

Think Tank 2022: A Viable Path to Peace in the Asia Pacific Region

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The twentieth century was called the age of a New Pacific Civilization. As the Asia Pacific Region grows in significance on the international scene, currently in the face of the United States declining influence and China's growing hegemony, Japan needs to develop its Asia policy from this geopolitical perspective. The first step would be to form a Korean Peninsula policy with an eye toward peaceful unification on the Korean Peninsula. Historically, Japan and South Korea's relationship has been complementary. One of the pillars for the formation of the new Pacific civilization is the United States. But in recent years, its power has begun to wane, and China is challenging American supremacy.

Replacing the United States alone would be impossible for Japan. This decline can be made up for by multi-level cooperation with maritime nations, which place priority on openness, freedom and democracy rather than force.

Another crucial piece for building a new Pacific civilization is the strategic policy toward the Korean Peninsula including its peaceful unification. It requires cooperation between Japan, South Korea, and the United States, and Japan is in the position to play a major role. Furthermore, in order to ensure peace and stability in Northeast Asia, it's necessary to maintain the strategic framework between Japan, South Korea and the United States.

The Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait are strategy hot spots where maritime nations collide with the continental power of China and Russia. Korea is situated between maritime and continental forces and as a close neighbor, shares strategic interests with Japan. For this reason, close cooperation between Japan and South Korea in politics, economy and diplomacy is indispensable, despite too many persistent conflicts between them. Given the sequence of the events behind the division of the Korean Peninsula, its reunification will require cooperation, not only from the two Koreas but also from neighboring countries such as China and Japan, as well as from the United States and Russia. The Korean Peninsula policy urged by Japan, South Korea and the United States, should be an approach to draw North Korea into its sphere of influence, rather than China's and to bring a peaceful transformation of the North Korea regime.

A South-Korea-led unification process will bring political stability and democratization of the peninsula and prevent the expansion of socialist forces, while easing tensions in Northeast Asia. In addition, the reunification of the two Koreas will serve Japan's national interests by resolving its issue of North Korean abductions of the Japanese citizens and by creating new markets.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the United States attaches great importance to the hub-and-spoke framework, which consists of bi-lateral alliances. And alliances with Japan and South Korea are vital for security in the region.

Therefore, in developing a policy toward the Korean Peninsula, it is essential for Japan and South Korea to work in close coordination and cooperation with the United States. Once the Japan-US-South Korea alliance is consolidated, we should consider establishing a new permanent regional security cooperation organization which also includes North Korea, China, Russia, etc. to replace the Six-Party Talks. It is essential that North Korea, accepts IAEA inspections first, and in return, neighboring countries guarantee North Korea's security to alleviate its sense of isolation. The security cooperation arrangement is necessary for confidence-building and policy consultations among the countries concerned. While

working to reduce China's influence in North Korea, it is also necessary to include China in the consultations and make China assume certain responsibilities for maintaining peace and stability in Northeast Asia. Japan should strive to prevent China from expanding its influence on the Korean Peninsula southward and to avoid the unification under China's sphere of influence.



The brave first step

What is instructive when considering such a strategy is that about thirty years ago, in December 1991, Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon visited North Korea to meet with President Kim Il Sung. They established a relationship of mutual trust that helped avoid a nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula. In order to bring North Korea into the international community and achieve peace on the peninsula, Rev. Moon showed that diplomatic influence combined with the influence of religious leaders, who are in the position of transcending national interests, is indispensable.

The total population of Japan, South Korea, North Korea, the three east–northeastern provinces of China and far eastern Russia will be approximately 320 Million by 2021. The Northeast Asian Economic Zone, promoted by the Japan–Korean tunnel, is estimated to have a population of over 350 million with a GDP higher than that of the European Union, making it one of the richest economic zones in the world. The friendship, solidarity and the unity between Japan and South Korea that will be fostered by working together on this major project of the 21st century, is also necessary from the perspective of strengthening the alliance among Japan, the US and South Korea. The construction of this tunnel will strengthen ties between the two countries. This will not only improve bilateral relations, but also further cooperation between Japan, the United States and South Korea, as well as boost the credibility of the alliance. And it can be expected to contribute significantly to peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific Region.

If the transformation of the north economic and social system progresses, it will accelerate the peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula and serve as the catalyst for the realization of an East Asian Community. The Japan– Korea tunnel is not only a cornerstone of the region's economic development and the realization of an economic community but also is a project to promote the peaceful unification on the Korean Peninsula.