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### ***Session IV: Non-US related: China-Japan-South Korea***

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## China, Japan, and South Korea, Trilateral Relations of Competition, Coordination toward Cooperation

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The sustainable peace and prosperity of Northeast Asia needs a pair of shoes of its own, which are supposed to be originally made by regional countries. However, unfortunately, this pair of shoes, being expected for quite a long time and discussed many times at many different levels and numerous occasions, have not been finished yet. The three countries, China, Japan, and South Korea, both as the leading economies and regional powers, are expected to take the responsibility as the leading or accelerating engine of the sewing machine.

Contemporary bilateral or trilateral relations of China, Japan and South Korea started from the end of World War Two, about 70 years ago, deprived from even more passing-by years of military rival and economic competition, back from to the late of 19th century. It is well known that those competition and rival between countries as well as nations went out-of-control, and led to couple of critical wars. One was China-Japan Yellow Sea War in 1894, with a completed defeat of China. The other one was the part of World War Two, in which Japan offered an unconditional surrender in 1945. Also, people will not forget the Korean Peninsula War from 1950 to 1953, together with the intervention of China and Joint Army of United Nation led by the US, which is technically not over till today, with just a Cease Fire Agreement left between the North and South.

Great changes have been taking place in the Asia-Pacific regional structure characterizing the shift in power balance among related countries as well as adjustments in their respective regional strategies. What is the prevailing trend in this transformation and what kind of regional order will likely emerge in the future? Maybe we could find the answer in the following dimensions: the evolving regional context, shift in power balance and power conversion, geo-political and geo-economic developments and interactions between them, and evolving regional order. As the study shows, the broadening of regional geographical scope, the rise in the number of actors involved, as well as changes in the relations among them, have combined to cast a pluralistic and complex flavor to the regional structure. China and Japan are paying increasing attention to their security roles, and so should South

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Korea be. In spite of the intensifying geopolitical competition among China, Japan and South Korea, with a background of China- US power rebalancing, in recent years a China-Japan-South Korea coordination structure is more likely to take place in the future.

Located in the geopolitical intersection of Asia and Western Pacific, China, Japan and the ROK have significant implications for East Asia and Asia-Pacific region. As important economies in the world, the three countries are mutually vital trade partners to each other, owning a wide range of interests and demands of cooperation on both security and economic issues. The trilateral cooperation concerns the core interests of the three countries, so the trilateral cooperation regime of PRC, Japan and ROK was established. However, there are some problems of macro-coordination and promotion existing in the regime itself, which leads to hardship in the cooperation process.

The situation in Northeast Asia presents the overall peace and stability, rapid economic growth, and has become the most potential and promising regions. However, historical problems and problems of natural disasters and the residual of the cold war, transnational crime form major brakes on international cooperation. The nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula is a major problem that affects the situation in Northeast Asia, making the situation in Northeast Asia more complicated and changeable. Japan and South Korea as the core countries of Northeast Asia, bear a heavy responsibility for the peace and prosperity of Asia. In view of the characteristics of the region, the three countries should work together to settle the stability and unity of the region, lay a solid foundation for bilateral and multilateral cooperation, respect and care for each other's interests and concerns. The continuing instability of the political situation in Korea as well as the important foreign factors of the United States' Asia Pacific strategy should not be a negative factor in the security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

In the process of economic globalization and political multi - polarization, regional cooperation has become the trend of the international community. The economic exchanges between countries have become increasingly closer, which is accompanied by a close strategic relationship and frequent friction in tactics. Historical issues in Japan and East Asian countries continued to ferment. And this lead to the peculiar "hot-cold- phenomenon" in East Asia, which is an unprecedented dilemma that puzzles every country in East Asia, especially the relationship between China and Japan. Some unstable factors, the constant transactions on economy among nations, historical burden that cannot be unloaded in the political realm, some sensitive issues in cultural communication, have become important factors that restricted the sustainable and friendly relations between the two countries. In the meantime, these unstable factors also plagued the integration of East Asia. Therefore

, under the historical background of East Asian Cooperation, seeking new breakthroughs in Sino-Japanese relations has become an important content of East Asian politics and proposition of the times at the same time.

The security situation in Northeast Asia remains complicated and sensitive. This region features a legacy of the Cold War, major power rivalry, historical discord, territorial disputes and rising nationalism.

China, Japan and the ROK are all striving to change the post-World War II order and during this transitory period the three countries are susceptible to troubles and frictions. It is necessary to build a collective security mechanism across the region. It is agreed on a comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security advocated by the New Asian Security Concept as the guiding principles for such a mechanism, so long as the US is not excluded, although to some extent Japanese and Korean scholars emphasized the positive aspects of the US-Japan alliance and US-ROK alliance.

China's defense policy can be termed as "active defense" in the context of a more general national strategy of peaceful development. China's military modernization is for the purpose of peace and the protection of China's lawful interests overseas. The increase in China's defense budget is commensurate with its economic growth and has become more and more transparent, and that it has neither the capability nor intention of challenging the US' role in the Asian Pacific, nor of changing the status quo in the East and South China seas. China attaches great importance to regional and international cooperation in both traditional and non- traditional security fields, and as a responsible stakeholder in regional and international affairs, China is ready to provide more and more public goods in security fields.

There would or could be some changes of Japan's peace orientation Since the Shinzo Abe government lifts the ban on exercising the right to collective self- defense by reinterpreting the Japan's Constitution, since the reinterpretation is justified by the great changes in both the internal and external environment of Japan. Abe is now pushing forward his security and foreign policy in the name of "Proactive Pacifism based on the Principle of International Cooperation".

China and ROK has been suffered a frozen bilateral relationship since the President Park Geun-hye decided to deployed the THAAD system. Relations between the ROK and Japan have been hurt by historical issues, but they have room for further cooperation on the North Korean nuclear program and other issues.

The lack of mutual trust among the three countries is the main cause for the dearth of security cooperation. This lack of trust is both the cause and result of many other thorny problems such as historical issues, territorial disputes, rising nationalism, and worsening national sentiments.

It is noticed that “China Threat” theory is still popular in Japan and South Korea, which has a negative effect on trilateral cooperation. Three countries should abandon the mentality of “regarding each other as an enemy” and build a win-win relationship by making strategic reassurances. There is also the importance of historical reconciliation between Japan and its neighboring countries. Without national reconciliation between Japan and China and between Japan and South Korea, any kind of security cooperation among the three countries will be impossible.

Even though there are many obstacles in the way of trilateral security cooperation, the three countries still have many opportunities. We can achieve more under the four principles of the New Asian Security Concept (namely common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security), properly dealing with the sensitive hot spot issues, jointly responding to non-traditional security challenges and pushing the construction of a regional security mechanism. There are plenty of room and space for trilateral cooperation in non-traditional security, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts, nuclear safety, counterterrorism, cyber security, navigational safety, maritime search and rescue, and UN peacekeeping missions. Cooperation in non-traditional security fields would be easier to achieve as it would be less sensitive, and the buildup of mutual trust through the process of cooperation in these areas would have spill-over effects on cooperation in traditional security fields.