

How the Ukraine War Transforms the Northeast Asian Security Agenda

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This article reviews the novel challenges to Northeast Asian security that have arisen since the Russian invasion of Ukraine and related developments, especially the growing military capabilities, foreign policy ambitions, and malign policy coordination of North Korea, Russia, and China. Not only does each authoritarian state present an independent challenge to South Korea, Japan, and the United States, but in collaborating, North Korea, Russia, and China amplify these dangers. In particular, Beijing and Moscow are pressing for curtailment of U.S.-allied cooperation regarding missile defenses, nuclear deterrence guarantees, and missile deployments. They also manifest more tolerance of DPRK provocations, even as these have intensified in frequency and intensity. Despite these challenges to international peace, the remarkable speed and scale of Western democratic solidarity in support of Ukraine and other trends have provided the new South Korean government with opportunities to enhance regional security in cooperation with other powerful democracies.

Keywords: Balancing, China, Japan, Russia, Ukraine

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1. Introduction

The new government of the Republic of Korea (ROK), led by President Yoon Suk-yeol, has assumed office at perhaps the most perilous time in modern Korean history. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has engaged in its most intensive campaign of missile testing ever, while Russia has pursued an unprecedentedly aggressive foreign policy toward the Western democracies. Meanwhile, growing tensions between China and the United States and Moscow and Washington have challenged Seoul's ability to manage these tensions. Compared with Northeast Europe and Ukraine, Northeast Asia presents a more complicated security environment, with three aggressive authoritarian states armed with nuclear weapons. In addition to the threats that these three states pose individually, their collaboration amplifies their challenge to other countries. China and Russia have expanded their bilateral defense cooperation in multiple ways while relaxing their opposition to the DPRK's growing provocations.

International relations theory relates how these power transitions are primed for problems. Ascending powers like China typically try to apply their growing economic and military capacity to alter international institutions and norms to their advantage as well as pursue territorial, commercial, and other concrete gains. They align with other revisionist states, in this case Russia and North Korea, to reinforce their challenge. Conversely, existing dominant powers such as the United States strive to maintain the extant norms, institutions, rules, and practices that benefit them.¹ In some worst cases, this struggle for primacy is resolved only through war.² Though China and Russia are presently the leading

1 A.F.K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968); Robert Gilpin, *War & Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); and Robert Keohane, "Hegemony and After: Knowns and Unknowns in the Debate Over Decline," *Foreign Affairs* 91, no. 4 (July/August 2012): 114-118. A good summary of this literature appears in Michael C. Webb and Stephen D. Krasner, "Hegemonic Stability Theory: An Empirical Assessment," *Review of International Studies* 15, no. 2 (2009): 183-198.

great power challengers to the United States, Beijing and Moscow seek partnerships with powerful dissatisfied countries, such as North Korea, to advance their goals. Anticipating these geopolitical threats can help South Korea, the United States, and its allies craft superior strategies to preempt and circumvent these efforts.

Fortunately, the international system offers the new ROK government several means to manage these current challenges and establish a firmer foundation for renewed efforts later, when conditions improve, to advance intra-Korean peace and unification. Seoul's allies and partners are responding to Sino-Russian threats with both internal and external balancing.³ Asian and other democracies are increasing their national resources earmarked for security and deepening their mutual cooperation. Regarding the latter, Russia's invasion of Ukraine has strengthened solidarity among democracies in Asia and elsewhere in resisting threats from aggressive authoritarian states. Additionally, the war has helped restore the U.S. national security community's consensus behind a strong U.S. foreign policy supporting alliances and stability in Asia.

The organization of this essay proceeds as follows. The first section reviews the novel challenges to Korean peace and security that have arisen in recent years. These include the growing military capabilities and foreign-policy ambitions of North Korea, Russia, and China. Not only do they present independent danger to regional peace and security, but their threats amplify as they collaborate. In recent years, Beijing and Moscow have become more tolerant of DPRK provocations. The article then discusses how, despite these challenges, the unprecedented solidarity of the Western democracies during the Ukraine War and other developments have provided the new South Korean government with opportunities to

2 Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides's Trap?* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

3 Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1979). For examples of these balancing processes at work see the case studies in: T.V. Paul, James Wirtz and Michel Fortmann (eds.), *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004).

enhance its security with key partners. The last section details how to pursue several of these opportunities.

2. Novel National Threats to Regional Security

China and Russia are now the most substantial revisionist powers seeking to alter the U.S.-designed economic and security structures established after World War II, which they perceive as failing to recognize their status or national interests. Sino-Russian relations have been on an upward trajectory since the late 1980s.⁴ Chinese and Russian leaders engage in numerous high-level exchanges, make innumerable mutually supportive statements, and manifest other displays of cooperation. Chinese officials have described their goal as "the building of a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind" based on "win-win cooperation."⁵ Russian officials accept China's rising power as inevitable, or at least beyond Moscow's capacity to prevent. Russian thinkers promote the concept of a "Greater Eurasia" bloc of Russia, China, and other non-Western countries that encompasses Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative, Moscow's Eurasian Economic Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and other multilateral frameworks.⁶ The "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," signed by Chinese President Jiang Zemin and Putin in 2001, has established a flexible legal instrument for bilateral collaboration.⁷ Over the years, Chinese and

4 Angela Stent, "Russia and China: Axis of Revisionists?," Brookings Institution, February 2020, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/russia-and-china-axis-of-revisionists/>.

5 "Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng Meets with Russian Ambassador to China Andrey Ivanovich Denisov," Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, April 19, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/202204/t20220419_10669789.html.

6 Alexander Lukin, "Sino-Russian Cooperation as the Basis for Greater Eurasia," *Human Affairs* 30, no. 2 (2020): 174-188.

7 "Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation," Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Russian information managers have developed a shared narrative of Western betrayal. According to this Sino-Russian narrative, Washington took advantage of the weakness of its main geopolitical rivals after the Cold War to construct an exclusionary world order that has privileged U.S. interests and values at the expense of China, Russia, and other countries. They perceive Washington as pursuing "absolute" rather than "equal" security, disregarding Russian-Chinese interests, misapplying sanctions, and subverting regimes aligned with Beijing and Moscow through military and other means under the guise of promoting democracy.

Among their primary objectives, Beijing and Moscow are endeavoring to weaken U.S. security alliances because of their critical role in sustaining U.S. world power and the U.S.-backed international order. Washington's robust portfolio of alliances provides the United States with unparalleled strategic advantages, including forward operating and staging bases, diplomatic and intelligence assistance, and international legitimacy for U.S. foreign policies. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has underscored this "power of partnership" in his speeches, noting that U.S. security alliances and partnerships represent a comparative strategic advantage in competition with China and Russia, since Beijing and Moscow lack powerful military allies.⁸ China and Russia have tried to weaken U.S. alliances by challenging their legitimacy and trying to divide U.S. partners from each other and the United States. Exploiting the well-known tensions within alliances between fears of abandonment and entrapment, Beijing and Moscow frequently strive to fuel allies' anxieties about U.S. disengagement and, conversely, their concerns about becoming entrapped in U.S. conflicts with China.⁹ For example, PRC propaganda plays upon

the People's Republic of China, July 24, 2001, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/200107/t20010724_679026.html.

8 "Remarks by Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III on Middle East Security at the Manama Dialogue (As Delivered)," U.S. Department of Defense, November 20, 2021, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/2849921/remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-on-middle-east-security-at-t/>.

9 Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics* 36, no. 4 (July 1984): 461-495.

Asian fears of renewed U.S. isolationism or risky confrontations with Beijing.

Meanwhile, the DPRK has ended its Trump-era provocation pause. Having test launched some dozen novel ballistic and cruise missiles, North Korea has developed a robust portfolio of offensive missiles with varying ranges and launching platforms.¹⁰ These systems encompass rail-mobile and submarine-based platforms, rapid-fire cruise and ballistic missiles, and hypersonic glide vehicles, with the eventual goal of deploying a slew of offensive strike systems.¹¹ Many of these missiles can convey nuclear or other unconventional warheads, so expectations are high that the DPRK could resume testing nuclear munitions. In April, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of Kim Jong Un, explicitly threatened South Korea with nuclear destruction in a future war.¹² Having the ability to "mix-and-match" its novel capabilities allows Pyongyang to present unprecedented threats to South Korea, Japan, and U.S. forces in Northeast Asia. In addition to a retaliatory second-strike capability against the U.S. homeland with ICBMs, the DPRK is acquiring more advanced intermediate- and short-range missiles that could attack U.S. forward-based forces, U.S. and allied bases, and other priority targets notwithstanding whatever missile defenses the United States and its allies establish.¹³ In early June, the DPRK launched eight missiles simultaneously to demonstrate how it could saturate these defenses by presenting them with multiple

10 Matt Korda, "Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Systems that Might be Implicated in Nuclear Use Involving the Korean Peninsula," Nautilus Institute, January 20, 2022, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/nuclear-weapons-and-delivery-systems-that-might-be-implicated-in-nuclear-use-involving-the-korean-peninsula/>.

11 Katrin Fraser Katz and Victor Cha, "North Korea's Missile Message: How Kim's New Nuclear Capabilities Up the Ante," *Foreign Affairs*, April 29, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/north-korea/2022-04-29/north-koreas-missile-message>.

12 "North Korea threatens to use nukes in event of preemptive strike by S. Korea," *Kyodo News*, April 5, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/04/0777d50043ec-n-korea-threatens-to-use-nukes-in-event-of-preemptive-strike-by-s-korea.html>.

13 David Wright, "Role of Missile Defense in North-East Asia," Nautilus Institute January 13, 2022, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/the-role-of-missile-defense-in-north-east-asia/>.

concurrent targets. By brandishing these missiles, Pyongyang intends to weaken Washington's extended deterrence guarantees to its allies and partners in Asia not only for defensive purposes, but also to enhance its coercive capacity to intimidate these and other countries uncertain about U.S. protection. For example, shielded behind its nuclear missiles, North Korea can leverage the risk of escalation to engage in sub-conventional aggression against South Korea and Japan. As a result, these novel capabilities challenge crisis stability—defined as a condition when parties lack the incentive to attack first in a crisis—by giving DPRK decision makers first-strike incentives.¹⁴

Even so, Chinese and Russian resistance has prevented the UN Security Council from taking a more effective stand against them. In the past, the Korean nuclear issue represented a rare international security question where Moscow and Washington could occasionally cooperate. Russian officials were critical of various U.S. policies, discouraged U.S. defense activities in South Korea, never officially committed to the U.S. goal of "complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization" (CVID), and treated denuclearization as a product—rather than prerequisite—of nuclear negotiations. Notwithstanding these incongruences, Russian policy makers sought DPRK denuclearization, refused to recognize the DPRK as a legitimate nuclear weapons state, imposed some sanctions on the North for its nuclear program, and accepted direct DPRK-U.S. dialogue as positively complementing multilateral denuclearization aims. Besides a general commitment to non-proliferation, Russia has seen the DPRK's missile and nuclear weapons testing as an unwelcome accelerator of South Korea, Japanese, and U.S. offensive and defensive strategic weapons programs, especially nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and ballistic missile defense systems.¹⁵ Russian policy toward Korean unification has

14 Ian Bowers, "Counterforce Dilemmas and the Risk of Nuclear War in East Asia," Nautilus Institute, February 11, 2022, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/counterforce-dilemmas-and-the-risk-of-nuclear-war-in-east-asia/>.

15 Sangtu Ko, "Geopolitical Motivations behind Russia's Active Engagement with North Korea," *The Korean Journal of Security Affairs* 24, no. 2 (December 2019): 150.

also at times been more flexible than China's obstinately negative approach. Not only would unification facilitate implementation of Russia's regional economic projects, but it could secure the departure of U.S. military forces from the Korean Peninsula. As Russian-U.S. relations have deteriorated, though, Russian interest in sustaining the DPRK regime as a strategic buffer and security problem for Washington, and a renewed energy and economic partner, has increased.¹⁶ In recent years, Russian leaders have calculated that the prospects of a new unified state allying with Washington presented an excessive risk to Russia's security.¹⁷ This year, Moscow's incentives to enforce existing international sanctions on North Korea, let alone agree to new ones, have declined further in parallel with the deterioration in Russian-Western relations.¹⁸ Russia's exclusion from Western financial institutions may give the DPRK more opportunities to conduct illicit WMD-related procurements via Russian entities since Russia and North Korea have less to fear from Western punishment now that they are so heavily and directly sanctioned.

Since the invasion of Ukraine led to a marked deterioration in Russia's relations with the West, Russia has been seeking novel partners with increased urgency. The DPRK is an obvious partner in this endeavor. In early March, the North Korean government was one of only four states that voted with Russia against a U.S.-supported draft resolution censuring Russia's invasion of Ukraine in an emergency UN General Assembly session. The renewed bilateral ties between Moscow and Pyongyang in the wake of the Ukrainian invasion demonstrate how both governments augment their mutual connections to circumvent their international

16 Gilbert Rozman, "Russian Thinking about the Korean Peninsula and the US Role There over a Decade," *The Asan Forum*, May 11, 2022, <https://theasanforum.org/russian-thinking-about-the-korean-peninsula-and-the-us-role-there-over-a-decade/>.

17 Stephen Blank, "Russia and the Korean Peace Process," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 27, no. 2 (2018): 23-66.

18 Paula Hancocks, "What North Korea learned from Ukraine: Now's the perfect time for a nuclear push," CNN, May 9, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2022/05/08/asia/north-korea-nuclear-ukraine-war-lessons-intl-hnk/index.html>.

isolation and secure leverage with third parties such as South Korea. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov made Moscow's policies toward the DPRK nuclear issue a centerpiece of his March 2021 trip to Seoul. Russian diplomacy can exploit the prospects of relaxing enforcement of sanctions impeding the transfer of military relevant dual-use items from or through Russia to North Korea. Less certain is how the DPRK leadership is assessing the net outcome of the Ukraine War. On the one hand, the high military, economic, and diplomatic costs Russia incurred in invading Ukraine may help dissuade the DPRK from underestimating the ROK's capacity for defense. On the other, that the United States and its allies have declined to send their own troops to defend Ukraine and denied Ukrainian requests for some needed military strike systems for fears of entrapment in a war with Moscow may persuade Pyongyang that South Korea's allies will not risk a nuclear war to defend their Korean allies.

Chinese leaders also favor a step-by-step, dual-track process for advancing denuclearization and creating an eventual peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. They fear that abrupt regime change in Pyongyang could harm their country's economic and security interests by leading to a unified Korean state that would distance itself from Beijing and align with Washington and other Western partners. PRC policy makers also strive to avoid antagonizing the DPRK leadership to the extent that North Korea would retaliate against Chinese interests. Although Beijing wants Pyongyang to end its nuclear program, the Chinese perception is that denuclearization should be an end goal of negotiations rather than a precondition for talks. Furthermore, PRC representatives have consistently downplayed concerns about North Korea's missile and nuclear activities, while sounding the alarm about U.S., ROK, and Japanese defensive countermeasures. As U.S. and allied officials try to build pressure on Pyongyang, PRC policies strive to construct escape and relief valves for the DPRK. They perennially urge Washington and its partners to offer more negotiations and concessions rather than employ punitive measures that they argue could deepen Pyongyang's alienation and intransigence. PRC representatives have urged Washington and its partners to make more concessions to the North—including normalizing diplomatic relations,

offering Pyongyang security guarantees, and providing more economic assistance—to secure its denuclearization. PRC officials have sought to play the role of mediator between Pyongyang and Washington.

Chinese and Russian leaders share some U.S. concerns regarding Korea. For example, they do not want the DPRK to have nuclear weapons. Yet, trilateral collaboration regarding North Korea has waxed and waned over the years, as Beijing and Moscow have prioritized the preservation of the DPRK regime over competing objectives. Neither wants a change in the DPRK regime, rapid Korean unification, or military actions against North Korea. They regularly call on the United States to exclude military threats, promote diplomatic solutions, and make concessions to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Both countries have been more concerned about the regional chaos that would result from the DPRK's abrupt collapse than the adverse impact of Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development programs. For this reason, they have both opposed strong sanctions on North Korea. In the UN Security Council, the Chinese and Russian delegations have for years employed their veto power to block proposed resolutions that would impose severe sanctions on the DPRK or authorize the use of force against the regime. More recently, China and Russia have advocated removing sanctions on North Korea and reducing U.S. military activities in South Korea to create a more favorable environment for nuclear negotiations. One reason for the recent spurt in DPRK missile testing may be that the North sees an opportunity in the divisions among Russia, China, and other great powers as an opportunity to accelerate its military R&D programs. (Another may be what Andrew Lankov terms the DPRK's "usual tactic of creating an artificial crisis in order to force the United States to enter into talks."¹⁹) The military buildups throughout Northeast Asia also provide some cover for Pyongyang's refusal to

19 Andrei Lankov, "Russia's Waning Influence on North Korea," Carnegie Moscow Center, December 21, 2020, <https://carnegie.ru/commentary/83506>: "This approach involves Pyongyang first taking some provocative action in order to send tensions soaring, and then, when the situation looks dangerous, agreeing to talks and a return to the pre-crisis situation in exchange for some kind of reward."

cooperate with reductions. In these conditions of heightened regional tensions, the DPRK's nuclear weapons program may become a cost that Russia and China are willing to bear.

In addition to the independent threats presented by North Korea, Russia, and China to South Korea and its allies, the democracies must manage the challenges presented by the deepening collaboration among these aggressive authoritarian states. Their shared security concerns, converging leadership perceptions, and harmonious expansionist ambitions have placed them in opposition to the rules-based international order supported by South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Chinese and DPRK propaganda has echoed Moscow's line blaming the Ukraine crisis on NATO policies. The Russian, Chinese, and DPRK governments have also sought to weaken U.S. military alliances in Asia, including the extended nuclear umbrella that Washington offers South Korea and Japan, and opposed the stationing of U.S. missile defenses and offensive missiles in Northeast Asia. Since the Cold War, the Russian government has supplied the People's Liberation Army (PLA) with billions of dollars' worth of sophisticated air, naval, and other defense platforms that have provided a foundation for Chinese military-industrial prowess, especially in the 1990s and 2000s when China was building the foundation of its modern defense, long-range sensor, and anti-ship capabilities. More recently, the S-300 and S-400 air defense systems and Su-35 warplanes provided by Russia have enabled the PLA to launch longer-range precision strikes against Taiwan, Japan, and U.S. warships from protected air space. Furthermore, the Chinese and Russian militaries have become each other's most important foreign partners. They have participated in frequent bilateral and multilateral military exercises, encompassing ground, sea, and air drills in the Indo-Pacific. Many joint China-Russian military exercises, as well as their single nation drills, occur in the vicinity of South Korea and Japan, including unilateral and joint naval drills and strategic aviation overflights. Chinese and Russian planes ostentatiously conducted such a joint aviation drill in May 2022 when President Biden was visiting Seoul and Tokyo.²⁰ Learning from the more experienced Russian military has been especially valuable for the PLA, which has not engaged

in major combat operations in decades. The joint exercises that have transpired near North Korea could facilitate their ability to render military and technical support to Pyongyang in possible Korean War scenarios. At some point, China and Russia may accede to DPRK requests, which they rejected earlier, for renewed weapons deliveries in order to pressure Seoul and keep the Pentagon focused on DPRK as well as Chinese and Russian threats.²¹ Even if the DPRK nuclear weapons program expands without direct Chinese or Russian assistance beyond impeding Western sanctions, the complexities of deterring three potential nuclear aggressors will challenge U.S. defense and deterrence policies.²² Greater trilateral cooperation between North Korea, China, and Russia could pose additional challenges to South Korea, the United States, and other partners. For instance, sanctions against Russia's military-industrial complex could become less effective if China supplies more military or dual-use technologies to Russia. Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang seek to weaken the cohesion of U.S.-led alliances by impeding collective missile defenses, extended nuclear deterrence guarantees, and U.S. plans to deploy ground-launched intermediate-range missiles in East Asia. The three governments' vigorous opposition to the deployment of advanced U.S. missile defenses in South Korea has illuminated their shared opposition to ROK-U.S. military ties. Their preferred resolution of the Korean conflict

20 Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan, US fly fighters after China drill, N. Korean missiles," Associated Press, May 26, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-biden-china-sea-of-japan-735941fbf94ec0096f57a92a825fed6b>.

21 Yoshihiro Makino, "Analysis: Why N. Korea is siding with Moscow on Ukraine invasion," *Asahi Shimbun*, May 6, 2022, <https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14603648>.

22 International relations theory underscores the difficulties of deterring even two independent nuclear actors, let alone three; see for example: Mel Deaile, "The Problem with Three: Great Power Competition Deterrence," *Wild Blue Yonder*, April 13, 2021, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Wild-Blue-Yonder/Article-Display/Article/2571380/the-problem-with-three-great-power-comp- etition-deterrence/>; and Stacie Pettyjohn and Jennie Matuschak, "Long Shadows: Deterrence in a Multipolar Nuclear Age," Center for New American Security, May 19, 2022, <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/long-shadows-deterrence-in-a-multipolar-nuclear-age>.

is the removal of all U.S. military forces from the Korean Peninsula and the end of the U.S. defense alliance with the ROK. Strains in U.S. alliances, such as between South Korea and the United States or the ROK and Japan, encourage Chinese, Russian, and DPRK mischief-making designed to weaken these partnerships. Furthermore, China and Russia oppose U.S. extended security guarantees to South Korea and Japan. These are unilateral but cooperative pledges to defend U.S. allies with nuclear weapons if necessary. These guarantees discourage nuclear proliferation since, when the United States credibly offers to protect another country with U.S. nuclear weapons, the other state does not need its own nuclear forces. In addition to noting that neither China nor Russia station nuclear weapons in other countries, Chinese and Russian diplomats claim that U.S.-led nuclear-sharing arrangements violate the U.S. commitments under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) not to offer nuclear weapons-relevant technologies to other countries. Last October, the Chinese government told the UN General Assembly "that the decision of the US, the UK and Australia to develop cooperation on nuclear-powered submarines flagrantly violates the spirit of NPT. It directly involves the transfer of highly enriched uranium (HEU) to Australia, a non-nuclear-weapon State, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), under its current safeguards system, is unable to effectively verify whether Australia will divert HEU to the production of nuclear weapons. The act of the three countries have posed direct risks of nuclear proliferation."²³ Russian diplomats and analysts have long denounced U.S.-led NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements on similar grounds.²⁴

23 "Written Statement by the Chinese Delegation at the Thematic Discussion on Nuclear Weapons at the First Committee of the 76th Session of the UNGA," Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the UN, October 22, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/ce/ceun/eng/chinaandun/disarmament_armscontrol/unga/t1916292.htm.

24 Nikita Degtyarev and Vladimir Orlov, "NATO Nuclear Sharing Arrangements: Whether They Are Compliant with the NPT: Assessment of the Current Situation in the Context of the Upcoming NPT Review Conference," *Security Index* 16,

3. The Ukraine Crisis

Moscow's illegal invasion of Ukraine has been a disaster for the world. Besides inflicting massive direct death and destruction, the conflict has exacerbated divisions regarding how the world's leading nations can respond to global challenges. The war has amplified existing global problems related to supply chain reliability, commodity inflation, restrictions on Internet freedoms, and international economic uncertainty. The food and fuel price hikes have proven especially challenging for developing economies already overwhelmed by waves of COVID-induced shutdowns and health price shocks. The conflict has also upended the global economic recovery from the COVID shutdowns and diverted attention from mitigating global climate change. The United Nations and international financial institutions have accordingly drastically scaled back estimates for world economic and trade growth in 2022.²⁵

Yet, the Ukraine crisis has seen unprecedented cooperation among the world's democracies in responding to the Russian invasion. In Asia, Japanese and South Korean leaders have seen the Russia-Ukraine war as concerning not just those countries but also the future of world order, based on the pillars of non-aggression and respect for territorial integrity. Opinion polls show that the Japanese and South Korean publics have been willing to incur substantial economic and diplomatic costs for the sake of supporting Ukraine and affirming democratic solidarity against Russia's military aggression.²⁶ The Russian government has placed both Japan and South Korea on its list of "unfriendly" countries, subject to various Russian sanctions.²⁷ Japanese and South Korean leaders also join their European

no. 1 (January 2021), www.pircenter.org/en/articles/2227-7901433#:~:text=2015-16%20Russia%20began%20to,and%20letter%20of%20the%20NPT.

25 "World Economic Situation and Prospects: April 2022 Briefing," United Nations no. 159, April 5, 2022, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/publication/world-economic-situation-and-prospects-april-2022-briefing-no-159/>.

26 "Global public opinion about the war in Ukraine," Ipsos, April 19, 2022, <https://www.ipsos.com/en-us/news-polls/war-in-ukraine-april-2022>.

27 "Russia issues list of 'unfriendly' countries amid Ukraine crisis," *Al Jazeera*,

and U.S. counterparts in seeing a potential Chinese or North Korean use of military force in Asia as presenting a comparably grave threat to international principles and society.

Compared with the limited asset, import, and investment freeze Tokyo imposed on Russian entities after Moscow's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea, the Japanese response to Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine has been substantially greater. Breaking with tradition, the Japanese government under Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has provided non-lethal defense equipment to the Ukrainian armed forces in an active combat zone and adopted all G7 sanctions imposed on Russia for its invasion of Ukraine, including eschewing use of the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) rapid messaging system with select Russian banks. Japan also revoked Russia's most-favored-nation trade status, restricted transactions with Russia's Central Bank, and froze millions of dollars' worth of assets of more than one hundred Russian political and economic leaders, including President Putin. Meanwhile, Japanese diplomats have leveraged the country's status as the only Asian member of the G7 to lobby India, ASEAN members, and other Asian countries to take a firmer stance against Russia's aggression in Ukraine. Japanese officials also expelled Russian diplomats, announced plans to reduce Japan's reliance on imported Russian energy sources, provided humanitarian assistance to Ukrainians, and declared their aspiration to raise defense spending to an unprecedented level of two percent of the country's national GDP.²⁸

Tokyo's bold policies and Moscow's negative response have led to the collapse of the decade-long Japanese effort to improve relations with Russia to enable Tokyo to focus more on resisting Chinese and North Korean belligerence. Under Shinzo Abe, who was prime minister from 2012 to 2020, Japan vigorously sought to improve relations with Russia to

March 8, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/8/russia-deals-with-unfriendly-countries-require-moscow-approval>.

28 Mari Yamaguchi, "Japan announces expulsion of 8 Russian officials, imposes new sanctions," Associated Press, April 8, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/japan-announces-expulsion-of-8-russian-officials-imposes-new-sanctions>.

enlarge Tokyo's diplomatic options and gain leverage with third parties. Abe personally held dozens of meetings with Putin to promote this campaign. Though geopolitically understandable given the rising threat from China and the DPRK, Abe's diplomatic outreach to Putin proved fruitless as the Russian government remained uncompromising in its demand to retain control of Japan's Northern Territories (termed the Southern Kurils by Russians). The Japanese public has generally supported its government's decisions since Japanese nationals have also suffered from large-scale Russian land seizures, notably in the Northern Territories, where Soviet occupation forces displaced Japanese residents from their ancestral homes. Japan's new approach toward international security crises should become clearer after the release of the country's revised national security strategy, mid-term defense spending program, and national defense program guidelines in coming months. Even now, however, Tokyo's response to the Ukraine crisis has effectively raised the bar regarding what Japan can and should do in future global emergencies.

South Korean policies toward Ukraine have been somewhat more modest, though still exceeding the support provided to Ukraine by India, Pakistan, or Israel. The Moon Jae-in government respected U.S. and other Western sanctions, supplied substantial humanitarian aid to Ukrainians, and later imposed independent prohibitions on engaging in transactions with some Russian banks or exporting strategic materials such as semiconductors to Belarus and Russia.²⁹ But, unlike Germany, which has reversed its decades-long arms export restrictions to conflict regions and provided arms to Ukraine, the Moon administration rejected Ukrainian requests for defensive but lethal anti-armor, anti-aircraft, and anti-ship weapons, despite the country's robust defense industry and an official U.S. government request to provide the weapons.³⁰ Anxieties about prompting

29 Andrew Yeo, "How Will South Korea's New President Approach Russia's Ukraine Invasion?," *The Diplomat*, May 7, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/how-will-south-koreas-new-president-approach-russias-ukraine-invasion/>.

30 Anthony Kuhn, "South Korea's immediate neighbors are impacting the military help its giving Ukraine," *National Public Radio*, April 28, 2022, <https://www.npr>.

Moscow to further disrupt intra-Korean relations were apparently one consideration weighing on the Moon government, specifically the prospects of Russia providing military technology to the DPRK if South Korea armed Ukraine. Newly elected President Yoon Suk-yeol has expressed a greater willingness to confront Russian aggression in Ukraine. In his February 2022 *Foreign Affairs* article, President Yoon also complained that the previous ROK administration's reluctance to confront Beijing "has created an impression that South Korea has been tilting toward China and away from its longtime ally, the United States." He insists that Beijing "should accept, rather than oppose, South Korea's cooperative system with its allies." Yoon has also called for more ROK leadership on international issues beyond the Korean Peninsula, transforming South Korea into a "global pivotal state" in promoting "freedom, peace, and prosperity through liberal democratic values and substantial cooperation" while making "a deeper alliance with Washington ... the central axis of Seoul's foreign policy."³¹

Even before the Ukraine crisis, the global nuclear arms control architecture laboriously built during the Cold War was withering.³² Renewed great power competition between the United States with China and Russia, combined with mutual accusations of circumvention, has created an inhospitable environment for arms limitations. Furthermore, whereas during the Cold War the Soviet Union and the United States monopolized the possession of the most advanced weapons systems, today many states and even some non-state actors have acquired sophisticated means to devastate each other. These novel technologies have included cyber weaponry, counterspace systems, armed drones, and high-precision counterforce delivery systems.³³ As these destructive capabilities have

org/2022/04/28/1095365240/south-koreas-immediate-neighbors-are-impacting-the-military-help-its-giving-ukra.

31 Suk-yeol Yoon, "Korea Needs to Step Up: The Country's Next President on His Foreign Policy Vision," *Foreign Affairs*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>.

32 Linton F. Brooks, "The End of Arms Control?," *Daedalus* 149, no. 2 (Spring 2020): 84-100.

spread to additional countries, Cold War arms control regimes limiting only two countries and one type of strategic weaponry (nuclear-armed missiles) have become of decreasing value. The political-military leadership of Russia, China, and the DPRK have also evinced strong interest in employing non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNWs) to achieve battlefield advantages as well as leveraging escalation fears to make war gains. The intention would be to highlight the dangers of further escalation should the conflict or antagonism continue.

The Ukraine crisis has underscored anew the advantages nuclear weapons bring to states. Russian officials have made nuclear threats to deter direct NATO military intervention on behalf of Ukraine. Western countries have restricted their assistance to the Ukrainians to deliveries of weaponry, remote training, intelligence sharing, and economic sanctions. The crisis has also highlighted the limited value of vague security guarantees given to states, like Ukraine, that have abstained from pursuing their own nuclear weapons in favor of securing general pledges of support from other countries—in Ukraine's case, the 1994 Budapest Memorandum.³⁴ Experts believe that the Ukraine War, like the earlier overthrow of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi and the U.S. military invasion of Iraq, has made the DPRK leadership even more reluctant to relinquish its nuclear deterrent in exchange for foreign security guarantees.³⁵

33 Richard Weitz, "Strengthening Multi-Domain Deterrence and Defense in the Asia-Pacific Region," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 32, no. 4 (December 2020): 495-516.

34 "Memorandum on Security Assurances, known as the Budapest Memorandum, in connection with Ukraine's accession to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, signed Dec. 5, 1994," <https://www.pircenter.org/media/content/files/12/13943175580.pdf>. See also: Doug Bandow, "A Lesson for North Korea: Ukraine Gave Up Its Nukes and Was Invaded," *The National Interest*, March 7, 2022, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/korea-watch/lesson-north-korea-ukraine-gave-its-nukes-and-was-invaded-201018>.

35 Jeongmin Kim, "DPRK unlikely to denuclearize after war in Ukraine: Ex-ROK ambassador to Kyiv," *NK News*, March 4, 2022, <https://www.nknews.org/2022/03/dprk-unlikely-to-denuclearize-after-war-in-ukraine-ex-rok-ambassador-to-kyiv/?t=1654338478976>.

Unsurprisingly, these novel trends, combined with Russian nuclear threats against the West throughout the Ukraine war, have exacerbated long-standing doubts about the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear security guarantees. For decades, the United States has committed to defend South Korea and Japan from external aggression through the use of U.S. nuclear forces. The credibility of these commitments was weakening even before the Ukraine war due to the growth of Chinese and DPRK nuclear capabilities; the deemphasizing of nuclear weapons in U.S. military doctrine; statements by President Trump and other U.S. officials casting doubts on the durability of U.S. force commitments; U.S. military setbacks in Afghanistan and other countries; the U.S. failure to enforce "red lines" against WMD activities in Syria, Iran, and elsewhere; and growing U.S. interest in adopting a no-first use or sole purpose policy.³⁶ The latter approach could mean that the United States would, for instance, not employ its nuclear forces to protect South Korea or Japan from a DPRK attack if the North employed chemical and biological weapons, cyber strikes, or conventionally armed missiles. Though the Biden administration decided in its Nuclear Posture Review to eschew a no-first-use doctrine for now, the Ukrainian conflict has exacerbated concerns in Japan and especially South Korea that the United States would not utilize its nuclear forces to parry North Korean, Chinese, or Russian military aggression against them as Pyongyang, Beijing, or Moscow might respond by launching nuclear strikes against U.S. forces in the Indo-Pacific region or even the U.S. mainland. In any case, the threat of U.S. nuclear retaliation has not shielded the ROK from lower-intensity DPRK provocations, such as the 2010 sinking of South Korea's *Cheonan* warship and subsequent DPRK shelling of Yeonpyeong. The United States has considered using nuclear weapons to deflect such "grey area" challenges by the DPRK on the Korean Peninsula and by China in the South

³⁶ Reversing earlier positions when faced with *fait accompli*, the United States cancelled planned punitive air strikes against the Syrian government for its chemical weapons use and made negotiating concessions to the Iranian regime even though the UN Security Council had ordered a cessation of its uranium enrichment.

China Sea excessive, but neither the United States nor its allies have found alternative means to rebuff such lower-intensity provocations.³⁷

These extended deterrence challenges have elevated Japanese and South Korean interest in either acquiring their own independent nuclear deterrents, stationing U.S. nuclear delivery systems on their territories, or having greater access to U.S. decisions regarding the possible use of U.S. nuclear weapons in their defense. President Yoon has advocated "establishing a more concrete agenda for the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group that Washington and Seoul established in 2016."³⁸ Proposals for NATO-style "nuclear-sharing" arrangements in Asia have been especially prominent within South Korea's national security community.³⁹ Yet, they have also been controversial due to their possible negative impact on regional crisis and arms race stability.⁴⁰ Still, public support for acquiring national nuclear deterrents has been growing in South Korea.⁴¹ Though so far eschewing national nuclear weapons programs, both Japan and South Korea have been enhancing their national missile, cyber, space situational awareness, and other defensive systems. They also aim to deploy retaliatory counterstrike capabilities in the next five to ten years to enhance their capacity for "deterrence by denial."⁴²

37 Van Jackson, "Raindrops Keep Falling On My Nuclear Umbrella," *Foreign Policy*, May 18, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/18/raindrops-keep-falling-on-my-nuclear-umbrella-us-japan-south-north-korea/>.

38 Suk-yeol Yoon, "Korea Needs to Step Up: The Country's Next President on His Foreign Policy Vision," *Foreign Affairs*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>.

39 Morten Soendergaard Larsen, "Talk of a Nuclear Deterrent in South Korea," *Foreign Policy*, September 9, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/09/09/south-korea-nuclear-deterrent-north-korea/>.

40 Joshua Byun and Do Young Lee, "The Case Against Nuclear Sharing in East Asia," *The Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 67-87.

41 "Thinking Nuclear: South Korean Attitudes on Nuclear Weapons," The Chicago Council on Global Affairs, February 21, 2022, <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/research/public-opinion-survey/thinking-nuclear-south-korean-attitudes-nuclear-weapons>.

42 John Grady, "Japanese Lawmakers Argue for Counterstrike Capability for Self Defense Force," USNI, May 3, 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/05/03/japanese>

The ROK aims to employ these systems against North Korean missiles and artillery systems before they launch. U.S. support for this objective led the ROK and the United States in May 2021 to terminate the bilateral guidelines limiting the weight and range of South Korean ballistic and cruise missiles. Tokyo also strives for "deterrence by denial" regarding the DPRK, while also seeking missiles to defeat attacks against Japan's outlying islands by the PLA Navy.

4. New Opportunities

During his May 2022 trip to Asia, President Biden underscored U.S. support for Japanese and South Korean efforts to strengthen collective defense and deterrence against regional security threats and enhance regional economic cooperation. The administration eschewed public fights over trade or burden sharing and offered means of collaborating on novel economic issues such as supply-chain security and countering corruption. Both Japan and South Korea notably joined the newly launched Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF). Regarding common threats, the Biden administration seeks to influence the policies of China, Russia, and North Korea primarily by shaping their external environments rather than by attempting to change their domestic political systems. In these cases, the main shaping tool is the coalition of Western democracies, including Japan and South Korea. In this respect, Biden found eager partners in both Tokyo and Seoul. Prime Minister Kishida welcomed U.S. support for Japan's enhanced deterrence and response capabilities, aspirations for permanent membership on the UN Security Council, and reformed capitalism. The Japanese and U.S. leaders also criticized Chinese and Russian policies that threatened regional security "and committed to remain attentive to cooperation between China and Russia in military affairs." Importantly, Kishida and Biden "stressed the critical importance of close ties and cooperation among Japan, the United States, and the ROK."⁴³

-lawmakers-argue-for-counterstrike-capability-for-self-defense-force.

While in Seoul, Presidents Biden and Yoon highlighted their commitment to "the values of promoting democracy and the rules-based international order" and "human rights and rule of law globally." In addition to pledging to strengthen their "airtight coordination" to achieve "the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," the ROK-U.S. joint leadership communique reaffirmed the U.S. determination to deploy strategic military assets to the Peninsula "in a timely and coordinated manner...and identify new or additional steps to reinforce deterrence in the face of DPRK destabilizing activities," including cyber threats. The joint presidential statement also restated the U.S. commitment to employ "the full range of U.S. defense capabilities, including nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities," to protect the ROK. Furthermore, the United States has responded positively to President Yoon's interest in resurrecting the ROK-U.S. Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group, which fulfills a Biden administration goal to sustain strong bilateral defense ties while discouraging South Koreans from pursuing their own nuclear weapons. Along with conducting a joint visit to Osan Air Base, the two governments advocated a "conditions-based transition of wartime operational control" to the ROK rather than one determined by a set timetable, which drove last year's U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. They also said they would expand ROK-U.S. defense industrial cooperation, including by discussing a possible Reciprocal Defense Procurement agreement, strengthening the resiliency of defense supply chains, and increasing collaboration on national security space issues.⁴⁴

The current governments of Japan and South Korea have expressed interest in expanding security ties with each other and the United States though the Biden administration's Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy⁴⁵.

43 "Japan-U.S. Joint Leaders' Statement: Strengthening the Free and Open International Order," The White House, May 23, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/23/japan-u-s-joint-leaders-statement-strengthening-the-free-and-open-international-order/>.

44 "United States-Republic of Korea Leaders' Joint Statement," The White House, May 21, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/21/united-states-republic-of-korea-leaders-joint-statement/>.

For example, Yoon specifically expressed interest in participating in the working groups of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue group of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States.⁴⁶ The Quad members have launched new high-technology cooperation projects in 5G wireless communications and other high-technology sectors to better compete with the Chinese state-backed enterprises contributing to Beijing's civil-military fusion programs.⁴⁷ Washington should encourage Tokyo to relax its opposition to South Korea's joining the Quad since the ROK has a lot to offer in these areas. "Mini-lateral" regionally tailored cooperation projects like the Quad and the AUKUS help compensate for the lack of comprehensive and powerful EU- or NATO-like institutions in the region.

Another opportunity arises from the advent of the new Integrated Deterrence concept that underpins the new National Defense Strategy and other recent U.S. strategy documents. This holistic approach combines military and non-military tools, involving multiple domains and actors, including interagency and foreign partners. Integrated Deterrence emphasizes how deterrence is a collective endeavor, with allies and partners contributing critical capabilities in coordination with the United States. The framework will help the United States to engage with Japan, South Korea, and other U.S. allies in Asia to discuss the implications of the new DPRK, Chinese, and Russian strike systems—as well as how to respond to them. For example, to support extended deterrence in Northeast Asia, the United States has long deployed dual-capable ballistic and cruise missiles on select surface vessels, submarines, and strategic bombers

45 "Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States," The White House, February 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>. See also: "Fact Sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States," The White House, February 11, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/11/fact-sheet-indo-pacific-strategy-of-the-united-states/>.

46 "Yoon says will 'positively review joining' Quad if invited: report," Yonhap, April 26, 2022, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220426001000315?input=tw>.

47 Suk-yeol Yoon, "Korea Needs to Step Up: The Country's Next President on His Foreign Policy Vision," *Foreign Affairs*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>.

operating in the Indo-Pacific region. To augment these capabilities in the face of the expanding missile arsenals of Russia, China, and North Korea, the United States is developing ground-launched intermediate-range missiles for the first time in decades—and is consulting with Asian allies and partners about possibly hosting them. Thus far, no Asian country has agreed to host ground-launched intermediate-range missiles on its territory.

The munitions shortfalls during the Ukraine crisis, which has seen the employment of thousands of missiles each month, has highlighted the need for more robust multinational defense industrial production capabilities encompassing Japan, South Korea, as well as the United States.

Additionally, one reason the ROK declined to provide Ukraine with Cheongung surface-to-air missiles is that South Korea has limited stocks of these weapons, which are needed for defense against potential DPRK aggression.⁴⁸ The United States has also curtailed arms shipments to Taiwan due to the need to divert some limited-availability weapons to Ukraine.⁴⁹ To reduce these supply-chain challenges, the United States and select partners could undertake additional U.S.-led military-technology defense industrial collaboration projects with select partners modeled after the trilateral Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) defense industrial partnership launched in September 2021. Among other projects, the AUKUS aims to provide Australia with nuclear-powered attack submarines, long-range precision-guided strike systems, quantum computing, artificial intelligence technologies, and other advanced military and dual-use capabilities. Pursuing these arrangements requires assessing what credible military capabilities partners can bring, when they might arrive, and how to operationalize

48 Anthony Kuhn, "South Korea's immediate neighbors are impacting the military help its giving Ukraine," *National Public Radio*, April 28, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/04/28/1095365240/south-koreas-immediate-neighbors-are-impacting-the-military-help-its-giving-ukra>.

49 Christian Shepherd and Vic Chiang, "Howitzer delivery to Taiwan delayed by strained U.S. supply chain," *The Washington Post*, May 3, 2022.

them. Even when partners cannot generate the same capabilities, they still might offer complementary contributions that sustain important areas of mutual military interoperability.

U.S., Japanese, and South Korean representatives should also discuss how they will engage with NATO and the EU, whose members have been increasing their security ties with Asian partners to discourage Chinese aggression. For example, European navies began to regularly conduct freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea, where Beijing has claimed sovereignty over important international waterways. Senior South Korean and Japanese officials should regularly attend NATO meetings on the Ukraine crisis but also those sessions covering other global security questions. The growing relations between China and Russia will likely demand greater security, economic, and other cooperation between the Asian and European democracies.

The allies need to reassess the employment of cyber weapons in wartime. In this domain, China, Russia, and North Korea represent the three most serious state actor threats in Asia.⁵⁰ They perceive cyber weapons as asymmetric capabilities potentially able to disrupt an adversary's critical military intelligence, communications, navigation, and information processing networks. The Ukraine War has, however, exposed some limits with cyber weapons. It had been thought that cyber conflicts favor offensive strategies due to the plethora of targets, the difficulties of attribution, the instantaneous pace of operations, and the low financial costs of cyber strikes. But the Ukraine War has illustrated how cyber capabilities are not perfect weapons in wartime. Cyber defenses appear stronger than we thought, especially since Ukraine has been fighting Russian cyber attacks for years and its partners had months before the launch of the Russian invasion on February 24 to fortify the defenses. The Ukraine conflict has underscored the value of proactively identifying

50 Maggie Miller, "Federal Authorities Warn North Korean Hackers Are Targeting Banks," *The Hill*, August 26, 2020, <https://thehill.com/policy/cybersecurity/513798-federal-authorities-warn-north-korean-hackers-are-targeting-banks>.

and mitigating vulnerabilities. Cyber weapons are most valuable when first used, before a defender is aware of the vulnerabilities being exploited. Once one of these "zero-day" vulnerabilities is exposed, it is more likely to be mitigated. Enhancing protection of critical networks requires multiple protection layers, zero-trust protocols, more active defenses for counterattacks and preemption, rapid reconstitution capabilities, and operating in cyber-contested and cyber-degraded environments. Whereas in peacetime cyber attacks can avoid the kinetic threshold of the laws of armed conflict, in wartime, they may be too imprecise instruments for warfare. Not only can their use have unexpected collateral casualties, but kinetic weapons have more predictable effects than cyber attacks, so commanders will rely more on them to achieve specific military goals and missions.

Another increasing prominent issue for trilateral dialogue is defending Taiwan should the PLA employ military force against that island. Taiwan's sustained autonomy is critical for ensuring the territorial defense and semiconductor supply-chain security of Japan, South Korea, and the United States. There are disturbing similarities between Ukraine and Taiwan. Moscow and Beijing both deny that these are genuinely independent nations; authoritarian Russia and China want to replace their autonomous democratic political structures with direct rule from Moscow and Beijing; and Russia and China are prepared to employ conventional aggression with nuclear threats to deter foreign military intervention in any major military contingency. Of course, there are some differences between the situations of Ukraine and Taiwan. An island is harder to attack than a neighboring country connected by land, while U.S. security and economic ties are stronger with Taiwan than with Ukraine. There is also more ambiguity in how the United States would respond to an attack on Taiwan. Whereas the United States has made clear that it would not employ force to defend Ukraine from Russia, Washington's policy of "strategic ambiguity" suggests the possibility that the Pentagon would come to Taiwan's direct defense. Still, the PLA will try to learn from Russian failures in Ukraine and prepare the information battlefield better, recruit an effective fifth column, anticipate popular resistance to a PLA occupation

force, plan for a lengthy war even as they hope for a short one, and prepare for massive sanctions against the PRC. In recent years, some Japanese national security experts and officials have become increasingly vocal about the imperative of Tokyo's and Washington's making clear that Japan and the United States will not permit the PRC to seize Taiwan. Several Japanese lawmakers have even warned that a U.S. failure to defend Taiwan from a Chinese attack (i.e., providing Taiwan, like Ukraine, with only indirect U.S. military assistance) would lead to the collapse of the Japanese-U.S. defense alliance given the criticality of Taiwan to Japan's national security.⁵¹

Though South Korea is unlikely to render direct military assistance to Taiwan, policy makers in Seoul would need to consider when and how Pyongyang might exploit a Taiwan crisis for opportunistic aggression. Like their Japanese counterparts, ROK officials would also want to be informed about U.S. military assessments that the PLA might use "nuclear coercion" to support its takeover of Taiwan in the next few years, and that the United States needs "limited nuclear employment" options to deter such an attempt.⁵² As part of their campaign to multilateralize support for Taiwan, moreover, the United States and Japan will also continue to press South Korea and other countries to affirm the importance of averting Chinese military aggression or coercion against Taiwan.

5. Conclusion

The new ROK government will need to manage an exceptionally difficult security environment. Fortunately, the United States and other

51 "The Spear and the Shield?: Japan's Defense Strategy Trajectory," Center for Strategic & International Studies, YouTube, May 3, 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e8H9QYlaSdY&t=2238s>.

52 Patrick Tucker, "China Likely to Use 'Nuclear Coercion' in Bid to Take Taiwan by 2027, STRATCOM Chief Says," *Defense One*, May 5, 2022, <https://www.defenseone.com/threats/2022/05/china-likely-use-nuclear-coercion-bid-take-taiwan-2027-stratcom-chief-says/366551/>.

democracies, including Japan, are eager to support Seoul. Meanwhile, President Yoon has affirmed strong interest in overcoming recent tensions with Japan and the United States to advance common security objectives. He has observed that, "Bilateral relations with Japan also require a rethink, and Seoul should recognize the strategic importance of normalizing ties with Tokyo...the two countries should seek comprehensive solutions to their disputes over history, trade, and security cooperation."⁵³ Better integrating the two countries' missile defenses with each other, as well as with the United States, would be a worthwhile contribution. South Korean and Japanese missile defense cooperation with the United States continues to resemble a bilateral spoke-and-wheel model, even though pooling assets among these countries would make regional missile defenses more effective. Japan has built a dual-layer defense architecture with Patriot interceptors anchoring the lower level and SM-3 interceptors launched from destroyers equipped with Aegis command and control systems providing an upper-level shield. The ROK has constructed an independently commanded and controlled indigenous Korea Air and Missile Defense system. The two countries are enhancing these systems' targeting, sensor, software, and fire control technologies. But attaining better joint protection against missile strikes can bolster collective defense and deterrence by helping achieve a more scalable and adaptable architecture extending across multiple defense domains and providing more resilient layered protection for Asian territory, forces, and populations. In addition to pooling these assets better with the U.S. BMD systems based in Asia, the countries of Japan, South Korea, and the United States could augment their joint capabilities still further with better space-based sensors along with more rapid targeting and control systems enhanced with artificial intelligence for downing fast-flying hypersonic missiles. Better South Korean-Japanese relations will also decrease potential ROK anxieties about Japanese counterstrike capabilities.

53 Suk-yeol Yoon, "Korea Needs to Step Up: The Country's Next President on His Foreign Policy Vision," *Foreign Affairs*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/south-korea/2022-02-08/south-korea-needs-step>.

The three countries should engage in a more regular dialogue that institutionalizes scenario discussions, such as how they will respond if North Korea attacks a Japanese target, like a ship, to exacerbate tensions among the partners. Their most important discussions will consider the most taxing worst-case contingencies, including that of combined DPRK-Russian-Chinese military action against Japan, South Korea, and the United States.

■ Article Received: 05/10 ■ Reviewed: 06/03 ■ Revised: 06/09 ■ Accepted: 06/15

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