

ROK-US-Japan Naval Cooperation in the Korean Peninsula Area: Prospects for Multilateral Security Cooperation

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Abstract

A new security environment in Northeast Asia is calling for fresh thinking and changes in terms of the security policies of the Republic of Korea, the US, and Japan. Especially, a series of provocations by North Korea in 2010 and a new assertiveness manifested in the rise of China provide a rationale for closer defense cooperation among the three countries. A bolstered trilateral defense arrangement among the ROK, the US, and Japan could provide the best platform to deter further provocations from the North, and to prepare for potential instabilities in the current power succession inside North Korea. At the same time, tighter trilateral defense cooperation can deter China's one-sided support of North Korea in its efforts to relate to future provocations by the North. It also puts indirect pressure on Beijing to hold Pyongyang accountable for its hostile actions. Given the asymmetric threats from the North, in particular, trilateral naval cooperation in the future should be focused on the following three categories: sea-borne Missile Defense (MD) and Proliferation Strategy Initiative (PSI), Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW), and, Mine Warfare (MIW), and preparation for contingencies in North Korea. Furthermore, the three navies should put more efforts behind regional maritime security activities, such as HA/DR and anti-piracy. In doing so, the three navies also should try to engage China in these efforts because the future of maritime security of the region depends on how to engage China in the international security system. Doing so is also a way to contribute to the building of multilateral cooperative mechanism for maritime security in the region.

Keywords: ROK-US-JAPAN Trilateral Naval Cooperation, North Korea provocation, Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region

Introduction

A new security environment in Northeast Asia is calling for fresh thinking and change in the security policy of the Republic of Korea

(hereafter ROK), the US, and Japan. A series of provocations by North Korea in 2010 and a new assertiveness manifested in the rise of China provide an especial need for new rationale and closer defense cooperation among the three countries.

Simply relying on past cooperation between the two bilateral alliances between the ROK-US and between Japan-US is no longer a solution to the new regional challenges North Korea poses for the three countries. It seems obvious that the two bilateral alliances should be geared towards deterring North Korean provocations, and, at the same time, creating a regional security throughout the Asia-Pacific region in the face of the rise of China as a G-2.

Given the sensitive relationship between the ROK and Japan, it is desirable to enhance, especially, naval cooperation in the seas surrounding the Korean peninsula. Because navies are uniquely suited for multilateral cooperation because of their intrinsic unobtrusive nature as over-the-horizon security forces, out of public view.¹ In examining trilateral naval cooperation among the three countries, this article intends to review how it has developed in the past, to identify the constraints under which it has operated, to analyze what impact 2010 North Korean provocations have made, and finally to propose a way ahead, with clear implications for multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Trilateral Naval Cooperation: Its Past

The ROK, the US, and Japan have a long history of cooperation in maritime security affairs. Naval cooperation among the three countries has developed steadily under the leadership of the US based on the ROK-US and US-Japan bilateral alliances. Direct naval cooperation between the ROK and Japan, however, has not progressed smoothly.

Participation of a Japanese Minesweeping Flotilla during the Korean War²

Strictly speaking, naval cooperation among the three countries started as early as October 1950 during the Korean war. North Korean forces laid approximately 3,000 mines in regional ports with the Soviet Union's assistance. The US, by contrast did not possess enough mine warfare capabilities at that time in East Asia. In the midst of the war, the US planned landing operations in the North Korean region. In support of this action, the US requested, in secret, to then-Japanese Prime Minister

Yoshida Shigeru, under its control that Japan sweep mines in littoral areas. The Japan Maritime Safety Agency (hereafter JMSA) many skilled experts in minesweeping operations, inherited from the former Imperial Japanese Navy.

In response, Yoshida ordered a combat support mission to the JMSA in line with the Japanese government policy of cooperation with UN forces. The Special Minesweeping Flotilla (hereafter SMF) engaged in mine sweeping in Inchon, Wonsan, Gunsan, Chinnampo, and Haeju for two months from mid-October to early December 1950. Although this event happened a long time ago, with Japan under the Occupation, it has many implications even today for the defense of the ROK and for naval cooperation among the three countries given the grave mine threats from North Korean submarines.

Trilateral Naval Cooperation during the Cold-War

During the Cold-War period, the three countries, all belonging to the Western bloc, maintained a relationship of triangular military cooperation in pursuit of the containment policy against the Communist bloc. The trilateral relations did not take the form of a formal alliance, but, instead, of a virtual one that the three countries built upon the two existing bilateral partnerships.³

Despite the potential and practical Cold-War necessity for trilateral cooperation against the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea, there was almost no practical defense cooperation among the three countries and/or between the ROK and Japan. The US had worked with the ROK and Japan only individually because of the different strategic orientations among the three countries and the delicate relationship between the ROK and Japan.⁴ In multiple settings, accordingly, the three countries have conducted diplomacy in a multilateral forum without explicit trilateral coordination.⁵

During this period, the ROK and the US conducted Team Spirit⁶ exercises, and, in the maritime context, the multilateral RIMPAC⁷ exercise in which the ROK and Japan, with others, participated but organized under separate group without any chance to cooperate bilaterally. However, the three countries were actively engaged in the activities of the International Sea Lanes of Communications (hereafter SLOC) Study Group for preserving security of the key SLOCs against the expansion of the Soviet submarines fleet and their activities in the region.⁸

Trilateral Naval Cooperation in the Post Cold-War Era

With the Cold-War over, a rationale for trilateral security cooperation among the three countries has been significantly decreased. Now, the focus has moved to dealing with factors of regional instability. In the Northeast Asian context, it is North Korean issues that matter most.

In order to ensure its regime survival and to overcome ever-deteriorating economic situations such as shortage of food and energy in the middle of international isolation and sanctions, North Korea has developed its nuclear program and conducted test-launches of missiles. In addition, North Korea has continued to build up asymmetrical conventional forces, such as submarines and special operation forces, threatening peace on the Korean peninsula and stability in the region.

On the other hand, Japan has begun to share a real sense of urgency on North Korean issues with the ROK and the US, only after a crisis unfolded on the Korean peninsula as North Korea declared its intention to withdraw from Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and allegedly tried to develop nuclear weapons in 1993. In particular, as North Korea test-launched the Taepodong-1 missile which flew over Japan in August 1998, and a North Korean spy-boat violated the Japanese territorial sea in March 1999, Japan began to recognize North Korean provocations as direct threats to its national security.

It was against these backgrounds that bilateral defense cooperation between the ROK and Japan began to progress rapidly and extensively in mid-1990s. Defense ministerial meetings and working-level government officials meetings were initiated in 1994, followed by security dialogues between the two governments in 1998. There also followed a variety of exchanges and more extensive cooperation at the military service-to-service level between the two countries, in terms of mutual friendly visits, education, seminars, and symposia.

In addition, practical improvements began to appear in bilateral naval cooperation between the two countries. A cruise training unit from the ROK Navy, for the first time in its history, visited Tokyo in December 1994, followed by a return visit by the Japan Maritime Self Defense Force (hereafter JMSDF) in September 1996, to Busan, Korea. The ROK navy and JMSDF conducted a bilateral search and rescue exercise in the south east off Jeju island in August 1999. It was the first field exercise conducted jointly in the history of the ROK and Japan.

Over the last two decades, the ROK, the US, and Japan have clearly shared concerns over security threats from North Korea but have failed to maintain an effective trilateral security cooperation mechanism for the following two reasons.⁹ First, differences in national priorities were a major stumbling block to closer defense cooperation. The ROK was preoccupied mainly with its defense against conventional threats from the North. The US was more concerned about the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) such as North Korea's nuclear weapons and long range missiles.¹⁰ Japan put more emphasis on North Korea's development of missiles and kidnapping issues.

Secondly, with the Cold-War over, the three countries noted trilateral cooperation should not be pursued in ways that would create a new confrontational structure in the regional power balance. In short, trilateral cooperation might be perceived as an effort to isolate China.¹¹ Then, deeper defense cooperation might prove counterproductive.

For the US, a confrontational policy vis-a-vis China was not appealing at a time when it had to wage the war against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan, and, at the same time, had to deal with severe economic troubles.

On the other hand, the ROK and Japan were not in a position to assume a hostile policy vis-a-vis China, either. Above all, the two nations wanted to avoid being caught in the rivalry between Beijing and Washington. Economically, China was, and still is, the largest trade partner for them.¹² While it was very important for the ROK to bolster the ROK-US alliance, Seoul did not wish to neglect its relations with China.¹³

Dramatic 2010

From the perspective of Northeast Asian security, 2010 was a pivotal year. In the midst of a series of belligerent actions by North Korea, combined with a new assertiveness by China, manifested in its pursuit of national interests in the region, a new rationale has been developing for closer trilateral defense cooperation among the ROK, the US, and Japan.

Reckless Provocations by North Korea, Emboldened by China.

The sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyong-do in 2010 demonstrated the deep-rooted risks existing on the Korean peninsula. These provocative actions were very different, in nature, from those in the past.¹⁴ One was bold surprise attack against a ROK naval

ship operating within the ROK territorial sea. The other involved relentless shelling, not only against military units but also civilian sectors on Korean soil.

The Yeonpyong-do shelling, in particular, was considered one of the most serious provocations since the end of the Korean War. It broke out just months after the sinking of the *Cheonan* which took the lives of 46 South Korean sailors. These hostilities were seen as evidence that the deterrent effect of the ROK-US combined defense system was somewhat insufficient in dealing with North Korean provocations.¹⁵ They also posed the challenge of managing Chinese reactions to ROK-US efforts to enhance their security alliance.¹⁶

In addition, North Korea revealed an industrial-scale uranium enrichment plant in November 2010. The revelation showed that North Korea was pursuing a second route to build and perhaps proliferate nuclear weapons, in addition to its existing plutonium-based weapons.

On the other hand, China became more assertive in pursuit of its national interests. China showed its one-sided support of North Korea in the *Cheonan* incident. It also attempted to stop the ROK-US combined military exercise, designed to show the ROK's will to respond to future North Korean attacks in the Yellow Sea. Especially, China's blocking of ROK efforts to secure a strong UN condemnation of North Korea for the Yeonpyong-do artillery shelling severely damaged ROK-Sino political relations.

In addition, China showed a more assertive attitude than ever before in the territorial dispute with Japan surrounding the Senkaku (Diaoyu in Chinese) Islands in September 2009.¹⁷ China's aggressive actions were again shown in Beijing's claims over almost all of the South China Sea at the international forum. China's naval expansion and its pursuit of the so-called strategy of anti-access and area denial began to make a big impact on the stability and maritime security of the region.

New Defense Requirements in a New Security Environment

Eventually, measures must be taken to stop North Korean provocations, and, at the same time, to deter the ever-increasing assertiveness of China. As a result, the following three actions are required: a more proactive deterrence strategy vis-a-vis North Korean provocations, supplementary measures to fill the gap in the ROK-US combined defense posture, as revealed in 2010 North Korean

provocations, and a need for a closer ROK-US-Japan defense cooperation.

First, in response to the 2010 North Korean hostilities, angry public opinion in South Korea demanded that the ROK government not allow further military provocation by the North without a more effective response. It is widely believed that only strong retaliations are able to stop further provocations by the North, although they carry with them risks of potential escalation.

Consequently, Seoul adopted a 'proactive deterrence' doctrine in defense reform. In explaining the new doctrine, ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Kwan-Jin stated "if the enemy attacks our people and territory again, I will use force to punish the enemy to make sure it does not even dare to think about it again. The enemy should be punished thoroughly until the source of provocation is eliminated."¹⁸

Second, the ROK and the US should demonstrate the credibility of the ROK-US alliance, reassuring South Korea public opinion that the combined defense posture is still capable of deterring the North.¹⁹ Therefore, at the 42nd ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) held in Washington DC, October 8 2010, the two countries agreed to institutionalize an Extended Deterrence Policy Committee to serve as a mechanism to enhance the effectiveness of extended deterrence.²⁰ Moreover, the ROK and the US agreed to complete a joint military operational plan to prepare against potential North Korean provocations. Previously, only ROK forces responded to North Korean provocations. The joint plan is expected to help the ROK obtain US assistance if needed.²¹

Last but not least, the provocations of North Korea in 2010 provided a context that justified a more meaningful security cooperation among the ROK, the US, and Japan. North Korean provocations have now become major threats, not only to the ROK-US alliance but to Japan. It has also become clear that the securities of the three countries are interdependent.

Closer trilateral cooperation enhances deterrence against the North and ensures that the policy of each country is well coordinated and cannot be manipulated by Pyongyang in its efforts to exploit any fissures. Deeper security cooperation is also necessary to attain a complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and, thereby, to contribute to regional peace and stability.²² Moreover, it could provide a

platform to solving the North Korean problems in the absence of meaningful results from the Six-Party talks.²³

Also, by bolstering trilateral security cooperation, the three countries need to show a sense of solidarity amid increased tensions caused by increased Chinese maritime activities in the region. Tighter trilateral security cooperation also puts indirect pressure on Beijing to hold Pyongyang accountable for its hostile actions.

That being the case, however, it is crucial for the three countries to maintain close and collaborative relations with China.²⁴ Deeper trilateral cooperation will be almost certainly seen by China as an effort by the three countries to contain its growing influence in the region. As a result, the Northeast Asian region could face division into two camps, ROK-US-Japan versus China-North Korea.²⁵ To avoid such an eventuality, trilateral cooperation must be designed solely to meet North Korean challenges. At the same time, it should be crafted as a catalyst of cooperation that engages China in the international security system.

After all, the ultimate purpose of more meaningful defense cooperation is to respond to common security issues like North Korean problems, maritime issues, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (hereafter HA/DR), and to engage China in multilateral efforts for regional security. To the extent that China supports long-term stability in Northeast Asia, it should welcome any effort that will improve peace and security in the region.

Against this background, there appeared renewed enthusiasm for security policy coordination, trilateral security cooperation, and symbolic solidarity among the ROK, the US, and Japan in preparation against North Korean full-scale aggression, provocations, and possible contingencies.²⁶ In July, officers from JMSDF observed ROK-US military exercises, and in December, 2011, ROK military officers observed Japan-US exercises.²⁷ Foreign ministers from the three countries also gathered in Washington D.C., on December 6, 2010, and agreed to build on mutual bilateral responsibilities to deal more effectively with common security threats from North Korea.²⁸

Ways Ahead for Trilateral Naval Cooperation

Which way, then, should future trilateral naval cooperation be headed? Without doubts, it should be promoted in a way that will contribute to deterring the North Korean threat, namely all-out war and provocations, and, at the same time, to addressing potential North

Korean instability, and to facilitating multilateral cooperation for the maritime security of the region. Which aspect, then, should the ROK address? The following three categories are most urgently needed for trilateral naval cooperation: sea-borne missile defense (hereafter MD) and Proliferation Strategy Initiative (hereafter PSI), anti-submarine warfare (hereafter ASW) and mine warfare (hereafter MIW), and preparation for contingencies in North Korea.

Seaborne-MD and PSI

North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles pose the most serious and direct threats to the three countries. North Korea's arsenal of SCUD, Nodong, and Taepodong ballistic missiles can deliver conventional, chemical, or biological warheads to targets throughout Asia, putting at risk at least tens of thousands of lives. During wartime, North Korea may try to attack Japan with missiles loaded with chemical warheads in order to achieve its political objectives, for example, escalation of war into a regional conflict with the involvement of China and Russia, in hopes of securing a cease-fire with favorable terms.

Also, in peacetime, North Korea might launch its missiles at any time as a part of brinkmanship tactics in order to draw more attention to its need for economic aid from outside. An inability to defend against the North Korean missile threats leaves neighboring countries more vulnerable to North Korean intimidation.²⁹ Closer collaboration on MD, therefore, is needed to deter a North Korean attack.³⁰

This is not to propose that the ROK should join a regional MD system with the US and Japan. Rather, it is to say that as the three navies possess Aegis capabilities now, the potential for trilateral cooperation increases in the field of seaborne-MD.³¹ Potential areas of cooperation are in intelligence collection and sharing, battlefield management C4I, and tactical synchronization.³²

Pursuing closer cooperation in naval MD area, the three countries could defeat any future North Korean missile attack, protect vital US military capabilities based in Japan or Guam, minimize the risk that an intentional North Korean provocation could lead to an all-out war, and help prevent Japan from taking an independent response. Such cooperation would also be an effective way to augment nascent trilateral defense among the three countries.³³ Furthermore, by promoting trilateral MD cooperation and exercises, the three countries could develop enhanced information sharing and joint C2 capabilities.

On the other hand, another important subset of maritime security cooperation is the PSI, the ongoing international effort to share information and interdict weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The ROK officially joined the PSI in the aftermath of the sinking of the *Cheonan* in May 2009. Closer cooperation and active participation in PSI would not only cultivate trust among the ROK, Japan, and the US, but it would also increase the chances of stopping North Korean proliferation.³⁴ At the same time, it would facilitate multilateral cooperation for maritime security among nations in the region.

ASW and MIW

Regardless of wartime or peacetime, trilateral cooperation in ASW and MIW deserves the most attention of the three navies, given North Korea's submarines threats. In wartime, before an all-out war might begin, North Korean submarines would likely covertly infiltrate and ambush ROK's vital SLOCs and major sea ports, in particular those that pass through and are located between the ROK and Japan off the ROK's southeast coast.³⁵ They, then, might attempt to escape after laying mines set up to operate at the commencement of hostilities. The objective of this specific operation would be to deny US augmentation of its forces' after the outbreak of war. This explains why North Korea possesses 70 submarines and midget submarines as the primary means of an asymmetric strategy.³⁶

In peacetime North Korea submarines can also act provocatively in seas off major ports. Imagine a situation in which a merchant ship is sunk by a mine in the vicinity of Busan, the biggest commercial sea port. Busan would then be immediately closed and shipments into and out of ROK would suffer serious damage, with grave impact on the national economy. Mine sweeping operations would require significant time and efforts to succeed. It would also be difficult to identify the source and perpetrator of provocation. North Korea will very much likely deny categorically its involvement, as witnessed in the sinking of the *Cheonan*. This is to say that even a single mine, if planted by the North, could create a serious crisis situation with a significant impact on almost all aspects of ROK society.

The problem is that the ROK Navy alone cannot deal with a North Korean submarine threat.³⁷ It does not have sufficient intelligence on when and where North Korean submarines might infiltrate. It also has limited ASW assets for the protection of the SLOCs around the major

harbors and the vital waters near the Korean Strait. Also, an insufficient number of US naval assets are permanently stationed around South Korea's vital sea lanes.

It is, therefore, necessary for the three countries to work together to conduct effective ASW and MIW in case of an emergency. In particular, MIW operations in the Korean and Tsushima straits should be planned and conducted trilaterally or bilaterally with the ROK and US Navies, and JMSDF³⁸ because these locations are strategic choke points essential for the augmentation forces' flow. The three navies should then collaborate, even share if necessary, forces required for the protection of the vital seas and sea lanes. In particular, Japan is in a good position to cooperate as it has great MIW capabilities.³⁹ Sharing intelligence on underwater targets, joint education and exercises in this specific area can further facilitate cooperation among the three navies.

Preparation for Instabilities inside North Korea

Finally, the three countries have to pursue a more positive naval cooperation in preparation for contingencies initiated by North Korea, especially in terms of non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO), and in dealing with massive numbers of refugees.

In case of evacuating Japanese citizens from the ROK, it may require Japan Self Defense Force assets to be used in the event of a crisis on the Korean peninsula. In addition, it would need permission from the ROK government to allow JDSF aircraft and vessels to enter ROK in NEO scenarios. The Japanese Government also needs information on possible non-combatant assembly points, facilities for sheltering evacuees, and airports and ports.

More cooperation in this regard would not only improve mutual trust between the ROK and Japan but would facilitate the successful execution of any ROK-US combined plans. Additionally, the three countries need to prepare for HA/DR to a large-scale influx of North Korean refugees in contingencies involving North Korea.

So far, this article has proposed three areas of new naval cooperation among the three countries. To further this cooperation, it will be necessary for the three governments to assess how their bilateral alliances may be better coordinated, and, in some cases, integrated at the operational level in order to achieve the desired objectives.⁴⁰ Following up on these efforts, the three countries ultimately need to develop trilateral contingency plans for deterrence, defense and crisis

management as hallmarks of their determination to respond jointly to North Korean provocations. However, if the circumstances do not allow immediate measures for follow-up actions, the three countries should put much effort into building multilateral cooperation mechanisms for regional security. This leads to trilateral naval cooperation for regional maritime security.

Cooperation for Regional Maritime Security

The three countries must prepare for deterring and responding effectively to various situations in Northeast Asia. To this end, naval cooperation, such as combined search and rescue, anti-piracy operations, HA/DR, can play a potentially important role. Moreover, the navies of the three nations should expand trilateral cooperation during international/multilateral security missions such as anti-piracy operations off Somalia.

Trilateral cooperation of the three navies for regional maritime security can achieve three crucial objectives. First, naval cooperation can evolve into a multilateral cooperation framework for regional security. Second, in so doing, the framework can engage China in the process of cooperation and encourage China to behave as a responsible member of the international community. Finally, the framework arrangement may influence China to act in a more transparent manner within a stable regional security mechanism that eliminates any doubt over the Korean peninsula and North Korean instability.

Conclusion

As argued in this article, strengthened trilateral cooperation among the ROK, the US, and Japan could prove effective in deterring further provocations from the North, and preparing for potential instabilities during the period of political transitioning North Korea. At the same time, tighter trilateral defense cooperation can deter China's one-sided support toward North Korea in any future provocations by the North. It also puts indirect pressure on Beijing to hold Pyongyang accountable for its hostile actions.

Given the asymmetric threats from the North, in particular, trilateral naval cooperation in the future should be focused on the following three categories: sea-borne MD and PSI, ASW and MIW, and preparation for contingencies in North Korea. Furthermore, the three navies should put more effort into regional maritime security activities, such as HA/DR

and anti-piracy. Doing so is a way to contribute to the building of multilateral cooperative mechanisms for maritime security in the region.

The three navies should also try to engage China in efforts for regional maritime security. It provides opportunities for China to assume responsible roles in the international community. It can also restrain potential naval conflicts by encouraging the People's Liberation Army Navy (hereafter PLAN) to control itself militarily. Moreover, it can be a good opportunity for PLAN to improve transparency, and facilitate confidence building through cooperation with other navies in the region. In other words, it is necessary for the three navies to lead PLAN to create 'habits of cooperation.'⁴¹

After all, it can be said that the future maritime security of the region depends on how to engage China in the international security system. In this context, stronger naval cooperation among the ROK, the US, and Japan is more significant and urgent than ever before.

Notes:

¹ *Trilateral Naval Cooperation : Japan-US-Korea*, Workshop II Report, jointly sponsored by the Center for Naval Analyses, the Korean Institute for Defense Analysis, and the Okazaki Institute, 1998, May, p. 3.

² For more, See Yoichi Hirama, "Japan's Value in the Korean War Issues surrounding the Dispatch of Minesweepers," <http://www.okazaki-inst.jp/minesweep.hirama.html>. As a Korean reference, see Jung, Ho-Sub, *Maritime Power and US-Japan Security Relations : Nature of US Control Measures against Japan* (Seoul: Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy, 2001), pp. 235-7.

³ In fact, the ROK-US alliance and the US-Japan alliance are inseparable as the US bases in Japan serve as a staging area for US operational actions in a Korean contingency. Therefore, it can be said that the bilateral security cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul is an indispensable factor in support of the ROK-US combined defense posture on the Korean peninsula. Also, as they share common interests in peace and security in the region, they could be seen as a strategic alliance, composed of the two bilateral alliances. Hyeran Jo, Jongryn Mo, "Does the United States Need a New East Asian Anchor?: A Case for US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism," *Asia Policy*, No. 9 (January 2010), pp. 69-71.

⁴ Japan's main attention was directed at the Soviet Union while the ROK's top concerns have been preventing and defending an attack from the North. Because of these distractions, the two countries have not been ready to coordinate their efforts on security matters.

⁵ Hyeran Jo, Jongryn Mo, "Does the United States Need a New East Asian Anchor ? : A Case for US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism," pp. 71, 74.

⁶ Team Spirit was an annual field maneuver exercise initiated in 1976 in order to deter North Korean war provocations and fortify ROK-US security cooperation. Team Spirit was usually held in late March to evaluate and improve cooperation between the ROK and US forces. In the maritime aspect, the exercise was mainly to conduct airlift operations of personnel and equipment, in augmentation of the forces in the ROK, from the CONUS and the US bases in Japan. At the same time, the two navies conducted amphibious operations and anti-submarine warfare (ASW) operations against North Korean submarines on the sideline of carrier task force operations. The exercise was held between 1976 and 1993. <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/team-spirit.htm>

⁷ The RIMPAC, firstly held in 1971, has been and still is the world's largest international maritime exercise. The purpose of the exercise is to enhance interoperability between Pacific Rim armed forces, as a means of promoting stability in the region. It is viewed as key to military readiness in case of potential armed conflict, such as threats from North Korea against the ROK, the US, and Japan. Participants conduct exercises in ship-sinking and torpedo usage. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RIMPAC>

⁸ The International SLOC Group was created in the early 1980s to research, discuss, and publish papers on SLOCs issues, making a major contribution to understanding the importance of regional maritime cooperation on SLOC protection issues. Fifteen international conferences have been held, with eleven books published. Current members represent: Australia, Canada, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, the ROK, Taiwan, and the US. <http://slocgroup.org/>

⁹ After the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1994, the three nations began to ad hoc high-level meeting to discuss collaboration on the North Korean issue. In the aftermath of North Korea's Taepodong missile launch in August 1998 and the Perry Process, the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) was created in 1999. TCOG, however, ceased to function by the beginning of the George W. Bush Administration. Six-Party Talks, which began in 2003, further undermined trilateral relations among the three countries.

¹⁰ Between the ROK and the US, policy differences on the North were sometimes obstacles to closer bilateral defense cooperation, as manifested in the Sunshine policy of the Kim Dae Jung and Rho Moo-Hyun governments on the one hand, and a hard-line policy against North Korea's nuclear policy by the Bush administration, on the other.

¹¹ Hyeran Jo, Jongryn Mo, "Does the United States Need a New East Asian

Anchor ?," p. 86.

¹² The ROK-China and Japan-China bilateral trade peaked at around US\$ 207.2 and 297.8 respectively s of 2010. <http://www.uschina.org/statistics/tradetable.html>

¹³ There are several reasons to do so. First, the ROK and China maintain close cooperation in political, economic, and cultural aspects, as "strategic cooperation partners" since 2008. Based on the North Korea-China Mutual Support Treaty of 1961, China can interrupt ROK-US combined forces in case of an emergency on the Korean peninsula. In doing so, China can act in a decisive role in any reunification of the two Koreas. Furthermore, China is the only country with some leverage over North Korea through its massive economic, in particular, food and energy, aid programs. Lastly, China has been leading the Six-Party Talks to resolve the nuclear issue of North Korea.

¹⁴ Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "Cheonan and Yeonpyong : the Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations," *The RUSI Journal*, vol. 156, no. 2 (April/May 2011), pp. 74-81.

¹⁵ Ryo Sahashi, "North Korea: Why is Seoul and Tokyo Cooperation Necessary ?," *East Asia Forum*, February 9th, 2011, p. 3. <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/02/09/north-korea-why-seoul-tokyocooperation>

¹⁶ Scott Snyder and See-won Byun, "Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: the Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations," p. 78.

¹⁷ When a Chinese fishing boat collided with two Japanese Coast Guard cutters in September near the Senkaku islands in the East China Sea, Japan seized the Chinese boat. China demanded not only the return of the ship and its crew, but adopted what appeared to be retaliatory actions. They took four Japanese businessmen in China into custody for allegedly entering a restricted military facility without proper authorization, and suspended exports of rare earth metals which are vital to the manufacture of a number of high-tech products in Japan.

¹⁸ Quoted in Rhee Sang-Woo, "From Defense to Deterrence: The Core of Defense Reform plan 307," *CSIS Korea Chair Platform*, <http://www.csis.org/program/korea-chair>.

¹⁹ In addition, Secretary Robert Gates reaffirmed the continued US commitment to provide and strengthen extended deterrence for the ROK, using the full range of military capabilities, to include the US nuclear umbrella, conventional strikes, and missile defense capabilities. "Joint Communique, The 42nd ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting," *2010 Defense White Paper*, (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2011), p. 393.

²⁰ 2010 Defense White Paper, p. 393.

²¹ <http://english.yonhannews.co.kr/national/2011/09/19/85/0301000000AEN201109190040500315F.HTML>

²² Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, "Toward a Deeper and Broader US-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership," *Media Note*, Office of the Spokesperson, Washington, DC, June 21, 2011, US Department of State. <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/06/166597.htm>

²³ Because a closer security cooperation among the three countries can lead the North to abandon its tactics of brinkmanship by means of nuclear weapons, missile development, and military provocations with asymmetric capabilities, and instead, adopt reform and open policies, and ultimately to fully engage in the international community.

²⁴ Editorial, *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, June 22, 2011.

²⁵ Ryo Sahashi, "North Korea: Why is Seoul and Tokyo Cooperation Necessary?," p. 3.

²⁶ Former Japanese Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs has proposed that trilateral cooperation should include the formulation of full-fledged contingency planning for the defense of ROK in the event of North Korean aggression and non-military aspects such as coping with refugee flows. Quoted in Ryo Sahashi, "North Korea: Why is Seoul and Tokyo Cooperation Necessary?," p. 3.

²⁷ Admiral Michael Mullen, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, called it "a terrific first step to broadening our trilateral relationship and deepening our collective readiness." Briefing by Admiral Mullen on US National Security Strategy, 25 July, 2011, <http://jjpdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2011/07/20110726110248su0.6132733.htm>

²⁸ Trilateral Statement Japan, ROK, and the US, Washington D.C., December 6, 2010. http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/juk_js1012.html

²⁹ The ROK is currently building, under the plan of Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), a low-tier missile shield by purchasing eight batteries (48 missiles) of older German Patriot-2 missiles and fielding Aegis destroyers, but without theater ballistic missile capability. Bruce Klingner, "The Case for Comprehensive Missile Defense in Asia," *The Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* # 2506 (January 7, 2011), <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/01/the-case-for-comprehensive-missile-defense-in-asia>.

³⁰ Michael Auslin and Christopher Griffin, "Time for Trilateralism?," *American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research Outlooks & On the Issues*, March 6, 2008, p. 4.

³¹ For more on this theme, see Bruce Klingner, "The Case for Comprehensive Missile Defense in Asia."

³² Yoji Koda, "Threats from North Korea and Trilateral Cooperation of ROK, US and Japan for Maritime Security," in *The Security Environment of the Korean Peninsula and Direction for Development of ROK Navy*, the 10th International Sea Power Symposium, hosted by ROK Navy, KIMS, and SLOC Study Group-Korea, September 2010, p. 21.

³³ Auslin and Griffin, "Time for Trilateralism?," p. 4, and Bruce Klingner, "The Case for Comprehensive Missile Defense in Asia."

³⁴ Auslin and Griffin, "Time for Trilateralism?," p. 4.

³⁵ Ho-Sub Jung, "ROK's Strategy on the Security of SLOCs," in *The Security of the Sea Lanes of Communication in East Asia* (Seoul: Korea Institute of Maritime Strategy, 2007), p. 486.

³⁶ Of course, North Korean submarines can attack surface ships and infiltrate the ROK, carrying out special operation forces. *2010 Defense White Paper*, p. 31.

³⁷ Ho-Sub Jung, "ROK's Strategy on the Security of SLOCs," p. 505.

³⁸ Yoji Koda, "Threats from North Korea and Trilateral Cooperation of ROK, US and Japan for Maritime Security," p. 24.

³⁹ According to 2010 Military Balance, Japan possesses one flotilla of minesweeper unit, composed of 32 minesweeping ships and 9 minesweeping helos(MH-53E). *The Military Balance 2010* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 409-10.

⁴⁰ Auslin and Griffin, "Time for Trilateralism?," p. 3.

⁴¹ Quoted in Jung, Ho-Sub, "PLA Navy's Build-up and ROK-US Naval Cooperation," in *PLA Navy Build-up and ROK-US Navy Cooperation* (Seoul: The Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy, 2009), p. 474.