

**EMBARGO UNTIL 09:00 SEPT. 25 KOR**  
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International Policy Coordination on North Korea Problems:  
Japan's Perspective on Obstacles for Closer Cooperation

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From a Japanese point of view, there seem to be several obstacles to overcome for closer international policy coordination on North Korea including 1) differences in threat perception and subsequent policy priorities possessed by the relevant actors, and 2) difficulties in international policy coordination caused by Japan's shaky bilateral relations with its neighbors.

Firstly, differences in threat perception over North Korea should be thoroughly addressed and shared by major actors in order to form a consensus on policy priorities in dealing with North Korea. The threat posed by North Korea has several aspects such as 1) direct threat of long to short-range ballistic missiles along with its nuclear programs, 2) threat to international efforts to prevent further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, 3) threat to the stability of the Korean Peninsula, and 4) low intensity threat of military/paramilitary provocations and illegal activities. Relevant actors such as the member states of the Six Party Talks may differ in their sensitivities on each aspect of threat primarily based on their geostrategic positions. This may lead the actors to have different policy priorities. For example, Japan seems to have more concerns over North Korea's medium range ballistic missiles as I have stated above as category 1) and the abduction of Japanese nationals as stated category 4) because of its close geographical position. This might have caused Japan to pay less attention on the global impact of North Korea's nuclear programs as stated category 2) and on the overall stability of the peninsula as stated category 3). In terms of ballistic missiles, the ROK may have more concern than Japan over North Korea's shorter-range missiles along with its huge number of artillery pieces deployed around the DMZ. In addition, the U.S., China and Russia may have different threat perceptions and subsequent policy priorities. Therefore, all the relevant actors need to work on a common agenda in dealing with North Korea.

The second set of problems relates inherently to Japan's diplomatic relations with its neighbors. In short, unless Japan works out policies to reduce the extremely high tensions in the ROK-Japanese and the Sino-Japanese relations, it seems impossible for Japan to cooperate with the ROK and China, the two

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most important actors over the issue related to North Korea. Japan including its public should deeply understand and explicitly appreciate the fact that the ROK-U.S. alliance has protected Japan's western flank for more than half a century. In the meantime, Japan and the ROK should acknowledge that the ROK-U.S. and the Japan-U.S. alliances are inseparable for the security of the Korean Peninsula. Specifically, as the former directly deals with the contingencies on the peninsula, the latter will provide rear security and logistic support for the ROK-U.S. alliance. As to the Sino-Japanese relations, the two countries have been in a hair-trigger situation since the Government of Japan decided to purchase three major islands of the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in September 2012. As far as this tension remains high and dangerous as those posed by North Korea, Japan will not be able to seek cooperative efforts with China in dealing with the issues related to North Korea. Tensions in the Sino-Japanese and the ROK-Japanese relations have heightened during power transition periods within the three countries. Any incoming administrations may have smaller room for diplomatic maneuver. In the case of Japan, the Abe administration won the upper house election with a fairly big margin in July and gained political assets to implement its political agenda. Therefore, it is highly desirable and feasible for the Abe administration to place the improvement of relations with the ROK and China high on its political agenda.