-regional-forum>.

not only economic and trade relations but also political and global cooperation. The FTA and FA together made possible the upgrading of bilateral relations to the level of Strategic Partnership.<sup>18</sup> Besides this, the two sides also reached consensus on the signing of a Framework Participation Agreement (FPA), which deals with cooperation on the global stage. In fact, South Korea is unique in having signed the aforementioned three major agreements with the EU, and in this sense the two parties regard each other as like-minded and natural partners.

The EU's approach to Asia has been described in the following reports: *Towards a New Asia Strategy* (1994);<sup>19</sup> *Europe and Asia: a Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnership* (2001);<sup>20</sup> *European Security Strategy* (2003);<sup>21</sup> the *Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia* (2012);<sup>22</sup> and, more recently, the *Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy* (EUGS, 2016).<sup>23</sup> In fact, growing concern over East Asia is underlined year after year. EUGS, which is imbued with concepts of resilience and a principled multilateralism, also confirms that a connected Asia is needed in order to deepen economic diplomacy and scale up the EU's secu-

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<sup>18</sup> Si Hong Kim, "Korea's Strategy towards the EU: From a Strategic Partner to a Privileged Partner", in Hungdah Su (ed.), *Asian Countries' Strategies towards the European Union in an Inter-regionalist Context*, Taipei, National Taiwan University Press, 2015, p. 70-71.

<sup>19</sup> European Commission, *Towards a New Asia Strategy* (COM/94/314), 13 July 1994, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:51994DC0314>.

<sup>20</sup> European Commission, *Europe and Asia: A Strategic Framework for Enhanced Partnerships* (COM/2001/469), 4 September 2001, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:52001DC0469>.

<sup>21</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Council of the European Union, *Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia*, 15 June 2012, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST 11492 2012 INIT>.

<sup>23</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, 28 June 2016, <http://europa.eu/pr79yu>.

rity role in the region. The EU wants to develop a more politically rounded approach to Asia, seeking to make greater contributions to Asian security. It also wishes to expand partnerships with Japan, South Korea, Indonesia and others; promote non-proliferation on the Korean Peninsula; and, finally, uphold freedom of navigation by standing firm on respect for international law, including the Law of the Sea and its arbitration procedures. The EU also supports an ASEAN-led regional-security architecture.

What could the EU do for East Asia in general, and South Korea in particular? The EU seems to prefer multilateral cooperation in the region, and respects ASEAN's centrality to this end. Although NAPCI is a South Korean initiative, if its efforts contribute to peace and stability in the region there is no reason why the EU would not support it.<sup>24</sup> CJK trilateral cooperation, which is a mini-lateral endeavour in Northeast Asia, is still in its infancy. But the political "weight" of these countries within the East Asia region cannot be neglected. If the EU adheres to traditional EU-ASEAN relations in terms of multilateralism in East Asia, there might be some friction with regional hegemons, in particular China and the United States, in the longer term.

## CONCLUSION

There are limits and possibilities to South Korea-EU relations set against the backdrop of security issues in the Northeast Asia region. Above all, both parties have, over the past decade, upgraded their ties with a free-trade agreement, Framework of Agreement and Framework Participation Agreement. In the 1990s, the EU engaged in inter-Korean issues, participating in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) projects, but with unsatisfactory results. Thereafter, the Union supported the Six-Party

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Reiterer, "The NAPCI in the Volatile Security Environment of North-East Asia: Which Role for the European Union?", in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2015), p. 587-589.

Talks although it did not have membership itself. A policy of critical engagement has been a guiding light in its stance on North Korea. Considering the geographical distances involved, any direct military intervention in the region would hardly be possible. Instead, non-traditional security issues – such as maritime, energy and environmental ones – are best suited for both parties to develop in the coming years.

The EU has traditionally preferred multilateralism as an approach to international relations, including in region-to-region dialogue. East Asia, however, does not offer much room for the Union to pursue such a goal, given the region's ongoing hegemonic struggle – in particular, between China and the United States. Previous South Korean governments have proposed diverse forms of multilateral or mini-lateral solutions aimed at regional peace and prosperity. However, territorial and historical disputes embedded in the region hindered those initiatives, and the Asian paradox has not yet been resolved.

The EU advocates economic interdependence and supports confidence-building measures in Northeast Asia through a multilateral approach. The challenge today lies in how to construct such a reality despite the numerous obstacles present in the region. In 2017, there will be presidential elections in South Korea. If the progressive opposition party wins, it will likely reopen doors to North Korea, adopting some version of the South's previous "Sunshine Policy". This would eventually lead to a necessary revision of the traditional engagement policy. If the conservative party currently in government wins, the new administration should still need to find ways to engage with the North in order to solve the deadlock in inter-Korean relations. The more pressing issues revolve around the Kaesong Industrial Complex, Mount Kumgang Tourism and the Rason Special Economic Zone. This means that whichever side takes power, they will need to reassess their position and converge on a more centrist and realistic policy. The EU's critical engagement towards North Korea could facilitate dialogue and cooperation – which, in turn, would enhance peace and confidence-building measures.

In conclusion, multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia on

functional issues such as nuclear safety and energy security are to be welcomed. South Korea needs to expand the geographical scope of its cooperation beyond Northeast and towards East Asia in general. ASEAN members might welcome South Korea's contribution in non-traditional security areas – in particular in the sphere of maritime security. To realize the goals of NAPCI – or any forthcoming, transformed version of the regional-security dialogue – it will be necessary to implement a step-by-step process and a rules-based approach. In order to build a norm-based East Asian order, cooperation between South Korea and Japan will be indispensable. At the same time, it is essential to demonstrate to China that such rules-based system can be effective for managing security relations in the region.



## PART III

### THE ADDED VALUE OF THE EU FOR SECURITY AND TRUST BUILDING IN NORTHEAST ASIA





## 8.

# The EU and the Korean Peninsula: Diplomatic Support, Economic Aid and Security Cooperation

*Ramon Pacheco Pardo*

## 1. BACKGROUND

The EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy was launched in June 2016. The strategy sets to establish a framework for the foreign-policy actions of the EU in the short and mid-term. The Korean Peninsula is mentioned in the strategy twice – once to urge the renewal of the EU's commitment to its partnership with the Republic of Korea (hereafter ROK) and again to make clear that Brussels stands for non-proliferation on the peninsula.<sup>1</sup> These are the guiding principles underpinning the EU's approach to Korean Peninsula affairs. They form the basis of the strategy that the EU will implement over the coming years. This should be a three-pronged strategy focusing on diplomatic support for the ROK, economic aid to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter DPRK), and security cooperation with the ROK and other countries in the region.

Indeed, Brussels seems to have followed these policies during the post-Cold War era whenever the political situation in the Korean Peninsula has allowed. Its East Asia Policy Guidelines indicate that diplomacy, targeted economic engagement and security coop-

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<sup>1</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, 28 June 2016, p. 38, <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/2>.

eration with partners are the policies of choice of the EU regarding Korean Peninsula affairs.<sup>2</sup> For the EU's main goal on the peninsula – to stop and roll back the DPRK's nuclear programme – needs a combination of “carrots” and “sticks” that matches well its own capabilities, especially in the case of the so-called carrots.

This strategy arguably made the EU an important player in Korean Peninsula affairs throughout the 1990s. The EU had a seat at the table in DPRK-related discussions through its participation in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO), the organisation in charge of implementing the Agreed Framework signed by the US and the DPRK in 1994, and – towards the end of the decade – developed its own independent policy through the normalization of diplomatic relations between most EU member states and Pyongyang.<sup>3</sup> Brussels itself officially established relations in 2001.<sup>4</sup> The EU's pro-engagement policy matched President Kim Dae-jung's “Sunshine Policy” and President Bill Clinton's rapprochement towards the Kim Jong-il regime in the late 1990s. North Korea welcomed this approach, which was implicitly presented as an example to the United States.<sup>5</sup>

The EU, however, became secondary in Korean Peninsula affairs as the second North Korean nuclear crisis began in October 2002, and KEDO subsequently wound up. Brussels was excluded from the Six-Party Talks launched in August 2003, and was reduced to providing diplomatic support to the SPT. An important development, however, was the participation of EU member states, and the EU itself, in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Launched by the

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<sup>2</sup> Council of the European Union, *Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia*, 15 June 2012, <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/doc/srv?l=EN&f=ST 11492 2012 INIT>.

<sup>3</sup> As of November 2016, Estonia and France are the two only EU member states not to have established diplomatic relations with the DPRK.

<sup>4</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Fact Sheet: EU-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Relations*, 1 June 2016, <http://europa.eu/!Hq38kF>.

<sup>5</sup> Korean Central News Agency, *DPRK's Invariable Stand on its Relations with Other Countries*, 5 November 2000, <http://www.kcna.co.jp/item/2000/200011/news11/05.htm>.

George W. Bush Administration in May 2003, the PSI targeted DPRK proliferation activities through the interdiction of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and nuclear-technology shipments. Member states such as France, Germany, Spain and the UK have been amongst those intercepting these banned items.<sup>6</sup> This showed a new-found assertiveness from the EU, which also translated into support for UN Security Council (UNSC) sanctions on Pyongyang.

Following the interruption of the Six-Party Talks – technically discontinued since 2009 – and an increasing number of missile and nuclear tests by the DPRK, the EU has continued to support deterrence measures such as PSI-led interdictions and further rounds of UNSC sanctions. Nonetheless, Brussels' Korean Peninsula "toolkit" still has a place for diplomacy – both bilateral and multilateral. It is in this context that almost all EU member states maintain diplomatic relations with Pyongyang. Meanwhile, the EU is supportive of inter-Korean and multilateral initiatives to reduce tensions on the peninsula. These include Park Geun-hye's *Trustpolitik* and related Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI), launched upon her becoming the President of the ROK in 2013.<sup>7</sup> Crucially, they also include the Six-Party Talks. China, the US and other participants in the talks have, since the SPT's discontinuation, called for their resumption – a situation which implies that they could be revived in the future.

Considering High Representative Federica Mogherini's willingness to make the EU a more active player in Asia, and with the DPRK nuclear issue still far from being resolved it becomes necessary to

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<sup>6</sup> Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "The EU and North Korea: Stopping Bombs, Encouraging Shops", in *Analyses of the Elcano Royal Institute (ARI)*, No. 32/2014 (26 June 2014), [http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano\\_en/contenido?WCM\\_GLOBAL\\_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano\\_es/zonas\\_es/asia-pacifico/ari32-2014-pachecopardo-eu-and-north-korea-stopping-bombs-encouraging-shops](http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/portal/rielcano_en/contenido?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/elcano/elcano_es/zonas_es/asia-pacifico/ari32-2014-pachecopardo-eu-and-north-korea-stopping-bombs-encouraging-shops).

<sup>7</sup> South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative. Moving beyond the Asian Paradox towards Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia*, Seoul, May 2014, [http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/North\\_Asia/res/eng.pdf](http://www.mofa.go.kr/ENG/North_Asia/res/eng.pdf).

reassess the aforementioned three-pronged strategy based on diplomatic support to the ROK, economic aid to the DPRK and security cooperation with international partners. This strategy can give the EU an independent voice in Korean Peninsula affairs while contributing to bringing stability to Northeast Asia.

## 2. DIPLOMATIC SUPPORT FOR THE ROK AND MULTILATERAL PEACE EFFORTS

ROK inter-Korean reconciliation initiatives date back decades. President Kim's Sunshine Policy, however, marked a turning point; it implicitly acknowledged that the ROK is stronger in economic, diplomatic, political and security terms than its northern counterpart. As such, Seoul should be willing to make a greater number of concessions in exchange for rapprochement with Pyongyang. Following a brief interlude in the early years of the Lee Myung-bak Administration (2008-13), this principle seems to have underpinned the ROK's DPRK policy ever since. The main difference appears to be the extent to which Seoul seeks reciprocity from Pyongyang.

### 2.1 *The EU and President Park's Trustpolitik and NAPCI*

Already outlined in autumn 2011 in an article published in *Foreign Affairs*, President Park's *Trustpolitik* involves a mixture of carrots and sticks.<sup>8</sup> This approach seeks to bring together the positive aspects of the Sunshine Policy – especially economic cooperation – with support for international diplomatic and military pressure when the DPRK becomes uncooperative. The approach matches the EU's own strategy. It is therefore no surprise that Brussels has publicly supported President Park's policy.

This support is underpinned by the EU-South Korea Framework

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<sup>8</sup> Park Geun-hye, "A New Kind of Korea: Building Trust between Seoul and Pyongyang", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 5 (September/October 2011), p. 13-18, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/node/1108418>.

Agreement. Signed in May 2010, the agreement lays out a number of areas for cooperation between both signatories.<sup>9</sup> Even though the DPRK is not mentioned by name in the agreement, several of its articles can be easily linked to deterring Pyongyang's provocations. They include provisions for cooperation on non-proliferation of WMD and their means of delivery, prevention of cybercrime, money laundering or illicit drug trafficking, and protection against human-rights abuses. The DPRK has been accused of these and other illegal activities.

The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative builds on President Park's *Trustpolitik*. NAPCI seeks to build trust through cooperation in both non-traditional and traditional security areas. The initiative is designed to supplement inter-Korean trust building, creating an environment in which open dialogue and mutual understanding at the Northeast Asian level make the DPRK more willing to engage in diplomatic exchanges.<sup>10</sup> Even though Pyongyang's recent behaviour has prevented NAPCI from creating the conditions for a diplomatic solution to Korean Peninsula tensions, the EU is nonetheless supportive of this initiative.

This support is twofold. At the official level, Brussels backs NAPCI as one of the regional mechanisms promoting stability in East Asia. Particularly relevant is the EU sharing its experience with multilateralism. As the 2015 ROK-EU Summit joint press statement acknowledges, this is an area in which the EU's experience is especially useful.<sup>11</sup> Certainly, the experience of the EU in developing multilateral integration is one its main sources of "soft" power on the Asian continent. Even though it might not be possible to replicate the EU's model

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<sup>9</sup> Framework Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States, On the One Part, and the Republic of Korea, On the Other Part, 10 May 2010. <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=8983>.

<sup>10</sup> Lee Sang-Hyun, "The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI): A Vision toward Sustainable Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia", in *The Asan Forum*, 15 December 2014, <http://www.theasanforum.org/?p=4646>.

<sup>11</sup> European Council, *Joint Press Statement, 8th Republic of Korea-EU Summit*, Seoul, 15 September 2015, <http://europa.eu/!pD73QR>.

of integration at the East – or Northeast – Asian level, the trust-building process initiated with the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957 might hold lessons for the region. One such lesson would be the role that a free-trade area, or common market, can play in fostering improved diplomatic relations.

At the track 1.5 diplomacy level, European and ROK researchers have been discussing areas and specific initiatives for cooperation within the context of NAPCI. These range from general trust-building proposals such as education and youth exchanges, to develop good neighbouring relations – with the Erasmus programme cited as an example – to specific suggestions such as addressing cybersecurity through confidence-building measures and the implementation of legislation at the regional level.<sup>12</sup> The main benefit of EU-ROK track 1.5 engagement is the possibility of discussing and testing ideas that can then be carried on to official exchanges among Northeast Asian countries and with other actors, such as the US and the EU.

## *2.2 The EU and a resumed Six-Party Talks mechanism*

The EU was not part of the Six-Party Talks when they were originally established.<sup>13</sup> However, Brussels has become more deeply engaged in Northeast Asian affairs since their launch in 2003 and even following their interruption in 2009. Strategic partnerships with China, Japan and the ROK – the last-named established in 2010 with the aforementioned framework agreement – are the basis of this engagement. Crucially, Brussels has made a point of including dialogues on East Asian affairs as part of these partnerships.

The fact that several countries have openly called for resumption

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<sup>12</sup> EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS) and Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDA), *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI) and EU-ROK Cooperation: Outcomes, Recommendations and Way Forward*, September 2015, <http://www.iss.europa.eu/activities/detail/article/northeast-asia-peace-and-cooperation-initiative-napci-and-eu-rok-cooperation>.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that an expanded membership of the SPT, potentially including the EU, was discussed prior to the talks being launched.

of the Six-Party Talks suggests that they are still seen as a valid multilateral framework. This means that there is a possibility that the talks might be re-established in the same or similar form in which they previously occurred. Considering that the EU now has deeper ties with three of the six parties, through the aforementioned strategic partnerships, there is a distinct possibility that the EU could be more actively involved in implementation of the SPT agreement even if it is not a signatory to it.

The Six-Party Talks Joint Statement of September 2005 lays out a set of commitments by all parties that are considered to be essential for the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the normalization of diplomatic relations between the DPRK on the one hand and the US and Japan on the other.<sup>14</sup> Even though only the six parties to the talks are covered by the commitments, there is no reason why other parties should not support them. In fact, it would be beneficial for the six parties to receive this support. This would show that the six-party process has the support of the international community, thus rendering it more legitimate. EU participation would be particularly relevant in this respect, considering its economic and diplomatic clout.

Following on from its long-standing commitment to support ROK and international community peace efforts, the 2005 joint statement offers scope for Brussels to participate in its implementation. To begin with, normalization of diplomatic relations between the DPRK and the US and Japan would probably follow a similar path to the process that led most EU member states to establish diplomatic relations with Pyongyang in the late 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>15</sup> This is because the starting point of such a process would be relatively similar to its earlier counterpart. In the late 1990s, EU member states had very limited contact with the DPRK and were critical of its political regime. It is the same with the US and Japan today. Any

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<sup>14</sup> Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, Beijing, 19 September 2005, <https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Ramon Pacheco Pardo, *North Korea-US Relations under Kim Jong Il. The Quest for Normalization?*, London and New York, Routledge, 2014.



normalization process involving these last-named countries would involve a series of confidence-building measures and diplomatic exchanges leading to the opening of embassies.

As of November 2016, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Romania, Sweden and the UK have embassies in Pyongyang. The DPRK has diplomatic offices in all these countries plus Austria, Italy and Spain. These countries could share their experience on issues such as the advantages, disadvantages and challenges of establishing diplomatic relations with the DPRK, the day-to-day work of their embassies in Pyongyang or the effects of having official DPRK diplomatic representation in their territories – including on issues such as information gathering about domestic affairs in the DPRK and relations with North Korean refugees. Even though at present it might seem inconceivable for Washington or Tokyo to normalize diplomatic relations with Pyongyang, it should not be forgotten that President Clinton seriously entertained this idea.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration of October 2002 explicitly mentioned the normalization of bilateral relations between the two countries.<sup>17</sup>

Another way in which the EU could participate in implementation of Six-Party Talks commitments is through its political and human rights dialogues. Regarding the former, Brussels is one of the few polities that maintains a semi-regular dialogue with the Kim Jong-un regime. This dialogue could be used to discuss progress in the implementation of the SPT Joint Statement – especially its denuclearization steps. Non-proliferation already features in the EU-DPRK dialogue,<sup>18</sup> so it is not inconceivable for denuclearization to be discussed as well. Since most other countries do not have a political dialogue with the DPRK, the EU is in a strong position to represent not only its position but that of other actors more focused on security matters as well.

Finally, the bilateral human-rights dialogue between the EU and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Japan-DPRK Pyongyang Declaration, 17 September 2002, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html).

<sup>18</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *EU-DPRK Political Dialogue – 14th Session*, Brussels, 25 June 2015, <http://europa.eu/!Xm36fP>.



the DPRK could be used to address one little-discussed aspect of the Six-Party Talks agreement. This is the commitment from all parties – including Pyongyang – to abide by recognized norms of international relations. Presumably, human-rights protection is one of these. Certainly, the DPRK has a very poor human-rights record.<sup>19</sup> But it should also be acknowledged that the Kim Jong-un regime has become more willing to discuss this issue over the past few years. The EU would be in a position to take a leading role in discussing human rights in the context of other issues such as non-proliferation, as well as matters of concern to the DPRK.<sup>20</sup> As the case of the recently established human-rights dialogue with Myanmar shows, Brussels is adamant on the matter of their protection being part of its external relations – even with countries that would rather discuss economic development instead of their human-rights situations. This confers a legitimacy on the EU that is useful when dealing with Pyongyang.

### 3. ECONOMIC ENGAGEMENT WITH THE DPRK

The EU has a policy of critical engagement with the DPRK. This means that Brussels is willing to engage with Pyongyang, even if this engagement is subject to restrictions imposed by UN, and the EU's own, sanctions.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Brussels officially supports engagement with the DPRK is, however, relevant. Engagement allows for regular interactions with a regime that often portrays itself as isolated and persecuted by third parties. In the case of relations with the EU, this is not the case. In addition to diplomatic and po-

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<sup>19</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), *Report of the Commission of Enquiry on Human Rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (A/HRC/25/63), 7 February 2014, <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/25/63>.

<sup>20</sup> Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "EU-DPRK Engagement: Maximising Influence", in Mariam Khotenashvili (ed.), *Workshop on Human Rights in North Korea: Accountability vs. Engagement*, Brussels, European Parliament, May 2016, p. 21-25, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EXPO\\_IDA\(2016\)578004](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EXPO_IDA(2016)578004).

<sup>21</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Fact Sheet: EU-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Relations*, cit.

litical exchanges, as described in the previous section, there is also economic engagement in the form of aid, assistance and EU-funded projects.<sup>22</sup> Considering that economic engagement is one of the tenets of President Park's *Trustpolitik* policy, there is scope for Seoul and Brussels to work together in this area.

### 3.1 Aid and assistance

The EU is a significant provider of humanitarian and food-aid assistance to the DPRK. This support dates back to 1995 and, as of November 2016, continues in spite of the Kim Jong-un regime's nuclear and missile tests. This aid is crucial for a population that has experienced high rates of malnourishment for over 20 years. President Park's *Trustpolitik* has a food-aid component as well. Hence, the EU's economic engagement through aid and assistance is aligned with ROK policy – for Seoul has not discontinued its aid and assistance towards the DPRK in spite of the latter's five nuclear tests.<sup>23</sup> In the case of the EU, continuing provision of humanitarian aid also allows it to strengthen relations with the DPRK Government. Other countries have been quick to discontinue aid following Pyongyang's misbehaviour – but not the EU, which, in this respect, is probably regarded as a more reliable partner.

A different type of assistance was included in the SPT Joint Statement – energy.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, energy assistance in the form of the construction of two nuclear-proliferation-resistant light-water reactors was part of the US-DPRK Agreed Framework, signed in October 1994, which put an end to the first North Korean nuclear crisis.<sup>25</sup> The nuclear reactors would have served as compensation for the

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth D. Nikitin, "Foreign Assistance to North Korea", in *CRS Reports*, No. R40095 (2 April 2014), <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40095.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Joint Statement of the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks, cit.

<sup>25</sup> Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Geneva, 21 October 1994, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/ac/rls/or/2004/31009.htm>.

DPRK's loss of energy-generating capacity derived from closing down its nuclear reactors. The Bush Administration also agreed to build the reactors following signature of the joint statement.<sup>26</sup>

Were the Six-Party Talks to be resumed and the joint statement to inform third-party policy towards the DPRK again, the EU could be involved in energy assistance through light-water reactor construction. After all, Brussels already has been a party in the development of this key element of the agreed framework through its participation in KEDO. The engineering capabilities of several EU member states, and the EU's uninterrupted engagement with the DPRK, would put Brussels in a good position to be involved in this type of energy assistance. Furthermore, Brussels' lack of strategic goals in the Korean Peninsula would probably make Pyongyang more willing to accept the presence of European (as opposed to South Korean, US or Japanese) engineers and other workers.

### 3.2 *EU-funded development projects*

Another element of the EU's economic engagement with the DPRK is implementation of EU-funded development projects. These projects are closely linked to the humanitarian goals behind Brussels' aid and assistance. Quite often, they involve participation in multilateral initiatives. Current projects focus on areas such as the provision of clean water, sanitation and health services; disaster preparedness; and agriculture risk reduction.<sup>27</sup> Since the DPRK has no access to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank or the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, these development projects are essential for the country to improve its infrastructure. From the perspective of Brussels, these projects allow for a semi-regular presence of European officials and experts in the DPRK. This is beneficial to get a glimpse of the situation on the ground, which can in turn inform EU policy towards the country.

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<sup>26</sup> Jeffrey Lewis, "Revisiting the Agreed Framework", in *38 North*, 15 May 2015, <http://38north.org/?p=7277>.

<sup>27</sup> See the European Commission website: *Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection - North Korea (DPRK)*, <http://europa.eu/!Ph93wX>.

Resumption of the Six-Party Talks and implementation of the joint statement would widen the scope of economic-cooperation activities with the DPRK. Trade, investment and energy are specifically named in the document.<sup>28</sup> In fact, Pyongyang has been pursuing stop-go economic reforms since at least July 2002. Concurrently, there has been a marketization of its domestic economy – private markets have a growing influence in the country.<sup>29</sup> Any meaningful economic reform, however, would necessitate opening up to third countries and receiving external funding and advice. This is the Chinese and Vietnamese model, which the DPRK could one day implement. The example of tourism is telling: in order to boost its tourism industry, the DPRK is seeking to work with the World Tourism Organization and foreign operators.<sup>30</sup>

The EU would be an attractive partner for the Kim Jong-un regime if the number of economic cooperation activities is increased as a result. The reason is twofold. To begin with, as already mentioned, the EU does not have any strategic interest in the Korean Peninsula. This makes it an appealing partner to a DPRK Government always suspicious of the intentions of other countries. In addition, European companies and governments offer a combination of capital and expertise. The DPRK needs both.

#### 4. SECURITY COOPERATION WITH THE ROK AND OTHER PARTNERS

The EU's security role in East Asia is limited. In contrast to the US, it does not have a military presence or an alliance system in the region. Nonetheless, Brussels' East Asia Policy Guidelines and the

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<sup>28</sup> Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, cit.

<sup>29</sup> Georgy Toloraya, "Deciphering North Korean Economic Policy Intentions", in *38 North*, 26 July 2016, <http://38north.org/?p=9706>.

<sup>30</sup> Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "North Korea: Northeast Asia's New Tourism Hub?", in *38 North*, 4 September 2014, <http://38north.org/?p=6535>.

EU-South Korea Framework Agreement indicate that the EU can cooperate with East Asian partners in general, and the ROK in particular, in order to curtail Pyongyang's proliferation of WMD and nuclear and missile tests.

#### 4.1 *Non-proliferation of WMD and DPRK denuclearization*

The EU is one of the most active players at the global level in the area of non-proliferation of WMD, engaging in a wide range of activities.<sup>31</sup> This contribution is logical when considering both its capabilities and the potential threat of WMD falling in the hands of rogue regimes or terrorist networks. In the particular case of the DPRK, Brussels' contribution to the Proliferation Security Initiative is supplemented by participation in the UN sanctions regime that – starting from 2006 – has sought to prevent proliferation as a means to punish Pyongyang for the development of its nuclear and missile programme. Non-proliferation is one of the key goals of the EU in its Korean Peninsula policy, due to the fear that DPRK WMD and nuclear technology might be used by countries such as Iran or might fall in the hands of terrorist groups.

The main *raison d'être* of the Six-Party Talks Joint Statement, however, was denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.<sup>32</sup> This is also one of NAPCI's goals.<sup>33</sup> Thus, this is one of the main areas in which the ROK, the US and other countries would seek cooperation from the EU were the joint statement to be reactivated. Brussels has been collaborating on denuclearization efforts through the implementation of UNSC sanctions, since many of their provisions seek to starve the DPRK of the technology and funds required to develop its nuclear programme. From the perspective of Brussels, this

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<sup>31</sup> Ramon Pacheco Pardo, "Normal Power Europe: Non-proliferation and the Normalization of EU's Foreign Policy", in *Journal of European Integration*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2012), p. 1-18.

<sup>32</sup> Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, cit.

<sup>33</sup> Lee Sang-Hyun, "The Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI)", cit.

collaboration sends a message to Pyongyang – its engagement via dialogues and aid does not preclude the imposition of sanctions. Concurrently, the EU's partners also receive the message that Brussels is ready to stand by them.

Reactivation of the SPT Joint Statement would, however, necessitate a different type of cooperation. Similarly to the provision of energy through the construction of the two aforementioned light-water reactors, it would involve EU member states with the appropriate technological capabilities in dismantling the DPRK's nuclear facilities. The experience of the EU in the post-Soviet Union space would prove very useful in this regard. Brussels has recent experience in the denuclearization of third countries of a type that few others have. This makes it an ideal partner for nuclear facility and materials decommissioning.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The EU has an important role to play in Korean Peninsula affairs. It should continue its diplomatic support for the ROK and multilateral peace efforts, maintain economic engagement with the DPRK and preserve security cooperation with the ROK and other partners. Yet, qualitative changes should be implemented in order to increase the effectiveness of its DPRK-related activities. The following recommendations would be helpful in this respect, were the Six-Party Talks to be reconvened and the September 2005 joint statement become the basis of international engagement with Pyongyang.

The EU should:

- 1 Share its experience and that of most EU member states that have normalized diplomatic relations with the DPRK, both in relation to the normalization process itself and to the diplomatic exchanges concomitant with normalized relations.
- 2 Use its existing bilateral political dialogue with the DPRK to discuss denuclearization in the context of a wider range of issues.

- 3 Use its existing bilateral human-rights dialogue with the DPRK to discuss human rights in the context of other issues, including denuclearization and matters of concern to Pyongyang.
- 4 Expand its assistance to the area of energy, particularly through support for the building of proliferation-resistant light-water reactors.
- 5 Widen the scope of EU-funded projects to address other areas – especially trade and investment, and energy.
- 6 Become more deeply involved in DPRK denuclearization activities, including by building on its own experience in the post-Soviet space.





## 9.

# The EU and the Six-Party Talks

*Moosung Lee*

With the advent of post-Westphalian world-order discourses after the end of the Cold War, which would argue that states alone no longer dominated global security issues, the European Union (EU) has emerged as a novel kind of actor that provides a normative form of security policy.<sup>1</sup> The EU's foreign policy is seen as normative in nature as it opts to deal with regional conflicts through dialogue and integration rather than by relying on the deployment of armed forces.<sup>2</sup> The Union has attempted to pursue this approach not only through its foreign-policy trajectory but also in its own integration processes.<sup>3</sup> In this context, Asia has been no exception – especially since the early 1990s, when the EU has realized that the region's stability and growth is vital to its own interests<sup>4</sup> and particularly since the North Korean nuclear issue, amongst others, began to constitute a source of regional insecurity. Under these circumstances, the EU seeks to address the North Korean nuclear issue within the context of regional cooperation, and has therefore made its own contribu-

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<sup>1</sup> Ian Manners, "Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40. No. 2 (June 2002), p. 235-258, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-5965.00353>.

<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Bretherton and John Vogler, *The European Union as a Global Actor*, 2nd ed., London and New York, Routledge, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Diez, Stephan Stetter and Mathias Albert, "The European Union and Border Conflicts: The Transformative Power of Integration", in *International Organization*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (July 2006), p. 563-593.

<sup>4</sup> Moosung Lee and Thomas Diez, "Introduction: The EU, East Asian Conflicts, and the Norm of Integration", in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 14. No. 4 (December 2016), p. 353-366.

tion – albeit marginal and indirect.<sup>5</sup> One of the prime examples of this contribution was the Union’s engagement in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) as an executive member, in the hope that this would incentivize North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, DPRK) to relinquish its nuclear aspirations in return for a degree of economic assistance.

Yet the EU’s endeavour, to its own and other parties’ disappointment, has fallen short of expectations. As the KEDO programme faltered, the Six-Party Talks emerged as an alternative. Aiming solely at addressing the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the talks once again rallied all the key stakeholders – i.e. the US, China, Russia, the two Koreas and Japan – within a newly established platform aimed at security cooperation and conflict resolution. There appeared to be good grounds for the EU’s participation but, given its past experience of failure (with respect to KEDO), it did not participate directly – nor is likely to do so for the foreseeable future. Even so, it remains undeniable that the EU’s anticipated contribution – whether that comes in the form of direct engagement or not – cannot be easily disregarded. Hence, this paper aims to examine the possible roles of the EU, with particular attention to its contribution to the future development of the Six-Party Talks (SPT).

## 1. EVOLUTION OF THE SIX-PARTY TALKS

The North Korean regime is concerned about its security. The development of nuclear weapons is a strategic move to ensure its own survival. However, during the Clinton Administration, the accompanying brinkmanship policy was, to some extent, mitigated. This was because the framework for dialogue represented by the KEDO facilitated a “forum” in which the conflictive behaviour of the parties concerned could be regulated. However, there was a sudden changeover in US foreign policy with the 9/11 terrorist attacks in

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<sup>5</sup> Moosung Lee, “The EU, Regional Cooperation, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis”, in *Asia Europe Journal*, Vol. 14. No. 4 (December 2016), p. 401-415.

2001, which traumatized the US and intensified its national-security concerns. Abandoning its previous policy of constructive engagement, it adopted a hardline policy, began putting pressure on North Korea and even called for the toppling of the Kim Jong-il regime in order to guarantee the peace and the security of the world. But this hardline stance, triggered by a security speech that portrayed the DPRK as a member of a perceived “Axis of Evil”, merely served to intensify North Korea’s misgivings about its security, and only led to the foreign-policy route of reactivating its nuclear programmes.<sup>6</sup> Purposely selecting routinized nuclear brinksmanship – even though this was certain to make it once again an outcast in the international community – North Korea declared it would withdraw from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), denouncing the US as a contributor to the recent debacle.<sup>7</sup> Despite the resulting deadlock over the North’s reactivated nuclear programme, efforts to deal with the matter in a peacefully way were not abandoned. The proposal of the Six-Party Talks came about. In the beginning, there was doubt whether the US would accept this proposal due to its longstanding suspicion of North Korea and its reluctance to commit itself to pursuing a diplomatic solution to the region’s security crisis. However, when the first round of the SPT finally took place in August 2003, such worries were dissipated.

Without the direct participation of the EU, the first round of the SPT began, and the participants were encouraged to adopt six points of “consensus”.<sup>8</sup> Although the first round concluded with nothing

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<sup>6</sup> It can also be argued as a move to ensure its own ontological security. For a general argument of ontological security, see Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma”, in *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2006), p. 341-370, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1354066106067346>. For specific implications relating with the North Korean nuclear issue, also see Moosung Lee, “The EU, Regional Cooperation, and the North Korean Nuclear Crisis”, cit.

<sup>7</sup> Kongdan Oh and Ralph C. Hassig, “North Korea’s Nuclear Politics”, in *Current History*, Vol. 103, No. 674 (September 2004), p. 273-279, <http://brook.gs/2c1dYiP>.

<sup>8</sup> Ren Xiao, “Korean Security Dilemma: Chinese Policies”, in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University

but an agreement for further rounds of talks “down the road”, it had significance in its own right: it re-launched the institutionalized framework of dialogue dealing exclusively with the nuclear issue. Riding the momentum gained by the first round, the second and third rounds were held in February and June 2004. They both allowed the participating parties to discuss the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the peaceful coexistence of the participating states and the use of mutually coordinated measures to resolve crises. As a result, during the second phase of the fourth round, the six parties finally consented to a joint statement on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The Joint Statement of 19 September 2005, despite some criticism that it was “bereft of any significance”,<sup>9</sup> was a breakthrough – at least, at the time – because it opened a window of opportunity that encouraged North Korea to reconsider its strategy of nuclear-development programmes in return for energy assistance and security guarantees from the other five parties.<sup>10</sup>

After the first session of the fifth round, however, the negotiating climate deteriorated. Because of alleged complicity on the part of the DPRK in money laundering and other illicit activities associated with clandestine nuclear-development programmes, the US imposed sanctions on North Korean trading entities as well as on Banco Delta Asia of Macau. Pyongyang regarded the freeze as the result solely of US hostility, and used it as a justification for its redoubling of efforts on regime security.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the brief period of rapprochement created by the release of the Joint Statement of 19 September 2005 soon collapsed. Pyongyang, as usual, ascribed all this to US financial sanctions, claiming this as a breach of the denuclearization pact signed in September 2005, and undertook a long-range

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Press, 2007, p. 213-229, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

<sup>9</sup> Victor D. Cha, “What Do They Really Want? Obama’s North Korea Conundrum”, in *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (October 2009), p. 120.

<sup>10</sup> Mikael Weissmann, *The East Asian Peace. Conflict Prevention and Informal Peacebuilding*, London and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan D. Pollack, “No Exit. North Korea, Nuclear Weapons and International Security”, in *Adelphi series*, No. 418-419 (2011), p. 145-146.

rocket test and its first underground nuclear explosion in 2006,<sup>12</sup> all of which left the SPT at a standstill.

With China's efforts to restart the talks, the sixth round resumed in February 2007 after an 18-month pause. At this meeting, the participants sought to overcome existing difficulties, and agreed to adopt an "action plan" for the implementation of the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement. Behind the scenes, China played a crucial role. It pressed North Korea to rejoin the multilateral framework after the nuclear crisis came to a head; the process gained momentum in the second half of 2007, leading to an agreement on Pyongyang disabling its ageing reactor and other plants at Yongbyon and removing thousands of fuel rods under the guidance of US experts. Yet, no sooner had this breakthrough been made than negotiations fell apart. Following a final round of talks in 2008, North Korea declared the deal void after refusing to allow inspections to verify compliance. The prospect of talks further deteriorated in 2009, when the UN Security Council condemned North Korea's failed satellite launch in a Presidential Statement. Instead of bowing to international pressure, Pyongyang firmly resisted by pulling out of the talks and resuming its nuclear-enrichment programme. Some sporadic attempts to resume the talks followed this latest breakdown, but these efforts have not come into fruition.

## 2. THE EU'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE TALKS

The EU's interest in the DPRK's nuclear issue dates back to the early 1990s, when its *Towards a New Asia Strategy* was published.<sup>13</sup> Since then, it has continually identified the North's aspiration to develop nuclear weapons as a serious threat to "regional stability".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Siegfried S. Hecker, "Lessons Learned from the North Korean Nuclear Crises", in *Daedalus*, Vol. 139, No. 1 (Winter 2010), p. 50, <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Hecker.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> European Commission, *Towards a New Asia Strategy* (COM/94/314), 13 July 1994, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/?uri=celex:51994DC0314>.

<sup>14</sup> European Council, *A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security*

Although the EU decided not to participate in the Six-Party Talks directly, its commitment to coping with the North Korean nuclear issue within the institutionalized framework of regional cooperation remains unabated. There are three explanations for this.

First is the EU's normative tendency to support multilateral frameworks for dialogue as a way of addressing regional conflicts.<sup>15</sup> Embedding the North Korean nuclear issue within this context can be seen as more appropriate than bilateral talks, in which power politics would be more likely to prevail. Bilateral talks, if held hostage to power politics, are likely to lead actors to threaten one another with military, economic or political aggression; this is also more likely to occur if they are overly preoccupied with their own national interests.

However, multilateral dialogue posits a different scenario. Intended to serve as an unbiased forum and thus being acceptable to all parties, even for discussing such controversial issues as nuclear weapons and missiles,<sup>16</sup> multilateral talks could function (at least, in principle) to diffuse tensions between archrivals – in this case, between the United States and the DPRK.<sup>17</sup> It is hard at the moment to envisage any European “effect” within SPT, because the EU is not part of the talks. But examples from the EU's neighbourhood policy show that multilateral talks have also been successfully used as foreign-policy instruments for conflict resolution. The EU's preference for civilian means of engagement does not simply imply its agree-

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*Strategy*, 12 December 2003, p. 4, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/78367.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Diez, Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter (eds.), *The European Union and Border Conflicts. The Power of Integration and Association*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Hazel Smith, “Reconstituting Korean Security Dilemmas”, in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2007, p. 17-18, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

<sup>17</sup> Maria Castillo Fernandez, “Korean Security Dilemmas: European Union Policies”, in Hazel Smith (ed.), *Reconstituting Korean Security. A Policy Primer*, Tokyo, United Nations University Press, 2007, p. 222-223, <https://collections.unu.edu/view/UNU:2484>.

ment with this normative approach, but seems to be a reflection of its self-identity as a normative power.<sup>18</sup> So, the normative EU's choice to support the SPT offers a contrasting viewpoint to the "realist" perspective that focuses overwhelmingly on effectiveness.

Second, while the existing frameworks fell short of expectations due to frictions among the parties engaged, and while nuclear crises have often overshadowed prospect for the talks, the EU nonetheless stresses that North Korea should re-engage constructively with the international community – and, in particular, with the members of the Six-Party Talks.<sup>19</sup> It is noteworthy that this approach has also been pursued through alternative paths, such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM). Specifically, the ARF serves as a forum in which members' incompatible positions can be attenuated and confidence among the parties concerned reinforced.

Since the mid-1990s, a nuclear-weapons-free zone on the Korean Peninsula has been regarded as an essential component for regional peace and stability. Against this backdrop, ARF has elected the North Korean nuclear issue as one of its main topics, particularly since 1996, and has continued to stress that the SPT should function as an important mechanism to deal with this issue.<sup>20</sup> The EU, as a member of the forum, echoed this view, supporting the reinforced role of the SPT in order to face recurring nuclear crises on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>21</sup> The analogous stance that the EU has

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<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Mitzen, "Anchoring Europe's Civilizing Identity: Habits, Capabilities and Ontological Security", in *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (2006), p. 270-285.

<sup>19</sup> Council of the European Union, *Council conclusions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, 3222nd Foreign Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 18 February 2013, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135534.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/135534.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), *ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Non-Proliferation*, Jakarta, 2 July 2004, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/library/arf-chairmans-statements-and-reports.html?id=179>.

<sup>21</sup> Katja Weber, "The ASEAN Regional Forum and the EU's Role in Promoting Security in the Asia-Pacific", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Pal-



maintained within ASEM should also be understood in a similar context. Agreeing to the principal position of ASEM that North Korea's nuclear programme is also regarded as one of the Meeting's key agenda items,<sup>22</sup> the EU has likewise endorsed the SPT as a main forum for discussion. This is not only a reflection of its normative intention that strengthening political and existing dialogues should be key in dealing with general security issues,<sup>23</sup> it is also indicative of its strategic intention of circuitously supporting the SPT.<sup>24</sup>

Third, the EU has also made efforts to cooperate with international society, assuming that this helps to justify its normative position in terms of how and in which form to address the current nuclear crisis. It has been observed that the EU has, on every occasion, joined international efforts to condemn North Korea's actions. Examples of this include its participation in the international impositions of economic and political sanctions, and its support of UN resolutions adopted in response to North Korea's continued nuclear-development activities. Its sanctions participation has taken the form of either a unilateral move or its participation in UN-led restrictive measures. Through these activities, the EU aims to take part in international moves aiming to prohibit the trades of goods, services and technology if these are suspected of contributing to the DPRK's nuclear-development programme. Alongside this, the EU has also vehemently supported relevant UN resolutions, which date back to Resolution 1718 of 2006,<sup>25</sup> and has expressed its un-

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grave Macmillan, 2013, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), *Chairman's Statement of the Sixth Asia Europe Meeting*, Helsinki, 10-11 September 2006, [http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/060911\\_ChairmanStatement.pdf](http://www.aseminfoboard.org/sites/default/files/documents/060911_ChairmanStatement.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> Nicola Casarini, "The Securitisation of EU-Asia Relations in the Post-Cold War Era", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 188.

<sup>24</sup> Seock-Jun Yoon and Jae-Jung Suh, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation", in Thomas Christiansen, Emil Kirchner and Philomena Murray (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of EU-Asia Relations*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, p. 407.

<sup>25</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (2006), 14 October 2006, [http://undocs.org/S/Res/1718\(2006\)](http://undocs.org/S/Res/1718(2006)).



relenting will and intention by its support of the most recent Resolution 2270 in 2016.<sup>26</sup> By doing so, the EU makes clear that the approach upon which it relies is not particular but universal in nature, that North Korea's brinkmanship is not acceptable according to international standards and that the only way to extricate parties from the current conundrum is to return to the existing framework of Six-Party Talks and restart dialogue.

### 3. THE LIMITS OF THE EU'S ENGAGEMENT

There are sceptical views that despite the EU's continued interest in the North Korean nuclear issue, its role and impact will turn out to be at best indirect or at worst marginal. There are two reasons behind this. The first is related to the Union's lack of political will. Given its past experience of failure to deliver desired outcomes under the KEDO programme, the EU decided not to participate directly in the SPT from the outset. Moreover, its lack of will is also related to EU member-state politics, which determine the scope and type of its foreign policy. What this means is that although the EU pursues a common foreign and security policy, this is intergovernmental in nature and the remit of action also depends on where the "lowest common denominator" of member states lies.<sup>27</sup> So, as Schmidt argues, as long as an appreciable number of member states show lukewarm interest in the EU's role within the SPT, its contribution both within and outside the talks will remain constrained.<sup>28</sup>

The second reason is that as the attitude of the EU is critical,

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<sup>26</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 2270 (2016), 2 March 2016, [http://undocs.org/S/Res/2270\(2016\)](http://undocs.org/S/Res/2270(2016)).

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Moravcsik, "Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach", in *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (December 1993), p. 487, <https://www.princeton.edu/~amoravcs/library/preferences1.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Hans-Joachim Schmidt, "Peace on the Korean Peninsula: What can the EU Contribute to the Six-Party Process?", in *PRIF Reports*, No. 75 (2006), p. 33, [https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk\\_downloads/prif75.pdf](https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_downloads/prif75.pdf).

so are those of the participating parties to the talks. In principle, the participants in the SPT would not necessarily deny the value and experience of the EU since it has been successful in addressing regional conflicts within the context of regional cooperation and integration. However, when it comes to the question of its direct participation as a dialogue partner, their positions remain somewhat reserved. For instance, the US, both as a contributor and a problem-solver in the current crisis, does not see the EU as a direct stakeholder – and nor does China. In addition, North Korea's attitude towards multilateralism also matters. For North Korea, the EU must be an agreeable partner for dialogue as compared to the US, but – given the ulterior motives behind the DPRK's participation in the SPT, and its fundamental suspicion regarding the so-called unbiased role of multilateral frameworks – the effectiveness of the EU's contribution may be open to question. That means North Korea's innate suspicion of external forces would not help the EU to play a more active role in the talks. As Buzan, Wæver and de Wilde argue, if such multilateral frameworks can easily degenerate into forums in which the US manages to mobilize others in support of its actions toward North Korea by referring to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and if they only serve to highlight the potential threats of the North Korean nuclear crisis to the local and international audience,<sup>29</sup> then the DPRK's resistance to embracing multilateral frameworks of discussion such as the SPT in order to address the current crisis becomes understandable. Consequently, the leeway for the EU to endorse the legitimate contribution of the talks is much impaired.

The fundamental question regarding the effectiveness of such a multilateral framework itself also undermines the EU's role in the foreseeable future. When it comes to the hard-security issue, particularly revolving around North Korea's nuclear efforts, attitudes diverge – over what kind of methods should be adopted, who should be “in the driver's seat” and who should be invited into this discussion. First, the US, amongst others, does not want its “hub-

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<sup>29</sup> Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver and Jaap de Wilde, *Security. A New Framework for Analysis*, Boulder and London, Lynne Rienner, 1998, p. 26.

and-spokes" system,<sup>30</sup> the cornerstone of its East Asian security policy,<sup>31</sup> to be challenged by excessive emphasis on the necessity of multilateral frameworks of dialogue such as the SPT: the latter should, rather, play a secondary, complementary role. Meanwhile, China's mixed attitudes towards the SPT should also be counted as an undeniable impediment. It appears that China has supported the critical role of the talks but still wants them to be operated in such a way as to serve its own national interests, even to the extent of what should be discussed and who should participate. Therefore – amidst discrepancies and controversies in terms of the formats, participants and objectives of the SPT, which are also connected with the political, strategic and security reality revolving around the Korean Peninsula – the role of the EU is not likely to be fostered.

It follows that, given controversies over the limits of the EU's contributions, future prospects for its role appear to depend on the interplay of key stakeholders' desires and interests, and the contextual constraints posed by geostrategic situations. Such a scenario looks increasingly plausible, especially if we take into account the conflictive inter-Korean relationship, which is now facing its worst diplomatic crisis because of the closing of official channels between the two Koreas. It has also sharpened emerging rivalries between the US and China for the regional hegemonic position, which renders the Northeast Asian security landscape ever more competitive and unstable. Even so, however, such a stark reality does not necessarily mean the end of the EU's role itself. Despite differences in terms of motives and strategies for addressing the present stand-offs, most of the directly involved parties seem to admit that resorting to armed force is undesirable and are principally in favour of non-military approaches. As a result, the existing framework of the SPT, although currently at a stalemate, can be reactivated at any time as a prime forum for discussing the nuclear issue, and the

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<sup>30</sup> This means that the US plays a central role in the Asian security policy, while its allies in the area play supplementary roles, along with the US.

<sup>31</sup> Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay. Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia", in *International Security*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Winter 2009/2010), p. 158.

norms and values of multilateralism that the EU has thus far striven to promote and externalize through its Asian policy continue to be persuasive. Of course, the push to make this happen is now being made in circuitous ways, as argued previously, but direct contribution – e.g. as a participant at the talks – may not entirely be discounted if the EU feels it imperative, and if the other parties also consider it necessary, both in normative and strategic terms.

## CONCLUSION

A discussion concerning the EU's role in the Six-Party Talks has generated three implications. While the first two relate to the pre-conditions to be met in order for the role of the EU to be enhanced, the last one concerns the ongoing debates seeking to rediscover the significance of the EU for the talks. First, for the talks to operate effectively and to make some, if any, contributions to bring about peace, the conflictive contextual conditions currently causing stalemate have to be eased. Otherwise, discussion of the possible role of the EU might turn out to be empty or meaningless. This means that as long as the US and the DPRK perceive each other as unreliable partners for negotiations, and see each other as a source of uncontrollable existential threats, a vicious cycle will continue – thus undermining the EU's desire for, and capability of, contribution. At the same time, principled commitment on the part of the EU is also essential in the context of this argument. Its future role as a key player in SPT, not to mention its reliability, is still open to question – not least while the EU is not directly involved in the talks, and particularly when its future engagement is questioned given its internal challenges. Foremost amongst these is the sovereign-debt crisis; however, this has been compounded more recently by the UK's Brexit vote, currently the most evident consequence of the continent's resurgent nationalism.

Nonetheless, it is still important to acknowledge the counter-argument highlighting the EU's position as a promising player. This is indeed the case when its normative inclination – promoting the

SPT, which aim at peace and prosperity in the region – is taken seriously. Making the most of the Six-Party Talks is a plausible option, and one that is available at the moment. If this is overlooked and disregarded, no other options seem open. Resorting to the use of military force in dealing with the current crisis does not look desirable, or feasible – which is exactly the case that the EU has made over the last few years.



# 10.

## Supporting NAPCI and Trilateral Cooperation: Prospects for Korea-EU Relations

*Michael Reiterer*

### 1. THE EU'S COMMITMENT TO ASIA IN THE LIGHT OF THE SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN NORTHEAST ASIA

In order to avoid any misconceptions from the outset, the most recent policy paper from the European Union, its 2016 Global Strategy, spells out clearly that

[t]here is a direct connection between European prosperity and Asian security. In light of the economic weight that Asia represents for the EU – and vice versa – peace and stability in Asia are a prerequisite for our prosperity. We will deepen economic diplomacy and scale up our security role in Asia.<sup>1</sup>

Like any other political player, the EU has to focus on internal problems and those in its “near abroad.” However, that does not mean that it will become entirely Eurocentric and neglect the “far abroad” – especially Asia. Therefore, it was a conscious decision to publish

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<sup>1</sup> European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe. A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*, 28 June 2016, p. 37, <http://europa.eu/globalstrategy/en/node/2>. See also Michael Reiterer, “Regional Security Architecture in the Asia-Pacific: What Role for the European Union?”, in *The Asan Forum*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (May-June 2016), <http://www.theasanforum.org/?p=7427>.

the Global Strategy at virtually the same time as the UK's vote to leave the EU (Brexit). An institution of the size and nature of the EU – the largest economy, trader, investor and donor of development aid worldwide – must, and is able to, handle more than one problem, and meet more than one challenge, at the same time. This was reinforced by a recent policy speech by the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission (HRVP) Federica Mogherini on the role of the EU as a global actor,<sup>2</sup> as well as the decision to hold the EU-ASEAN foreign ministers meeting in Bangkok in October 2016.<sup>3</sup>

The unprecedented economic growth of East Asia in general, and of China in particular, has produced rapid power shifts within the region, and, as a consequence, among regions. Newcomers demand their share of the economic “cake” – a claim to which others have to yield, either in absolute or in relative terms. This creates a temptation to fall back on the zero-sum politics that characterized the Cold War of the mid-twentieth century.

The Obama Administration's “Pivot to Asia” appears to have been more a move to preserve the US position in the Asia-Pacific region than to conquer new ground, while China has to carve out new territory in order to re-establish itself as a regional power with a global vocation.

China has sought a new Asian security architecture since President Xi Jinping's 2014 speech at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).<sup>4</sup> The People's Republic regards such a new system as a potential security guarantee for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). However, the DPRK rejects any third-party guarantees and has continued the

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<sup>2</sup> Federica Mogherini, *Speech at the public seminar “EU as a Global Actor”*, Stockholm, 10 October 2016, <http://europa.eu/!GW36Dw>.

<sup>3</sup> Bangkok Declaration on Promoting an ASEAN-EU Global Partnership for Shared Strategic Goals, Endorsed at the 21st ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting held in Bangkok on 13-14 October 2016, <http://europa.eu/!FM46jX>.

<sup>4</sup> Zhang Yu, “Xi Defines New Asian Security Vision at CICA”, in *Global Times*, 22 May 2014, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/861573.shtml>.



development of its nuclear arsenal through the testing of missiles and other weapons; it has even failed to rule out the pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons. This leads to spiralling tensions, which have the potential to get out of hand. Existing sanctions reaching the limits of their effectiveness could also embolden other powers to test alternative counter-measures – a scenario that carries with it an inherent escalatory potential. The decision by the Republic of Korea (ROK) to allow the stationing of the US Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile system,<sup>5</sup> while purporting to target the DPRK, has also become an irritant to China and Russia – not least because of a lack of trust regarding its intended objectives. This led to the cancellation of these two countries' participation in the third High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Northeast Asian Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI).

East Asia has more contested boundaries than any other part of the world. Although attention has focused recently on disputed maritime delimitation in the East and South China Seas, many competing claims over land borders also remain unresolved. The recently rekindled conflict between India and Pakistan, two nuclear powers, serves as a sobering reminder of the risks involved.

While arbitration has worked in some cases (Malaysia/Indonesia in 2002, Malaysia/Singapore in 2008, the Philippines/Indonesia in 2014 and India/Bangladesh in 2014), China sticks with its four “NOs” in the case of the South China Sea Arbitration with the Philippines: no participation, acceptance, recognition or implementation. This is a problem for the rule of law in the region, and contributes to latent nationalism; the latter can be exploited or instrumentalized easily at any time.

Accidental escalation through encounters in the East and South China Sea are aggravated by the growing size and increased fre-

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<sup>5</sup> If the deployment of effective North Korean IRBMs and SLBMs is seen as inevitable, it would only make sense for the US-ROK alliance to deploy the US-made THAAD missile system on South Korean soil in order to intercept any missiles that the DPRK might launch in any future crisis. However, the range of the THAAD radars could also mean this system could detect missiles fired from China, thereby eroding the efficacy of the PRC's strategic nuclear deterrence vis-à-vis the US.

quency of patrols by and encounters with coastguard vessels of the parties involved.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), military expenditure in East Asia is growing more rapidly than in any other region of the world apart from Africa:

Military spending in Asia and Oceania rose by 5.4 per cent in 2015 and by 64 per cent between 2006 and 2015, reaching \$436 billion in 2015 at current prices and exchange rates. China had by far the highest military expenditure in the region: an estimated \$215 billion, or 49 per cent of regional spending. This was more than four times that of India, which was the region's second-largest spender. Almost all countries in the region increased their spending between 2006 and 2015.<sup>6</sup>

Among the 15 biggest military spenders worldwide are four Asian countries: China, at no. 2; India, at no. 6; Japan, at no. 8; and the ROK, at no. 10. Factoring in the US (the no. 1 spender), Russia (no. 3) and Australia (no. 13), all of whom have a strong security stake in the area, seven out of 15 top spenders are in the Asia Pacific region, a statistic that serves to underline heightened tensions:

Heightened tensions with China over the South China Sea are reflected in substantial growth in military expenditure in 2015 by Indonesia (16 per cent), the Philippines (25 per cent) and Viet Nam (7.6 per cent). Japan also began to increase spending in 2015 after years of decline, signalling rising threat perceptions from both China and North Korea.<sup>7</sup>

The rising potential for conflict escalation and the need to protect existing economic stakes suggest that the time may now be ripe for a more active discussion of arms-control measures and their application in Asia.

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<sup>6</sup> Sam Perlo-Freeman et al., "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2015", in *SIPRI Fact Sheets*, April 2016, p. 3, <https://www.sipri.org/node/3187>.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Nuclear threat potential is high: six out of nine nuclear powers are active in Asia, three of them are outside Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) frameworks, and “[m]eanwhile, the North Korean threat grows.”<sup>8</sup>

These developments are taking place against the backdrop of a lack of a regional security system that is able to deal with the challenges; all the while, the East Asia Summit (EAS) has potential, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) a history and NAPCI<sup>9</sup> is searching for a genuine role.

At the same time, non-traditional security threats – e.g. earthquakes; hurricanes; and pandemics, such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) – remain risks that necessitate preparatory, capacity building and training measures. They are prime examples of actions requiring close regional cooperation.

## 2. A REVIEW OF NAPCI

The EU has a long tradition of engagement on the Korean Peninsula, as evidenced by its participation in the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) in the 1990s.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the EU has also honoured the Korean invitation to join NAPCI as a dialogue partner and has remained supportive, as evidenced by the joint press statement of the 8th Republic of Korea-EU Summit, which took place in Seoul on 15 September 2015:

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<sup>8</sup> “A Shrimp among Whales”, in *The Economist*, Vol. 421, No. 9013 (29 October 2016), p. 28, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21709317-threat-north-grows-south-korea-finds-itself-lonely-place-shrimp-among-whales>.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Reiterer, “The NAPCI in the Volatile Security Environment of North-East Asia: Which Role for the European Union?”, in *European Foreign Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (2015), p. 573-589. This paper provides an overview of the European experience in trust building and offers some concrete examples in the area of energy, education, joint management of shared resources (fisheries), environment, volunteer services, etc.

<sup>10</sup> See the 1997 agreement available in KEDO official website: [http://www.kedo.org/ap\\_main.asp](http://www.kedo.org/ap_main.asp).

The Leaders discussed the security situation in East Asia and highlighted that regional cooperation needs to be strengthened in order to build trust, which would serve as the foundation for prosperity and stability in the region and beyond. In this regard, the EU reaffirmed its continued support for the multilateral process promoted by the ROK's Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative (NAPCI). [ROK] President Park appreciated that the EU has made indispensable contributions to developing NAPCI by sharing its experience on regional multilateral cooperation in particular during the ROK-EU Joint Seminars in Seoul in 2014 and in Brussels in 2015. The EU Leader expressed support for the active role of the ROK as the chair country in leading the trilateral cooperation among the ROK, Japan and China and welcomed the ROK's hosting of the 6th ROK-Japan-China Trilateral Summit in the near future.<sup>11</sup>

However, the deteriorating relationship with the DPRK casts serious doubt on these examples of *Trustpolitik* – particularly, the series of nuclear and missile tests and the adoption of policy measures such as the closure of the Kaesong Industrial Complex and the deployment of THAAD, which China and Russia perceive as threats to their own security. ROK President Park Geun-hye stated before the National Assembly, in February 2016:

It has become clear that we cannot break North Korea's will to develop nuclear weapons through existing means and goodwill [...] It's time to find a fundamental solution for bringing practical change in North Korea and to show courage in putting that into action. [...] The government will take stronger and more effective measures to make North Korea bitterly realise that it cannot survive with nuclear development and that it will only speed up regime collapse.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Press Statement, 8th Republic of Korea-EU Summit, Seoul, 15 September 2015, point 17, <http://europa.eu/!pD73QR>.

<sup>12</sup> AFP, "South Korea's Park Says Time to Play Hardball with North", in *The Express Tribune*, 16 February 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/?p=1047820>.

In addition, President Park has openly invited defectors from the DPRK to come to the ROK, and has instructed ministries to prepare for an increasing influx.<sup>13</sup>

There is obviously a need for either a new narrative or a new policy. As for NAPCI, there is a need to enhance public awareness domestically as well as internationally, which will only be successful if

- there is a clear message – e.g. terms of reference and an accompanying strategy, “road map” plus communication strategy based on content (not words);
- it is clear that NAPCI works only long-term and not short-term or for ad hoc problem solving;
- “hard” security issues can profit from the transfer of confidence from non-traditional and “soft” security measures;
- soft institutionalization following the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) example e.g. a dialogue structure without institutionalization can be achieved: best done in close cooperation with the Trilateral Secretariat/process in order to assure life beyond the current ROK administration;
- buy-in by participants and dialogue partners can be achieved; and
- a review process confirms its additionality, complementarity and usefulness.

### 3. NAPCI: PROGRESS ACHIEVED

In the run-up to the third meeting,<sup>14</sup> which took place in Washington on 6 October 2016 – the first time that the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting had been held outside the Republic of Korea (in

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<sup>13</sup> Arirang News, “President Park Calls for Resettlement Plan for Defectors, Stronger Sanctions on N. Korea”, in *YouTube*, 10 October 2016, <https://youtu.be/wKgKzZNe16s>.

<sup>14</sup> South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), *Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative Forum 2016 Takes Place*, 8 October 2016, <http://tinyurl.com/hzlf8ok>.

principle, a strong sign of “buy-in” by partners) – some progress could be registered:

- the designation of national Focal Points (in 2015);
- customized cooperation in some of the areas covered by NAPCI such as: (a) nuclear safety, whereby meetings of the Top Regulators (TRM) were held along with the enlarged format (TRM+) – e.g. the Northeast Asia Nuclear Safety Consultative Body; (b) disaster management – an ROK-Japan-China Trilateral Table Top Exercise (TTX) with Russia, the US and Mongolia as observers; and (c) energy security – a meeting of the Northeast Asia Energy Security Forum.

The third NAPCI meeting was overshadowed by boycotts by China and Russia, primarily to express displeasure about the THAAD deployment decision. In its reaction, Russia seemed to playing a supportive role to China. This diminished the ROK’s success in its policy of achieving co-ownership of the process by another NAPCI participant.

Despite the boycott, the co-hosts decided to proceed with the meeting in order to demonstrate continuity, patience and the will to provide a platform for meetings and discussions to underline the continued need for *Trustpolitik*.

In contrast to the official event, Russian and Chinese representatives participated actively in the NAPCI Forum, an experts’ meeting that is held in parallel with the officials’ meeting.

#### 4. THE WAY FORWARD

Participants agreed that NAPCI can best contribute to the necessary trust building in Northeast Asia as a long-term, inclusive and open process while continuing to focus on functional cooperation in “soft” security areas in order to create common ground. There is a need to continue to actively engage in, support or complement regional and multilateral frameworks of dialogue and cooperation, to create synergies as part of a networking diplomacy. Various formats are possible:

- Making better use of the ASEAN Regional Forum, in which the DPRK participates but has not, thus far, played a decisive role.
- Revival of the stalled Six-Party Talks (SPT) – supported by many as the (past) forum for talks, although rather unlikely at this stage. Interesting to note in this context that the participants in the NAPCI process are the parties of the SPT minus the DPRK plus Mongolia and the dialogue partners (EU, OSCE [Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe] and the UN). The last-named, as a group or individually, could play a more active role as facilitator for a reconvening of the talks if judged helpful by the parties.
- Building on and eventually enlarging the Trilateral Cooperation between China, the ROK and Japan, which has gained momentum again in 2016 with 18 functional ministerial or high-level meetings (finance, culture, education, and environment) plus a foreign ministers' meeting.
- Seeking synergies and alignment with the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue, managed by Mongolia, in which the DPRK participates.
- Drawing on the KEDO experience and eventually making use of its still-existing legal shell – a functional approach to the talks on energy could be re-attempted, bearing in mind that energy was one of the founding trust- and confidence-building elements at the beginning of European integration (Europe's founding Coal and Steel Community – the ECSC).

In addition, a network of think tanks supporting NAPCI, drawing on work done by the OSCE and supported by the EU Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), could contribute as a platform for exchanges in addition to the valuable contributions by the meetings of the Northeast Asia Cooperation Forum. While this could increase the visibility and acceptance of NAPCI, rendering it relevant through concrete benefits for the peoples concerned, track 2 or 1.5 platforms ease the DPRK's participation – as demonstrated by the Zermatt Dialogue, organized by Switzerland.

Last but not least, lessons learnt in the negotiations with Iran could play a role. Despite considerable differences between the two cases,

there could be some lessons learnt concerning format and negotiating technique, the role of facilitators and a more flexible format for talks. In the end, persistence, as well as multilevel and multitasked cooperation, allowed the EU, in cooperation with its partners, to make use of a geometry variable in order to broker a nuclear deal with Iran.

## CONCLUSIONS

The impeachment of President Park has further endangered that NAPCI will outlive her presidency. However, striving to build trust and confidence will remain a crucial task for any future ROK government. As in the past, the name of the project might change but the policy might remain valid, despite – or, rather, because of – mounting tensions.

Greater continuity across various administrations would facilitate trust building and eventually preparing for meaningful talks. Cooperating more closely, or even merging, with other formats in order to achieve synergies in the interest of establishing/maintaining lines of communication is a possibility worth considering. Thus, participants in the third meeting recognized “the need to build on the discussion of the Meeting and continue their efforts to actively engage in multilateral dialogues and cooperation as a long-term investment for the peace and prosperity in the region.”<sup>15</sup> Assigning a greater role to civil society is another requirement: intertwining the NAPCI Forum with the intergovernmental meeting and supporting this with a think-tank forum would be useful first steps in this regard.

Two of the five priorities in the Global Strategy commit the EU to follow through in its external action, namely to build “cooperative regional orders” and an integrated approach to conflicts<sup>16</sup> – both priorities of particular relevance for NAPCI.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., Chair’s Summary.

<sup>16</sup> The other three are security for the Union, state and societal resilience, global governance for the 21st century. European External Action Service (EEAS), *Shared Vision, Common Action: A Stronger Europe*, cit., p. 9-10.



Therefore, and based on the EU's experience of voluntary regional governance (which is a fundamental rationale for the EU's own peace and development in the twenty-first century, the Global Strategy commits the EU to "promote and support cooperative regional orders worldwide, including in the most divided areas."<sup>17</sup> The latter qualifier certainly applies to the Korean Peninsula, which is also the forum for simultaneously promoting non-proliferation. Thus, critical engagement in order to spin the thin thread of communication leading to talks forms part of an integrated approach to this conflict, which has a global dimension and which challenges global governance.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 32.



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This book contributes to current debates on Northeast Asia's evolving security dynamics, including the role of the EU in promoting regional cooperation and trust building. The chapters have been written by a select group of European and Korean experts with the aim of shedding light on some of the initiatives being developed in Northeast Asia to promote regional cooperation and trust building. At the same time, they also examine the distinctive role that Europe has been playing in supporting some of these plans, including discussion of how – and to what extent – the EU's approach differs from that of the United States.

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