

Does the United States Need a New East Asian Anchor?: A Case for US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism

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“I believe this tripartite cooperation will endure into the future, and be applied to other problems in the region, as well.”

*William Perry,
Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee,
Washington, DC, October 12, 1999*

I. Introduction: A New Rationale for Trilateral Partnership

Trilateralism among the United States, Japan and Korea has significantly contributed to the peace and security of East Asia in the last fifty years. The most important links in the US-Japan-Korea triangle are the US’s bilateral alliances with Japan and South Korea. But trilateralism has been important in issue areas such as policy coordination regarding North Korea. Building on this success, the United States, Japan, and Korea are looking to improve their trilateral cooperative mechanisms.

The benefits of trilateralism seem obvious. As traditional allies, the United States, South Korea and Japan are natural partners for promoting peace and security in East Asia. They also share core values of democracy and freedom, making them indispensable pillars of an open East Asian region. Neither does there seem to be a clear better alternative. To the extent that East Asian community-building requires a sub-regional anchor, it is hard to think of a better anchor than the United States-Japan-Korea sub-region. It is, therefore, important to review the concept and history of trilateralism among the United States, Japan and South Korea and to explore ways to expand and deepen it as a positive force in the building of an open and peaceful East Asian region. Of particular interest is an examination of the impact of governmental changes in the three countries on the future of trilateralism. Japan and South Korea have new conservative governments in place, while the United States now has a new administration as of January 2009.

But the future success of US-Japan-Korea trilateralism is not assured. First, both the US-ROK alliance and the US-Japan alliance have shown signs of strain in recent years. Second, the three

¹ Previous versions of this paper were presented at the workshops held at Yonsei University (July 30, 2008) and at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University (December 4, 2008). Special thanks to Michael Armacost, Seohyun Park, T.J. Pempel, Harry Rowen, and Gi-Wook Shin.

countries have not been successful in articulating a new rationale for trilateralism in the presence of competing ideas.

While we advocate the potential benefits of trilateralism, we also recognize the potential obstacles that may hinder the development of trilateral relations in light of recent political and economic developments.² Economic downturn may result in less attention to Northeast Asia, as the agenda has to compete with other policy priorities domestic and abroad. The financial crunch may also lead to defense cuts, which may mean less resource for alliance relations. Economic hardship simultaneously affects economic relations, pulling political efforts away from multilateral cooperation. The mounting domestic opposition both in US Congress and Korean National Assembly to KORUS FTA may just be one of the obstacles reflecting protectionist backlashes.

Given domestic leadership changes and fluid regional security dynamics, now is an opportune moment to evaluate potential benefits of trilateral cooperation and consider what those changes portend for the trilateral relations. To this end, this introduction identifies what trilateralism is in the context of East Asian politics, analyzes the conditions where trilateralism can thrive, and provides theoretical and policy rationale as to why US-Japan-Korea may be the best political framework to promote Asian security and economic development. Presenting this work on trilateralism, we have a broad audience in mind – scholars that are interested in the diverse forms of cooperation, students interested in the possibility of regional cooperation in East Asia, and policymakers in the said three countries and beyond with the goals of stability and development in Asia.

We specifically focus on the following train of questions: 1) “why do we need US-Japan-Korea trilateralism in particular to promote stability and development in Asia?” 2) “what are the conditions for successful trilateral cooperation?” and 3) “what kind of specific policy measures are necessary to improve trilateral relations?” To answer these questions and to advance the argument that increased trilateralism will strengthen East Asian security and development, we proceed in several steps. We first define and review the historical pathways along which trilateral relations have developed in answering the first question concerning the special role of United States-Japan-Korea trilateral relations: given that other cooperative partnerships in the region are possible, what is distinctively important about the US-Japan-Korea triangle? To analyze the uniqueness of the US-Japan-Korea trilateral partnership, we examine alternative international groupings and compare them to our proposed mechanism. The second question we delve into concerns the conditions necessary for successful implementation of trilateralism. We argue that the current political climate in our three partner countries presents an opportune time to advance the political agenda of trilateralism. After establishing the need and timing of US-Japan-Korea trilateralism, we conclude by providing an outline for the overall project and summarizing policy recommendations.

² We thank Harry Rowen for these points.

II. Concept of US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism

Before we develop concrete policy proposals and strategies based on trilateralism, we provide the form and substance of trilateralism. We first consider a general definition of trilateralism, with attention to key characteristics and requirements. We then derive a typology of trilateral relations. Our discussion is primarily informed by the history of trilateralism and the consideration of contemporary patterns of trilateralism in practice.

Definition of Trilateralism

Trilateralism refers to “cooperative security behavior between three states or strategic polities to promote specific values and orders.”³ The definition focuses on three elements: the nature of the arrangement, the parties involved, and the goal of the arrangement. First, with regard to the nature of the interaction, trilateralism is defined to be cooperative behavior. It is a behavior that can be developed into institutionalized cooperative forms or practices. The cooperative behavior has historically been confined to the issue of security, but nowadays trilateralism can be extended to other domains such as economic development or the environment due to the close policy nexus among issue areas.⁴

Second, in terms of the actors involved, trilateralism is a policy forum among three states or strategic polities. This implies that trilateral relations are more than the sum of bilateral relations among the countries that are willing to cooperate. It also means that major actors share some predisposition to be strategic allies equipped with political will and capabilities.

The third element of the definition – common political goals and a shared strategic vision of regional or international order – lays out the necessary conditions for trilateral relations. The creation of trilateral relations requires the alignment of foreign policy interests, be they common threats or the establishment of regional/international order. The progenitor of modern trilateralism, the Trilateral Commission, is a case in point. It was formed by private citizens of the United States, Japan, and Europe, who shared the goal of together shouldering leadership responsibilities in the international system. The trilateral relations among the United States, Japan, and South Korea fit the proposed definition. These three countries have a history of coordination in security affairs; they are strategic allies with bilateral military alliances; and they share common interests in peace and security in the region.

Forms of Trilateralism: A Typology

³ Tow et al. 2007, p.24.

⁴ Recent international relations literature have produced many works in the inter-relationship or cross-cutting relationships among issue areas – ties between international trade and human rights; trade and security; trade and environment, etc.

Trilateral relations exist in any set of three countries if we look at all forms of interactions and exchanges among the three countries. Therefore, it is important to confine our analysis to formal trilateral relations, i.e., cooperative behaviors under formal bilateral or trilateral agreements.

We identify two main variables affecting forms of institutionalized trilateral relations: 1) the strength or circularity of bilateral relationships along the trilateral axis and 2) the choice of multilateral forum as the primary political venue used to foster trilateral relations. The countries in pursuing trilateralism first choose whether to use a hub-spoke system or a three-way mechanism. Under a hub-spoke system, two bilateral agreements are necessary to tie the three countries in a trilateral relationship. We call this system a structure with two-legs. Alternatively, the three countries can formalize their trilateral relations through a three-party agreement, resulting in a three-leg structure. The second variable of the venue choice is important because three countries can pursue a trilateral partnership embedded in a multilateral structure or independently of any multilateral framework.

Depending on the strength of bilateral relationships and the choice of a venue, trilateral mechanisms can be, at least in theory, divided into four types: 1) independent two-legs, 2) independent three-legs, 3) multilateral two-legs, and 4) multilateral three-legs. In practice, however, it is highly unlikely that multilateral two-legs will emerge and even if they do, they would not be a significant development because the problem of coordinating bilateral relationships is always present in a multilateral framework.

Table 1: Types of Trilateralism

		Strength of Bilateral Relations	
		Hub-and-Spoke	Three-party Agreement
Choice of Venue	Embedded in a Multilateral Framework	Multilateral two-legs (NA)	Multilateral three-legs (Trilateral summits on the APEC sidelines)
	Outside of a Multilateral Framework	Independent two-legs (The US-Japan and US-Korea alliances)	Independent three-legs (Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group , 1999-2002)

Trilateralism is more than the sum of bilateral relations and we view the three “probable” types as three evolutionary stages of trilateralism. Trilateralism can start with common historical experience based on bilateral relations. Such two-leg structure can branch out to three-leg structure. If the three-way relations mature, trilateralism in its fuller form can root itself in a broader regional framework. This typology does not include the subtleties of how trilateral relations are managed but nevertheless

provide a broad category of trilateralism, thereby shaping the discussion of how we view US-Japan-Korea trilateralism.

III. An Overview of United States-Japan-Korea Trilateral Relations

In this section, we review the existing practice of trilateral relations among the United States, Japan and Korea by examining the history of each type of trilateral relations introduced in Table 1, by offering up the examples of recent practice of trilateralism, and by providing the patterns and lessons drawn from the past experience. We first consider the trilateral relations among the US, Japan, and Korea, according to the typology of independent two-legs, independent three-legs, and multilateral three-legs.

1. **Independent Two-Legs**: Trilateral security relations between the US, Japan, and South Korea have often been depicted as the relationship between two strong legs and one weak leg. The relationship is embedded in bilateral relations between the US and Japan on the one hand, and the US and the ROK on the other.⁵ The US-Japan alliance has traditionally served as a linchpin of the Northeast Asian policy of the United States.⁶ The US-ROK alliance, albeit weakened gradually in recent years due to political tensions between the two countries,⁷ has been a strong one. As a matter of policy, the crucial question is whether this status quo policy has a sufficiently strong rationale to be maintained. Some scholars and policymakers have advocated the continuation or consolidation of current policies—a view most articulately propounded by Cossa (1999). He characterized the tripartite relationship as a “virtual alliance.” According to this view, the trilateral partnership will not take the form of a formal alliance, but instead of a virtual one where the three countries build on the two antecedent bilateral partnerships, maintaining the U.S.’s alliances with Japan and Korea while also strengthening bilateral security cooperation between Tokyo and Seoul. Proponents of the continuation of such a “two-legged” approach point to the European experience where the key partnership between France and Germany developed into the supranational institution of the European Union. This approach is nevertheless cautious about any progress to be made toward a three-way relationship and ignores the fact that trilateralism is more than the sum of separate bilateral relations.
2. **Independent three-legs**: Examples of the three-leg structure include the Perry Process which led to the establishment of the Trilateral Oversight and Coordination Group (TCOG) and a Defense Trilateral. Officially established in 1999, TCOG was at that time touted as a successful example that led to the concerted foreign policy effort toward North Korea. TCOG originated from informal trilateral discussions among high-ranking government officials in 1992 in response to

⁵ See Cha 1999 for a scholarly effort to explain this phenomenon using alliance theory.

⁶ See the National Security Strategy of the United States 2006. For the current discussion on US-Japan alliance, see Armitage and Nye 2007.

⁷ See Park 2005 for political developments regarding the contemporary US-ROK alliance. See Snyder 2008b for the recent thorny security issues between the United States and South Korea, including whether Korea should join the American-led missile defense program and the Proliferation Security Initiative.

the first North Korean nuclear crisis; however, over time, it lost its political luster by primarily engaging junior-level officials. As another part of the Perry Process, a Defense Trilateral was pursued by defense ministries. This bureaucratic-level interagency coordination has its advantages in terms of establishing points of contact and also guarantees continued dialogue, unlike APEC summit meetings, whose political initiatives can quickly dissipate and fade away. In sum, the trilateral relations among the United States, Japan, and Korea have the history of independent three-legs, but such approach has been rather ad hoc, focusing on the problem of North Korea than providing the long-term vision for comprehensive cooperative issues.

3. Multilateral three-legs: Occasional summit meetings in APEC (Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation) among the leaders of United States, Japan and Korea are the best example of a trilateralism with multilateral three-legs. A trilateralism with multilateral three-legs is the most promising in the long run, since we view trilateral relations as part of broader, regional cooperative framework. In fact, this is what we are proposing as a policy matter for the US-Japan-Korea partnership: trilateral relations can operate as an anchor and can be further developed building the regional cooperative order. The political network among US-Japan-Korea can serve as a sub-grouping within broader cooperative regional partnerships. This not only consolidates the trilateral partnership but also provides a complementary cooperative mechanism in the region. Possible multilateral forums where US-Japan-Korea trilateralism has been at work but could be made stronger are the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).⁸

Table 2 provides the examples of existing mechanisms for trilateral interactions among the United States, Japan and Korea, broken down into issue areas of international security, economy and human rights. We intentionally include some interactions submerged in multilateral setting that are outside of the typology proposed in Table 1, since they serve as examples of the current status of regional cooperation, which can be further developed as the issues future trilateral relations can take up.

Table 2. Practice of United States-Japan-Korea Trilateral Cooperation

TRILATERALISM IN SECURITY ISSUES			
<i>Existing Mechanisms</i>	<i>Issues</i>	<i>Trilateralism Types</i>	<i>Notes/Assessments</i>
Republic of Korea – U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM); ROK-U.S. Military Committee Meeting (MCM) ⁹	Security environment in and around the Korean Peninsula, North Korea issue, Combined Force Command, anti-terrorism and counter-terrorism activities	Independent two-legs	Based on the US-Korea Mutual Defense Treaty 1954; Ministerial, yearly meetings, agenda changes depending on political circumstances

⁸ Track II security forums include the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and the Asia Security Conference (ASC). See Tsunekawa 2005 for the development and activities of these informal institutions.

⁹ SCM subcommittees (the Security Cooperation Committee (SCC), the Defense Technology and Industrial Cooperation Committee (DTICC), and the Logistics Cooperation Committee (LCC))

US-Japan Security Consultative Committee (SCC) ¹⁰	Realignment of US forces, counter-terrorism efforts, missile defense, coordination Japan's Self-Defense Forces (SDF) and the U.S. Armed Forces	Independent two-legs	Based on the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty of 1960; so-called "2+2 meeting" of the U.S. secretaries of State and Defense with their Japanese counterparts
Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG)	North Korea denuclearization	Independent three-legs	Established in 1999 by the Perry Report ¹¹
Six-party Talks	North Korea denuclearization	Multilateral	Talks opened in 2003; <i>ad hoc</i> form of multilateral diplomacy ¹²
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	Confidence-building and preventive diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region	Multilateral	Established in 1994, Not yet fully developed ¹³
TRILATERALISM IN ECONOMIC AFFAIRS			
Korea-US Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA)	Trade	Independent two-legs	Signed in 2007; Ratification within the US Congress uncertain
Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI)	Finance	Multilateral	Established in 1999 under ASEAN plus three, US is not a member; a step toward the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund (AMF), bilateral swap initiative
TRILATERALISM IN OTHER ISSUE AREAS			
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)	Human rights	Multilateral	Framework level with initiatives; at nascent development stage; mostly under the umbrella of UN agencies such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or UN Commission on Human Rights
North East Asian Sub-regional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC)	Environment	Multilateral	Established in 1993, US is not a member to this intergovernmental network of China, Japan, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Mongolia, Republic of Korea (ROK), and Russian Federation
World Bank or IMF	Governance and corruption	Multilateral	Influence through international institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF
COMMON MECHANISM ACROSS ISSUES			
Meeting of the Head of States between Japan and Korea	Various	Independent two-legs	Various years; so-called "shuttle diplomacy" the meetings cover issues such as youth exchange, or the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) ¹⁴
APEC Meeting	Various	Multilateral three-legs	Founded in 1989, APEC meeting agendas include issues such as climate change and corporate social responsibility; perceived to be weak in implementation

Two major patterns emerge from Table 2. First, existing mechanisms have been largely bilateral or multilateral. TCOG is one salient exception with the independent structure. The practice of trilateral relations has been either independent two-legs or comprehensively embedded in multilateral settings.

¹⁰ For the list of SCC agenda over time, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/index.html>

¹¹ See Schoff 2005 Appendix B for the complete listing of TCOG meeting chronology.

¹² See Schoff 2005 Appendix A for the select chronology on the North Korean nuclear issue.

¹³ See Kahler 2001; Tsunekawa 2005

¹⁴ For the complete listing of the exchanged visits between the heads of state, see <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/press/2008/4/0422.html>

For instance, based on bilateral military alliances, the United States has worked with South Korea and Japan individually. In multiple settings, the three countries have conducted diplomacy in a multilateral forum without explicit trilateral coordination. Second, we have not thus far observed active forms of trilateral initiatives to push truly multilateral agendas. The scope of issue under TCOG was confined to North Korea issues. Also, even when the leaders of the three countries meet on the sidelines of the APEC Summit Meeting, they usually discuss issues of common interest, not related to APEC agendas. This indicates the need for the discussion on the longer-term vision, potentially beyond the security issues, by strengthening the trilateral relations among the three countries.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the episodes of trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan and Korea have been significant, even though small in number. The development holds important lessons for the future of trilateralism. The evidence demonstrates the need for multilateral three-leg trilateral relations – the trilateralism embedded in regional cooperative framework. As the cooperation issues are becoming ever more comprehensive, the bilateral hub-and-spoke relations have limited capacity to tackle emerging issues such as human rights and the environment, not to mention effective coordination in security issues. In sum, all three types of trilateral cooperation – independent two-legs, independent three-legs, and multilateral three-legs – have been present in the history of interaction among three countries. Based on this review of past and current trilateral relations, we suggest that the multilateral three-legs would be the most desirable form of trilateral relations in attaining the goal of stability and development of the Asian region in the future. Historically, the relationship based on the independent two-legs has been most salient with a couple of attempts of independent three-legs, but multilateral three-leg has the most potential to further the interests of region.

IV. Why US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism?

US-Japan-Korea Trilateral Partnership vs. Alternative Groupings

Trilateralism is certainly a means, not an end, and it is important to make it clear what the end of trilateralism is. To us, US-Japan-Korea trilateralism should be ultimately justified as an anchor for or motor of East Asian integration. In East Asia, multilateral regional order has been slow to develop and one reason is that East Asian multilateralism has lacked a strong sub-regional anchor.

Many scholars and practitioners suggest that political heterogeneity in Asia prevent coherent and deep multilateral cooperation. One important strand in the relevant literature attempts to explain how and why the cooperation in East Asia is organized as such. The first line of work tries to solve the puzzle of why multilateralism did not emerge in East Asia. The answers point to a variety of possible causes, including the remnants of the San Francisco system¹⁵; a “hub-and-spoke” series of bilateral alliance relations stemming from lack of common identity in the post WWII period¹⁶; political

¹⁵ Koo and Agarwal 2008.

¹⁶ Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002.

heterogeneity or historical animosity¹⁷; and the idea that multilateralism is often seen as instrumental and strategic, as “means to other ends.”¹⁸

Given the absence of significant multilateralism in East Asia, scholars have ruminated about possible bilateral or triangular relationships with different core states that could meaningfully replace or complement the multilateral structure. Many scholars identify the leadership role of the United States as the key factor in determining which forms of cooperation will emerge in the region.¹⁹ Besides the question of leadership and of who counts as a “core” state, the scope of membership—whether membership should be open or closed—is also a critical matter in deciding which cooperative framework to pursue.

We argue that trilateralism does not necessarily undermine multilateralism and can actually be woven into a broader multilateral forum. Modern day trilateralism also is not necessarily confined to the security realm; it can be extended to many other issue areas such as governance, cultural or social issues. As a result, we place trilateral relations within a comprehensive regional order and claim that trilateralism becomes meaningful only when it becomes an anchor for a broader regional order. By “anchor” we mean a solid political alliance with the goal of promoting regional peace and security. An example of a “model” anchor is the Franco-German relationship as it existed through the inception and early stages of the European integration.²⁰ The Franco-German relationship exemplifies the tight connection between the existence of an anchor and the success of regionalism. The relationship has been cited as a “motor” or “engine” of the EU integration.²¹ In this case, bilateral relations were based on well-developed communication channels that permeated every-day politics²² and that also connected France and Germany to the Atlantic Alliance on matters pertaining to NATO as well as other items of mutual political interest.²³

We want to apply the idea of anchoring to East Asia, and to the Asian region more broadly. If European integration has been anchored by the German-French partnership, one must ask which relationship in Asia might be able to anchor regional cooperation. Which country is willing and capable of providing leadership for Asian regionalism? The literature on East Asian regionalism²⁴ reveals that the development of political alliances has been rather haphazard and there is no core anchor given the web of bilateral relations. Given this historical development, we argue that there is no better candidate than the US-Japan-Korea triangle to serve as the anchor for East Asian regionalism in the future. By examining the alternative regional groupings to US-Japan-Korea trilateralism in the next section, we demonstrate the feasibility and practicability of the proposed trilateral relations as an anchor to Asian regionalism.

Alternatives to US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism

¹⁷ Oh 2003; Solingen 2005.

¹⁸ Kahler 2000.

¹⁹ Cha 1999.

²⁰ Leading works on the Franco-German relations in the EU, see Simonian 1985; Schmidt 1993; Webber 1999.

²¹ Thus goes the famous quote of French President Giscard d'Estaing (1974-1981): “Germany and France agree, *Europe makes progress*; wherever they are divided, *Europe marks time* (re-quoted from Webber 1999, p.4)”

²² Webber 1999, p.2-4.

²³ Schmidt 1993.

²⁴ Key volumes on this topic include Ikenberry and Mastanduno (2003), Katzenstein (2005), Katzenstein and Shiraishi (1997), Pempel (2004), and Shambaugh (2005).

Why do we need a US-Japan-Korea trilateral relationship? Is it necessary to promote it as the instrument for regional order? To answer these questions, we compare eight alternative anchoring mechanisms in the region suggested by the literature: 1) US unilateralism, 2) US-China, 3) US-Japan, 4) US-Japan-China, 5) US-Japan-Australia, 6) US-Japan-India, 7) Korea-Japan-China, and 8) ASEAN-US-China. We discuss each grouping in turn.

1) US unilateralism: Historically, the United States has shaped the regional order in Asia.²⁵ The argument for US unilateralism would crucially assume the robustness of American power. Now that US dominance is in decline, political observers question whether US unilateralism is possible.²⁶ Some observers even suggest that any attempt at unilateral management of Asia may be counter-productive.²⁷

2) US-China: The strongest proponent of this anchor is Bergsten (2008). He proposed the G-2 as an institutional framework. The proposal is based on the argument that the United States has to embrace China as a responsible global partner to solve global problems. Given the historical record of how difficult it is to manage such competitive relations, it is difficult to imagine a G-2 alliance coming about in the near future. The most difficult question is whether China would be willing to accept that order.

3) US-Japan: The Armitage-Nye report (2007) makes a case for strong ties between US and Japan, arguing that this partnership would have a positive influence in Asia.

4) US-Japan-China: The proponents of this enhanced trilateral cooperation²⁸ arrangement argued that the post-Cold War regional order would be best managed by the three countries with the greatest capacity to bring about regional economic, political and military stability, particularly in the wake of recent economic turbulence and dangerous cross-strait relations. However, the feasibility of this trilateral relation in any institutionalized form in the foreseeable future is questionable.²⁹

5) Japan-China-Korea: Given their geographical proximity, Japan-China-Korea is suggested as an alternative anchor but it is not clear whether such trilateral relations would be appealing to the broader design of the United States regarding regional security. Also, the prospect of Japan and China forging a formal relationship is distant. Therefore, this trilateral arrangement looks unlikely in the short term, though scholars increasingly discuss its possibilities. As Japan-China relations enter into a rather stable phase³⁰ and as Korea's economic ties with China become closer,³¹ this trilateral relationship may

²⁵ Katzenstein 2005 notes that the American imperium has shaped Asian region, particularly in relation with the center of the region – Japan.

²⁶ Zakaria 2008 suggests that the US unilateralism is no longer sustainable.

²⁷ Armitage and Nye 2007; Mochizuki 2004 argues that US unilateralism would likely make Japan-China relations closer.

²⁸ See Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; USIP special report no.37.

²⁹ Armitage and Nye 2007 also notes the importance of this triangle relationship for regional security and stability but does not necessarily advocate the development of “trilateralism” among the three countries.

³⁰ Mochizuki in Shambaugh 2005

³¹ Shambaugh 2005, p.33.

become viable if US interest in the region declines. With China slowly assuming regional leadership in regional organizations such as in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and embarking on its project of military modernization,³² we cannot exclude the possibility of this trilateral relation emerging in the next decade or so. However, if we take the convergence of interests as a key prerequisite of trilateralism, then this trilateral configuration still has a long way to go.

6) US-Japan-Australia: This trilateral partnership is the most compelling alternative,³³ given recent developments. The Australia-Japan-US Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD) was inaugurated in September 2007³⁴; Japan and Australia signed the Japan-Australia Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in March 2007; and US-Australia and Japan-US are long-time unwavering allies. However, it is doubtful whether Australia will be willing to invest its political capital in the security matters of East Asia.

7) US-Japan-India: Given geographical reach, spanning South Asia and East Asia, this trilateral relationship is also seriously considered by scholars and practitioners.³⁵ The security ties between the US and India were demonstrated in the 2007 Nuclear Agreement. The ties between Japan and India have been forged by the Joint Statement towards India-Japan Strategic and Global Partnership signed in 2006. However, some uncertainty about the viability of this trilateral relationship stems from the foreign policy position of India. New Delhi has traditionally been cautious about the relationships with China as well as the United States, so it is difficult to imagine that India will align itself strictly with the United States.

8) ASEAN-US-China: This triangular relation is thought to be critical to maintaining the security in the region of ASEAN members.³⁶ However, the Southeast Asia region is easily a competitive forum for China and the United States, and therefore this trilateral partnership cannot provide a common vision for regional order.

Table 3 summarizes the eight groupings discussed above. The comparative evaluation of these alternative groupings indicates that US-Japan-Korea as an anchor is the most politically viable option and also the most feasible means to achieve the goal of regional stability and economic development in East Asia as well as in the Asian region more broadly. Compared to US-Japan or US-Japan-Australia, the US-Japan-Korea trilateral partnership is better suited because Korea provides leverage in the nuclear matter involving North Korea while providing a better prospect for economic cooperation based on its KORUS FTA. Several groupings fail the feasibility test. For instance, US-Japan-India may not be politically feasible because India may be reluctant to align explicitly and across the board with the United States when it has to maintain good relations with China. The US-China alternative seems unlikely in the near future, although the bilateral relationship between these countries will be crucial in coming decades. ASEAN-US-China could be a thorny partnership because it might sharpen the rivalry between China and US over

³² Shambaugh 2005, p.23-33.

³³ See Tow et al. 2007.

³⁴ Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Joint Statement at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/63411.htm>

³⁵ See for instance CICS 2007 report.

³⁶ Ott 1998.

ASEAN countries. For these reasons, the US-Japan-Korea trilateral alliance should be considered a serious alternative to the other designs. If developed properly and with adequate political resources, the proposed trilateral relations can be an example-setting anchor for East Asia and more broadly for Asian region. The trilateral relations can provide well-orchestrated security policies while proffering a long-term vision for the regional cooperative arrangement in the areas of economic affairs, human rights, and the environment.

Table 3. Alternative Regional Groupings

Alternative Trilateral Configuration	Source	Key Rationale (For or Against)
US unilateralism	Krauss and Pempel 2004*; Katzenstein 2005*	Declining US power; can be counter-productive if it produces negative reactions in other countries
US-China	Bergsten 2008	Strong need for continued coordination
US-Japan	Armitage and Nye 2007; Krauss and Pempel 2004*	Traditional allies in the East Asia region
US-Japan-China	Glosserman 2005; Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Armitage & Nye 2007*; USIP report	US as a stabilizer, assuming US commitment to deep engagement; regarded as the critical trilateral relationship to sustain the region's stability
US-Japan-Australia	Tow et al. 2005	Japan and Australia are long-time US allies; A Japan-Australia-US axis has been suggested as a counter-force to the emergence of China as a regional power.
US-Japan-India	CICS 2007 report	They share common values and a commitment to the maintenance of an open and stable international order; significant shared interests in the strategic, energy, and economic fields.
Korea-Japan-China	Shambaugh 2005*	The cooperation among these three major Asian countries has been meager, limited to technology cooperation, due to historical disputes. This trilateral relationship has not been often mentioned in practice.
ASEAN-US-China	Ott 1998*	As members of the ARF's 25 participants, ASEAN, the US, and China can be another potential trilateral arrangement inclusive of two major global powers, the United States and China.

* This source does not necessarily advocate this particular trilateral arrangement, nor does it directly consider the idea of trilateralism. Instead, the source examines the bilateral relations among the said three countries.

V. Conditions for Successful US-Japan-Korea Trilateral Cooperation Analytical Framework for the Determinants of Trilateralism

Our goal in this section is to lay out the triad conditions that shape the development of trilateral relations, namely, issue characteristics, changes in domestic politics, and geopolitical relations. This broader framework allows us to evaluate why trilateralism is needed now, based on the assessment on the favorable conditions for trilateralism in the current political environment.

Three Determinants of Trilateralism

The success of trilateralism is not guaranteed and we see three key factors that could shape the development of trilateral relations: geopolitical relations, changes in domestic politics, and issue

characteristics. The first determinant – geopolitical relations – is important because these relations help us to identify the international constraints and opportunities for trilateralism. The form and viability of any trilateral partnership will, in large part, be determined by the regional geo-political environment, such as the potential political response of China and the history of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia or in Asia, more broadly. Trilateral relations should be conducted in the relations of other countries outside of the triangle and the preferences of other countries factor into the possibility and forms of trilateral relations. The geopolitical concerns include the preferences of influential states such as the United States and China, in addition to the development of Sino-American relations. The consideration of geopolitical relations is important also because we should take into account other forms of international groupings to push the same agenda of creating a regional order.

The second determinant – the changes in domestic politics – provides guidance to the question of timing. With leadership turnovers, new political agendas and opportunities emerge and favorable domestic politics are pre-conditions for successful trilateral relations. A systematic examination of domestic political environments is important because it provides a basis for assessing the foreign policy preferences of each country, which in turn provides a basis for forecasting the foreign policies they will embrace. Depending on which aspect of policy a new leader focuses on, and how new initiatives are taken, the change in domestic leadership can bring about structural changes in trilateral relations and determine the type of trilateral partnership. The new leader's coalition base in domestic politics and his/her political capital appealing to domestic constituents as well as international counterparts can help the trilateral partnership evolve into two-leg, three-leg, or multilateral structure.

The third determinant – issue characteristics – impacts on the form of trilateral relations because different policy domains demand different levels of cooperation and political attention. With these considerations in mind, we discuss domestic, regional and international political factors comprehensively to gauge the political climate in our three countries of interest and evaluate historical records of cooperative mechanisms in the region.

First Determinant: Geopolitics

The geopolitical factors such as the Sino-US relations have political ramifications of a proposal to solidify trilateral relations. US trilateral cooperation with Japan and South Korea will be conditioned depending on the US policy toward China and the US's overall foreign policy objectives.³⁷ China's foreign policy and its strategic thinking will also determine the viability of trilateral relations. Such considerations are likely to influence security issues heavily.

Security arrangements are what bind the three countries together and it is important to analyze and gauge the prospects for regional security cooperation in this regard. Two lines of predictions exist,

³⁷ See Council of Foreign Relations China Task Force Report 2007 for two opposing views about China within the United States policymaking circle. The first is "engagement" camp and the other is "adversarial" position represented by the *Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006* by the Pentagon. The opposing views are also reflected on presidential candidates' position toward China. See the CFR's Issue Tracker, "The Candidates on U.S. Policy Toward China"

one positive and the other negative. Recently Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice took the positive view and hinted at the possibility of creating an institutionalized form of cooperation, tentatively named “Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism,” building on groundwork laid by the six-party talks.³⁸ Some scholars and policymakers, however, are more reserved and suggest that any forecast regarding security cooperation and stability is contingent on the future of relations between the US and China.³⁹

Given China’s apprehension about US predominance in the region, and the mutual US-Japan-ROK desire to avoid an escalation of conflict with China, trilateral relations are not likely to develop into a three-way military alliance. The key trade-off for trilateral policymakers is between the danger of risking peace with China and the potential gains from policy coordination among three allied—or quasi-allied—countries. If the US pursues a confrontational policy, trilateral mechanisms for cooperation may develop in unexpected ways.⁴⁰ The existing tensions between Japan and China would be heightened under this scenario. Unless the United States wants to pursue a Cold War-era policy toward China, the idea of trilateralism will be accepted by China only with suspicion, in which case trilateralism could be rendered counterproductive. If the US does not want to provoke a confrontation, it will prudently choose to make the pursuit of economic prosperity its priority in the region. It is the implicit consensus among policy-makers that the US does not want to challenge China (as the status quo with Taiwan policy exemplifies) because of potential economic disruption; neither does China want any security tensions mainly due to its domestic political troubles such as secessionist movements or domestic civil unrest. On the part of the United States, confrontational policy is not appealing either, given that the new leadership in 2009 will inherit many other foreign policy challenges, including terrorism and the war in Iraq, in addition to economic troubles in domestic arena.

Thus, the prospect of stable US-Sino relations in the near term provides a favorable condition for trilateral relations to develop. Three-way alliance would produce China’s reaction, but other forms of close security cooperation beyond the status quo of two-way alliances can provide the platform to solve the problems toward North Korea when the six-party talks do not make a great progress. Also, the trilateral cooperative framework can be extended to the issues of broader regional problems such as disaster management.

Second Determinant: Domestic Politics

Given the recent leadership turnovers in all three countries, now is a good time to evaluate the feasibility of trilateral relations. Domestic political changes serve as an important factor that have impacted on the historical development of trilateral relations among the US, Japan and Korea. Trilateralism among the United States, Japan, and Korea may be the best framework for advancing security, democracy, and economic prosperity in East Asia. But it cannot materialize if there is no

³⁸ Rice 2008.

³⁹ Shambaugh 2006, for instance.

⁴⁰ Occasional friction regarding human rights violations has surfaced between the United States and China but has not affected economic and security relations of the two countries. China’s intention is also important given its proactive role in the ARF, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Six Party Talks (See Aggarwal and Koo 2008, 295).

domestic political support for it in each of the three countries. Indeed, domestic politics may be the most important stumbling block to the success of trilateralism. Nationalist animosities between Japan and Korea are one clear example. But there will be no shortage of critics in each country if US-Japan-Korea trilateralism is openly (and exclusively) promoted. The question, then, is how to navigate domestic politics to harness the positive forces of trilateralism when they are needed.

The empirical records of the ebbs and flows of trilateral cooperation according to domestic political changes are rather mixed. Historically, leadership change has not dramatically altered the face of trilateral cooperation.⁴¹ The United States' perception of the importance of US-Japan relations as the linchpin of US security strategy in the region has not shifted over the past fifty years.⁴² US troops also remain in South Korea, although the main US base there has been relocated due to brewing political tensions between the liberal leadership of South Korea—which was heavily influenced by anti-American sentiment—and the US.⁴³

Amid such continuity, some discontinuity may also be expected with the advent of new leaderships in each of our three partner countries. New leaderships in the respective country are likely to bring new face to trilateral relations. The Japanese Prime Minister Fukuda has had summit meetings with the Chinese leader Hu Jin Tao⁴⁴ and the Bush Administration, where he stressed his policy of a "firm Japan-U.S. alliance that resonates with Japan's Asia diplomacy."⁴⁵ Fukuda is generally known to have a dovish personality in terms of foreign policy issues, in contrast to the conservative and nationalistic mindset of his predecessors, Koizumi and Abe.⁴⁶ The new conservative regime in South Korea led by Lee Myung Bak is likely to pursue a policy more aligned with the United States, despite some sentiment in South Korea that stronger ties with China are desirable.⁴⁷ President Lee also seeks a closer relationship with Japan and the resumption of shuttle diplomacy is expected.⁴⁸

With the new administration in place as of January 2009, the United States may review their foreign policies in the Northeast Asian region. However, it is unlikely that we will see a complete reversal of current policies. The US's top foreign policy priority will continue to be counter-terrorism and its foreign policy focus will be on Iraq and Iran. The new administration in the United States may well wait until 2010—when it will issue its four-yearly National Security Strategy Report—to set the agenda for its proposed world order.

⁴¹ For a detailed review of the trilateral relations during the historical period between 1945 and 1996, see Cha 1999.

⁴² This is noted by the Armitage Report in 2001 and also confirmed by the National Security Strategy of the United States.

⁴³ See the feeling thermometers in *Global Views 2004: South Korean Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*. Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, East Asia Institute.

⁴⁴ See the Economist 2007 for the seemingly improved relations between China and Japan.

⁴⁵ Asai Shimbun 2007.

⁴⁶ Rajan 2007. See Tanaka 2007 for more foreign policy agenda of the Fukuda Administration.

⁴⁷ Snyder 2008a.

⁴⁸ Nishino 2007.

The critical question is whether triateralism can garner enough political support in all three countries. The feasibility of three-leg structure in the security area—including the strengthened Japan-ROK ties—has been challenged by many. Opponents of this approach cite the insurmountable difficulty of accumulating the necessary political capital to gain both the public support for—and the legislative approval of—a formal treaty, particularly in Japan where constitutional issues may resurface.⁴⁹ KORUS FTA has faced oppositions by growing protectionist sentiment in both US and Korea. Domestic politics presents a lot of uncertainty as much opportunities as it provides.⁵⁰ The uncertainty surrounding future instances, such as the preferences of new leaders in three countries as well as the public sentiments altered by external events (e.g. Tokdo disputes between Japan and Korea, beef trade between US and Korea), leaves us the complete picture of trilateral relations undrawn.

Third Determinant: Issue Characteristics

Issue characteristics of policy domains determine the underlying foundation for trilateral cooperation. By issue characteristics, we mean two things: the extent of sovereignty compromise and the type of institutional demands. Depending on the nature of the issue, some policies are more amenable to stronger institutional forms of trilateralism, others more suitably embedded in multilateral settings. The issue characteristics matter in determining which forms of trilateral relations we are likely to observe mainly because different political issues tend to involve different political institutions and demand different political tools grown out of different historical experiences. The issue areas exhibit their divergent trajectories regarding historical cooperation and require varying degrees of political will and resources.

Security issues are traditionally viewed as sensitive issues, involving much sovereignty costs in terms of loss in autonomous decision-making. The security coordination therefore demands coordination among high-level officials. Security politics encompasses all matters that are vital to national and international security, including the issues of military alliances, regional security cooperation, and confidence-building measures and exchanges. Where military power and regional security relations are of paramount importance, nations are likely to prefer two-leg trilateralism, due to the existing bilateral military alliance structure consolidated over time. For this reason, we expect slow development to formal alliance structure, and most security relations would involve effective coordination among the three parties devoid of alliance formality.

Relative to security issues, humanitarian politics is less likely to be constrained by geopolitical configurations. But at the same time, the issue is more sensitive than those associated with economic affairs with respect to the considerations of sovereignty and autonomy. In this issue area, we expect to find the combination of bilateral and multilateral structures. In fact, trilateral cooperation in

⁴⁹ Cossa 1999.

⁵⁰ Compared to domestic politics, issue characteristics and geopolitics are to some degree structural components.

humanitarian issues has been embedded in multilateral framework, occasionally boosted by unilateral moves with regard to salient issues such as human rights problems in North Korea.⁵¹

We expect that economic issues will be heavily influenced by external, macro changes of global policy convergence due to the forces of globalization,⁵² as well as domestic political support. The economic aspects of cooperation have been analyzed extensively in the growing literature. Both scholars and practitioners have observed the increasing web of bilateral or regional economic ties negotiated and signed,⁵³ even before the alternative options are thoroughly debated,⁵⁴ such as a single Asia-wide free trade agreement,⁵⁵ either as a form of stand-alone AFTA, or through APEC, or based on the ASEAN+3 (China, Japan, and Korea).⁵⁶ Trilateral ties are about to be strengthened on the economic front but the prospects are uncertain. The US-Korea FTA was signed in 2007 (although the ratification is uncertain in the US Congress with the expiration of fast-track authority⁵⁷); a formal US-Japan agreement has not been initiated, but their economic relations are now free of the tensions of the 1990s.⁵⁸ Korea-Japan FTA negotiations began in 2003 but suspended since November 2004, have yet to result in an agreement. These bilateral initiatives and proposals that together form a web of FTAs constitute an example for other regions in Asia to follow.

VI. Conclusion: Toward Better Management of US-Japan-Korea Trilateralism

Thus far, we have presented our analytical framework and examined existing mechanisms and argued that trilateral partnership is no longer just a theoretical possibility; our focus now turns to how

⁵¹ For instance, Japan sent its aid to North Korea to finance humanitarian relief for North Koreans, and the US Congress passed the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004 to alleviate the suffering of North Korean population. Japan in 2004 offered humanitarian assistance for North Korea through the contribution to the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF, and the World Health Organization (WHO). The information can be found at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/announce/2004/8/0805.html>

⁵² See Simmons and Elkins 2006 for the literature on policy diffusion in the international domain.

⁵³ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) chronicles all the bilateral trade ties in the Asian region at its Asia Regional Integration Center, <http://aric.adb.org/ftatrends.php> Also see Park 2008 for a list of trade agreements concluded by countries in East Asia as of September 2007.

⁵⁴ Scholars recently have attempted to find which cooperative forms are welfare improving (Park 2008) or to study the effect of overlapping cooperative arrangements (Davis 2008). These questions are related to a larger body of research on whether regional trade is a building block or a stumbling block. See, for example, the recent exemplary work by Baldwin 2008.

⁵⁵ Kawai 2005, as the Head of the Office of Regional Economic Integration of the ADB, proposed such a long-term trade liberalization plan.

⁵⁶ See Tsunekawa 2005 for a review of bilateral and regional cooperation in various issue areas including drug control, monetary cooperation, etc.

⁵⁷ Even though KORUS FTA is about to be torpedoed in the US Senate, policymakers can come back to the proposal and muster resources if the new administration inaugurated in 2009 is favorable to the extension of fast-track authority and if anti-globalization sentiment subsides after the election. Looking at the history from CUSFTA to NAFTA, extending bilateral FTA ties to a three-way FTA is not an easy option. Adding political heterogeneity to the mix, the negotiation may be very difficult, but given the web of bilateral and regional trade webs forged recently, this is not a hopeless proposal if the political environment becomes more generally favorable.

⁵⁸ See Ahearn 2005 for the development of US-Japan FTA proposals.

trilateralism should develop and expand in the future. In this section, we discuss potential and existing tools of implementation for various kinds of trilateral partnership.

Trilateralism will require institutionalized practices at an operational level during the implementation stage. What should be the scope of tripartite coordination? What kind of political initiatives are to be suggested for durable, discreet, but developmentally oriented trilateral relations? What kind of political resources are to be mustered to achieve such objectives? The challenge of advancing trilateral arrangements comes down to concrete policy suggestions about how the relationship should be managed, addressing the question of who should be involved, at what governmental levels, and which avenues should be pursued under what time-frame.

Specifically, the prescription will involve the following three considerations, whenever applicable: institutional format, working methods of trilateralism, and time-frame. First with regard to the institutional format of trilateralism, we ask whether the existing trilateral framework enough. We suggest some institutional improvements based on the historical record, considering the frequency of meetings, level of interactions, and/or the extent of media exposure. Also, we take into account the economic and political difficulties ahead in evaluating the most feasible institutional form we could expect. Second, we examine the working methods of trilateralism. By working methods, we mean the operational details of implementing trilateral policies. Who should provide primary resources and who (Korea or the US or Japan) should take the initiative? We also include the discussions on potential political initiatives. Whenever possible, we identify potential "champions" or politicians that can muster political resources to advance the idea of trilateralism. Third, some policy recommendations may involve time elements in their implementation. For instance, some policy suggestions are in near term goals while others target long term goals.

Overview of Trilateralism Research Agenda

With the foregoing conceptual and theoretical framework in mind, we can lay out the trilateralism research agendas in four policy domains in which trilateralism has had and will have a deep impact, including the areas of security, North Korea, economic cooperation, and humanitarian policies. We need solid empirical platforms to evaluate different kinds of trilateralism in practice, tracing the historical pathways of trilateralism or lack thereof, identify existing mechanisms, and offering a way forward with an eye toward the better management of trilateralism.

- Coordinating Two Alliances: US Alliances with Japan and Korea: The United States has maintained two separate alliances with Japan and Korea. This "hub-and-spokes" system has also acted as a "virtual" three-way alliance, as the two alliances share common challenges and must be coordinated to be effective. But alliance coordination has not always been successful, and this chapter explains why its success has varied over time.
- Trilateral Cooperation vis-à-vis North Korea: Policy toward North Korea and its nuclear program presents another case study in US-Japan-Korea trilateralism. Since the first nuclear crisis of the early 1990s, the United States, Japan, and Korea have made efforts

to come up with a coordinated response to the crisis. The successes and failures of these joint efforts provide not only important policy lessons but also important cases and scenarios for pushing the possibility of deeper trilateral partnership.

- Creating an Open Regional Economy: The Role of the US-Japan-Korea Economic Relationship: Trilateralism has not been limited to the security/political area. At the level of structural relationships, there is no question that a triangular economic relationship among the United States, Japan, and Korea has certainly played an important role in the economic development of East Asia. But one is hard-pressed to find cases where the three countries exercised leadership in finding policy solutions to important regional economic issues. If this is the case, one must ask why trilateralism in economic policy has not been as active as in security policy. This analysis should also point to the future directions of economic trilateralism, including the possibility of a trilateral FTA.
- United States, Japan, and Korea on North Korean Human Rights: If trilateralism is driven by common values, the humanitarian crisis in North Korea would be one area where we would expect to see a high level of trilateral cooperation among the three leading democracies of East Asia, the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Yet trilateral cooperation on North Korean human rights has been sparse and ineffectual, especially at the inter-governmental level. This lack of coordinated effort at the inter-governmental level may encourage more cooperation at the civil society level. Indeed, in recent years we have seen a surge in interactions among East Asian human right groups. So the North Korean human rights issue can be a good case study of whether or not the US-Japan-SK trilateral relationship can be extended to values issues and civil society concerns.

Policy Recommendations

In sum, the US-Japan-Korea triangle is attractive for three reasons. The first is the political timing of structural power shifts in the region. The US-Japan-Korea alliance is the most viable option at this historical juncture, when China's foreign policy trajectory is unknown. It is the best anchor for Asian regionalism for the foreseeable future, at least until China becomes developed and responsible enough. The second argument for US-Japan-Korea trilateralism is the change in domestic politics currently underway in these three countries. It is high time to review the foreign policies of each country to assess their broader goals regarding the establishment of a new regional order. The third reason is a functional one. There are significant problems to be addressed through the coordinated leadership of three countries, such as the North Korean problem. The US-Japan-Korea trilateral relationship carries utmost functional importance when a power vacuum is expected in North Korea surrounding rumors about the North Korean leadership. In addition to this immediate security issue, the proposed trilateral relations have a potential to shape the regional order by engaging cooperation in other issue areas of economic development or environmental protection.

Based on these rationales, we conclude that our three countries should re-orient themselves to the development of trilateral partnerships. In security issues in particular, trilateralism should stay in the background or be used discreetly as a supplement to formal bilateral or multilateral arrangements. Neither Japan nor South Korea is ready to enter into a formal alliance, even if it is a three-way alliance with the United States. This is also because trilateralism may work to isolate China.

However, we do not propose that the status quo should prevail. Rather, we see the political momentum with new political leaderships in three countries and we find that the trilateral relationship between the US, Japan, and South Korea has the potential to forge new cooperative mechanisms in a region fraught with weakly institutionalized cooperation. Trilateralism should not be a mere security management tool. It can be enhanced to become an avenue to constructive institution-building. Trilateral relations can also be couched in a broader regional framework that can foster future cooperation in the region. Given the weakly institutionalized regional cooperation framework, the trilateral partnership can serve as an anchor for a broader security and economic coordination.⁵⁹

In the area of economic and humanitarian issues, trilateralism should be and is capable of serving as an example-setting cooperative mechanism. Along these lines, the three most advanced nations of East Asia should set an economic, political and moral example for the rest of East Asia. The best way to achieve this kind of leadership through example would be to integrate the three societies in a way that would promote the idea of cooperation as a model for East Asia. Specific policies would be a three-way FTA, a three-way human rights agreement, and even, promotion of common environmental policies. Shaping trilateral cooperative mechanisms in this way will bring about a stable and prosperous region in the coming decades.

Taking into account political opportunities and constraints of trilateral relations, the project team recommends the following in the respective issue area of cooperation, with the larger aim of establishing an anchor.

- With regard to security cooperation, the current "hub-and-spoke" model of trilateral security relations among the United States, Japan and Korea should be upgraded to a more explicit three-way cooperative arrangement with the United States-Japan-Australia triangular alliance as a model.
- While conducting a review of the Six-Party talks, the United States, Japan and Korea should formally revive the TCOG process for dealing with the North Korea problem and expand its mandate to include planning for unexpected contingencies in North Korea and regarding other long-term North Korean issues.
- The regional trade policies of the three countries should be reoriented toward the signing of a three-way free trade agreement. Given the domestic political constraints

⁵⁹ This may change, however, if a new cold war begins in East Asia. The characteristics of this trilateral relation will ultimately depend on the new US administration's policy choices after the November 2008 election.

faced by the ratification of KORUS, this is a long-term goal. The economic partnership can be a first step of this effort rather than full-fledged free trade agreement.

- The human rights agenda of the Six-Party talks should expand beyond the issue of Japanese abductees and cover other human rights issues in East Asia such as North Korean refugees. Ultimately, this cooperation will be embedded in a broader regional framework for human rights cooperation.

We believe that the proposed trilateral cooperative framework can produce synergy among the three issue areas of security, economy, and human rights cooperation. The cooperation can be fruitfully extended to other issue areas, potentially embedded in the proposed security partnerships. The trilateral partnership as an anchor has the potential to promote further regional cooperation. This of course is a long-term goal but an achievable and worthy one.

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