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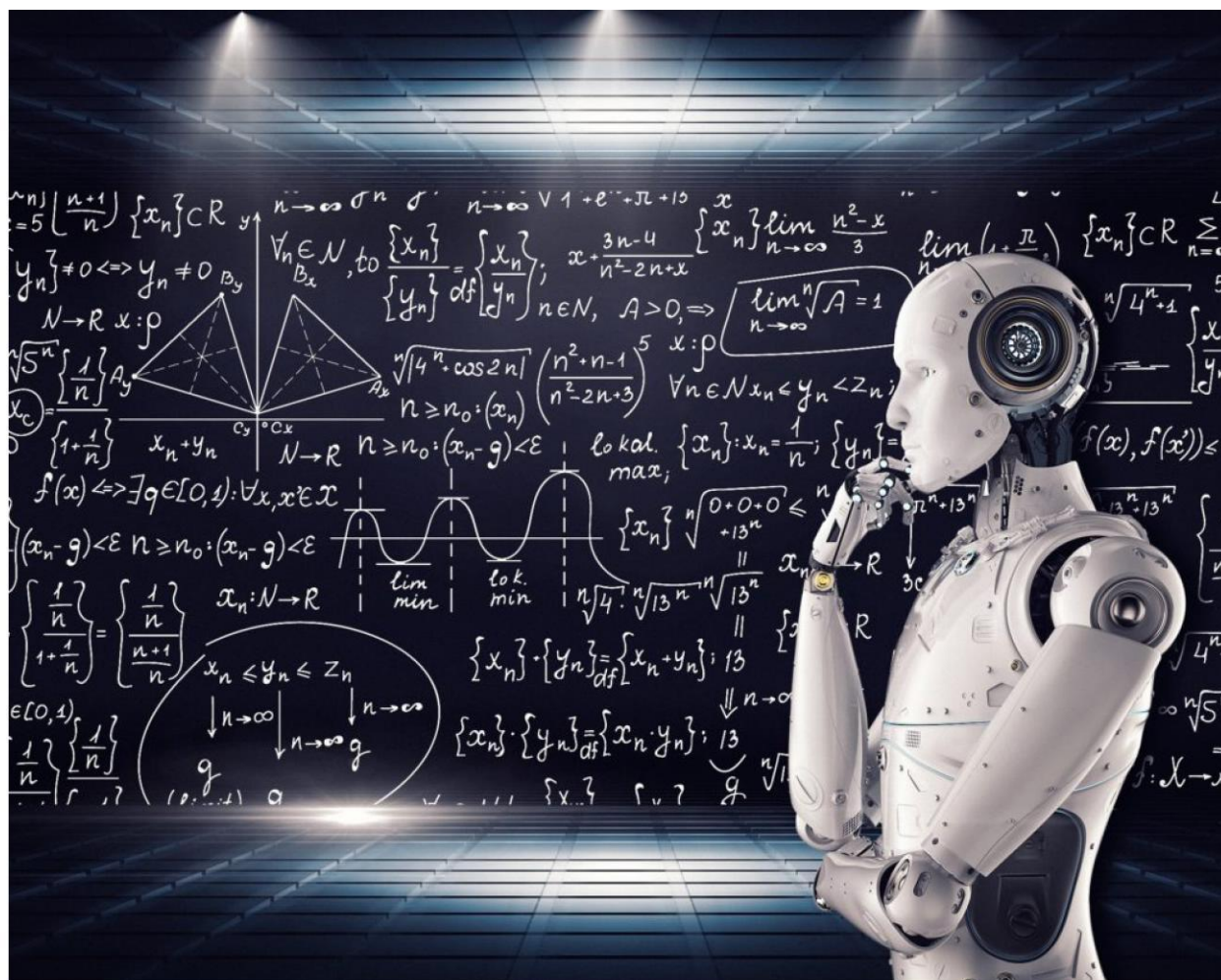
THE PENINSULA

Security Cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo: Changing the Conversation

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At a time when the Biden Administration is seeking to restore faith in the alliances and show resolve, the potential for security cooperation between Japan and Korea is dimmed by the continuing primacy of disputes over history. Aggravating this problem is an ever-

widening gap between Japan and South Korean with respect China. At the two mid-March “2+2” meetings held in Tokyo and Seoul, these differences were on full display. Japan directly raised multiple concerns; South Korea, by contrast, did all it could to avoid estranging Beijing.

These conflicts hardly advance the cause of trilateral security cooperation. What might, though, is a focus on the future. The Nonproliferation Policy Education Center’s (NPEC’s) latest multiyear study, New Frontiers for Security Cooperation with Seoul and Tokyo, outlines a menu for such cooperation, focusing on six specific areas for collaboration that move beyond traditional security issues.

Artificial intelligence (AI)

Japan, the United States, South Korea, and three other allied states already bankroll 50 percent of the world’s high technology research and development (vs. China’s 26 percent). This should give the United States a leg up in its AI competition with China but only if Washington collaborates with these key allies. How should the United States, Japan, and South Korea proceed? NPEC tapped Tarun Chhabra, now Director for Technology and National Security on the National Security Council, to supply answers. Chhabra suggests ten specific initiatives including measures to protect the transfer of sensitive AI information, coordinate the screening of AI investments, block hostile penetration of allied AI-related supply chains, and harmonize AI-related export controls. In addition, he recommends that Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo work with other AI-advanced allied governments to establish common standards: to pool and store non-sensitive datasets; develop privacy-preserving machine learning systems; promote allied military AI interoperability and software; coordinate national AI research and development; and develop inter-allied AI human capital pools. His key recommendation is that Washington should promote AI standard-setting as a way not only to advance common interests, but to lock in allied advantages against hostile competitors.

5G

5G communication systems exports constitute an emerging geotechnical contest that United States and its highest tech friends are currently losing. China is subsidizing Huawei and ZTE 5G exports to the developing world, creating new technological dependencies that, in turn, create leverage over developing nations’ economies and even their political

development.

Fortunately, there may be technical fixes to short-circuit China's 5G head start. Eric Brown of the Hudson Institute suggests that the U.S. push technical alternatives to China's end-to-end 5G systems. Rakuten Mobile in Japan as well as Nokia, Cisco, and NEC are experimenting with Open RAN 5G software that allows countries to use almost any 5G handset or terminal without sacrificing control over the data that flows to and from them. This has led to the creation of commercial groups, such as the O-Ran Alliance and the Open RAN Policy Coalition.

More could be done. South Korea's Samsung Corporation, Brown notes, is currently the only large 5G firm located in a major democracy that is a member of the Open RAN Policy Coalition. A "democratic ecosystem" for 5G cooperation could expand beyond the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to include Taiwan, Australia, India and Western Europe. A step in this direction is the recent creation of a U.S.-led Multilateral Telecommunications Security Fund, which aims to leverage U.S. financing along with that of Australia, the UK, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan.

Reducing civilian "value" targets' vulnerability to missiles and drones

An underappreciated consequence of the arms race in East Asia is the increasing vulnerability of nuclear facilities to precision missile and drone attacks. Even a non-lethal attack could prompt the immediate closure of all nuclear plants in any given country. An attack against the large spent fuel reprocessing plant in Rokkasho, Japan (and in the future, against similar plants in China and possibly South Korea), could produce Chernobyl-like radiological releases.

The NPEC report suggests adding the vulnerability of nuclear plants to missile and drone attacks to the agendas of existing East Asian nuclear security forums in which Japan, Korea and China participate. Joint assessments have yet to be discussed in a serious fashion among or between any of the alliance partners. Specific measures worth discussing would include moving more spent reactor fuel from pond storage to safer spent fuel casks; delaying efforts to build or expand spent fuel recycling plants, which are the most radioactive of targets and are in any case uneconomic; hardening spent fuel ponds' roofs with ultra-high performance concrete; installing emergency sprinkler cooling systems for existing spent fuel ponds; building remote nuclear reactor control rooms, as Japan has begun to do; building passive bird cage slat barriers to key parts of each nuclear facility to

limit missile and drones threats; and employing active point defenses. In addition to nuclear plants, Seoul, Tokyo, Taiwan and Washington ought to assess the vulnerability of other potential civil targets, such as dams, natural gas depots, and petrochemical plants, which, if hit, would produce disastrous knock-on effects.

Competing against China's One Belt One Road initiative

Washington would like to compete with China in building major infrastructure projects in the developing world. But as Karl Friedhoff of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs notes in the NPEC study, Beijing will always be quicker and the low bidder in building rail lines, roads, ports, bridges, and power generators. Instead, Friedhoff recommends Washington and its wealthier East Asian and Pacific allies should leverage their comparative advantages in providing services — schooling, medical care, business financing, legal counsel, and secure IT — and exploit the large transportation and energy projects China might construct. China can build big, cheap infrastructure but the United States, Japan, and South Korea can easily best Beijing at providing the high technology services that are essential to improve human capital in the developing world. South Korea and Japan are already taking this approach in Southeast Asia. Washington could help by standing up a trilateral coordinating council that could make optimal use of U.S., Japanese, and South Korean developmental financial resources to broaden their beachheads in Southeast Asia.

Space

Space services are another potential area of cooperation. As Taro Sato of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force explains in his analysis, Japan's Free and Open Asia Pacific initiative affords a logical venue for allied space development assistance. A key market for such aid would be ASEAN. Virtually all countries in the region have maritime, navigational, environmental, disaster relief, agricultural, fishing, and communications security requirements. These can best be met with satellite-related services from Japan, South Korea, the United States and other allied space-faring nations. One possible venue Washington could use to coordinate the provision of such services is the Asia Pacific Regional Space Agency Forum.

The report considers other areas of cooperation that relate directly to military spending, including anti-submarine warfare and military space cooperation, and these also make for interesting reading. The report's list is by no means exhaustive. It is, however, demonstrative of a key point: that strengthening extended deterrence—which we already do well—is not the only or even the most logical route to a more robust balancing of China

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scope of cooperation in ways that increase underlying capabilities and match those in which China's rise poses risks. Not coincidentally, such an approach has the benefit of reminding all three parties of the advantages that come from cooperation, and the costs of allowing outstanding issues—no matter how important—from driving them apart.

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Return to the Peninsula