

**EMBARGO UNTIL 09:00 SEPT. 25 KOR**  
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International Policy Coordination on North Korea:  
The Challenge of Crafting and Sustaining Consensus

Paper Abstract  
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For presentation at  
The Asan North Korea Conference 2013

More than 60 years after the armistice that marked the cessation of open hostilities, the Korean Peninsula remains defined by division today. For most of the world the “Cold War” ended over two decades ago, yet the Korean Peninsula remains that unfortunate period’s last vestige. For decades the division of the Korean Peninsula was mirrored in the region and globally. While South Korea’s successfully Nordpolitik led to the normalization of relations with China and Russia in the early 1990s, North Korea has remained isolated and the source of serious tensions in the region.

Despite continuing differences in approach between the United States and its allies on the one hand, and the DPRK’s traditional patrons China and Russia on the other, as North Korean actions and statements have ventured ever further outside the global “norm” responding to such provocations as North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs has increasingly become a driver for international cooperation.

On a more immediately level, the past several decades of North Korean threats has served to further strengthen both the U.S.-ROK alliance and the U.S.-Japan Alliance. In the late 1990’s the United States, South Korea and Japan formed a Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) to help forge a common approach to the many challenges of dealing with North Korea. Even without the formal TCOG mechanism, it has now become common if not essential for the three countries to consult closely prior to reaching out to China, Russia, or North Korea.

A broader regional approach was formalized in the Six-Party Talks, which while functionally non-existent remain a mantra in the policies of all countries in the region with the exception of North Korea. From a U.S. perspective the talks were partially an effort to resist the DPRK’s calls for bilateral talks and more important recognition that only a coordinated approach toward North Korea offered a realistic prospect of affecting a change in North Korean behavior. In a more optimistic era, there was hope that the six party talks might evolve into a broader regional security mechanism. In fact, the September 19, 2005 joint statement of the six party talks established a separate working group on a Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism.

While much recent focus has been placed on the differing approaches to Syria by the United States and Russia, North Korea has been an area of fare greater coordination and even cooperation. Perhaps in part because of the long history between the U.S. and Russia in negotiating international arms control treaties, Russia seems to take the North Korean Long-Range Missile and nuclear program more seriously than does North Korea’s principal patron, China. As a result, efforts to secure Russian support for

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stronger responses in the U.N. Security Council have been an important step in encouraging China to move in the same direction.

The success or failure of any approach to North Korea ultimately requires to acquiescence if not the active participation of China. While few in Washington or Seoul are satisfied with the current level of policy coordination with China regarding North Korea, China has undeniably come a long way. Less than a decade ago it would be impossible to imagine China having signed on to three separate UN Security Council Sanctions Resolutions against its erstwhile ally North Korea. Still, a major focus on both ROK and U.S. diplomacy related to North Korea remains focused on security even greater Chinese support.

In this context, there remain many longstanding and a few new questions related to international policy coordination on North Korea:

- How far might China be expected to go in joining international responses to North Korean provocations.
- Is ROK diplomacy with China peeling China away from the DPRK, or peeling the ROK away from the U.S.
- How will the resumption of Kaesung affect regional policy coordination?
- Will tensions between the ROK and Japan limit effective trilateral coordination?
- Might U.S.-Russian cooperation on Syria effect cooperation on North Korea.