

PEACE FORUM 2025

The prospects for changes in the situation of Northeast Asia
and the responses of the three countries with regard to the
launch of the second term of Trump

트럼프 2기 출범과 동북아 정세 변화 전망 및 3국의 대응

Friday, June 13, 2025

Kyungnam University

2025. 6. 13.(금)

경남대학교

Program

13:30~14:00 Opening Ceremony

- Greetings from the host **Jae Kyu Park** (President, Kyungnam University)
- Opening Remarks **Chia-Chuen Chang** (Chinese Culture University)
- Opening Remarks **Mika Suzuki** (President, Soka University)

14:00~15:00 Session I : Prospects for the South Korea's Northeast Asia Policy

- Moderator **Jae-wook Cho** (Kyungnam University)

South Korea's New Government: Northeast Asia Policy Proposal with a Focus on North Korea

- Presenter **Young Joon Choi** (Kyungnam University)
- Discussants **Hideki Tamai** (Soka University)
Chia-yin Wei (Chinese Culture University)

15:00~16:00 Session II : Prospects for Changes in U.S.-China-Russia Relations and Japan's Response

- Moderator **Jae-wook Cho** (Kyungnam University)

The Strategic Triangle and Japan: Changes in U.S.-China-Russia Relations with the Second Trump Administration and Japan's Response

- Presenter **Minoru Koide** (Soka University)
- Discussants **Eul-Chul Lim** (Kyungnam University)
Roger S. Chen (Chinese Culture University)

16:00~17:00 Session III : Prospects for Changes in the Cross-Strait Relations and Taiwan's Response

- Moderator **Jae-wook Cho** (Kyungnam University)

Using AI Technology to Construct an Early Warning Model for Taiwan Strait

- Presenter **Chia-Chuen Chang** (Chinese Culture University)
- Discussants **Sang Man Lee** (Kyungnam University)
Jonathan Luckhurst (Soka University)

13:30~14:00 **개회식**

- 개회인사 **박재규** (경남대 총장)
- 인사말씀 **Chia-Chuen Chang** (대만 중국문화대학 교수)
- 인사말씀 **Mika Suzuki** (일본 소카대 총장)

14:00~15:00 **제1회의 : 한국의 동북아 정책 전망**

- 좌장 **조재욱** (경남대 교수)

한국 정부의 동북아 정책 제언: 대북정책을 중심으로

- 발표 **최영준** (경남대 극동문제연구소 국제협력실장)
- 토론 **Hideki Tamai** (일본 소카대 부총장)
- Chia-yin Wei** (대만 중국문화대학 교수)

15:00~16:00 **제2회의 : 미중러 관계 변화 전망 및 일본의 대응**

- 좌장 **조재욱** (경남대 교수)

전략적 삼각관계와 일본: 트럼프 2기 시대 미중러 관계 변화 및 일본의 대응

- 발표 **Minoru Koide** (일본 소카대 교수)
- 토론 **임을출** (경남대 극동문제연구소 교수)
- Roger S. Chen** (대만 중국문화대학 교수)

16:00~17:00 **제3회의 : 양안 관계 변화 전망 및 대만의 대응**

- 좌장 **조재욱** (경남대 교수)

AI기술을 활용한 양안 관계 조기 예측 모델 구축

- 발표 **Chia-Chuen Chang** (대만 중국문화대학 교수)
- 토론 **이상만** (경남대 극동문제연구소 초빙교수)
- Jonathan Luckhurst** (일본 소카대 교수)

Participants Profile

Kyungnam University

Cho, Jae-wook

Cho, Jae-wook is a professor of political science and diplomacy at Kyungnam University. He serves as the vice president of the 21st Century Political Science Association. He has served as a member of the Changwon City Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Project Committee. His representative publications include *History of International Relations on the Korean Peninsula* (Hanul books, 2019).

Choi, Young Joon

Professor Choi, Young Joon received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Idaho in 2001 with a dissertation titled "A Study of Public Service Motivation: The Korean Experience." Since 1992, he has worked in various fields such as information analysis, unification policy, exchange and cooperation, and planning and coordination at the Ministry of Unification, and served as the Director of the Unification Policy Office and the 26th Vice Minister of Unification. He has been working at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies since September 2022. His main research areas include North Korea's administration and diplomacy, inter-Korean relations, and unification policy.

Lee, Sang Man

Professor Lee, Sang Man headed the China Center at Kyungnam University's Institute for Far Eastern Studies until February 2025. Now retired, he remains an invited professor there and Invited Foreign Professor at Shandong University in China. Educated at Dongguk University (B.A./M.A./doctoral coursework) and earned Renmin University of China (Ph.D.), he has spent over four decades researching Chinese socialism, Northeast Asian relations, and the East Asian world-system. He has published 100+ articles, co-authored 20 books, and delivered dozens of conference papers and overseas lectures. Recent studies examine China's gray-zone strategy, Confucian-based cross-national integration, and the cultural and civilizational perspective of the East Asian world-system.

Lim, Eul-Chul

Professor Lim, Eul-Chul is currently serving as an associate professor and director of research at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies at Kyungnam University. He earned his master's degree in Japanese Studies from Korea University and a Ph.D. in International Politics from Kyungnam University, where he researched the North Korea-U.S. nuclear missile negotiation process. For over 30 years, he has studied North Korean politics and diplomacy, inter-Korean relations, North Korea-U.S. relations, and North Korea-Japan relations. He has served as a policy advisor for the Office of National Security at the Blue House, the Ministry of Unification, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and so on. Through appearances on major broadcasts and media interviews, he provides insights into the situation on the Korean Peninsula and actively contributes to timely policy discussion.

Soka University

Koide, Minoru

Koide, Minoru is Director/Professor of the Graduate School of International Peace Studies, Soka University.

After earning a Ph.D. (1994) in International Relations from the University of Southern California, he has been studying and teaching multilateral institutions in the Asia Pacific, Japanese foreign policy, and Japan-South Korea relations. His recent research is focusing on Lyuh Woon hyung, a Korean national independence movement leader.

Luckhurst, Jonathan

Luckhurst, Jonathan is Director of the Global Governance Center and Professor of International Relations at the Graduate School of International Peace Studies, Soka University, in Tokyo. He previously worked at the University of Guadalajara and the Monterrey Institute of Technology in Mexico, and holds a Ph.D. from the University of Essex in the UK. Prof. Luckhurst's research

focuses on global governance, especially the G20, global governance networks, global political pluralism, and shifting authority, ideas, and beliefs in world politics. His publications include the books *G20 Since the Global Crisis* and *The Shifting Global Economic Architecture: Decentralizing Authority in Contemporary Global Governance* (both published by Palgrave Macmillan). His is currently researching political contestation and pluralism in world politics and G20 governance networks. Prof. Luckhurst participates in the official Think 7 and Think 20 engagement groups of the G7 and G20.

Tamai, Hideki

Tamai, Hideki is a Professor of Peace Studies, International Relations at Soka University and Director of Soka University Peace Research Institute (SUPRI). He was appointed Vice President and Dean of the Faculty of Letters at Soka University In 2024. He earned BA (Sociology) at Soka University in 1985 and MA (International Relations) at Soka University in 1989. His research examines and promotes Human Security, for example his analysis of the UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) presented it uniquely as a novel type of international regime from the perspective of constructivism. He is also very experienced in leading many international conferences, such as the International Symposium “Human Security in Asia,” “Global Governance for Human Security,” and “Building a Peace Community in Asia in 2017”. “Ways to Promote Cooperation and Coexistence – Beyond “Power and Interdependence” for the Peace Forum in 2023.

Chinese Culture University

Chang, Chia-Chuen

Chang, Chia-Chuen is the former director of the Institute of Labor Studies at Chinese Culture University in Taiwan. He is currently the CEO of the Chinese Cross-Boundaries Management Education Foundation. He used to be the Secretary-General of the Taiwan Consumer Education Foundation and served as a member of the advisory committees of several government labor departments. He is also currently a review committee member of the Taipei City Labor Rights Fund.

Chen, Roger S.

Chen, Roger S. is a Professor in the Department of Public Administration and Management at Chinese Culture University, Taiwan. He studied Political Science, Policy Analysis, Sociology, Marxism, and STS (Science, Technology and Society) in Taiwan and UK, and received his PhD from Department of Government, University of Manchester in 2002. He was a visiting scholar at Duke University in 2005 and teaches in Graduate School both at National Taiwan Normal University and Chinese Culture University. He also acts as a government advisor for publicly funded projects at the central and local levels and serves as a reviewer for various local and international academic journals.

Wei, Chia-yin

Wei, Chia-yin (Judy) is an assistant professor in the political science department at Chinese Culture University, Taipei, Taiwan. She had been an assistant research fellow and a post-doc research fellow in the Center for Hufu East Asia Democratic Studies at National Taiwan University between 2016 and 2021. She got her Ph.D. in political science from the University of South Carolina in the United States in 2016. Her major is comparative politics, and she specializes in economic voting, political communication, political behaviors, elections, democratization, and area studies. Her journal article– “The Strategic Coordination under Quasi-SNTV: A Case Study of Hong Kong” was published in the *Japanese Journal of Political Science* in 2017. It centers on the strategic behaviors of parties, political groups, candidates, and voters in proportional representation in Legislative Council elections in Hong Kong. She is currently working on the media effects on presidential election in Taiwan, impacts of Sunflower Movements in Taiwan and Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong, and the influence of quality of governance on support for democracy; she recently gets a research grant entitled “Information Heterogeneity and Value Change: A Comparative Perspective” from National Science and Technology Council in Taiwan and will start to explore the evolution of value change from comparative perspectives.

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SESSION I

**Prospects for
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한국의 동북아 정책 전망



PRESENTATION

South Korea's New Government:

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한국 정부의 동북아 정책 제언: 대북정책을 중심으로

- **Young Joon Choi** Kyungnam University

최영준 경남대 극동문제연구소 국제협력실장



1. Background

The prospect of former U.S. President Donald Trump's return to office presents a significant challenge for many nations, particularly in Northeast Asia. Trump's initial election in 2016 was unexpected, and his "America First" doctrine marked a stark departure from the traditional role of the United States as a key architect of the global liberal order. Historically, the U.S. has been recognized for providing security guarantees and economic stability as global public goods, spearheading international institutions and norms to uphold multilateral cooperation. However, under Trump, this role was reoriented toward a more unilateral framework, prioritizing national interests over broader global commitments. Consequently, Northeast Asia's strategic equilibrium is now subject to heightened volatility, necessitating a recalibrated approach to regional diplomacy and security. Trump's return following an unsuccessful re-election bid is an unprecedented political development in modern U.S. history,¹ further amplifying uncertainty among foreign governments regarding potential shifts in American foreign policy. His potential second term is expected to follow the strategic contours of his first, but with increased decisiveness and accelerated implementation due to strengthened domestic support.² One notable example is the imposition of highly discretionary unilateral tariffs aimed at addressing

¹ President Donald Trump is an extremely rare case of a leader who, despite failing to secure reelection after his first term, has returned to serve a second term. Even in the long history of the U.S. presidential system, such an occurrence has only happened once before—132 years ago. The 22nd (1885–1889) and 24th (1893–1897) U.S. President Grover Cleveland, a Democrat, was the first to serve two non-consecutive terms. Trump is now the second.

² In the congressional elections held alongside the recent U.S. presidential election, the Republican Party secured victory in both the House and Senate. As a result, the likelihood of Congress supporting rather than opposing the administration's policies has increased. Moreover, during Trump's first term, the administration faced numerous trial-and-error challenges in the preparatory phase, and his political foundation within the Republican Party was not firmly established. As a result, several cabinet members opposed his policies. However, President Trump has now solidified his control over the Republican Party, and his cabinet is composed entirely of loyalists who actively support his agenda.

the U.S. trade deficit – a strategy that places substantial pressure on economies heavily dependent on external trade, including South Korea. Trump’s security policy, rooted in transactionalism, has demonstrated a willingness to exert economic pressure on allies such as South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan.³ This approach could manifest in heightened demands for defense cost-sharing, with the implicit threat of troop reductions or withdrawals – a particularly concerning prospect amid North Korea’s ongoing nuclear advancements. These dynamics have raised questions regarding the credibility of U.S. security commitments and the stability of the Korea-U.S. alliance.

Domestically, South Korea has faced unprecedented political upheaval. On April 4, 2025, President Yoon Suk Yeol was dismissed following the Constitutional Court’s ruling on the declaration of martial law in December 2024. Although a full-blown crisis was averted, the incident has left lasting damage across political, economic, and social sectors, exposing vulnerabilities in South Korea’s democratic institutions. Economic instability and unresolved social issues, including medical sector disruptions, have compounded these challenges. Consequently, in light of the upcoming early presidential election, policy discussions have centered on economic recovery and diplomatic recalibration. Given South Korea’s economic dependence on global markets, diplomatic strategy – particularly Northeast Asian policy – has emerged as a critical focal point, especially in the context of U.S.-China strategic competition. Within this framework, the following discussion outlines policy recommendations for the next South Korean government, emphasizing North Korea policy.

North Korea Policy during the previous administration were overshadowed by diplomacy with major powers, largely driven by a value-based foreign policy aligned with the Biden administration. In the aftermath of the political crisis, North Korea policy has remained sidelined and is highly likely to continue being

³ Lim Eul-chul, “The Trump Administration’s ‘Mar-a-Lago Agreement’ Initiative: Impact and Response,” IFES BRIEF 2025-08 (April 15, 2025).

overlooked in discussions regarding the next government's agenda. South Korea, as the world's only divided nation, must proactively shape policies that address security threats from the North, mitigate economic ramifications, and lay the groundwork for long-term unification. Recognizing this urgency, the subsequent sections will outline a comprehensive Northeast Asia policy, with a particular emphasis on North Korea strategy for the incoming administration set to take office on June 4.

2. Current Northeast Asian Dynamics

North Korea

North Korea, under the direct leadership of Kim Jong-un, has undertaken a fundamental revision of its policy toward South Korea, formally declaring a hostile two-state theory while even rejecting the notion of shared ethnic identity. As part of this strategic shift, North Korea has replaced its traditional reference to "South Joseon" with "Republic of Korea," assigned its diplomatic ministry to handle inter-Korean affairs, and dissolved all domestic organizations dedicated inter-Korean issues.⁴ In response, the Yoon Suk Yeol administration introduced the August 15 Unification Doctrine, aiming to assert South Korea's distinct approach to unification while preemptively leading the discourse. However, North Korea has completely disregarded this initiative, offering no official response. Since the division of the Korean Peninsula, North Korea

⁴ In his speech at the Workers' Party plenary meeting in December 2023, Kim Jong-un accused South Korea of making the collapse of the North Korean regime and unification through absorption its national policy. He asserted that inter-Korean relations were no longer those of ethnic kinship or shared identity but rather relations between two hostile states, two warring nations still engaged in conflict. Furthermore, in his policy address to the Supreme People's Assembly in January 2024, Kim ordered the removal of the concepts of reconciliation, nationhood, and unification in relations with South Korea, instructing corresponding amendments to the constitution to reflect this stance.

has continuously adjusted its policy toward South Korea, evolving from the Democratic Base Theory to the South Korean Revolution Theory, and later to acknowledging the South Korean government and engaging in dialogue in response to shifting international political dynamics and the asymmetry of power between the two Koreas. Until recently, such shifts generally favored reconciliation and cooperation. However, with its latest hostile two-state stance, North Korea now explicitly advocates for the complete severance of inter-Korean relations, signaling a dramatic reversal in its approach.

South Korea's Domestic Policy Environment Regarding North Korea

The domestic landscape for North Korea policy has always been complex and challenging. Since the first inter-Korean summit in 2000, engagement with Pyongyang has intensified political divisions between conservatives and progressives, further entrenching ideological and regional rivalries. These existing political fault lines were compounded by deep-seated disagreements over North Korea policy, forming a layered structure of opposition. Throughout successive administrations - including the progressive governments of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun, followed by the conservative presidencies of Lee Myung-bak and Park Geun-hye, and then the return to progressive leadership under Moon Jae-in - policy disagreements regarding North Korea have remained pronounced, exacerbating inter-Korean political fragmentation within South Korea, commonly referred to as South-South conflict. Despite ideological divisions, there was, until this point, a foundational consensus on core principles such as mutual recognition, dialogue, humanitarian aid, social exchanges, and economic cooperation. This consensus was largely rooted in the Korean National Community Unification Plan introduced by the conservative Roh Tae-woo administration in September 1989, which received broad political consensus. Subsequently, the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement, signed in 1991, further solidified mutual respect for these principles. However, during the

relatively brief tenure of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration, the shared policy framework between conservatives and progressives regarding North Korea has largely eroded. Entering office amid already deteriorated inter-Korean relations, the Yoon administration demonstrated little intent to restore or improve relations with the North. Its policies prioritized foreign affairs and security concerns while neglecting unification policy, thereby disrupting strategic balance. By closely aligning with the Biden administration's value-based diplomacy, Yoon emphasized enhanced trilateral cooperation among South Korea, the United States, and Japan, as well as reinforcing extended deterrence through military capabilities - effectively promoting a peace-through-strength approach. As a result, the policy space for North Korea has effectively disappeared, leaving no room for strategic engagement and resulting in only a confrontational stance between Seoul and Pyongyang. In this tense atmosphere, conservative civilian organizations distributed propaganda leaflets targeting North Korea. In retaliation, Pyongyang launched a large number of balloons filled with waste materials, resulting in an unusual exchange where, instead of people and goods, only leaflets and refuse crossed the border.

In response to North Korea's hostile two-state theory, President Yoon introduced the August 15 Unification Doctrine⁵ in his speech commemorating Korea's National Liberation Day in 2024. While framed as a vision for unification, the doctrine excluded North Korean leadership from the discourse, advocating for the infusion of liberal democratic values into North Korean society via information inflows - with the underlying expectation that such ideological shifts would destabilize Pyongyang's regime. Many analysts interpreted this as an implicit declaration of regime collapse-driven absorption

⁵ In his speech, former President Yoon declared, 'Today, I declare our vision for unification and our strategy for its realization to the South Korean people, North Korean residents, and the international community.' Notably, his unification strategy made it explicitly clear that he was addressing these three groups while deliberately excluding North Korean authorities from consideration.

unification.⁶ From the perspective of South Korea's official Korean National Community Unification Plan, the Yoon administration's Unification Doctrine represented an unilateral attempt to dismantle the remaining policy consensus without public deliberation. From the perspective of the official unification plan of the South Korean government, the National Community Unification Plan, the Yoon Suk-yeol administration's unification doctrine appears to have unilaterally attempted to dismantle the existing policy consensus on North Korea without national agreement. This was essentially an effort to nullify the gradual, phased, and peaceful approach to unification outlined in the National Community Unification Plan, without going through a proper public deliberation process. By adopting an extreme stance on North Korea and unification, the administration accelerated the politicization and ideological framing of North Korea policy, ultimately eroding the domestic foundation for policy implementation.

The Emergence of Trump's Second Term and Shifts in Northeast Asian Geopolitics

During Trump's first term and the Biden administration, strategic competition between the U.S. and China intensified, while the ongoing war in Ukraine deepened hostilities between the U.S. and Russia. As a result, Northeast Asia witnessed strengthened trilateral cooperation between South Korea, the United States, and Japan, largely led by Washington. However, contrary to widespread predictions, this did not lead to a solidified China-North Korea-Russia triangular alliance. While China distanced itself from the U.S. and maintained close relations with Russia and North Korea, it exercised restraint in fully advancing trilateral cooperation, mindful of its broader diplomatic interests. That is, it

⁶ The key terms highlighted by progressive and centrist media outlets included "Yoon Suk-yeol's declaration of unification through absorption" (Hankyoreh, August 15, 2024.), "Premise of North Korean regime collapse theory" (KyungHyang, August 15, 2024.), and "Aggressive unification vision directly targeting North Korean residents" (Hankook, August 15, 2024.).

sought to preserve favorable relations with other Western nations, such as the EU. Conversely, Russia and North Korea – both facing urgent strategic needs – formalized a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement to reinforce their bilateral ties.

The anticipated trajectory of a new Cold War stemming from U.S.-China competition and U.S.-Russia conflict now appears subject to significant shifts following the inauguration of Trump's second term. Trump has repeatedly emphasized his intent to end the war in Ukraine, exerting pressure on both Russia and Ukraine, while concurrently expressing a strong willingness to engage diplomatically with North Korea. Simultaneously, he has pursued tariff wars against adversaries and allies alike, disregarding traditional diplomatic alignments. This approach has diluted the rigid bloc-based confrontation that characterized Biden's tenure and weakened ideological divides on the global stage. Whereas Biden emphasized trilateral cooperation among South Korea, the U.S., and Japan as part of a broader strategy to contain China, Trump has instead prioritized economic and security interests as a unified package, aiming to maximize American gains in dealings with Seoul and Tokyo. This shift suggests that trilateral cooperation may loosen significantly under his administration.

Meanwhile, China has intensified efforts to expand its coalition against the U.S., widening the scope of potential partnerships – an approach that could lead to strengthened China-South Korea cooperation. Additionally, as the prolonged war in Ukraine left Russia struggling with shortages in conventional munitions and personnel, Moscow deepened its alliance with Pyongyang, resulting in unprecedentedly close North Korea-Russia relations. Nonetheless, Russia has maintained a degree of strategic flexibility, acknowledging South Korea's decision not to supply offensive weaponry to Ukraine, thereby leaving open the possibility of future cooperation with Seoul. If the war concludes, Russia is likely to explore avenues for stronger bilateral ties with South Korea.

In essence, the evolving geopolitical landscape offers greater opportunities for pragmatic engagement with major powers, including the U.S., China, and

Russia, while simultaneously fostering potential shifts in their respective relations with North Korea. This marks a stark contrast to the Yoon administration's rigid value-based diplomacy, which ultimately marginalized inter-Korean policy considerations. The drastically altered international environment underscores the new strategic imperatives facing South Korea – necessitating a balanced perspective that integrates foreign and North Korea policy while closely assessing evolving relations among key global actors and Pyongyang.

3. Strategic approach to North Korea policy

Pyongyang's Intentions

With inter-Korean relations deteriorating beyond mere stagnation into overt confrontation reminiscent of previous eras, North Korea's adoption of the hostile two-state theory has prompted extensive analysis regarding its motivations and South Korea's response strategy. Four main explanations have been proposed regarding the background behind North Korea's shift to a new inter-Korean strategy, diverging from past approaches. The first explanation suggests that, given the regime's overwhelmingly inferior position compared to South Korea, Kim Jong-un seeks to completely sever ties with the South in order to preemptively block any negative influence on North Korean citizens.⁷ The second explanation argues that as North Korea continues to expand its nuclear arsenal, it is leveraging the narrative of hostile two-state theory to shape a psychological and strategic environment conducive to the possibility of a preemptive strike against South Korea.⁸ The third explanation suggests that, following the Hanoi summit's breakdown, North Korea grew frustrated with its inability to independently

⁷ Andrei Lankov, "Kim Jong-un Acknowledges the Truth" (February 21, 2024, Maeil Business Newspaper)

⁸ Sung Ki-young, "Two Perspectives on North Korea's Policy Shift" (February 22, 2024, Hankook Ilbo)

advance inter-Korean relations under a progressive administration. With the subsequent rise of a conservative government, Pyongyang concluded that prospects for inter-Korean cooperation had completely vanished.⁹ The fourth explanation posits that, in light of the prolonged U.S.-China strategic competition and the emergence of a new Cold War, North Korea has decided to revert to a bloc confrontation approach, reminiscent of the Cold War era between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹⁰ The first two explanations emphasize North Korea's internal strategic calculations, while the latter two highlight external geopolitical factors, including shifts in South Korea's policy and broader global dynamics. Given this interplay of internal and external drivers, a comprehensive analysis must consider all four perspectives when assessing Pyongyang's rationale.

Response Strategies for South Korea

Meanwhile, opinions diverge on how to respond to North Korea's hostile two-state theory, leading to two main approaches. The first argument asserts that, given North Korea's declared shift in policy direction, South Korea should also adopt a more realistic policy stance in response. This perspective argues that emphasizing shared ethnic identity and pushing for unification has, in practice, fueled a competition for national legitimacy between the two Koreas, thereby escalating tensions rather than easing them. As a result, some advocate for an approach in which South and North Korea establish peaceful diplomatic relations as neighboring states and focus on coexistence rather than immediate unification.¹¹ Others suggest abandoning the fixation on unification and instead

⁹ Park No-ja, "Even If the Two Koreas Are Not Kin, There Is No Need to Be Enemies" (February 21, 2024 Hankyoreh Newspaper)

¹⁰ Ye Dae-yeol, 2024. "The Era of North Korea's Declaration of a Hostile Two-State Relationship: What Should Be Done?" 『History and Reality』 Issue 132. Editorial.

¹¹ Lim Ji-hyun, "Is Our Unification Still Just a Wish?" (January 17, 2024, Chosun Ilbo)

prioritizing peace-building efforts, leaving the future of the Korean Peninsula to be determined by later generations.¹² Another perspective argues that North Korea's stance should, in fact, reinforce the pursuit of unification. Some advocate for this position from a normative standpoint, emphasizing the national cause and vision of establishing a prosperous unified Korean state.¹³ Others go beyond the normative reasoning, incorporating practical considerations, such as the high costs of permanent division, including the ongoing risk of war, as further justification for why unification must not be abandoned.¹⁴

Both arguments contain valid points. The peace-first perspective rightly acknowledges that current inter-Korean relations have regressed significantly, with mutual hostility entrenched and no immediate prospects for reconciliation. In such a scenario, fostering trust through sustained peaceful engagement is a logical priority. However, concerns remain that excessive emphasis on peace without unification risks legitimizing permanent division, ultimately solidifying the Korean Peninsula's separation at a psychological and political level. Conversely, the unification-first argument is crucial in reminding South Korea of its historical responsibility as a divided nation and reinforcing the necessity of unification as a long-term national goal. However, this stance often gravitates toward absorption-based unification, excluding North Korea's participation in the process - thus reinforcing Pyongyang's perception of South Korea's unification efforts as a threat, unintentionally strengthening its commitment to severing ties.

¹² "Im Jong-seok, 'Let's Not Pursue Unification, But Accept Two Separate States'" (September 19, 2024, Seoul Economic Daily)

¹³ Son Jae-sik, "Is Peace and Unification Still Our Wish?" (January 23, 2024, Chosun Ilbo)

¹⁴ Kim Cheon-sik, "Permanent Division vs. Free and Peaceful Unification of the Korean Peninsula" (February 22, 2024, Seoul Newspaper)

Lessons from German Unification

South Korea's approach to North Korea must draw insights from Germany's unification process. East Germany, like North Korea today, sought to permanently institutionalize division, even denying shared ethnic identity with West Germany. Additionally, Germany's situation was far more complex, as unification required approval from the victorious Allied powers, who remained wary of a resurgent German state. West Germany never abandoned the goal of unification throughout the Cold War, even if it could not openly proclaim it. Internally, the Ministry for Intra-German Relations played a key role in managing unification policies and inter-German exchanges, laying the groundwork and preparing for eventual unification. Taking into account East Germany's stance advocating the two-state theory, West Germany agreed to sign the Basic Treaty, which formally represented an agreement between two states. While accepting East Germany's Foreign Ministry as a participant in East-West German dialogues, West Germany, in contrast, chose to be represented not by its Foreign Ministry but by the Chancellor's Office. Ultimately, West Germany achieved unification through the consistent and sustained implementation of inter-German exchange policies, as well as skillful unification diplomacy targeting major powers. At the core of this success lay West Germany's quiet yet unwavering commitment to the goal of unification. In essence, the key to West Germany's approach was a wise combination - firmly maintaining its objective of unification while adopting a flexible stance in terms of form and strategy when dealing with East Germany and the Allied powers.

In this sense, we must firmly uphold and advance our goal of unification. Our Constitution already clearly defines the ultimate aspiration of our divided nation. However, to be more precise, that aspiration is peaceful unification. What must be safeguarded throughout the unification process is peace. Peace and unification hold equal value and must exist together as a singular objective. In other words, the goal is not merely unification, but peaceful unification.

In this regard, the so-called Unification Doctrine, which explicitly expressed the intention to dismantle North Korea as a state, reflects an approach that prioritizes unification even at the expense of inter-Korean confrontation and the erosion of peace. This stance fundamentally misunderstands the meaning and spirit of peaceful unification, which is our ultimate goal. Just as the December 3 Martial Law was ruled unconstitutional, this doctrine also runs counter to the principles enshrined in our Constitution. Consequently, peaceful unification must remain the unwavering goal of our North Korea policy, safeguarded against shifts or compromises. Policy consistency is crucial, and North Korea's changing stance toward the South must not dictate or alter our fundamental objective. North Korea's inter-Korean strategy has changed multiple times over the years; therefore, our task is to uphold our goal while encouraging positive engagement from the North. This calls for flexibility in execution. While continuing efforts to strengthen the public's commitment to unification and pursuing diplomatic initiatives toward this goal, the implementation strategy of our North Korea policy must be adaptively adjusted in response to Pyongyang's shifting approach toward the South.

Strategic Framework for North Korea Policy

In the current North Korea policy environment, what specific measures can the next administration take to achieve the policy goal of peaceful unification? Given that the new government will inevitably start anew in its relations with North Korea, its first step must be to establish and present a vision for inter-Korean relations.¹⁵ What should this vision entail over the course of the new administration? I propose that it should be the "Foundation for Coexistence and

¹⁵ This is a distinct concept from peaceful unification, which has been presented as the ultimate objective of North Korea policy. While peaceful unification is a long-term goal that must be pursued beyond any particular administration, a given government's North Korea policy vision represents a more limited, pragmatic, and time-bound approach within its term.

Co-prosperity.”

The Unification Doctrine of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration and Kim Jong-un’s hostile two-state theory both reject the formation of a positive inter-Korean relations, as each side views the other as a regime to be eliminated rather than engaged. Neither approach is acceptable. Under such circumstances, the first step toward the ultimate goal of peaceful unification must be the establishment of a foundation for coexistence and co-prosperity, which should serve as the guiding vision of the new administration’s North Korea policy.

Presenting this vision for inter-Korean relations also entails a redefinition of South Korea’s perception of North Korea. Building a shared foundation for existence and development acknowledges North Korea as a counterpart in the journey toward peaceful unification. This, in turn, signifies a commitment to recognizing and engaging with North Korea.

Following the establishment of a vision and perception, practical measures must be taken to overcome the current inter-Korean deadlock. The foremost priority is halting psychological warfare between the two Koreas. South Korea has already witnessed the severity of the propaganda leaflet conflict—where civilian groups sent anti-North Korea leaflets across the border, prompting Pyongyang to retaliate by releasing waste-filled balloons toward the South. Despite this, both sides continue to engage in broadcast-based psychological warfare against each other. This not only exacerbates the suffering of border-area residents but also risks escalating into accidental military clashes. Both South and North Korea must immediately suspend such broadcasts. South Korea should take the initiative in halting its own broadcasts first, encouraging North Korea to follow suit—a move that would be advantageous both diplomatically and practically. Additionally, the government must actively intervene to regulate civilian groups’ leaflet campaigns to prevent further deterioration of inter-Korean relations.

Moreover, South Korea must declare its commitment to honoring previous inter-Korean agreements as a demonstration of its genuine intent to establish

the foundation for coexistence and co-prosperity. Even if North Korea does not respond immediately, South Korea's proactive efforts to restore inter-Korean ties will help manage peace on the Korean Peninsula while signaling its sincerity in engagement.

In summary, the next administration must redefine its vision for inter-Korean relations, reshape its perception of North Korea, and implement concrete measures to realize this vision. Given the tight schedule following the early presidential election, it would be highly effective to package these three components into the August 15 Liberation Day speech as part of the new government's North Korea policy blueprint. Additionally, restoring inter-Korean dialogue channels and proposing open-ended negotiations – unrestricted by timing, agenda, or format – should be considered. South Korea must also prepare response strategies based on potential North Korean reactions.¹⁶

Regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, South Korea must maintain its stance on denuclearization while actively supporting U.S.-North Korea dialogue and negotiations and formulating its own strategic approach based on their outcomes.

4. Suggestion of Northeast Asia Policy Direction

A key aspect of South Korea's Northeast Asia strategy must be the balanced integration of inter-Korean relations into its diplomatic engagements with major powers. That is to say the incoming South Korean government should integrate

¹⁶ First, regardless of whether North Korea responds immediately, maintaining a consistent position with a long-term perspective is essential. Second, even if North Korea asserts that the two Koreas are warring nations, dialogue can still occur between hostile states. Given that North Korea may engage in highly limited talks and, unlike previous approaches, restrict interactions to a state-to-state framework – potentially designating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the sole channel – preparations must be made to address this scenario.

its North Korea policy into its broader diplomatic strategy with key global actors, ensuring that it is not neglected or marginalized as was the case during the Yoon administration

The second Trump administration's strategy toward South Korea appears to center on leveraging South Korea's security dependence on the U.S.—including the presence of U.S. forces in Korea and extended deterrence—as a bargaining tool to maximize economic benefits. This includes pushing for a substantial increase in South Korea's defense cost-sharing while simultaneously pressuring Seoul to reduce its trade surplus with the U.S. Given North Korea's ongoing nuclear expansion, strengthening U.S. extended deterrence measures remains a priority for South Korea. At the same time, maintaining a stable and mutually beneficial alliance is essential. To achieve this, South Korea should emphasize that the U.S.-South Korea alliance is not only vital to South Korea's national security but also plays a crucial role in advancing U.S. strategic interests. Demonstrating South Korea's contributions to broader U.S. objectives can help reinforce the reciprocal benefits of the alliance. Additionally, efforts to enhance South Korea's independent and integrated defense capabilities should proceed alongside alliance cooperation. This includes advancing defense science and technology while steadily progressing toward the transfer of wartime operational control.

Given China's motivation to expand its influence in the wake of Trump's second term and intensifying U.S.-China competition, the incoming South Korean government needs to strategically enhance South Korea-China relations while leveraging China's role in advancing North Korea's denuclearization and improving inter-Korean relations. China has consistently advocated for North Korea's denuclearization, aligning with South Korea's stance on the issue. This shared objective presents an opportunity for closer cooperation between Seoul and Beijing in pursuing security goals on the Korean Peninsula. The escalation of North Korea's nuclear weapons program has been the root cause of past security tensions between South Korea and China, including the THAAD dispute. By

framing bilateral security cooperation around North Korea's denuclearization, South Korea and China can strengthen their foundation for security collaboration and reduce friction over past policy disagreements. China views stability on the Korean Peninsula as intrinsically linked to its own national security and economic interests. This recognition provides South Korea with an avenue to explore various cooperative strategies with China to help break the deadlock in inter-Korean relations. South Korea should avoid falling into an overly U.S.-dependent diplomatic trajectory that would place the Korean Peninsula at the heart of international confrontation, exposing Seoul and Pyongyang to extreme geopolitical forces. Instead, It is advisable for South Korea to exercise diplomatic prudence by working with China on shared priorities such as North Korea's denuclearization and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula. Through strategic cooperation with China, South Korea can maintain a safe distance from the whirlwind of U.S.-China rivalry while simultaneously advancing inter-Korean reconciliation. By anchoring its diplomatic outreach to China in these common interests, South Korea can enhance its strategic positioning, mitigate external risks, and foster regional stability.

Japan has gradually moved away from its postwar passive security policy, grounded in its pacifist constitution, toward a more proactive and assertive defense strategy. This shift has been driven by China's growing regional influence and North Korea's escalating nuclear threat. Key developments illustrating this transformation include the Japanese Cabinet's constitutional reinterpretation in July 2014, which enabled the exercise of collective self-defense rights, and the December 2022 revision of three major security documents - National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and Defense Buildup Plan - which formally introduced the concept of counterstrike capabilities.¹⁷ Additionally, the Kishida

¹⁷ For further details, refer to: Park Young-Jun et al., *The Meaning and Evaluation of Japan's Security Policy Revisions – Korean Peninsula Focus 2023-01*, Seoul: Kyungnam University Institute for Far Eastern Studies, 2023.

administration declared its intention to increase Japan's defense spending to 2% of GDP, marking a significant departure from previous defense spending patterns. Since the inauguration of Trump's second term, The United States is shifting its focus toward maximizing national interests rather than upholding traditional alliances. As a result, a growing sense of self-reliance among individual nations is likely to emerge,¹⁸ contributing to an increase in Japan's strategic autonomy. In other words, Japan faces two distinct paths: it can continue its existing security policy stance, maintaining its current trajectory, or it can adopt a more flexible strategy in its approach toward China and North Korea. By appropriately balancing these two options, Japan can expand its strategic maneuverability and create a broader range of diplomatic and security choices. Japan has historically maintained a delicate balance in its foreign policy—anchoring itself in the U.S.-Japan alliance while carefully managing its relations with China from the perspective of national interest. Additionally, depending on geopolitical conditions, Japan has at times pursued active engagement with North Korea to improve bilateral relations. Given this precedent, how should South Korea's new administration formulate its diplomatic approach toward Japan? Considering the persistent nuclear threat from North Korea, a degree of security cooperation with Japan remains necessary. However, the habitual continuation of a trilateral security framework centered on the U.S., South Korea, and Japan as a countermeasure against China does not necessarily serve the best interests of Seoul or Tokyo. Moreover, it risks reinforcing strategic cooperation among North Korea, China, and Russia—an outcome that would be counterproductive to regional stability. Instead, South Korea should take an active role as a stakeholder in promoting peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, prioritizing the revitalization of trilateral cooperation between South

¹⁸ Under the aggressive tariff policies of Trump's second term, the EU has been reassessing China's value as an alternative cooperation partner and redefining its relationship with Beijing. This assessment falls within this category. Lee Sung-Won, *Europe's Perspective on China Amid U.S.-China Competition: Strategic Cooperation, Competition, and Risks*, Sejong Focus (May 15, 2025).

Korea, China, and Japan. By strengthening this framework, South Korea can contribute to alleviating security concerns, facilitating economic collaboration, and enhancing mutual trust among the three nations. This initiative aligns with the need to address the Asian Paradox.¹⁹ Advancing efforts to resolve this paradox through trilateral cooperation would constitute a meaningful step toward fostering regional stability and long-term prosperity. Additionally, South Korea's next administration should work closely with Japan to address their shared strategic priority – the resolution of North Korea's nuclear issue. Both nations need to maintain a consistent stance on North Korea's denuclearization, ensuring that their positions remain aligned in diplomatic engagements. When conditions allow, South Korea is advised to actively support improvements in Japan-North Korea relations, as fostering diplomatic ties between Tokyo and Pyongyang serves as a key mechanism for broader North Korea engagement. Strengthening Japan's role in North Korea policy would provide South Korea with additional leverage in regional diplomacy, contributing to stability and strategic balance in Northeast Asia.

South Korea's next administration should seek to improve relations with Russia, recognizing the evolving geopolitical landscape shaped by the Ukraine war. North Korea and Russia, once mere diplomatic partners, have now solidified their alliance into a *de facto* blood alliance, maintaining unprecedentedly close ties. The continued strengthening of Kim Jong-un's military posture raises concerns about the potential transfer of Russia's advanced military technology to North Korea. Should such technology exchanges materialize, military tensions on the Korean Peninsula would escalate, further straining South Korea-Russia relations. Against this backdrop, South Korea must monitor the progression of the Ukraine war and assess the timing for restoring and enhancing diplomatic

¹⁹ The term "Asian Paradox" was first used at an international forum hosted by the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) in October 2012. Asian Paradox is used to explain deepening economic ties in the region do not necessarily translate into stronger political or security cooperation. To overcome the Asian Paradox, nations and their people must engage in consistent, long-term efforts to build trust.

engagement with Russia. The eventual conclusion of the war is expected to open opportunities for postwar reconstruction and expanded trade, creating favorable conditions for diplomatic realignment. During this phase, South Korea should advance both economic and security cooperation with Russia in tandem. If military cooperation between North Korea and Russia intensifies, raising security tensions on the Korean Peninsula, South Korea must underscore to Moscow that such developments ultimately undermine Russia's own security interests. It is essential to convey that South Korea-Russia relations would also inevitably face restrictions should Moscow continue deepening its military alignment with Pyongyang. South Korea's new administration needs to simultaneously work on persuading Russia in a positive direction. Specifically, if inter-Korean relations return to a stable path of development, conditions will emerge to revive and enhance long-envisioned trilateral cooperation projects between South Korea, North Korea, and Russia. By emphasizing this prospect, South Korea should encourage Russia to play a constructive role in improving inter-Korean relations. Since this trilateral cooperation aligns with President Putin's long-standing Eastward Policy, strengthening security and economic cooperation between South Korea and Russia can serve as a valuable future strategic asset for both countries.

DISCUSSION

South Korea's New Government:

Northeast Asia Policy

Proposal with a Focus on North Korea

한국정부의 동북아정책제언: 대북정책을 중심으로

- **Hideki Tamai** Soka University

Hideki Tamai 일본 소카대 부총장

- **Chia-yin Wei** Chinese Culture University

Chia-yin Wei 대만 중국문화대학 교수



Discussion Paper on the Presentation of Dr. Young-jun Choi

Hideki Tamai Soka University



Overall Comments

Dr. Young-jun Choi's paper successfully and accurately outlines the necessity for the next South Korean government to readjust its foreign and security policy amidst the shifting international political economy brought about by the second Trump administration.

The Trump administration would likely pursue a literal "America First" policy, eschewing the role of an international order-maker and provider of international public services as envisioned by hegemonic stability theory. Instead, it would unilaterally pursue what President Trump perceives as "national interests," often disregarding the disadvantages to other nations, their citizens, and at times, even its own citizens. It appears that this overt policy shift by the United States has accelerated the spread of egoistic national behaviors and the exclusionary populist movements supporting them, which have become more pronounced since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr. Young-jun Choi examines the foreign policy that a new South Korean government, facing an emergency declaration of martial law in December 2024 and subsequently a major political crisis involving the indictment and removal of the incumbent president, would need to adopt amid the global shifts brought about by the Trump administration. It is crucial that his paper does not reduce the geopolitical situation in Northeast Asia to a single cause.

Instead, it recognizes that multiple factors—such as the return of the Trump administration, domestic political turmoil in South Korea, a fundamental change in North Korea’s policy towards South Korea, and shifts in relations among the U.S., China, and Russia—are interacting to destabilize the strategic balance in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, the paper discusses the significance of strategic thinking aimed at peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula.

Attention to Key Topics

National Interests as a Middle Power – Confirmation of Policy Goals

This paper demonstrates that middle powers like South Korea face dilemmas in securing their economic and security interests amidst great powers competition. It suggests that to ensure national survival and the pursuit of national interests, South Korea should prioritize specific national interests and flexibly adopt diplomatic strategies such as balance of power and risk-hedging. This approach would allow South Korea to maximize its own interests rather than merely following great powers.

“Peaceful Unification” as the Basis of Foreign Policy

The paper details how the deterioration of inter-Korean relations has deepened “domestic political divisions” and how the “ideological conflict” between conservatives and progressives has “seriously affected” North Korea policy. It analyzes that under the Yoon Suk-yeol administration, the consensus on unification policy, previously shared by South Korean governments regardless of their conservative or progressive leanings, has “accelerated politicization and ideologization” due to the Yoon administration’s “extreme North Korea and unification policy,” ultimately “eroding the domestic foundation for policy

implementation”. As a result, the paper argues that the space for dialogue between conservatives and progressives within South Korea has been lost, and only “antagonistic stances remain” between Seoul and Pyongyang. Understanding this mechanism of linkage between intra-South Korean conflict and inter-Korean relations provided valuable insights into the formation and evolution of political conflict in South Korea.

I noticed also the paper’s assertion that the Yoon administration’s unification theory “violates principles stipulated in the Constitution”. This appears to pertain to a higher-order normative issue of “legitimacy,” distinct from the validity or rationality of policy. It presents a profound consideration related to the core political science concepts of constitutionalism and the rule of law: even if a policy appears effective in the short term, if it violates the constitution, it will lose domestic support and become unsustainable in the long run.

Presenting the Vision of a “Foundation for Coexistence and Co-prosperity”

The paper argues that transforming the adversarial perception of North Korea as a “regime to be excluded” and instead recognizing it as a “partner on the path to peaceful unification” would establish a “foundation for coexistence and co-prosperity” and serve as a “guiding vision” for the next administration’s North Korea policy. It points out the current situation where both the Yoon administration and the Kim Jong Un regime “refuse to form positive inter-Korean relations”. Presenting a “foundation for coexistence and co-prosperity” as a solution to this situation is a process where parties in conflict fundamentally change their perceptions of their relationship and the nature of the problem, thereby creating possibilities for new solutions. This recommendation emphasizes the importance of not just changing policies, but “redefining perceptions” of the relationship, aiming to fundamentally alter the structure of conflict. This aligns with conflict resolution theory, which defines conflict resolution as transforming conflict relationships and resolving adversarial relations. It also matches the

concept of “reframing” in the conflict resolution process.

Previous notions of “legitimacy competition” and “unification led by system collapse” have been inherently zero-sum, exacerbating conflict by viewing the other side as a threat. The vision of “coexistence and co-prosperity” is an attempt to transform inter-Korean relations from a zero-sum game into a positive-sum game. Furthermore, the recommendation to recognize North Korea as a “partner” and encourage “engagement” incorporates a constructivist perspective, suggesting that the principles of action in international relations are shaped not only by power struggles but also by shared ideas and identities. It implies the possibility of reconstituting hostile relationships into cooperative ones by changing mutual perceptions.

Responding to North Korea’s “Hostile Two-State Theory”

A major obstacle to the “peaceful unification theory” presented in the paper is North Korea’s “hostile two-state theory”. Dr. Young-jun Choi successfully analyzes the motivations behind the “hostile two-state theory” from both internal factors (blocking negative impacts on the regime, shaping psychological and strategic environment) and external factors (dissatisfaction after the breakdown of the Hanoi summit, return to bloc confrontation under a new Cold War). Furthermore, he presents two main approaches for South Korea’s response strategy: “coexistence first” and “unification first,” objectively evaluating the pros and cons of each. His paper states that there is “some merit” in both “coexistence first” and “unification first” arguments, while clearly pointing out the risks each carries (justification of permanent division, being perceived as absorption unification and provoking North Korea’s backlash). This demonstrates a realistic recognition that policy decisions always involve “trade-offs” between multiple goals. This is a sound approach to policy analysis, carefully evaluating the opportunity costs and risks of each option for complex problems where an ideal solution does not exist.

The paper points out that alongside North Korea's "hostile two-state theory," the Yoon administration's "unification theory" also "refuses to form positive inter-Korean relations" by viewing the other side as a "regime to be excluded". This observation suggests that the policies of both sides "constitute" each other's hostile actions, creating a vicious cycle. This recognition underscores the need for "redefining perceptions" through a "foundation for coexistence and co-prosperity."

Furthermore, the paper states that in the current situation where "mutual hostility is entrenched," "cultivating trust through sustained peaceful engagement is a logical priority". This not only presents policy options but also emphasizes the fundamental importance of dialogue and trust-building in conflict resolution. This is based on the recognition that escalating conflict increases the risk of accidental military clashes, demonstrating a deep understanding that dialogue is not merely a negotiation tool but an essential condition for maintaining peace. This assertion aligns with the importance of dialogic diplomacy and confidence-building measures (CBMs) in conflict resolution theory. Dialogue emphasizes "subjectivity and dialogicality" among different actors, building a foundation for resolving conflicts. The paper recognizes the dangers of the absence of dialogue and prioritizes its restoration, thereby indicating a practical path to peacebuilding.

Remaining Challenges

Evaluation of Ideological and Strategic Divergence with North Korea

While the paper provides a detailed analysis of the implications of North Korea's "hostile two-state theory," it must be understood in reality as a national policy that denies "peaceful unification." How should we conceive of concrete measures to bring about cognitive changes that would transform such a clear ideological divergence?

When peace research was institutionalized in the 1960s, ideas for transforming adversarial relationships, such as Charles Osgood's GRIT (Graduated Reciprocation in Tension-reduction), were proposed. However, neither the U.S. nor the Soviet governments adopted this as actual policy. While Gorbachev's "New Thinking" foreign policy, pursued after he became General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1985 and initiated Perestroika, is thought to have partially incorporated the ideas of GRIT, practical examples of GRIT are not abundant. Nevertheless, where can we find the basis for such gradual and reciprocal communication being possible in the current inter-Korean relationship? Furthermore, how should we consider the possibility of South Korean citizens, who share the ideal of "peaceful unification" and view North Korea, an openly "enemy state," as a "partner for peaceful unification," forming a majority within South Korea?

Possibility of a Multilateral Cooperation System for Peace on the Korean Peninsula and East Asia

The paper presents a strategy that coolly analyzes the interests of the United States, China, Japan, and Russia in the context of South Korea's foreign policy, with North Korea policy as its axis, and links North Korea policy with national relations with each of these countries. The countries mentioned readily bring to mind the framework of the Six-Party Talks formed in 2003 regarding the nuclear development issue. Of course, the situation and interests of these six countries are entirely different from that time. However, it is necessary to consider that the framework of the Six-Party Talks went into hiatus without fulfilling the expectation that it would develop into a framework for discussing overall East Asian security.

That is, a more precise analysis may be needed regarding the certainty of the evaluation of the strategic goals and capabilities (influence over North Korea) of the United States, China, Japan, and Russia as presented in this paper. To what

extent can China, which consistently seeks denuclearization of the peninsula, strongly pressure North Korea? What kind of vision can be drawn in the current situation, where there are many factors that fluidize the power balance among nations, such as North Korea strengthening its cooperative relationship with Russia? Further consideration of these points is awaited.

**Comments for
South Korea's New Government:
Northeast Asia Policy Proposal
with a Focus on North Korea**

Chia-yin Wei Chinese Culture University



Professor Choi's paper examines South Korea's Northeast Asia Policy, which focuses particularly on North Korea and offers suggestions for a Northeast Asia Policy proposal for the incoming administration. The paper not only analyzes the contemporary Northeast Asia situation and the impacts of Trump's second term but also offers policy suggestions for Northeast Asia to the new government. I think Professor Choi's efforts also offer some constructive and practical lessons for cross-strait relationships (China vs. Taiwan. I am going to delineate the paper's contribution first and then propose some suggestions. I will conclude that Northeast policy proposals for new government can be lessons for cross-strait relationships and a comparative case study of inter-Korean relationships and cross-strait relationships deserve further exploration.

First of all, I would like to applaud Professor Choi's effort to succinctly elaborate on the evolution of Northeast Asia geopolitics from both domestic and international perspectives. Professor Choi delves into the policies and strategies of North Korea and South Korea toward each other; he finally proposes policies and strategies for the new government. Readers who are not Northeast experts can easily and quickly figure out Northeast Asian geopolitics from global perspectives.

Second, I agree with Professor Choi's point of view regarding North Korean policy suggestions—"halting psychological warfare between the two Koreas.", "establishing peaceful diplomatic relations rather than immediate unification" and "Foundation for Coexistence and Co-prosperity". Policy suggestions for the new governments benefit not only South Korea but also Northeast Asia's security and economic interests. Relationships with the U.S., Japan, China, and Russia are vital for Northeast Asia as well. The detailed and feasible schemes of Northeast Asia policies and strategies are necessary for the new government's policy suggestions and implementation.

Third, the inter-Korean relationship is kind of similar to a cross-strait relationship in that China insists on unification; however, Taiwan's ruling party emphasizes independence and the incumbent president William Lai even alleged that China is a "foreign hostile force" in March 2025. The declaration of the Lai administration has exacerbated cross-strait relationships and probably triggered a hazardous situation in Northeast Asia geopolitics. For both China and Taiwan, peace-building should be the priority before immediate unification or independence, as is evident in the two Koreas. I suggest that a comparative case study of inter-Korean relationships and cross-strait relationships can be done for scholarly purposes.

In addition, the role of Taiwan can be taken into consideration in Northeast Asia strategies and policies as well. Although Taiwan is "a state with limited recognition" in international society, the role of Taiwan is vital in Northeast Asia's security and economic interests.

In all, I think Professor Choi's policy suggestion for the new government is quite promising. To alleviate the cross-strait relationship, the principle of the Foundation for Coexistence and Co-prosperity should be taken into account by both China and Taiwan as well.

SESSION II

**Prospects for Changes
in U.S.-China-Russia Relations
and Japan's Response**



미중러 관계 변화 전망 및 일본의 대응



PRESENTATION

The Strategic Triangle and Japan:

*Changes in U.S.-China-Russia Relations
with the Second Trump Administration and
Japan's Response*

전략적 삼각관계와 일본:
트럼프 2기 시대 미중러 관계 변화 및 일본의 대응

- **Minoru Koide** Soka University
Minoru Koide 일본 소카대 교수



1. Introduction

The concept of a “Strategic Triangle” involving the United States, China, and Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) was first introduced in the 1980s to describe the dynamic great-power relations of the Cold War era¹. In that period, Washington, Moscow, and Beijing engaged in triangular diplomacy where typically two sides would align against the third. This framework remains relevant today, but its strategic implications have shifted dramatically under new geopolitical realities. The modern U.S.-China-Russia triangle features a rising China and a revanchist Russia often aligned against a United States that is now deeply intertwined with the global economy—unlike the rigid bipolar context of the Cold War. Furthermore, power in today’s international system is more distributed (with influential actors like the EU, Japan, and India), making the triangle’s dynamics more complex and multipolar than the binary superpower standoff of the 20th century².

Japan, though not a vertex of this great-power triangle, finds itself profoundly affected by its shifts. As a U.S. ally and neighbor to both China and Russia, Japan’s security and prosperity depend on how the triangle’s relations evolve. The challenge is especially acute as a new U.S. administration under Donald Trump’s second term takes shape in 2025. President Trump’s foreign policy ethos emphasizes unilateral action and skepticism toward traditional alliances and multilateral institutions. In the first 100 days of his new term, Trump launched a global trade war targeting allies and adversaries alike, and withdrew the U.S. from international agreements such as the Paris Climate Accord and

1 Ilpyong J. Kim ed. *The Strategic Triangle: China, the United States and the Soviet Union*, Paragon House Publishers: New York, 1987.

2 Vu Le Thai Hoang and Huy Nguyen, “The Modern China–Russia–US Triangle: Why We Can’t Expect a Stable “Two vs One” Dynamic This Time Around” *The Diplomat*, June 4, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/the-modern-china-russia-us-triangle/#:~:text=Since%20the%20beginning%20of%20the,this%20assessment%20merits%20further%20examination>

the World Health Organization. He has openly called longstanding defense pacts “one-sided,” complaining that the U.S. bears disproportionate costs – for example, alleging that “*we pay hundreds of billions of dollars to defend [Japan], but they don’t pay anything*”.³ This unilateralist, alliance-skeptical posture marks a sharp departure from the post-war U.S. norm of multilateral leadership, and it raises serious concerns in Japan about U.S. reliability as a security partner.

Given these developments, Japan faces a strategic imperative to adapt its foreign policy. The modern Strategic Triangle still consists of Washington, Beijing, and Moscow, but the alignments within it have altered: unlike the 1980s when the U.S. and China found common cause against the Soviet Union, today China and Russia have forged a closer partnership in opposition to U.S. dominance. Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin declared a “no-limits” alliance in 2022, building the strongest Sino-Russian ties in decades. At the same time, U.S.-China relations have deteriorated into strategic rivalry, and U.S.-Russia relations are at their lowest point since the Cold War due to the war in Ukraine. Compounding the volatility is President Trump’s approach, which favors bilateral deal-making and personal diplomacy over institutional alliances, and which disdains the multilateral order as a constraint on U.S. freedom of action. Trump’s return to the White House could therefore upset established patterns in the triangle, potentially creating new rifts or opportunities among the three powers.

In this context, Japan must pursue a multifaceted strategic approach toward the U.S., China, and Russia. Tokyo can no longer rely solely on the U.S. alliance as a guarantor of stability; it needs hedging strategies. The Japanese government itself acknowledges that it faces “*the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II*”.⁴ This paper analyzes U.S.-China-

³ Gabriel Dominguez, “Trump calls U.S.-Japan alliance ‘one-sided’ as nations prepare for tariff talks,” *The Japan Times*, April 11, 2025.

⁴ X post by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 23, 2025. https://www.mofa.go.jp/fp/ipc/page4e_001366.html

Russia relations through the lens of the Strategic Triangle, contrasting the Cold War triangular diplomacy of the 1980s with the current landscape of the 2020s. It then examines how the evolving triangle, especially under the second Trump administration, impacts Japan's foreign policy. Finally, it offers an analysis on Japan's possible response, including strengthening its alliance with the U.S. while preparing for American retrenchment, shoring up regional partnerships, and managing relations with China and Russia.

2. Analysis of the 1980s Strategic Triangle

During the late Cold War, the U.S.-China-Soviet strategic triangle was defined by shifting alignments that each player exploited to enhance its security⁵. In the 1970s, the relationship between Beijing and Moscow had deteriorated sharply (the Sino-Soviet split), which created an opening for the United States. Seizing the opportunity, President Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger pursued a rapprochement with China in 1972, reconfiguring the bipolar Cold War into a triangular configuration. By the 1980s, this triangle featured tacit cooperation between the U.S. and China aimed at counterbalancing the Soviet Union's power. The "Nixon shock" of 1972, when the U.S. abruptly announced its opening to Communist China, stunned Japan and other allies. Tokyo quickly responded by normalizing relations with Beijing the same year, aligning with the new triangular détente.

Key characteristics of the 1980s triangle included a U.S.-China quasi-alignment against the USSR, a relatively isolated Soviet Union facing pressure on two fronts, and a nuanced role for Japan. From Washington's perspective, improving ties with Beijing was a strategic "China card" to contain Soviet

⁵ Thomas W. Robinson, "On the Further Evolution of the Strategic Triangle," Chapter 1 in Ilpyong J. Kim ed. *The Strategic Triangle*.

ambitions. Beijing, for its part, saw the Soviet Union as its primary threat following border clashes in 1969, and thus viewed the U.S. as a counterweight. Chinese leaders tolerated the American alliance with Japan as long as it stayed within limits, because the U.S.-Japan security treaty actually helped deter the Soviet military presence in East Asia – a situation far preferable to a remilitarized Japan acting independently. In fact, Tokyo's security alliance with Washington (concluded in 1960) became a linchpin of regional stability during this period, allowing Japan to outsource its defense to the U.S. and focus on economic growth. Japan spent only about 1% of GDP on defense under this Yoshida Doctrine, a posture made possible by the U.S. military umbrella. This low military profile assuaged neighboring Asian countries' historical fears of Japanese rearmament.

Japan's own foreign policy in the 1970s–80s thus operated in the shadow of the strategic triangle. Once the U.S. opened to China, Japan moved swiftly to establish its diplomatic rapprochement with Beijing to avoid being left behind. The heyday of Sino-Japanese relations in fact occurred in the late 1970s and 1980s, facilitated by U.S.-China strategic cooperation against the USSR. During this period, Japan provided extensive economic assistance and investment to China – including Official Development Assistance (ODA) beginning in 1979 – which supported China's reform and opening. Tokyo's calculus was that aiding China's development would not only open a huge market for Japanese goods but also strengthen China as a buffer against Soviet expansion in Asia. Notably, Beijing and Tokyo signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978, implicitly agreeing to oppose “hegemonism” (a veiled reference to the Soviet Union). Though showing much reluctance to stimulate the Soviet Union with the anti-hegemonism clause, Japan participated in the triangular collaboration aimed at constraining Soviet power⁶.

⁶ Peter Berton, “Soviet Perceptions of Japan: Foreign and Defense Policies, and Relations with the Strategic Triad,” Chapter 7 in the Strategic Triangle.

Meanwhile, Japan's relations with the Soviet Union remained cool and fraught. A longstanding dispute over the Northern Territories/Kuril Islands (Soviet-occupied islands claimed by Japan since 1945) prevented the conclusion of a World War II peace treaty between Moscow and Tokyo. Throughout the 1980s, the Soviets maintained a formidable military presence in the Far East, including bases in the Kurils and submarines patrolling near Japan's coasts, which Tokyo viewed as a direct threat. Japan responded by incrementally strengthening its Self-Defense Forces and enhancing U.S.-Japan security cooperation. Notably, during his visit to Washington in January 1983, Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone agreed to raise Japan's defense spending above the informal 1% of GDP cap (albeit modestly above) and famously declared he wanted Japan to be an "unsinkable aircraft carrier" for the U.S. in the Pacific. The expansion of the Japanese military budget drew criticism from China's Deng Xiaoping, who was wary of Japanese remilitarization. Still, China understood that a constrained, U.S.-aligned Japan posed less danger than an unmoored, potentially nuclear-armed Japan – and that the U.S.-Japan alliance in fact helped keep Soviet forces in check.

By the late 1980s, the strategic triangle began to shift again. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev sought to improve relations with both China and the U.S. as part of his "New Thinking." Sino-Soviet relations thawed (Gorbachev's 1989 Beijing summit with Deng marked a symbolic end to their split), and U.S.-Soviet détente progressed with arms control agreements. The triangular dynamics thus grew more fluid: each leg of the triangle saw rapprochement by the end of the decade. Japan navigated these changes by maintaining its alliance with the U.S. while cautiously engaging the Soviet Union. For example, the mid-1980s saw some limited Japan-Soviet economic talks and exchanges, though no breakthrough on the territorial issue was achieved. Tokyo's priority remained solidly with Washington and increasingly with Beijing. Japanese leaders were keenly aware that if U.S.-China or U.S.-Soviet relations dramatically improved, Japan must not be caught off guard (a lesson learned from the Nixon shock).

Indeed, whenever Sino-American ties warmed, *“Japan promptly endeavored to improve relations with both the U.S. and China for fear of being cut out of a deal”*.⁷ This careful diplomatic balancing act typified Japan’s foreign policy in the late Cold War: aligning closely with the U.S. strategy while also hedging by keeping open channels to the other great powers. By the time the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Japan had established itself as an economic powerhouse firmly anchored in the Western alliance, with a stable (if still limited) relationship with China, and an unresolved but manageable standoff with Moscow over the Northern Territories.

3. Strategic Triangle in the 2020s: New Dynamics

The triangular relationship among the U.S., China, and Russia in the 2020s differs markedly from its 1980s incarnation. While the three players are the same, the distribution of power and alignments have changed in fundamental ways. Most notably, China has emerged as a peer competitor to the United States – a far cry from the 1980s when China was a relatively weaker country leveraging U.S. support against the mightier Soviet Union. Conversely, Russia today is the junior partner in many respects: the Soviet Union’s superpower economy and global bloc have been replaced by a Russia with less than one-tenth of China’s GDP and a primarily regional sphere of influence (albeit one backed by nuclear weapons and substantial military force). This inversion of the China-Russia roles – with China now the ascendant power and Russia seeking support – has profound implications for the triangle’s dynamics.

Sino-Russian Alignment. In recent years, Beijing and Moscow have formed an increasingly tight strategic alignment, largely in response to what they jointly

⁷ Lowell Dittmer, “Japan, China and the American Pivot: A Triangular Analysis,” EAI Working Paper No. 163 (May 26, 2014), p. 14.

perceive as U.S. pressure and containment. They have cooperated diplomatically (often voting together in the UN Security Council to counter Western initiatives), expanded military ties (conducting joint exercises and patrols in East Asia), and boosted economic links (especially in energy, with Russia supplying oil and gas to fuel China's growth). In early 2022, on the eve of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin proclaimed a bilateral partnership with "no limits" and "no forbidden areas" of cooperation. Chinese official discourse has celebrated that China-Russia relations are at their "best in history," highlighting personal chemistry between Xi and Putin. U.S. analysts have noted that *"Beijing and Moscow have forged a 'no-limits' alliance...more solid than at any point since 1949"*, i.e. since the early Cold War when Mao and Stalin were allied⁸. This represents a stark contrast to the 1980s, when Beijing and Moscow were estranged rivals.

However, the depth and durability of the China-Russia partnership should be viewed with some nuance. On one hand, it rests on a strong foundation: both powers share a long-term goal of undermining U.S. global leadership and creating a more multipolar international order more favorable to authoritarian interests. This was foreshadowed by their 1997 Joint Declaration on a Multipolar World and the 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, which institutionalized cooperation. As long as both China and Russia remain at odds with Washington, they have powerful incentives to set aside historical mistrust (such as past border conflicts or rivalry in Central Asia) and coordinate strategically. On the other hand, the relationship is inherently asymmetrical and pragmatic. China's economy is roughly ten times larger than Russia's and far more diversified, creating an imbalance where Russia risks becoming a resource appendage to China. Their interests do not always perfectly align: for example, Russia's primary focus is on reasserting influence in its European "near abroad," whereas

⁸ Dimitri Simes Jr., "China and Russia's 'no limits' ties test West As Ukraine shivers," Nikkei Asia, February 8, 2022.

China's focus is on East Asia and the Western Pacific. Economically, beyond energy and arms sales, there is limited complementarity – Russia's high-tech and manufacturing base is comparatively weak, and Chinese firms dominate many sectors. Thus, some experts describe the partnership as a “conditional alliance”: robust in opposing U.S.-led order, but lacking the full trust and integration of a true alliance. Crucially, the strength of the Sino-Russian axis “*hinges heavily upon U.S. policies*”. A Chinese state newspaper frankly acknowledged that closer China-Russia ties are largely a reaction to “*the U.S. and its main allies' suppression*” of the two countries. In other words, external pressure from Washington is a key glue binding Beijing and Moscow together.⁹

One implication of this dynamic is that if U.S. policy were to change – for instance, by reducing hostility toward one of the two – the two-against-one configuration might shift. History provides examples: when the U.S. accommodated China's rise in the 1990s (supporting its WTO entry) or when Washington pursued a “reset” with Russia around 2009–2011, China-Russia strategic coordination temporarily took a back seat. Both Beijing and Moscow still value their access to U.S. markets and technology and neither wants an outright economic rupture with the U.S. economy. Thus, unlike the Cold War when the Soviet and Chinese economies were largely decoupled from the West, today there are powerful interdependencies at play. China is deeply integrated into global trade and supply chains with the U.S., and even Russia (despite sanctions) sells energy and commodities to American allies and relies on global financial systems. This globalized context means the strategic triangle now operates within a broader web of economic and institutional linkages. It is not a sealed triad but rather embedded in the international order that the U.S. helped build. For example, even at the height of U.S.-China tensions in recent years, annual bilateral trade has hovered around \$600 billion, that never existed between the U.S. and USSR.

⁹ Vu Le Thai Hoang and Huy Nguyen, “The Modern China–Russia–US Triangle”

The U.S. Strategic Posture. The United States of the 2020s remains the pre-eminent military power and a technology superpower, but it faces a more challenging strategic environment. After the relative unipolar moment of the 1990s–2000s, Washington now acknowledges a return of great power competition. Its official strategy labels China as the “pacing challenge” (the only country with the economic and military capacity to mount a long-term challenge to U.S. primacy)¹⁰ and Russia as an acute threat to the U.S. and allied interests (especially after the Ukraine invasion).¹¹ In practice, U.S. policy has taken a harder line on both fronts: erecting trade barriers and tech export controls against China, expanding NATO and sanctioning Russia for aggression, and pursuing new Indo-Pacific security partnerships (like the Quad and AUKUS) to counterbalance China. Under President Joe Biden (2021–24), the U.S. reinforced alliances and presented a united front with allies in Europe and Asia. But the return of Donald Trump in 2025 introduces significant uncertainty (discussed later in this paper).

A key difference from the 1980s is that the U.S. now faces simultaneous strategic competition with *two* major powers, rather than exploiting a rift between them. In the late Cold War, U.S. strategists could play the “China card” to keep the USSR in check. Today, by contrast, China and Russia coordinate to frustrate U.S. goals, whether it’s Russia backing China’s positions on Taiwan, or China echoing Russian narratives blaming NATO for the European security crisis. This creates a potential “two-front” predicament for Washington. However, as noted, the U.S. could theoretically try to drive a wedge between Beijing and Moscow (for instance, by reaching a *détente* with one to isolate the other).

¹⁰ “China Remains ‘Pacing Challenge’ for U.S., Pentagon Press Secretary Says, November 17, 2021. <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2846904/china-remains-pacing-challenge-for-us-pentagon-press-secretary-says/>

¹¹ Valerie Insinna, “The upcoming defense strategy dubs Russia an ‘acute threat.’ What does that mean?”, *Breaking Defense*, March 30, 2022. <https://breakingdefense.com/2022/03/the-upcoming-defense-strategy-dubs-russia-an-acute-threat-what-does-that-mean/>

In reality, forging such a split is difficult amid high distrust; nonetheless, the strategic triangle remains dynamic rather than fixed.

Technological and Geoeconomic Factors. The 2020s triangle is also shaped by competition in new domains. Technological supremacy – in areas like semiconductors, artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, and space – has become a major battleground between the U.S. and China. Unlike the Cold War, when the U.S. and Soviet technological spheres were largely separate, today’s tech ecosystems are intertwined, leading to intense debates over decoupling and supply chain security. The U.S. has imposed sweeping export controls on advanced semiconductors and equipment to China, aiming to hobble China’s military-modernization and high-tech industries. Crucially, it enlisted allies like Japan in these restrictions. In March 2023, Japan agreed to align with U.S. curbs on chip technology to China, imposing its own export controls on semiconductor manufacturing equipment¹². Such coordination shows the triangle’s effects ripple into global economic policy: Japan and other U.S. partners are taking costly steps to constrain China’s tech rise, reflecting the broader strategic contest. China, for its part, has responded by accelerating indigenous innovation and, in retaliation, restricting exports of critical minerals (like rare earths) needed for high-tech production¹³. Meanwhile, Russia’s war in Ukraine has triggered energy and commodity shocks worldwide, underscoring how economic interdependence can become a strategic vulnerability.

In summary, the contemporary strategic triangle features a quasi-aligned China-Russia bloc facing a wary United States, all operating in a globalized

¹² Tim Kelly and Miho Uranaka, “Japan restricts chipmaking equipment exports as it aligns with US China curbs, Reuters, March 31, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/japan-restrict-chipmaking-equipment-exports-aligning-it-with-us-china-curbs-2023-03-31/#:~:text=The%20U,not%20face%20a%20competitive%20disadvantage>

¹³ Sujai Shvakumar, Charles Wessner, and Thomas Howell, “The Limits of Chip Export Controls in Meeting the China Challenge,” CSIS, April 2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/limits-chip-export-controls-meeting-china-challenge#:~:text=The%20Limits%20of%20Chip%20Export,effort%2C%20similar%20export%20controls>

economic system that binds and complicates their rivalry. This is a more unstable and fluid triangle than in the 1980s. There is no clear “pivot” player to be won over – instead, Washington and Beijing see each other as primary adversaries, and Moscow has essentially thrown in its lot with Beijing to resist U.S.-led pressure. At the same time, each side must consider second-order effects: U.S. actions against one can drive it closer to the other; excessive Beijing-Moscow closeness could provoke stronger U.S.-led containment. All three must also contend with the reactions of other important states (e.g. EU, India, Japan, etc.). It is within this intricate great-power interplay that Japan must formulate its response.

4. Implications for Japan’s Foreign Policy

The shifts in the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle have directly impacted Japan’s security calculations and foreign policy in recent years. As the only Asian member of the G7 and a neighbor to both China and Russia, Japan is on the front lines of the evolving great-power competition in East Asia. Several trends stand out: a significantly worsened security environment around Japan, adjustments in Tokyo’s defense posture and alliance management, careful diplomatic balancing regarding China, and the collapse of hopes for rapprochement with Russia.

Heightened Threat Perception. Japan’s recent Defense White Papers, including the latest 2024 version, bluntly assess the regional threats. National Security Strategy (NSS), released in December 2022, identifies China’s growing military activities and coercive behavior as “*an unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge*” to Japan’s peace and security¹⁴. North Korea’s advancing

¹⁴ Adam P. Liff and Jeffrey W. Hornung, “Japan’s New Security Policies: A Long Road to Full Implementation,” RAND, March 27, 2023. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/03/japans->

nuclear and missile capabilities are labeled a “*grave and imminent threat*.” Russia’s aggression in Ukraine and its military assertiveness in Asia are also cited as “*serious security concerns*,” marking the first time since the Cold War that Japan has openly named Russia as a security challenge alongside China and North Korea¹⁵. This stark language reflects a bipartisan consensus in Tokyo that the strategic environment has deteriorated. Chinese naval and air incursions around the Senkaku Islands (which Japan administers, but China claims as the Diaoyu) occur regularly, and China’s rapid military modernization – including deploying ballistic missiles and building a blue-water navy – directly affects Japan’s defense planning. In 2021, for instance, Chinese and Russian warships conducted a joint naval drill that circumnavigated the Japanese archipelago, signaling their growing military cooperation in Japan’s vicinity. And since 2022, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine – though geographically distant – has had a profound psychological impact on Japan’s strategic community, reinforcing the lesson that territorial aggression by a great power is no longer unthinkable. Japanese leaders have explicitly drawn parallels between Ukraine and potential contingencies in East Asia (such as a conflict over Taiwan), arguing that unilateral changes to the status quo must be deterred in both Europe and Asia.

Defense Buildup and Alliance Commitments. In response to these threats, Japan is undertaking its most significant military build-up in decades. Under plans approved in 2022, Japan will boost defense spending to 2% of GDP by 2027, supporting capabilities such as stand-off missiles (e.g., Tomahawk and Type-12), Aegis-equipped vessels, and integrated air and missile defense¹⁶.

[new-security-policies-a-long-road-to-full-implementation.html#:~:text=Japan%27s%20New%20Security%20Policies%3A%20A, strategic%20challenge%E2%80%9D%20and%20a](#)

¹⁵ Yuka Koshino, “Japan’s transformational national-security documents,” IISS, December 21, 2022. <https://www.iiss.org/online-analysis/online-analysis/2022/12/japans-transformational-national-security-documents/#:~:text=Japan%27s%20transformational%20national,%28>

¹⁶ Jennifer Kavanagh, “Japan’s New Defense Budget is Still Not Enough,” Carnegie, February 8, 2023. <https://carnegieendowment.org/posts/2023/02/japans-new-defense-budget-is-still-not-enough?lang=en>

The expansion will fund new capabilities that were previously considered off-limits for Japan's exclusively self-defensive policy. Notably, Japan is acquiring "counterstrike" missiles – long-range precision weapons that can hit targets overseas if Japan is attacked. This marks a doctrinal shift aimed at deterring adversaries like North Korea and China by holding at risk assets on their territory (such as missile launch sites), in coordination with the U.S. Also, Japan plans to invest in advanced fighter jets (co-developing a next-generation fighter with the UK and Italy), cyber defenses, space domain awareness, and unmanned systems, among other areas. These defense buildup plans indicate that Japan will take primary responsibility for its own defense and enhance its role in the U.S.-Japan alliance. In essence, Tokyo is responding to a less secure environment by becoming a more militarily capable and active ally.

The U.S.-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy, but Japan has been adjusting how it manages this alliance. During the Biden administration, alliance ties were reinforced – evidenced by the Allies' joint statements on Taiwan's importance, coordination on technology security, and U.S. Marines in Okinawa being restructured for agile island defense (aimed at China). Yet, Japan is also preparing for scenarios where it might need to do more if U.S. commitment wavers. Tokyo has started hedging against U.S. unpredictability by strengthening security cooperation with a broader network of partners. Japan has invigorated the Quad (with the U.S., Australia, and India) as a platform for Indo-Pacific strategic coordination, including maritime security and infrastructure projects. It signed a landmark defense pact with Australia (the Reciprocal Access Agreement in 2022) to enable closer military collaboration, and deepened ties with India through bilateral and trilateral naval exercises (recognizing India's key role in the Indian Ocean and its cautious alignment to counter China). Japan has also expanded security dialogues with European powers – notably the UK, France, and recently NATO as an institution. For example, in 2023 Japan hosted a NATO liaison office and conducted naval drills with the British Royal Navy's Carrier Strike Group. These moves reflect Japan's

strategy of building a “*networked alliance*” – centered on the U.S. alliance but reinforced by other like-minded partners that share democratic values and concerns about China¹⁷. Japanese officials frequently mention the importance of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP), a concept that aligns with U.S. and allied visions for countering coercion and maintaining rules-based order in the region¹⁸.

Economic Statecraft and Resilience. As the 2024 Diplomatic Bluebook of Japan underscores economic security as an integral part of Japan’s national strategy, another change in Japan’s recent security approach is the growing use of economic statecraft to address its vulnerabilities. Japan remains deeply economically interdependent with China – China is Japan’s largest trading partner, and Japanese manufacturers have extensive supply chains in China. This interdependence restrains Japan from overly provocative actions and gives Tokyo an interest in stability. However, it also exposes Japan to economic coercion; Chinese unofficial sanctions on Japanese products were felt during past diplomatic spats (e.g. the rare earth embargo in 2010). Learning from these experiences, Japan has implemented policies to diversify supply chains (offering incentives for companies to relocate production from China to Southeast Asia or back to Japan) and to tighten scrutiny of sensitive investments. Japan established an Economic Security Promotion post in the cabinet and passed a law in 2022 to secure critical infrastructure, technology, and materials¹⁹. Aligning with U.S. efforts, Japan has joined in restricting exports of cutting-edge technology to China that could have military uses – a notable example being the curbs on

¹⁷ Urs Schottli, “Russia’s Eurasian ambitions prompt Japan’s strategic response,” Gisreports, May 15, 2025. <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/japan-russia/#:~:text=,other%20potential%20allies>

¹⁸ Akihiko Tanaka, 「地球を読む：インド太平洋地域の安定重要性増す」読売新聞、2025年5月25日 (The Japan News by the Yomiuri Shimbun is expected to deliver an English translation of this article in a few weeks)

¹⁹ Act on the Promotion of Ensuring National Security through Integrated Implementation of Economic Measures (Act No. 43 of 2022) <https://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/en/laws/view/4523/en>

semiconductor equipment exports to China²⁰. By doing so, Japan is carefully walking a line: protecting its own technological edge and supporting U.S. strategy, while trying to minimize blowback from Beijing. Indeed, when Tokyo announced chip equipment restrictions in 2023, it did so without explicitly naming China, framing it as a neutral measure for peace and stability.

Diplomacy with China and Russia. Japan's diplomatic posture toward China in the 2020s has been one of action with deterrence, dialogue with realism. On one hand, Japan under the late Prime Minister Abe and his successors has grown more outspoken about China's assertiveness – emphasizing the need to deter any unilateral change to the status quo in the East or South China Seas, and voicing that peace in the Taiwan Strait is critical for Japan's security. On the other hand, Japanese leaders have sought to maintain high-level engagement with Beijing to manage tensions. After a long COVID hiatus, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met President Xi Jinping in November 2022, and there have been efforts to set up military crisis communication hotlines between the two countries. Japan recognizes that outright confrontation with China would be disastrous given economic realities; thus it pursues a dual-track approach: firm on principles and defense, but open to détente and confidence-building. This is analogous to Europe's Cold War stance of being militarily strong while pursuing Ostpolitik-style dialogue with the Soviet bloc. Domestic opinion in Japan has turned more wary of China (polls show record-high unfavorable views of China among Japanese citizens²¹), which constrains how far Tokyo can go in rapprochement. But Tokyo will calibrate its China policy in tandem with U.S. strategy, trying to avoid being seen as the “weak link” yet also guarding its own economic interests.

²⁰ Tim Kelly and Miho Uranaka, “Japan restricts chipmaking equipment exports as it aligns with US China curbs,” Reuters, March 31, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/technology/japan-restrict-chipmaking-equipment-exports-aligning-it-with-us-china-curbs-2023-03-31/#:~:text=The%20U,not%20face%20a%20competitive%20disadvantage>

²¹ 萩原ゆき, 「日本人の中国に対する印象「良くない」が92.2%、過去2番目の高さ」 Bloomberg, 2023年10月11日。

As for Russia, Japan's policy has undergone a dramatic reversal. During the 2010s, especially under Prime Minister Abe (2012–2020), Tokyo made a concerted effort to improve relations with Moscow. Abe held numerous summits with Putin, seeking a breakthrough on the Northern Territories dispute through economic cooperation (the “8-point economic plan”)²² and a peace treaty. There were modest joint projects in areas like LNG development in the Russian Far East. However, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 ended this rapprochement. Japan, aligning with its G7 allies, imposed sanctions on Russia – including freezing Russian assets, banning certain exports, and even phasing out Russian oil imports – and expelled some Russian diplomats. In return, Moscow designated Japan an “unfriendly country,” suspended all peace treaty talks, and bolstered military deployments around Japan (e.g. conducting drills in the Kurils). Any illusion that Japan could somehow drive a wedge between Russia and China, or resolve bilateral issues in the near term, has vanished. The current situation underscores the importance of Japan reinforcing its own defense capabilities and maintaining U.S. engagement in Asia.

In sum, the evolving Strategic Triangle has impelled Japan to reorient its foreign policy in several ways: doubling down on the U.S. alliance but preparing for self-reliance, networking with other democracies to compensate for any U.S. shortfall, adopting a more hard-headed approach to China (integrating security concerns into economic policy), and abandoning a conciliatory approach to Putin's Russia in favor of deterrence. Japan's post-Cold War assumption that it could focus on economic interests while the U.S. maintained regional order is no longer tenable. As both its latest Diplomatic and Defense Blue Books put it, *“Japan is finding itself in the midst of the most severe and complex security environment since the end of World War II”*. The stage is set for how Japan will navigate these challenges amid the uncertainties of a second Trump administration.

²² Japan's Eight-Bullet-Point Proposal for Economic Cooperation with Russia https://www.japan.go.jp/tomodachi/2016/japan_and_russia_edition_2016/japans_eight_bullet_point.html

5. Strategic Triangle and the Second Trump Administration

The inauguration of Donald Trump's second term in January 2025 introduces a new variable into the strategic triangle and Japan's calculus. Trump's foreign policy instincts – emphasizing “America First” transactionalism, skepticism of alliances, and admiration for strongman leaders – differ markedly from the traditional U.S. approach that Japan has relied upon. Thus, Tokyo must assess how a renewed Trump presidency could alter U.S.-China-Russia relations and what that means for Japan's strategy.

One immediate concern is the stability of the U.S.-Japan alliance under Trump. During his first term (2017–2020), President Trump pressured Japan (and other allies like South Korea and NATO members) to pay more for U.S. troop deployments, often in brusque fashion. He complained that the U.S.-Japan security treaty was “one-sided” and floated the idea that if allies didn't increase burden-sharing, the U.S. might withdraw forces. In late 2019, his administration reportedly demanded a quadrupling of Japan's annual host-nation support payments for U.S. forces²³. Those frictions were somewhat managed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's personal diplomacy (Abe courted Trump with high-profile meetings and gifts, emphasizing Japan's investment in the U.S. and purchasing American military equipment). But Abe is no longer in office, and Trump in a second term may feel emboldened to take even tougher stances, especially if domestic advisors who favor alliance “restraint” gain influence²⁴. Indeed,

²³ Lara Seligman and Robbie Gramer, “Trump Askes Tokyo to Quadruple Payments for U.S. Troops in Japan,” *Foreign Policy*, November 15, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/11/15/trump-asks-tokyo-quadruple-payments-us-troops-japan/#:~:text=Trump%20Asks%20Tokyo%20to%20Quadruple,troops>

²⁴ Jasen J. Castillo, John M. Schuessler, Miranda Priebe, “Here's Why Trump's Foreign Policy is Hard to Pin Down,” *RAND*, January 3, 2025. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2025/01/heres-why-trumps-foreign-policy-is-hard-to-pin-down.html#:~:text=Still%2C%20Trump%20faces%20some%20countervailing,presence%2C%20downgrading%20some%20of%20its>

President Trump has often argued that U.S. allies are “free riders” exploiting American security guarantees. For Japan, a worst-case scenario would be a Trump decision to significantly scale back the U.S. military presence in Japan (for example, withdrawing some of the 50,000 U.S. troops, or not coming to Japan’s defense in a pinch) unless Tokyo accedes to onerous demands. Japanese policymakers are already bracing for renewed cost-sharing negotiations and the possibility that Trump could link security commitments to trade concessions, given his mercantilist view of alliances²⁵.

Another area of uncertainty is Trump’s approach to China. In his first term, Trump oscillated between confrontational policies (launching a trade war, banning Chinese tech firms like Huawei, and intensifying freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea) and surprising cordiality (praising Xi Jinping’s power consolidation, and in 2018/19 seeking a trade deal that ultimately resulted in the “Phase One” agreement)²⁶. Trump’s rhetoric in the 2024 campaign remained tough on China – blaming Beijing for COVID-19 and economic woes – and he has continued tariffs and export restrictions. Yet, Trump’s decision-making is famously impulsive and deal-oriented; he might be tempted to strike a grand bargain with Xi if he thinks it benefits his legacy or domestic politics. This could take the form of renewed trade negotiations where Trump offers tariff relief in exchange for China buying more U.S. products (as he has attempted more than once), or even an agreement on strategic issues that sidelines third parties. Such bilateral deal-making could marginalize Japan’s interests. For instance, if Trump were to negotiate directly with China on reducing U.S. military deployments in Asia in exchange for some Chinese concessions, Japan could find itself excluded from decisions impacting its security. The memory of the Nixon

²⁵ Jesse Johnson, “Japan wants to ‘separate’ tariff and security issues. That may be tough.” *The Japan Times*, April 23, 2025. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2025/04/23/japan/politics/japan-us-trade-security-talks/>

²⁶ Ashish Kumar Sen, “Trump, Xi pause US-China trade war,” *New Atlanticist*, June 29, 2019. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/trump-xi-pause-us-china-trade-war/>

shock in 1972 – when the U.S. abruptly shifted on China without consulting Tokyo – looms large²⁷. A similar scenario under Trump is not out of the question. Tokyo would need to stay in close consultation with Washington and perhaps leverage pro-Japan voices in Congress to avoid being blindsided. At the same time, if Trump’s China stance turns overtly hostile (e.g. a full decoupling or aggressive naval blockade in a Taiwan crisis), Japan would be pressed to support its ally, possibly at great economic and security cost. In short, Trump’s unpredictable China policy forces Japan to prepare for divergent outcomes: an overly conciliatory U.S.-China deal on one hand, or a spiraling confrontation on the other.

Also unsettling is Trump’s posture toward Russia. Trump has long expressed admiration for Vladimir Putin and questioned the value of confronting Russia over issues like Ukraine. In a second term, Trump might move to de-escalate U.S.-Russia tensions, even if it means undermining Western support for Ukraine. He has already signaled skepticism about “unconditional aid” to Kyiv and suggested he could broker a peace deal swiftly. Such moves could result in the U.S. pressuring Ukraine to accept a ceasefire that leaves Russian gains in place, or even unilaterally scaling back sanctions on Russia. For Japan, which has aligned with the G7 hard line against Putin, a softer U.S. approach to Russia could be jarring. On one hand, if Trump reconciles with Putin, it might slightly loosen the Beijing-Moscow axis (since Russia would feel less isolated and less dependent on China), Japanese strategists would welcome any wedge between China and Russia. On the other hand, a U.S.-Russia détente that comes at the expense of Ukraine and European unity could damage U.S. credibility and fracture the Western alliance. Japan’s identity as a democracy aligned with the West means it would find any abandonment of Ukraine problematic, both morally and for

²⁷ Rana Mitter, “For China and Japan, is this Trump’s ‘Nixon Shock’?” *South China Morning Post*, May 19, 2018. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2146408/china-and-japan-trumps-nixon-shock>

the precedent it sets (regarding tolerance of aggression). Additionally, if Trump bypasses Japan in dealings with Russia – for example, making assurances about Pacific force deployments or Russia’s interests in Asia without consulting Tokyo – it directly undercuts Japan’s security. Trump’s handling of Russia could range from strategic opportunity to strategic nightmare for Japan, depending on how it unfolds.

Trump’s impact on the broader multilateral system also carries implications. In his first term, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade pact, left UNESCO and the UN Human Rights Council, and undermined the WTO’s appellate body – actions that signaled a retreat from multilateral leadership²⁸. Allies like Japan value these institutions; indeed, Japan took up the mantle of TPP (renamed CPTPP) after the U.S. exit and has championed the rules-based order in Asia. The second Trump term is bringing more of the same: within hours of Trump’s second inauguration, the White House announced the United States’ withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), the Paris Agreement, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)’s tax agreement²⁹. Trump has also been using tariffs or currency accusations even against allies. While the second Trump administration has so far kept a commitment to alliance forums like the Quad or G7³⁰, Japan, which sees the Quad and other minilateral groupings as critical for regional diplomacy, might have to lead from behind to keep such initiatives alive if U.S. enthusiasm

²⁸ Ali Harb, “Tearing down’: What drives Trump’s foreign policy?” Aljazeera, April 29, 2025. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/29/tearing-down-what-drives-trumps-foreign-policy#:~:text=During%20the%20first%20100%20days,Organization%2C%20amongst%20other%20international%20forums>

²⁹ President Trump Begins Second Term by Withdrawing the United States from International Agreements and Institutions and Contravening U.S. International Legal Obligations. *American Journal of International Law*. 2025;119(2):313–327. doi:10.1017/ajil.2025.17

³⁰ Ken Moriyasu, “Quad foreign ministers meet on Day 2 of second Trump era,” Nikkei Asia, January 22, 2025. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Indo-Pacific/Quad-foreign-ministers-meet-on-Day-2-of-second-Trump-era>

wanes. Tokyo might find closer coordination with Australia, India, and others to be a hedge, ensuring that even if the U.S. president is lukewarm, the working-level and leader-level engagements continue (possibly encouraged by Congress or by Trump's own advisors who favor maintaining influence vis-à-vis China).

In sum, a second Trump administration injects a degree of alliance uncertainty and strategic volatility into Northeast Asia. It could alter the strategic triangle by either softening one leg (U.S.-Russia rapprochement) or hardening another (more U.S.-China confrontation or, conversely, a U.S.-China deal that sidelines Russia). For Japan, the prudent course is to prepare for turbulence: the U.S. alliance, while still indispensable, might become less predictable and more transactional. China and Russia may seek to exploit any rifts between Washington and its allies. Japan's response, therefore, should be to mitigate risks and seize any opportunities that arise from changes in the triangle.

6. Conclusion

The evolving dynamics of the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle present both a formidable challenge and a critical opportunity for Japan's foreign policy. The structural transformation of this triangle—shifting from a Cold War-era equilibrium to a 21st-century configuration marked by asymmetry, fluid alignments, and multidimensional rivalry—has dramatically altered Japan's external environment. China's rise as a systemic competitor to the U.S., Russia's increasing strategic dependence on Beijing, and Washington's oscillating global commitments, particularly under the Trump administration, have collectively disrupted the previous stability that underpinned Japan's postwar diplomacy.

Japan's experience in the 1980s triangle offers both contrast and instruction. Then, Japan operated under a relatively predictable U.S.-China-Soviet configuration, anchored by a reliable U.S. alliance and a clear ideological divide. Japan's strategic role was largely one of a loyal economic partner and low-profile

security contributor within the American-led bloc. By contrast, today's triangle offers neither predictability nor ideological clarity. Japan now must assert itself diplomatically and strategically amid great-power contestation that often marginalizes the interests of middle powers.

The reemergence of Donald Trump to the U.S. presidency amplifies these uncertainties. Trump's transactional approach to alliances, disregard for multilateralism, and unpredictable behavior toward both rivals and partners introduce volatility into the very foundations of Japan's security architecture. The potential weakening of U.S. credibility—whether through reduced commitment to East Asian security or unilateral deal-making with China or Russia—forces Japan to reassess its long-held assumptions about strategic reliance on the United States.

In response, Japan has begun charting a more proactive and multidimensional strategy. The defense buildup toward 2% of GDP, the diversification of security partnerships under the Free and Open Indo-Pacific vision, and the institutionalization of economic security policy all point toward a recalibrated posture: one that balances continued alliance dependence with growing strategic autonomy. Japan's outreach to Australia, India, Europe, and NATO, as well as its guarded engagement with China and its hardening stance toward Russia, reflect a more flexible and resilient foreign policy, designed to hedge against shifts in the triangle's geometry.

Yet challenges remain. Japan must manage its economic interdependence with China while deterring coercion; it must sustain alliance trust with a potentially erratic U.S. administration while maintaining regional stability; and it must prevent a deepening China-Russia axis that undermines the regional balance of power. Strategic foresight, diplomatic agility, and domestic political unity will be essential in navigating this turbulent landscape.

In conclusion, Japan can no longer afford to be a passive bystander in the great-power politics of Northeast Asia. The strategic triangle has reemerged as a defining structure of the international order—but in altered form. By

recognizing its fluidity and aligning its national strategy accordingly, Japan has the opportunity to not only safeguard its own interests but also to contribute meaningfully to a stable and rules-based regional order. The coming years will test Japan's ability to adapt and lead within this complex triangular dynamic, particularly under the renewed unpredictability of the second Trump administration.

DISCUSSION

The Strategic Triangle and Japan:

*Changes in U.S.-China-Russia Relations
with the Second Trump Administration and
Japan's Response*

전략적 삼각관계와 일본:
트럼프 2기 시대 미중러 관계 변화 및 일본의 대응

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Similarities and Differences in the Geopolitical Challenges Faced by Japan and South Korea

Eul-Chul Lim Kyungnam University



Dr. Minoru Koide's paper provides an in-depth analysis of the complex geopolitical challenges Japan faces, particularly under the uncertainties of the second Trump administration, and effectively highlights Japan's strategic considerations. It offers significant insights into understanding Japan's dilemmas, challenges, and response strategies in navigating the evolving U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle. Additionally, it provides valuable implications for South Korea, which shares a similar geopolitical position, making it an impressive and thought-provoking piece.

The paper contributes not only to academic discourse but also provides practical insights for policymakers. It emphasizes Japan's complex geopolitical position, reliant on the U.S. alliance while managing relations with China and Russia, and systematically analyzes the security and economic challenges Japan faces. In particular, it addresses the specific impact of the Trump administration's unpredictability on Japan's foreign policy, offering practical policy implications.

To facilitate a more productive and focused discussion, I will comment on the similarities and differences in the geopolitical challenges faced by Japan and South Korea, and conclude with related questions.

1. Similarities

First, Japan and South Korea, as key U.S. allies in East Asia and neighbors to China and Russia, face similar geopolitical challenges. Both countries confront common challenges within the evolving dynamics of the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle and the uncertainties of the Trump administration.

- **Uncertainty in the U.S. Alliance:** The Trump administration's "America First" policy and transactional approach to alliances create concerns for both Japan and South Korea regarding the reliability of U.S. security commitments. Trump has previously demanded significant increases in South Korea's contributions to the cost of U.S. troop deployments, similar to pressures faced by Japan. Both nations are enhancing their independent defense capabilities to prepare for potential weakening of U.S. military commitments.
- **China's Rise and Coercive Actions:** China's military modernization, assertive actions in the South and East China Seas, and economic coercion (e.g., the 2010 rare earth embargo against Japan and economic retaliation following South Korea's 2016 THAAD deployment) pose common threats to both countries. Japan is concerned about the Senkaku Islands, while South Korea is wary of China's activities in the Yellow Sea and around Jeodo.
- **Russia's Military Threat:** Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its military activities in East Asia (e.g., joint exercises near the Korean Peninsula and Japanese archipelago) raise security concerns for both nations. Japan's Northern Territories dispute and South Korea's deteriorating relations with Russia (due to participation in sanctions over Ukraine) share a similar context.
- **North Korea's Threat:** South Korea is directly exposed to North Korea's nuclear and missile threats, while Japan faces significant risks from North Korea's missile tests (e.g., missiles passing over Japanese territory). Both countries share common interests in deterring and responding to North Korea's provocations.
- **Economic Security and Supply Chain Vulnerabilities:** Both Japan and South

Korea are vulnerable to economic coercion due to their deep economic interdependence with China, their major trading partner. Both nations are pursuing supply chain diversification for critical technologies and resources, such as semiconductors and rare earths, to strengthen economic security.

2. Differences

- **Geopolitical Priorities:** Japan focuses on stability in the East China Sea (Senkaku Islands) and the Taiwan Strait, pursuing regional leadership through its Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) vision. In contrast, South Korea prioritizes denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and inter-Korean relations, placing greater emphasis on the U.S.-South Korea alliance and peninsula peace over active participation in the Indo-Pacific strategy.
- **Historical Tensions:** Historical issues (e.g., forced labor and comfort women) constrain bilateral cooperation between Japan and South Korea. The paper does not explicitly mention South Korea as a key partner, suggesting Japan's focus is more on the Quad (U.S., Australia, India) and European partners. South Korea seeks to strengthen ties with Japan but faces domestic political resistance, limiting cooperation.
- **Relations with Russia:** Japan has a long-standing conflict with Russia over the Northern Territories, and the prospect of reconciliation has diminished following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. South Korea's relations with Russia have historically been less adversarial, but recent participation in sanctions over Ukraine has strained ties.
- **Domestic Political Context:** Japan has strong bipartisan consensus on strengthening security policies and defense capabilities post-Abe Shinzo. In contrast, South Korea's security and foreign policy approaches, particularly regarding Japan and the U.S., vary between progressive and conservative governments, leading to less policy consistency.

3. The Need for Strategic Cooperation between Japan and South Korea

Considering their shared challenges and complementary strengths, strategic cooperation between Japan and South Korea can yield mutual benefits. The necessity of cooperation is underscored by the following:

- **Addressing Common Security Threats:** North Korea's missile and nuclear threats, China's military buildup and potential Taiwan invasion, and Russia's regional activities are shared challenges. Cooperation enables intelligence sharing etc.
- **Strengthening the U.S. Alliance:** Amid the Trump administration's uncertainties, Japan-South Korea cooperation can help maintain U.S. military engagement in Asia. For instance, trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea cooperation enables joint responses to U.S. burden-sharing demands.
- **Economic Security and Technology Cooperation:** Both Japan and South Korea hold global strengths in semiconductors, batteries, and AI. Cooperation in supply chain diversification and technology protection can reduce reliance on China and enhance economic security.
- **Maintaining Regional Order:** Japan's FOIP vision and South Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy support a rules-based order, and bilateral cooperation can create synergies in multilateral platforms like the Quad.

4. Cooperation Strategies and Mutual Benefits

To cooperate effectively, Japan and South Korea can consider the following specific strategies:

- **Strengthening Trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea Security Cooperation:** Japan

can leverage South Korea's North Korea expertise to strengthen regional security, while South Korea can enhance its defense capabilities through Japan's advanced technologies. The U.S. benefits by maintaining influence in Asia through allied cooperation.

- **Economic Security Cooperation:** Build bilateral cooperation to stabilize semiconductor and battery supply chains. For example, integrate Japan's semiconductor equipment (e.g., Nikon, Tokyo Electron) with South Korea's memory chips (e.g., Samsung, SK Hynix) to form a supply chain network and pursue joint procurement strategies for rare earths and critical minerals. This reduces vulnerability to Chinese economic coercion and allows both nations to lead in technology alliances with the U.S. and Europe, enhancing economic security and global technological competitiveness.
- **Cooperation in Multilateral Platforms:** Link Japan's FOIP vision with South Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy to advance maritime security, infrastructure development, and climate change responses in frameworks like the Quad and AUKUS+. Japan strengthens its FOIP vision through South Korea's involvement, while South Korea expands its diplomatic influence in the Indo-Pacific.
- **Managing Historical Tensions:** Regularize high-level dialogue channels to diplomatically manage historical issues and build trust through civilian reconciliation programs (e.g., youth exchanges, joint historical research). Modeling past efforts like the 2015 Japan-South Korea comfort women agreement, create a negotiation framework based on mutual respect. Mitigating historical tensions reduces political obstacles to security and economic cooperation, enabling smoother collaboration.
- **Coordination on Russia and China Responses:** Coordinate sanctions and foreign policies toward China and Russia.

5. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the need for close cooperation between South Korea and Japan, several challenges and limitations exist:

- **Historical and Political Obstacles:** Cooperation is constrained by historical tensions and domestic political opposition. Overcoming this requires strong political will from both nations' leaders.
- **Differing Strategic Priorities:** Japan focuses on the broader Indo-Pacific strategic balance, while South Korea prioritizes peninsula-centric security. This may limit synergies in regional cooperation.
- **China's Backlash:** Closer Japan-South Korea cooperation may provoke China's backlash, impacting both nations' economic interests. To manage this, both countries should prioritize practical and discreet coordination over public displays of cooperation.
- **U.S. and North Korea-China-Russia Arms Race:** The strong opposition from North Korea, China, and Russia to U.S. President Donald Trump's next-generation missile defense system, the "Golden Dome" plan, is increasing the likelihood of reigniting a global arms race, including in East Asia. As a result, Japan faces a complex geopolitical environment within the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle, compounded by the additional variable of North Korea, placing it at a critical juncture in its security and diplomatic choices.

6. Conclusion

Japan and South Korea face similar geopolitical challenges within the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle and the uncertainties of the Trump administration, emphasizing the need for strategic cooperation. Trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea cooperation, economic security networks, coordination

in multilateral platforms, and historical tension management are mutually beneficial strategies. However, historical tensions and differing strategic priorities pose obstacles, necessitating sustained high-level dialogue and trust-building.

Finally, This paper raises many interesting points for me, but due to time constraints, I will ask the following a few questions:

1. While the paper focuses on the U.S.-China-Russia strategic triangle and the uncertainties of the second Trump administration in analyzing Japan's foreign and security policies, it only marginally addresses the North Korea variable. North Korea poses a direct security threat to both Japan and South Korea, adding further complexity to the dynamics of the U.S.-China-Russia triangle. I would like to hear the presenter's views on how Japan's response becomes more complex when considering the North Korea variable, how Japan's strategies might change as a result, and what would be the desirable approach for Japan-South Korea cooperation in this context.
2. What would be the impact on Japan-South Korea relations if the South Korean government pursues independent nuclear armament? How is Japan's nuclear policy expected to change in response?
3. How effective can trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea cooperation be in strengthening East Asian security amid the uncertainties of the Trump administration?
4. What multilateral mechanisms can Japan and South Korea leverage to jointly counter China's economic coercion?
5. If South Korea actively participates in Japan-centric Indo-Pacific frameworks like the Quad, what positive and negative impacts might this have on Korean Peninsula security?

**Discussion Paper for
the 2025 Peace Forum:
“Japan’s Role in the Evolving Strategic Triangle:
Responding to U.S.-China-Russia Dynamics during
Trump’s Second Term”**

Roger S. Chen Chinese Culture University



1. Overview

Professor Koide’s paper provides a compelling update to traditional strategic triangle theory by contextualizing evolving U.S.-China-Russia relations in the 2020s and analyzing Japan’s responses—especially under the renewed unpredictability of Donald Trump’s second administration. The paper expertly connects Cold War triangular diplomacy to today’s multipolar and ideologically ambiguous landscape, highlighting Japan’s shift from strategic passivity to cautious proactivity.

2. Key Contributors

By highlighting both continuity and change in triangle dynamics, Professor Koide contrasts the 1980s configuration—where the U.S. and China aligned to balance the USSR—with today’s partial Sino-Russian coalition against a more unilateralist and wary United States.

By viewing Trump's return as a disruptive force, consistent with scholarly perspectives in international relations, the paper argues that Trump's foreign policy—marked by alliance skepticism and personalistic deal-making—further destabilizes the strategic triangle, making Japan's position more precarious.

Building on this observation, Professor Koide goes further to reflect on Japan's strategic evolution. He argues that Japan is no longer merely a U.S.-dependent economic power; it is enhancing its military capabilities, diversifying partnerships, and developing policies on economic security.

3. Analytical Strengths

Overall, by comparing with the Cold War, the paper offers a strong historical grounding that helps readers appreciate the strategic recalibrations required today. Beyond military concerns, Professor Koide incorporates technological rivalry, economic interdependence, and institutional realignments, making the analysis holistic and multidimensional—reflecting the author's deep expertise in peace studies and international relations.

Furthermore, his reflections on Japan's evolving foreign policy are another strength of the paper. His recommendations on balancing alliance commitments with strategic autonomy are both timely and pragmatic.

4. Critical Reflections

On Trump's role, the paper thoroughly illustrates his unpredictability. However, more attention could be given to U.S. institutional resilience—e.g., the role of Congress and the Pentagon in constraining presidential discretion—which may help moderate abrupt policy shifts.

Japan is largely portrayed as reactive, yet its growing leadership in frameworks such as the CPTPP and the Quad suggests more assertiveness than

the paper credits. This implies Japan can play a more active role as a middle-power agent.

Regarding the China-Russia coalition, while the paper correctly identifies its asymmetry, it perhaps underestimates ideological and regime-security commonalities that may deepen their cooperation, regardless of U.S. behavior.

5. Discussion Questions

1. To what extent can Japan credibly hedge against U.S. retrenchment while remaining within a U.S.-centric security architecture? If the Trump administration continues pressing Japan to assume more regional security responsibility while providing reduced support, Japan may face increased economic and security vulnerabilities.
2. What might a Japan-led regional order look like if U.S. engagement declines sharply under Trump? Could Japan, India, and Europe jointly anchor a “middle power coalition” within a fragmented strategic triangle?
3. How sustainable is Japan’s dual-track approach to China, given rising domestic hostility toward Beijing? Has Japan's stance become more biased toward the United States in recent years, leading to more targeted measures against China? Is this shift beneficial for Japan, particularly given the long-term importance of economic and technological cooperation with China?

6. Conclusion

Koide’s work is a vital strategic update, urging Japan to remain nimble in an age of eroding alliances, intensifying rivalries, and transactional diplomacy. His paper challenges policymakers to think beyond Cold War templates and to reimagine Japan’s regional and global roles in a rapidly shifting triangle. As U.S. policy under Trump remains a wildcard, Japan’s choices in the coming years may prove pivotal—not only for its own security but for the broader balance in the Indo-Pacific.

SESSION III

Prospects for Changes in the Cross-Strait Relations and Taiwan's Response



양안 관계 변화 전망 및 대만의 대응



PRESENTATION

Using AI Technology to Construct an Early Warning Model for Taiwan Strait

AI기술을 활용한 양안 관계 조기 예측 모델 구축

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Predicting the future development of both sides of the Taiwan Strait is a daunting task, as it involves a high degree of uncertainty in the current political conflict between the two sides and the international development situation. This article proposes an empirical strategy based on the information accumulated by the expert group in the past year. The strategy fully applies the professional knowledge of cross-strait research experts, as well as the feasibility of open artificial intelligence programming language processing and modeling. Specifically, in this article, all stakeholders involved in the model (the United States, China, and Taiwan) are considered rational participants, and their expected behaviors have strategic significance to maximize their respective utility. To simulate these relationships, this article utilized Bueno de Mesquita's (2011) Predictor's Game model, which accurately predicted the development of the Russia Ukraine war using data collected from selected experts in February 2023 and a large language model (GPT-3). This model will compare the predicted results obtained based on different hypothesis inputs with the match predictions provided by experts and generated by GPT-3, in order to evaluate the variability of the compared predictions and deepen the understanding of potential conflicting outcomes.

Briefly introduce the benefits of the model by using the Predictor's Game model of Bueno de Mesquita (2011) to simulate the war between Russia and Ukraine as follows: The Russia-Ukraine conflict highlighted and exacerbated the group contradictions between the Western countries and the China Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination (summarized as a hidden alliance in this paper), and emphasized the importance of military alliances that provide security guarantees or military assistance commitments. The United States and its allies have taken measures to support Ukraine and demand that Russia take responsibility for the ongoing war. Specifically, they have imposed unprecedented economic sanctions on Russia to reduce its ability to finance the war, bring costs to Russian policy makers and elites, and cause damage to the Russian economy (which has also created a demonstration and simulation image

for cross-strait relations and influenced the ideas of the ruling authorities in Taiwan). Although the sanctions imposed by Western countries on Russia have not yet caused a rift within the Kremlin system, the West's goal is to bring about economic recession or stagnation, low fiscal efficiency, and increased inflation in Russia, ultimately leading to the exacerbation of social dissatisfaction. This may make it more difficult for the Putin regime to maintain stability, and the Kremlin may attempt to suppress potential social protests through a combination of repression and social spending. Under vicious pressure, this may lead to domestic threats and regime change for the regime (Snegovaya et al., 2023). However, the model cites data from the open AI online prediction platform Metaulus, which predicts that there is only a 7% chance of a regime change or coup in Putin's Russia in December 2023, and only 18% of participants believe that Russia will experience significant democratization in the next five years (Metaulus 2023d, c).

Big data and open artificial intelligence enable political strategy models to grasp changes and trends more finely and comprehensively. Predicting the future development of cross-strait relations is a difficult task, as it involves a high degree of uncertainty in the conflict itself and changes in international relations. Bueno's model proposes an empirical strategy based on the information accumulated by expert groups in conflicts, combined with artificial intelligence computation to construct a dynamic model. Specifically, in this article, all stakeholders are considered rational participants whose actions have strategic significance to maximize their respective benefits utility is the goal. Based on the efficient and accurate prediction results of this model, this article uses it to deduce the cross-strait warning model as follows: The first section briefly introduces the current geopolitical conflict between the mainland and Taiwan. The second section provides an overview of the methodology framework, including a brief overview of the Predictor game model and general information about the GPT-3 Davinci model. The third section describes the empirical strategy used in this study, which involves collecting data through small-scale expert surveys and GPT-3. The fourth section introduces the main findings of this article. Finally, the final

section draws conclusions and explores potential directions for further research.

1. The current geopolitical conflict between mainland China and Taiwan

This article mainly focuses on three dimensions of conflict: the ruling dimension, which involves cross-strait control over territory; Second dimension is the level of military threat, it focuses on the accumulation of pressure in current military conflicts; Third, the future dimension of Taiwan's politics, emphasizing the evolution of future events of the Taiwan regime.

All three dimensions of the problem contain a wide range of potential outcomes. For example, control over the issue of unified territory includes maintaining a separate state from Taiwan, including corresponding foreign policy autonomy, to achieving complete reunification across the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan losing its foreign policy independence. At the level of military unification, the possibility of tactics being used in conventional warfare to fully achieve war objectives and/or subsequently unable to defend projection areas has been considered, and the positions of all parties in supporting this action have been taken into account.

Cross Strait relations can be simplified as the three main participants, as the Western alliance can be represented by the United States, and current conflicts between the two sides are often caused by the United States taking the lead in challenges. The game between the three participants is shown in Figure 1. This game has three main national participants. Each country is guided by the international voice or national actions of its leaders, and exchanges influence with each other. There is a principle of agency relationship within each country's environment (China and the United States each have their own political operating mechanisms and goals of maximizing utility). The success or failure of a leader's interaction with other leaders will affect their future political survival

ability. The friendly or hostile interactions between participants at the national level will in turn affect their respective domestic mechanisms in selecting appropriate leaders they deem suitable for dealing with other participants at the national level. A country's leader also has the motivation to indirectly influence another country's leader through the influence of its domestic mechanisms. The influencing factors of the size of state power can be roughly listed as follows:

- (1) Domestic stability
- (2) Military strength
- (3) International discourse power
- (4) Alliance forces
- (5) Group interests (binding forces (ideology, sharing benefits, system))
- (6) Economic development (national wealth)
- (7) Basic factors (scientific and technological talents, education, social stability (politics))
- (8) Infrastructure construction and livelihood needs.
- (9) Ecology and Energy
- (10) Steady State of Population
- (11) Election Competition Environment and Social Moral Value

For example, the recent news content on China by the United States includes: criticism of China by Vice President J.D. Vance nominated by Trump before 2024, in chronological order of news sources:

- (1) Economic competition: Vance criticized China for weakening the US manufacturing industry through unfair trade and government subsidies. He believes that China's economic behavior poses a significant threat to the economic interests of the United States.
- (2) National Security: He expressed concern about China's expansion in technology and military fields, especially its leading position in high-

tech fields such as 5G and artificial intelligence. He believes that this poses a serious threat to the national security of the United States.

- (3) Human rights issues: Vance criticized China's persecution of ethnic minorities, especially the treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, and called on the international community to take a tougher stance to address these human rights violations.
- (4) Epidemic response: Vance accused China of concealing information at the beginning of the COVID-19 epidemic, which led to the spread of the virus around the world, and believed that China should be responsible for the spread of the global epidemic (PolitiFact).
- (5) Global influence: He expressed concern about China's expansion of its global influence through the "the Belt and Road" and other means, believing that this is China's attempt to achieve its political purpose through economic means, which poses a threat to global freedom and democracy (PolitiFact).

The G7 (Group of Seven) also criticized China's role in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, accused China of providing military and economic support to Russia, and threatened to impose further sanctions on relevant Chinese enterprises. The European Union has recently launched multiple anti-dumping investigations into Chinese manufacturers of tinplate steel products, electric vehicles, as well as products such as arginine and vanillin, in order to address unfair trade practices. However, China strongly refutes these accusations of unfair trade and threatens to retaliate.

The competition for geopolitical frontiers is manifested in the intensification of competition between the United States and China in the Middle East, driven by strategic interests and the geopolitical significance of the region. Here are some key points about their competition: In terms of economic influence: Over the past decade, China has significantly strengthened its economic presence in the Middle East, expanded trade by about 40%, and made significant investments in the

region. This growth is largely attributed to China's one Belt and one Road Initiative (BRI), which involves a wide range of infrastructure projects and investment in various fields, including telecommunications and 5G networks. Compared to US aid, China's trade relations are often favored by Middle Eastern countries due to fewer conditions. The decision to join the BRICS group of countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) in August 2023 is also a key focus of attention. many People question whether the BRICS countries and the Middle East and North Africa have begun to form anti Western groups, although they deny distancing themselves from the West. The more intense and explicit sovereignty dispute over islands and reefs in the South China Sea between China and the Philippines, which was announced by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague, Netherlands on July 12, 2016, can be regarded as a clear event point. According to reports, although neither Chinese nor American officials have confirmed the news, the official Weibo account of the Southern Theater Command of the People's Liberation Army posted a message on June 30, 2024: "Smoke is thick in the deep blue sea. Goodnight." This was interpreted by some netizens as an official suggestion of electronic warfare in the South China Sea. So it is obvious that the evolution of cross-strait relations in the Taiwan Strait has been influenced by the century long game between China and the United States. This is an important reason why the construction of a cross-strait relations warning model must include the participation of China, the United States, and Taiwan. Based on this, a priori empirical basis is proposed for the following model.

2. A warning predict model for cross-strait relations constructed through game theory

The essence of interactive game models, taking Taiwan as an example, Ma Ying jeou was elected as the leader of Taiwan 17 years ago. He started an open and friendly policy towards Chinese Mainland. This is the highest degree

of improvement in cross-strait relations since the Kuomintang withdrew from Chinese Mainland to Taiwan in 1949. This improvement is also partly due to the relatively friendly and stable relations between the United States and Chinese Mainland during this period. When the domestic political dynamics within each country change, very different political leaders will emerge. In Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party's Tsai Ing wen replaced the Kuomintang's Ma Ying jeou. In the United States, Trump was elected and began his policy of “making the United States great again”, turning Chinese Mainland into the first strategic competitor on the list of the United States.

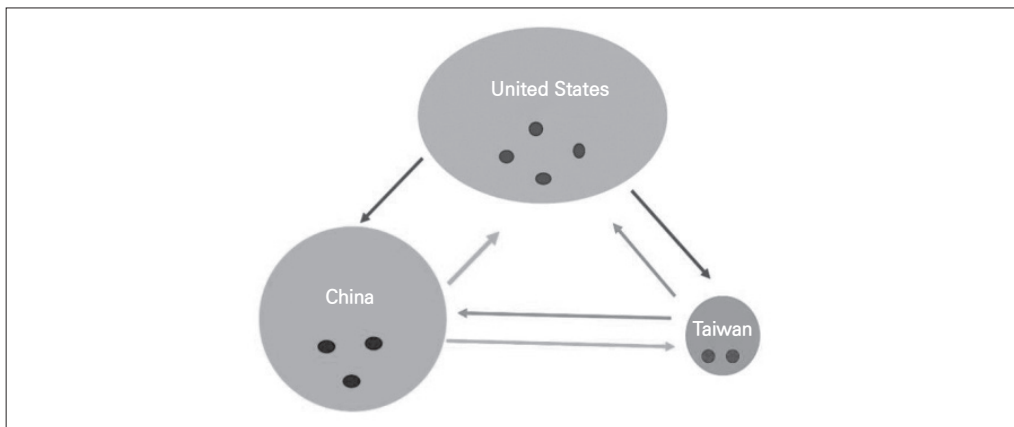


Figure 1: Interaction of National Forces among China, the United States, and Taiwan

The overall national objective function consists of two main parts, distinguished as:

- (1) The investment in external national influence (such as military power, international discourse power, alliances, etc.) will contribute to the enhancement of national power
- (2) The investment in the influence of internal stability governance (such as infrastructure, livelihood needs, ecology, and energy...), in addition, there are overall resource limitations due to national strength

- (3) The limitations of resources include population, GDP, infrastructure, and basic factors.

Represented by the simultaneous equations of econometrics as follows:
Taking the United States as an example of simultaneous equations

$$U_{US}(\cdot) = U_{US}(P_{US}(\cdot), E_{US}(\cdot)) \dots\dots\dots (U1)$$

$$P_{US}(\cdot) = P_{US}(\langle PX_{i-US} \mid PY_{i-US} \mid PZ_{i-US} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (U2)$$

$$E_{US}(\cdot) = E_{US}(\langle EX_{i-US} \mid EY_{i-US} \mid EZ_{i-US} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (U3)$$

$$B_{US}(\cdot) = P_{US}(\cdot) + E_{US}(\cdot) \dots\dots\dots (U4)$$

Middle

- $U_{US}(\cdot)$: represents the total national utility function of the United States.
- $P_{US}(\cdot)$: represents the political power function of American leaders, currently using PX_{i-US} as its endogenous explanatory variable, including support for American leaders, media output, etc;
- PY_{i-US} : is the domestic condition variable of political power, including party supporting influence), court tendency structure factors, etc.
- PZ_{i-US} is the international condition variable of political power, including international voice, international military force dispatch power...etc.
- $E_{US}(\cdot)$: It represents the economic development function of the United States. At present,
- EX_{i-US} is its endogenous explanatory variable, including gross domestic product, treasury bond, non-agricultural employment, etc;
- EY_{i-US} : is a domestic condition variable for economic development, including industrial structure and returns, employment numbers, input-output ratio, technological research and development strength factors, etc.
- PZ_{i-US} is an international condition variable for the development of the US economy, including changes in trade proportion, exchange rates, and net capital inflows ... wait.

- $B_{us}(\cdot)$: Budget constrain.
- Due to the limitation of national strength, political power and economic development are affected by the total budget. Excessive investment in international expansion will inevitably limit domestic economic development. For example, when the United States provided military aid to Ukraine, Vance believed that it was more important to use it for the relief of impoverished workers domestically.

The simultaneous equation structure of the country's total utility function is also suitable for the setting of Chinese Mainland and Taiwan, so there are :

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} U_c(\cdot) = U_c(P_c(\cdot), E_c(\cdot)) \dots\dots\dots (C1) \\ P_c(\cdot) = P_c(\langle PX_{ic} | PY_{ic} | PZ_{ic} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (C2) \\ E_c(\cdot) = E_c(\langle EX_{ic} | EY_{ic} | EZ_{ic} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (C3) \\ B_c(\cdot) = P_c(\cdot) + E_c(\cdot) \dots\dots\dots (C4) \end{array} \right.$$

and

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} U_T(\cdot) = U_T(P_T(\cdot), E_T(\cdot)) \dots\dots\dots (C1) \\ P_T(\cdot) = P_T(\langle PX_{iT} | PY_{iT} | PZ_{iT} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (C2) \\ E_T(\cdot) = E_T(\langle EX_{iT} | EY_{iT} | EZ_{iT} \rangle) \dots\dots\dots (C3) \\ B_T(\cdot) = P_T(\cdot) + E_T(\cdot) \dots\dots\dots (C4) \end{array} \right.$$

The simultaneous equations of national utility for the three parties mentioned above can be reduced to the following Reduced Functions

$$\begin{aligned} F_{USC}(\cdot) &= F_{USC}[Px_{us}(\cdot), Px_c(\cdot), Ex_{us}(\cdot), Ex_c(\cdot)] \\ &\dots\dots\dots \text{F1 (China US balanced linkage)} \\ F_{UST}(\cdot) &= F_{UST}[Px_{us}(\cdot), Px_T(\cdot), Ex_{us}(\cdot), Ex_T(\cdot)] \\ &\dots\dots\dots \text{F2(Balanced linkage between the United States and Taiwan)} \end{aligned}$$

$$F_{CT}(\cdot) = F_{CT}[Px_C(\cdot), Px_U(\cdot), Ex_T(\cdot), Ex_T(\cdot)]$$

.....F3(Mainland Taiwan Balanced Linkage System)

And the subsystem functions of the system (Subset Functions)

$$F_{USD}(\cdot) = F_{USD}[Px_U(\cdot), Ex_U(\cdot)]$$

.....F4(Domestic political and economic balance in the United States)

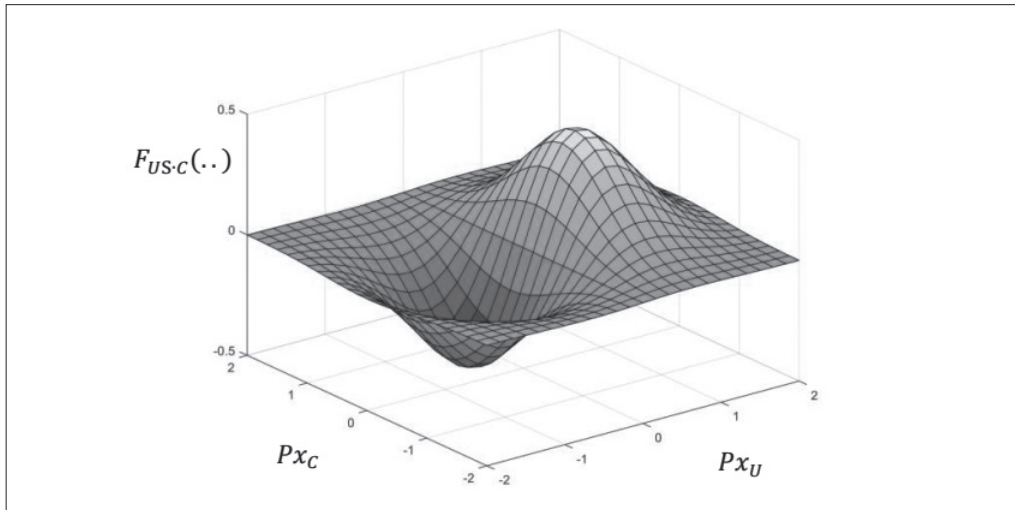
$$F_{CD}(\cdot) = F_{CD}[Px_C(\cdot), Ex_C(\cdot)]$$

.....F5(China's domestic political and economic balance model)

$$F_{TD}(\cdot) = F_{TD}[Px_T(\cdot), Ex_T(\cdot)]$$

.....F6(Taiwan's domestic political and economic balance model)

The method of extracting the quantity can be illustrated in the following figure



**Figure 2: Schematic diagram of partial extraction factors
for balanced linkage between China and the United States**

If F_{USC} as a dependent variable defined as the sustainable peaceful relationship between the United States and China, it is determined by the two-level triangular game mentioned above. That is to say, in order to obtain F_{USC} , it must

simultaneously satisfy six inequality functions (F_1 , F_2 , F_3 , F_4 , F_5 , F_6), Sustainability and peace in Taiwan mainland relations are not only determined by the history of modern US China relations and US Taiwan relations, but also by the domestic politics of the United States, mainland China, and Taiwan. In addition, F_{USC} is a dynamic variable that changes over time. Therefore, we can place F_{USC} in a continuous time online and attempt to observe or even predict their correlation relationship under the influence of all six equations. The same applies to the changes in the equilibrium linkage functions of other $F_{UST}(\cdot)$ and $F_{CT}(\cdot)$.

3. Prediction models practiced through future event tables

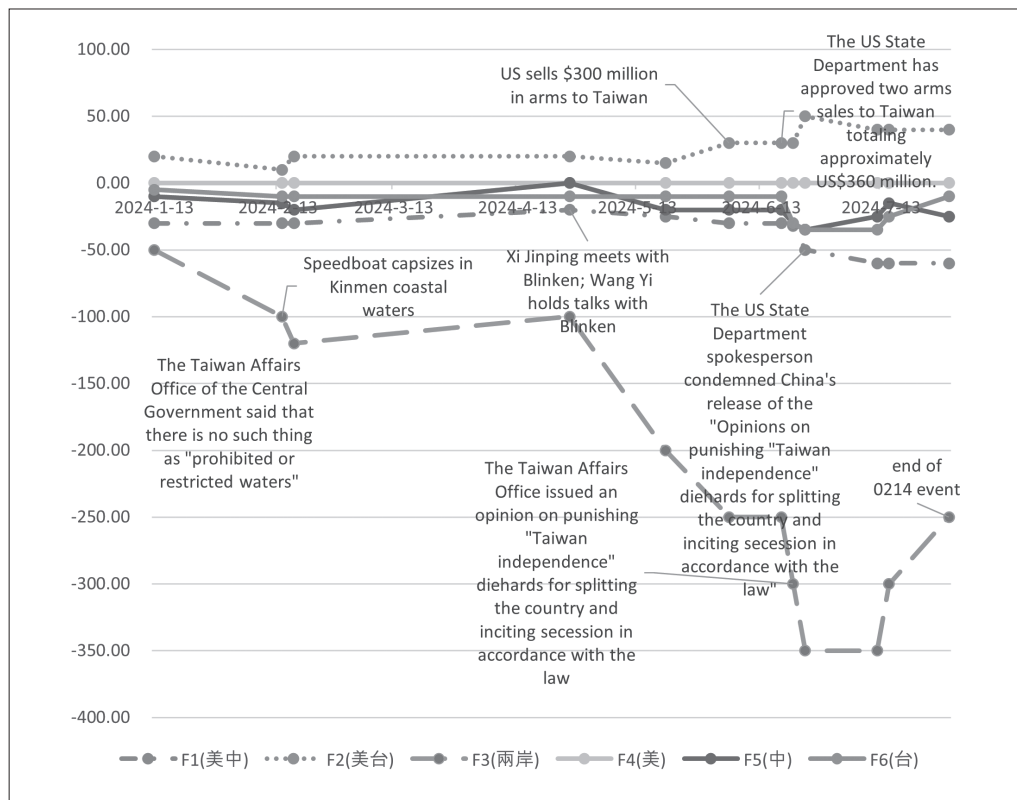


Figure 3. Early warning model for cross-strait relations

In practice, we can demonstrate the timeline as a future event graph as shown in Figure 3. The middle line represents the changes in the timeline deduction. Any specific situation where time is online at a specific time is determined by the history of these six equations and the expected future development of these six inequalities.

Recently, The 2024 Kinmen Chinese motorboat capsizing incident, also called the 2/14 Kinmen Incident, took place on 14 February 2024, when a boat of the 9th Brigade of the Taiwanese Coast Guard Administration (CGA) collided with a Chinese motorboat in the waters of Kinmen, Fuchien Province, Taiwan (ROC). All four crew members of the Chinese motorboat were thrown into the water, two of whom later died. The subsequent deduction triggered by this event will also analyze the new balance of power between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and the United States Taiwan afterward.

4. Research findings for discussions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the deduction of model data:

1. With the end of the Taiwan election, the volume index of cross-strait relations continues to decline.
2. US Taiwan relations have steadily increased slightly since the beginning of spring 2024.
3. US China relations have slightly declined in the above two trends.
4. The political power volume within Taiwan has slightly declined in recent months, due to the interaction between the external environment and cross-strait relations, which has contributed to the corruption and rectification movement within Taiwan's internal politics.
5. The internal power and political voice of the United States are not affected by the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

The advantage of the quantity model lies in its combination of rational game analysis, objective use of network volume analysis, news hot spot browsing, and AI interpretation through big data, making it an accurate prediction tool.

It is worth noting that with the result of the Taiwan election, the continuous deterioration of cross-strait relations does not conform to the tone of “peaceful reunification”. The mainland will strengthen its discourse on sovereignty in the international arena, while the Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party authorities rely more on military support from the United States (Ukraine can be used as a mirror) to sow discord between cross-strait relations. Scholars may have said that the improvement of cross-strait relations should make good use of Washington as a fulcrum, which is often the reason for this. However, due to the long-term detachment of technology industries from manufacturing, China’s so-called “two ends outside” is precisely the result of the United States moving intermediate manufacturing overseas. The widening wealth gap in the United States and the social problem of the middle class’s loss will seriously affect its domestic political stability. The United States has turned domestic issues into a tariff war and a technology war between the United States and China, and there is currently no possibility of change in this tone. The above prediction model has three tones that need to be carefully observed: first, the anti China tone of the United States; 2. China’s sovereignty tone; This is called a lagged variable in quantitative models, which means that its influence is not easily eliminated after a considerable amount of time. However, there are many control variables in the model that can be widely applied in practice, such as from April 1 to 2, 2025, the Eastern Theater Command of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army “successfully completed” “various joint training tasks” around Taiwan and “comprehensively tested the integrated joint combat capabilities of the troops.” However, the report did not mention the military harassment name “Strait Thunder-2025A”. Relevant news reports and discussions have been widely spread and discussed on various online platforms in Taiwan. This type of impact on the balance of political power within Taiwan is worth to attention. At present, the extraction

of operational variables that have an impact on the domestic political structure of both sides of the Taiwan Strait (F5 and F6) shows no significant difference, indicating that there are currently multiple non interactive international or domestic policy tools across the Taiwan Strait, rather than policy tools that have an impact on people's livelihoods. This is worthy of attention and concern. For example, the mainland coast guard's enforcement of the Islands in south-china sea has affected the livelihoods of Taiwanese fishermen. Can such a high-profile impact continue to effectively improve cross-strait relations are very worth exploring. In addition, how to guide the changes in the situation in Europe and the Middle East in the global game between China and the United States into the model is also a worthwhile direction to try.

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DISCUSSION

Using AI Technology to Construct an Early Warning Model for Taiwan Strait

AI기술을 활용한 양안 관계 조기 예측 모델 구축

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Using AI Technology to Construct an Early Warning Model for Taiwan Strait

Sang Man Lee Kyungnam University



1. Significance of the Paper

1) This paper presents a timely and ambitious study that combines artificial intelligence (AI) technology, game theory, and mathematical economic models to build an early warning system capable of forecasting potential conflicts in the Taiwan Strait. 2) In the current security landscape of Northeast Asia—where U.S.-China strategic competition and cross-strait relations are deeply intertwined—such simulation-based predictive models can offer practical implications for both policymakers and academia.

2. Core Contents of the Paper

1) Theoretical and Modeling Aspects

(1) The strategic actions of the U.S., China, and Taiwan are quantified based on political power (P) and economic capacity (E), and balanced within national budget constraints (B) through a system of simultaneous equations. (2) The utility function integrates domestic factors (e.g., public opinion, industrial structure), international factors (e.g., trade dependency, military capability), and structural elements (e.g., infrastructure, population). (3) The detailed equilibrium system

consists of six functions (F1-F6), which reflect both interstate interactions (U.S.-China, U.S.-Taiwan, China-Taiwan) and each state's internal political-economic balance.

2) Scenario Forecasting via Future Event Tables

(1) Using the February 2024 Kinmen Chinese motorboat capsizing incident as a case study, the model demonstrates how a localized incident can impact both cross-strait dynamics and broader U.S.-China relations. (2) This scenario-based approach structurally explains the quantitative ripple effects of events over time and demonstrates its capacity for dynamic predictions.

3) Analysis of Research Findings and Political Discourse

(1) The study finds that cross-strait relations have steadily deteriorated since Taiwan's most recent presidential election, while U.S.-Taiwan ties are strengthening and U.S.-China relations are declining (2) Taiwan's domestic political power index is shown to be decreasing, whereas U.S. political power remains largely unaffected by Taiwan Strait tensions. (3) Discourses such as anti-China sentiment (U.S.), sovereignty claims (China), and reliance on military alliance (Taiwan) function as lagged variables, exerting sustained and structural influence.

3. Academic Contributions

By conceptualizing the U.S., China, and Taiwan as rational strategic actors and incorporating both external influences (e.g., military, diplomacy) and internal governance concerns (e.g., economic stability, social welfare) into a unified utility function, this paper constructs a comprehensive model. Through

six functions (F1-F6), it links multilateral interaction with internal political dynamics, and applies this framework to simulate future event timelines, such as the 2024 Kinmen incident. Notably, the use of strategic discourses as ‘lagged variables’ to measure long-term effects is particularly compelling.

The paper can contribute in several key areas:

(1) Establishing a Quantitative IR Prediction Framework: It introduces a rigorous model that quantifies interstate interactions and analyzes the interdependence of complex variables, marking a noteworthy convergence of international relations and data-driven predictive research. (2) Introducing Time-Series Analysis for Political Discourses: The identification of anti-China, sovereignty, and military alliance narratives as ‘lagged variables’ offers empirical evidence of how discourse analysis can be integrated with mathematical modeling. (3) Policy-Relevant Applications: The AI-based simulation model demonstrates utility beyond theory, providing a temporal and empirical foundation for policy decision-making.

4. Areas for Improvement

(1) **Real-Time Applicability:** While the paper emphasizes time-based prediction, the real-world international environment often experiences a proliferation of simultaneous and rapidly changing variables. Therefore, improvements in sensitivity adjustment and the quantification of uncertainty variables are necessary. (2) **Possible Underrepresentation of Military Variables:** While the analysis rightly notes that military exercises—such as joint drills by the PLA or operations like ‘Thunder of the Strait’—influence political variables, the broader effects of military threats on public sentiment and electoral outcomes require more precise socio-psychological modeling. (3) **Limited Consideration of Multilateral Influences:** While the model is fundamentally based on a triadic framework involving the U.S., China, and Taiwan, it lacks structural integration

of third-party actors such as Japan, the EU, and ASEAN. In particular, Japan's Taiwan Strait policy and Indo-Pacific strategy impose substantive constraints on cross-strait dynamics and should be incorporated into the model.

5. Future Research Directions

(1) Integrating European and Middle Eastern Variables: As U.S.-China strategic competition becomes increasingly global, factors such as the EU's policies to contain China, competition over energy dominance in the Middle East, and developments on the Korean Peninsula may also be linked to the Taiwan Strait crisis. Therefore, incorporating these elements into the model would be a necessary improvement. **(2) Building Interfaces Between AI Models and Real-World Policy Models:** It is important to note the potential for enhancing the real-world applicability of simulation outcomes by developing a policy sandbox platform integrated with AI tools such as GPT-4 and time-series forecasting models. **(3) Modeling Civilian-Based Interaction Scenarios:** As current cross-strait dynamics rely on non-cooperative strategies, modeling policy variables based on civilian exchanges—such as fisheries, healthcare, and environmental cooperation—would enrich the model.

6. Conclusion

From a comprehensive perspective:

(1) This paper presents a pioneering study that constructs a structural and predictive framework for cross-strait relations through mathematical modeling. It deserves high praise for integrating AI and game theory to pursue both predictive power and practical applicability in international politics. (2) Moreover, the model has the potential to evolve into a global conflict prediction

platform, contributing not only to East Asian security but also to broader geopolitical analysis. (3) I hope that future research will extend this model to various geopolitical contexts. I would like to once again express my sincere appreciation to the presenter for this insightful work.

7. Questions for the Author

Despite the model's outstanding structure, I would like to raise a few questions as a discussant. Brief answers would be appreciated:

- (1) **Limits of the Rational Actor Assumption:** While the model treats all actors as strategically rational, how might we account for non-rational variables such as Taiwan's internal electoral dynamics, nationalist public opinion in China, or political polarization in the U.S.?
- (2) **Model Sensitivity and Response to Shocks:** The model operates based on six primary functions, but how is its sensitivity measured when confronted with unexpected external shocks (e.g., leadership changes, cyber conflicts, or third-party interventions)?
- (3) **Integrating Domestic-International Interactions:** The model currently treats domestic political economy and international strategy as separate layers. However, in reality, domestic legitimacy and international rhetoric (e.g., U.S. and China's external framing of the Taiwan issue) often form reinforcing feedback loops. Is there room for a more refined integration of these dynamics?
- (4) **Enhancing the Model's Regional-Global Scalability:** The suggestion to incorporate global variables—such as developments in the Middle East or Europe—is certainly compelling. However, how can the model balance regional specificity with global comprehensiveness? As more variables are added, is there a risk of reduced predictive accuracy?

인공지능 기술을 활용한 대만해협 조기경보 모델 구축

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1. 본 논문의 의의

1) 본 논문은 인공지능(AI) 기술과 게임이론, 그리고 수리경제 모델을 결합하여 대만해협에서의 갈등 가능성을 사전에 예측할 수 있는 조기경보 체계를 구축하고자 하는 매우 시의적절하고도 도전적인 연구이다. 2) 미·중 전략경쟁과 양안관계가 복잡하게 얽혀 있는 현재의 동북아 안보 지형 속에서, 이러한 시뮬레이션 기반의 예측 모델은 정책결정자와 학계 모두에게 실질적 함의를 제공할 수 있는 유용한 도구가 될 수 있다.

2. 본 논문의 핵심 내용

1) 이론 및 모델링 측면

(1) 각국(미국·중국·대만)의 전략적 행동을 정치력(P)과 경제력(E)으로 나누어 정량화하고, 이를 국가 예산 제약(B) 내에서 균형화하는 동시방정식 구조로 설계하였다. (2) 효용함수는 국내 요인(여론, 산업구조), 국제 요인(무역비중, 군사력), 구조 요인(인프라, 인구 등)을 포함한 종합적 함수로 구성된다. (3) F1~F6 함수로 구성된 세부 균형 시스템은 국가 간 상호작용(미중, 미대만, 중대만)과 각국의 내부 정치경제적 균형을 모두 반영한다.

2) 미래 사건표(Future Event Tables)를 통한 시나리오 예측

(1) 2024년 2월 발생한 진먼(島) 해역 모터보트 사건을 예시로 들어, 단일 국지적 사건이 양안관계는 물론 미중관계 전반에 영향을 미칠 수 있음을 보여준다. (2) 이러한 시

나리오 기반 접근은 사건의 정량적 파급 효과를 시간 축 상에서 구조적으로 설명하고, 동태적 예측이 가능함을 입증했다.

3) 연구결과 및 정치적 담론의 분석

(1) 대만 총선 이후 양안관계는 지속적으로 악화되고 있으며, 미-대만 관계는 점진적으로 강화되는 반면, 미중 관계는 악화 추세에 있음을 분석하였다. (2) 대만 내부의 정치적 권력 지수는 하락하고 있으며, 미국의 정치력은 대만해협 문제에 거의 영향을 받지 않음을 분석하였다. (3) 반중 담론(미국), 주권 담론(중국), 군사동맹 의존(대만)은 모두 시간 지연형 변수(lagged variables)로서, 지속적이고 구조적인 영향을 미침을 분석하였다.

3. 학술적 기여

미·중·대만 세 국가를 합리적 전략 행위자로 설정하고, 외부 영향력(군사력, 외교력 등)과 내부 통치(경제 안정성, 사회 복지 등) 간의 자원 배분을 동시에 고려한 효용함수를 구성하며, 6개의 함수(F1~F6)를 통해 다자간 상호작용과 내적 정세를 연결하는 모델을 제시하고, 2024년 ‘금문도 사건’과 같은 실제 사건을 통해 미래 사건 타임라인(Future Event Timeline)을 시뮬레이션하는 구조를 적용하였다. 또한 발표자는 주요 담론을 ‘지연변수(lagged variables)’로 설정하여 장기적 영향력을 측정하는 접근도 매우 흥미롭다.

이 논문은 다음과 같은 면에서 학문적 기여를 할 수 있다.

(1) **정량모델 기반 국제관계 예측 틀 정립**: 국가 간 상호작용을 계량화하여 복합 변수 간 연동성을 정밀하게 분석하는 시도는 국제정치학과 데이터 기반 예측 연구의 융합적 접근으로 주목할 만하다. (2) **정치 담론의 시계열 분석 가능성 제시**: 반중, 주권, 군사동맹이라는 전략 담론이 ‘시간 지연 변수(lagged variables)’로서 기능한다는 설명은 담론 분석과 수리모델의 결합 가능성을 실증적으로 보여준다. (3) **정책적 실천성 판단 가능**: AI 기반 시뮬레이션 결과는 단순한 이론적 모형이 아니라, 정책 판단의 시계열적 근거 자료로도 활용 가능함을 보여준다.

4. 보완사항

(1) **모델의 실시간 적용성에 대한 검토 필요:** 논문은 시간축 기반 예측을 강조하고 있지만, 실제 국제정치 환경에서는 변수가 과잉 발생하며 동시다발적으로 변화하는 경향이 있다. 이에 따라 예측의 민감도 조정(sensitivity adjustment) 또는 불확실성 변수의 계량화 방안이 보완되어야 한다. (2) **군사 변수의 과소반영 가능성:** 중국 인민해방군의 합동훈련이나 '해협의 천둥'과 같은 군사 훈련이 정치적 변수에 영향을 미치는 점은 잘 지적되었지만, 군사위협이 국민 정서와 선거 결과에 미치는 영향은 보다 정밀한 사회심리적 모델링이 필요하다. (3) **국제사회의 다자 영향 고려 부족:** 모델은 기본적으로 3자 구조(미국, 중국, 대만)에 기반하고 있으나, 일본, EU, 아세안 등 제3자의 영향도 구조적으로 반영될 필요가 있다. 특히 일본의 대만 해협 정책 및 인도-태평양 전략도 양안관계에 실질적 제약 조건을 형성하고 있다.

5. 향후 연구 방향 제안

(1) **유럽·중동 정세의 통합적 변수화:** 미중 전략경쟁이 글로벌화 되면서, EU의 대중 견제 정책, 중동 에너지 지배권 경쟁, 한반도 상황 등도 대만해협 위기와 연결될 수 있기 때문에 이에 대한 추가 보완도 필요하다. (2) **AI 모델과 실제 정책 모델 간의 인터페이스 구축:** GPT-4나 시계열 예측AI 모델과 연동된 정책 실험 플랫폼(policy sandbox) 개발을 통해 시뮬레이션 결과의 현실 반영도를 높일 수 있음을 유의할 필요가 있다. (3) **민생 중심의 상호작용 정책 시나리오 제시:** 현재 양안은 비상호작용적 전략 수단에 의존하고 있어, 어업, 의료, 환경 등 민생 기반의 교류 채널을 정책 변수화하는 모델링이 필요하기도 하다.

6. 맺음말

종합적으로 볼 때,

(1) 본 논문은 양안관계의 구조적 분석과 예측 체계를 수리적으로 구성한 선구적 연구이며, AI와 게임이론의 융합을 통해 국제정치의 예측 가능성과 실천 가능성을 동시에 추

구한다는 점에서 높이 평가할 수 있다. (2) 또한 이 모델이 동아시아 안보뿐만 아니라 전 지구적 갈등 예측 플랫폼으로 진화하고 발전해 나가는데 크게 기여할 것이다. (3) 향후 후속 연구를 통해 이 모델이 더 다양한 지정학적 맥락에 적용되기를 기대하며, 발표자에게 다시 한번 깊은 감사의 말씀을 드립니다.

7. 본 논문에 대한 몇 가지 질문

모델의 탁월한 구조에도 불구하고, 토론자로서 몇 가지 질문을 제기합니다. 간단하게 대답해주시면 됩니다.

- (1) **합리적 행위자 가정의 한계 설정:** 모든 국가를 전략적 이성에 기반한 행위자로 설정하고 있지만, 대만 내부의 선거 동학, 중국의 민족주의 여론, 미국 내 정치 양극화와 같은 비합리적 변수는 어떻게 모델링할 수 있을까요?
- (2) **모델의 민감도와 충격 대응력 판단 수준:** 모델은 6개 주요 함수에 따라 작동하지만, 예기치 못한 외생적 충격(예: 지도자 교체, 사이버 충돌, 제3국 개입 등)에 대한 탄력성(sensitivity)은 어떻게 측정되고 있습니까?
- (3) **국내-국제 상호작용 통합의 필요성:** 현재는 국내 정치경제와 국제 전략을 별도로 모델링하고 있지만, 실제로는 국내 정당성과 국제 전략(예: 대만 문제를 둘러싼 중미의 대외 수사)이 서로 강화되는 피드백 루프를 형성하기도 하는데 이 부분을 더 정교하게 통합할 가능성은 없는지 궁금합니다.
- (4) **모델의 지역-글로벌 확장성 제고:** 중동이나 유럽 정세와 같은 글로벌 변수의 도입 제안은 흥미롭습니다만, 지역 집중성과 글로벌 포괄성 간의 균형은 어떻게 조절해야 할까요? 변수가 늘어날수록 예측 정확성이 저하되는 문제는 없는지요?

Using AI Technology to Construct an Early Warning Model for Taiwan Strait

Jonathan Luckhurst (Soka University)

with additional comments from **Prof. Hartmut Lenz** (Soka University)



I have discussed and shared the paper with my colleague and Co-Director of the Global Governance Center at Soka University, Prof. Hartmut Lenz. Prof. Lenz is an expert on game theory, so his guidance on some theoretical aspects of the paper should be useful for Dr. Chang.

First, my own comments on key issues in the paper: -

General Comments: -

1. The paper presents an ambitious and potentially valuable analytical approach to cross-Straits relations. This could help policymakers and experts to judge the potential for escalation and conflict and assess how to avoid such escalations.
2. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and large language models (LLMs), with additional nuance provided by the analysis of expert opinions, is useful but also prone to distortions from the effects of imperfect information and uncertainty.
3. Some of the variables and concepts used are problematical, or require some explanation and justification. 'International discourse power' is one such

term. Perhaps it indicates something similar to Joseph Nye's 'soft power,' but this would require explanation and justification, especially since Nye himself argued against the quantifiability of 'soft power.'

Specific Points:-

1. The list of "influencing factors of the size of state power" is incomplete and the inclusion of "steady state of population" as an indicator of stability seems questionable. Likewise, "Social Moral Value" requires clarification as a variable.
2. The claim that "Excessive investment in international expansion will inevitably limit domestic economic development" is unsubstantiated. Indeed, arguably the U.S. invested in this type of 'international expansion' in the 1940s and it was very beneficial for the U.S. economy and in its security consequences.
3. Using J. D. Vance's claim to be prioritizing domestic goals over international commitments is a problematical assumption, partly because his words cannot be taken as always accurate or truthful.
4. Dr. Chang states: "The widening wealth gap in the United States and the social problem of the middle class's loss will seriously affect its domestic political stability. The United States has turned domestic issues into a tariff war and a technology war between the United States and China, and there is currently no possibility of change in this tone." The former claim about the effects of the wealth gap might be borne out, but this gap has developed since the late-20th century and arguably U.S. domestic institutions have remained relatively stable. Rather than the wealth gap, it is perhaps the unpredictability of the Trump Administration that threatens American institutional stability in the present (something perhaps Trump would consider a good effect, as a critic of the status quo ante). On the latter claim that "there is currently no possibility of change in this tone," Trump's flip-flopping on tariffs might indicate this could change.

5. The references section at the end is incomplete.

Final Remarks: -

The analytical approach discussed in the paper has the potential to provide useful insights policymakers and experts on a range of foreign-policy issues. The theoretical framework requires further development, as noted by Prof. Lenz, but it seems to make sense to apply such theorizing to Taiwan–China and Taiwan–China–U.S. relations.

Comments from Prof. Lenz (Soka University):-

General Comments:

1. Conceptual Appeal: The ambition to fuse Bueno de Mesquita’s forecasting framework with LLM-derived data streams is elegant and fits to recent research. An operational early-warning dashboard for cross-Strait escalation could possibly provide value for diplomats and crisis-managers.
2. Reflexivity & Goodhart’s Law: The paper should grapple with the well-known problem of reflexive indicators: once actors recognise a metric is being monitored, they may alter behaviour to game it. Following Goodhart cautions, “When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.” World-affairs forecasts are especially vulnerable to this endogeneity.
3. Opaque Macro-Variables: Several aggregate inputs—e.g. “domestic stability” or “international discourse power”—are so broad that they can influence numerous pathways at once. Without precise definitions or weighting schemes, readers cannot assess whether these variables genuinely drive the outcomes the model seeks to predict.

4. Strategic Misrepresentation: The model appears to treat public narratives as sincere statements of actors' utilities, invoking a rational-actor assumption. Yet political language often masks true intentions; cheap talk and signalling dynamics matter (see Fearon 1994; Sartori 2002). For instance, J. D. Vance may justify tariffs as reshoring policy while the underlying aim is revenue to offset domestic tax cuts. The framework should account for such divergence between rhetoric and motivation.
5. Model Specification Gap: While the study leans heavily on Bonde's (2022) GPT-3–Metaculus approach, it does not present the detailed game-theoretic model it claims to employ; instead, a simplified diagram stands in for a formal model. Full equations, parameter definitions, and solution concepts are needed to evaluate the approach.
6. Retrodiction vs. Prediction: A core limitation inherited from Bonde (2022) remains unaddressed: the “forecast” questions were already resolved when GPT-3 was queried. Consequently, the exercise gauges the model's recall of facts embedded in its 2021 training corpus, not its capacity for forward-looking reasoning under uncertainty.

More detailed points:-

1. Risk: With fewer than 10 experts, results can swing wildly; groupthink or selection bias are an issue. Furthermore selection criteria of experts, and credentials are absent.
2. No estimation strategy is specified; equations appear conceptual only.
3. GPT-3 seems treated as an additional “expert”, but the paper does not discuss issues like prompt engineering or the model's well-known sensitivity to framing. There is no protocol transparency and therefore replication and robustness checking are impossible.
4. The paper never shows the actual numeric outputs from the Predictor-

LLM blend so at the moment it is rather a conceptual study than a complete paper.

Further Improvements:-

1. The methodological part has to be greatly improved. At the moment it is in many instances unclear which data is used and how it is interpreted.
2. General issues about prediction models for rare events have to be discussed, especially its specific pitfalls like class-imbalance and zero-inflated distributions need to be addressed.
3. The game between the three actors China, US and Taiwan needs to be specified so it is possible to assess decision model of the individual actors and therefore its prediction power.
4. The exact GPT prompts should be included in the paper.

Final Remarks:-

The paper is an interesting step into forecasting major world events with GPT-3. However, because it uses retrodictive data, minimal prompting strategies, and limited statistical analysis, it cannot tell us much about the true forecasting potential of large language models. A more rigorous, prospective, and statistically grounded study would be needed to answer the headline question. Furthermore, we should make the general point that any forecasting system that ignores how its own publicity feeds back into the world risks obsolescence or distortion.