Virtual Event | Redesigning Contingency Planning Mechanisms in Northeast Asia

TRANSCRIPT

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• Harry B. Harris Jr., Former Ambassador to Republic of Korea, Commander of United States Indo-Pacific Command
• Ken Jimbo, Professor, Keio University
• In-bum Chun, Lt General (Ret.), Republic of Korea Army
• H.R. McMaster, Japan Chair, Hudson Institute

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H. R. McMaster:

Hello, everyone. I'm H. R. McMaster. It's a real privilege to host this great session on behalf of the Hudson Institute to talk about a very serious threat, I think, to all of humanity, and that's whether or not the only communist hereditary dictatorship in the world gets the most destructive weapons on earth and can threaten us with those weapons. And of course, very important to dealing with that threat is, I think, two of the most important bilateral relationships, but then relationships across the three countries of the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

And we have three amazing panelists to give us their views on the relationship on the threats that we're facing, and what opportunities we have to work better together, to reduce those threats, and secure peace, and build a better future in Northeast Asia, and then for the rest of the world as well.

My old friend Admiral Harry Harris is here. Admiral Harris served as the U.S. Ambassador to South Korea from July 2018 until January 2021, an eventful few years. He served, beyond that 40 years in uniform, retiring on the 1st of June 2018. He's the first Asian-American to hold four-star rank in the U.S. Navy. He commanded U.S. Pacific Command, U.S. Pacific Fleet, the U.S. 6th Fleet, the Striking and Support Forces NATO, and Joint Task Force Guantanamo. He participated in numerous combat operations, including Desert Shield and Storm, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and Odyssey Dawn. He's flown over 4,400 hours, including over 400 hours in combat, and he's just a great guy, by the way, too, so great to see you, Harry.

He was born in Japan and reared in Tennessee and Florida. He graduated from Annapolis and holds master's degrees from Harvard and Georgetown. He did post-graduate work at Oxford as well, and completed the Seminar XXI Fellowship at MIT, and he is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Dr. Ken Jimbo, Jimbo-san, it's great to see you and to have you on this panel. He's a Professor at the Faculty of Policy Management at Keio University. He served as a Special Advisor to the Minister of Defense, Japan Ministry of Defense in 2020, and a Senior Advisor at the National Security Secretariat, kind of the National Security Council Staff on Japan. His main research fields are in International Security, Japan-U.S. Security Relations, Japanese Foreign and Defense Policy, Multilateral Security in the Asia-Pacific, and Regionalism in East Asia. He's been a policy advisor for various Japanese governmental commissions and research groups, including the National Security Secretariat, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. His policy writings are writings from which I've learned quite a bit. They've appeared in NBR, the RAND Corporation, Stimson Center, Pacific Forum CSIS, Japan Times, Nikkei, Asahi and Sankei Shimbun.

And then, we're very fortunate to have someone representing the country that is closest to the threat of North Korea, Lieutenant General In-bum Chun from the South Korean Military, a distinguished officer who served 38 years in the South Korean Army and retired in 2016. He was a visiting fellow at the Center for East Asia Policy Studies of the Brookings Institution, he was a visiting researcher at the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS, the University of Johns Hopkins, and a visiting fellow at the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs in Georgia Tech. His past military positions include Chief of the Election Support Branch, Civil Military Affairs/Strategic Operations Directorate of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, the Director of U.S. Affairs at the Korean Ministry of National Defense, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations at the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command, and Senior Member of the UNCMAC or Uncmac, the Commander of the ROK Special Forces Command, and Deputy Commander of the First ROK Army.
What you can see with all of these bios is that, there's a combination of tremendous practical experience, and then, also, academic research and policy research and writing about policy to influence the direction of our multilateral approach and each of our nations' approach to this particular problem set. The General is one of the most decorated officers in Iraq military history and his awards include three U.S. Legions of Merit, which is extraordinary, a U.S. Bronze Star Medal, and the USSOCOM medal. He serves now as the Senior Vice President of the AUSA Korea Chapter, and is on the Advisory Board for NBR, the National Bureau of Asian Research.

And so, without further delay, let's just get the panel started. We'll start with Admiral Harris. Each members of the panel are going to offer some opening and framing remarks, and then we'll go into a general discussion. Welcome, everyone. It's great to see all of you.

**Admiral Harry Harris:**

Yeah. Thanks, H. R., and let me give a shoutout to Hudson for putting together this important discussion. Now, let me just begin by saying that the U.S. has only five bilateral security treaties in the whole wide world, and these are all in the Indo-Pacific, that’s Australia, the Philippines, Japan, South Korea, and Thailand. The rest are multilateral, the Rio Pact and NATO, of course, come to mind, but there's only five bilateral security treaties that we have, and these are in East Asia.

Let me emphasize that our most important alliances, allies in North Asia are with South Korea and Japan, while Australia forms a bulwark to the South. And I've said this often, because it is true, since World War II, the network of U.S. alliances and partnerships has been at the core of a stable Indo-Pacific. Relationships matter and alliances matter, and I'm glad the Biden administration has embraced this concept.

No country can shape the future of their region in positive ways in isolation. Therefore, it's crucial, in my opinion, for the ROK, the Republic of Korea, for Japan, and for the United States to work together to enhance security cooperation and preserve the international rules-based order.

The reality is that, no important security or economic issue in the region can be addressed without South Korea's and Japan's active involvement. I believe that both governments have used the historical divisions between them for domestic politics. That said, I know Seoul better than Tokyo in this context, and let me speak to that.

I do believe that the current administration in South Korea has placed too much emphasis on threading the needle between its number one trading partner, that's the People's Republic of China or PRC, on the one hand, and its only security ally, that's us, the United States, on the other. I believe it also weighed improving relations with North Korea as more important than strengthening the security lines with the U.S., as manifested by its agreements with the PRC over THAAD, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system, insistence on the reduction of joint military exercises, which exist only to improve the readiness of the combined force to defend South Korea, and its willingness to discard the GSOMIA or General Security of Military Information Agreement, the bilateral agreement between Seoul and Tokyo. I also believe that Japan and South Korea are unable to work out their differences by themselves, that it will take a strong mediator, the U.S. or someone else, or a strong common existential threat, North Korea or the PRC for the latter example.
Now, without going into the bad history between Seoul and Tokyo, and it's important to underscore how serious this bad history is, let me talk briefly about the trilateral crisis of 2019 surrounding the GSOMIA agreement. I advocated strongly, while I was an ambassador for the two nations, to sign this... I'm sorry. I advocated strongly for the two nations to sign this agreement when I was the PACOM commander back in 2016, and I was pleased when they did. Unfortunately, in 2019, when Japan announced export restrictions and removed South Korea from its whitelist, citing security concerns, South Korea announced its intent to abrogate the GSOMIA. Only hard lobbying by the United States at all levels of government, including me in Seoul, called Seoul to reconsider, which they did.

Now, that said, I was encouraged by the outcome of just last February's trilateral foreign ministerial meeting in Hawaii, where the three leaders condemned the recent flurry of North Korean missile tests, and acknowledged the need to deter further to such activity. The South Korean Foreign Minister, Chung Eui-yong, said himself, that in going further than the trilateral statement, he said that ongoing disagreements between Seoul and Tokyo would not affect cooperation on North Korea. This is a strong and positive statement, in my opinion.

I'm optimistic about South Korea's new president-elect's outreach to Tokyo and vice versa. The stakes are too high to take any other course. I was pleased that President-elect Yoon's defense advisor, Kim Young-eun underscored the GSOMIA, was more than a bilateral intelligence share impact between South Korea and Japan. In his opinion, the GSOMIA bridges, Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo for security coordination. "We need to properly restore GSOMIA to firm up trilateral corporation," he said, and he's so right.

Importantly, President-elect Yoon has promised to establish a future-oriented South Korea-Japan cooperative relationship, and Japan's Kishida government is also sending positive signals to Yoon. Finally, I'll note that this is so important, and it's too early to be optimistic, but it seems to me that we're off to a good start in the future, and trilateral corporation will be an improvement over where we've been. Thank you.

H. R. McMaster:

Thank you so much, Admiral Harris, for those great framing comments. And I think you know that if we try to prioritize this relationship, when I was national security advisor and had three confidential meetings in San Francisco between Director Chung Eui-yong and Director Yachi Shotaro, and I was sad to see it starting to come apart. I think it's coming back together, and I think in large measure because of leaders in all countries you included, and Jimbo-san included, and General Chun have been really strong voices for keeping the family together.

With that, Jimbo-san, would you share your framing remarks with us about the relationship, the thread, and what we need to do about it?

Dr. Ken Jimbo:

Well, thank you, General McMaster. And I would also like to begin by thanking Hudson Institute for putting this all together. And it's such an honor for me to share the panel with Admiral Harris and General Chun, who served tremendously over past years on our trilateral relations have spent.
As mentioned, the timing for considering that trilateral security corporation couldn't be better than now as South Korea, having a new Yoon Suk-yeol administration. It was a win by narrow margin at the presidential election, but I think result was significant. And it is the first occasion in five years to amend the weakest link in our trilateral relationship, that is obviously the Japan-Korea leg of cooperation. And we should capitalize it as early as possible before having Korea local election in June, and also Japan's upper house election in July. So, I think that timing is quite crucial.

And from Tokyo's perspective, the security of South Korea is closely linked with the security of Japan. And from the alliance perspective, the U.S.-ROK Alliance and the Japan-U.S. Alliance share the operational theater to deter and respond to the crisis in Korean peninsula. It is always our important reminder that if Tokyo-Seoul relations remain strained, it will undermine our collective ability to deter aggression by North Korea and also by China.

It is never too late to work on the trilateral agenda by first, cross referencing each of our defense policy that is going to take shape in coming months, in both countries. And second, coordinating functions in two of our bilateral alliances with the United States, in line with the U.S. National Defense Strategy, and also the joint war fighting concept. And the third, materializing trilateral joint operations. So, these three dimensions should be pursued in parallel.

Let me offer some of these potentials from Tokyo’s perspective. As Japanese government plans to revise the national security strategy and additional two defense documents by the end of this year, what we expect is having a robust increase, at least, comparing with the past in our defense budget and also our capability, and that will involve self defense force introduction of the long range strike capability, and that might be the one of the significant decision in our post-war history.

Although, there remains a wide ranging views regarding what we are aiming at in terms of objectives, operational concept, and the scale of such capability, but given that Japan's indigenous strike package, that is a strike operation solely by SDF, may fall into two costly and less effective options. My hunch is that, only available option that Tokyo pursue, vis-a-vis North Korea, is Japan joining the joint strike operations side by side with the United States, and also, potentially, with ROK.

So, it is about integrating Japanese strike capability in the alliance framework. And with that, we can achieve better operational effectiveness, and also reducing the South Korean concerns. And most importantly, we might pursue the opportunity for get free of us in the loop of decision making, and also the sharing of the political responsibility when we decide to strike. So, I recall the USFK’s command philosophy is, fight tonight and win, but for us, we should pursue fight together and win in the trilateral context.

Let me also touch upon the connecting the bilateral alliance. To ensure the robust and seamless U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Korea join operation in the theater, both Japan and South Korea's defense corporation guideline needs to be further coordinated, and that might involve a deeper intelligence sharing from peace time through the contingency, so I really concur with that. Admiral Harris has been mentioning about the importance of the GSOMIA, and also we should pursue resuming of the missile defense cooperation. And further, we can aim for the establishing much more integrated missile defense architecture that obviously needs to be decided by the government of Korea. And also, having a trilateral regular defense dialogue, and TTX, and actual exercise to operationalize scenario-based contingency planning.
On the nuclear domain, as the North Korea's ICBM capability grows, the risk of so called decoupling that Pyongyang attempts to drive a wedge in the alliance should not be underestimated. The extended deterrence and assurance dynamics is based on the closed consultation among US and its allies. So, the rise of nuclear sharing option debate in Tokyo, and also the re-introduction of the tactical nuclear weapons in Korea exemplify such a potential fear of the alliance decoupling.

While I don't immediately support two of these options, but I think most effective way is to upgrade the extended deterrence dialogue that we have in the U.S.-Japan Alliance context, and also the extended deterrence strategy and consultation group in the U.S.-Korea Alliance, and that will desirably connect it, further coordinate it together. And those might, I think, increase the confidence over the U.S. nuclear extended deterrence in the years to come.

Finally, I will also like to cite our discussion that we have internally last week, that is the importance of the strategic messaging for both of our audiences in Japan and Korea. And it is important to identify that both Japan and South Korea is in the integrated theater, where Korea's defense capability will eventually save lives of the Japanese people. And Japanese capability is indispensable for supporting the U.S. operation in the Korean peninsula, thus serving the defense of South Korea. So, these are, I think, the important spirits that should be emphasized more vocally by our political leaders and nurture our public support towards the trilateral relations.

I'll stop here. Thank you very much.

H. R. McMaster:

Thank you, Jimbo-san. What a rich discussion already, hearing about the importance of the San Francisco system of alliances, the importance of intelligence sharing in GSOMIA, and now the importance of... We're talking about cross referencing capabilities and ensuring complimentary capabilities.

And it's only going to get better because now, we get to hear from General Chun, and hear his point of view on the threats that we're facing, but how we can work better together? And we went in reverse order, I think, general, because we should probably have started with the person who's closest to the danger, but we look forward to hearing your comments.

General In-bum Chun:

Thank you very much. Again, I would like to just voice my appreciation to Hudson, and to you for providing this opportunity. I also would like to appreciate the comments made by Admiral Harris and Dr. Jimbo-san.

I feel that the first step to trilateral cooperation is the acknowledgement that it is in the best interest of the United States, Japan, and Korea, that Korea and Japan have better relations. You would think that this is a given, but surprisingly, many people seem to forget this on both sides of the straights, so this is something that must be focused upon. Both Korean and Japanese political leaders must communicate this message to their population. I think that a added on message must be that to the Korean public. They must understand that Japan is vital to the security of Korea. And to the Japanese, they must realize that Korea is vital to their security.
For both of these countries, we need each other for our security. Although, there are historical territorial and even naming issues between Japan and Korea, it cannot take precedence over security. And yet, both Japan and Korea face internal political realities in each country, that is why we need the United States to come to our help and be the median. We need to separate security with historical territorial issues and focus on mutual interests, and learn from Israel's maturity and Germans' sincerity.

When the Republic of Korea was born, we were the underdog of the relationship. Even now, many Koreans feel that they are the victims of this relationship. This is just reality. So, I think that Japan and the United States must recognize and understand this fact and ease the hearts of the Koreans. Finally, I believe that the Koreans must learn how to overcome their emotions and be more practical.

I just want to emphasize that, although I agree that we need to ensure that we take advantage of the window of opportunity, that the tempo has to be measured because right now, we've been going south, now we want to turn north. And if we shift gears too quickly, people are going to get bumped around, so we need to have a gradual phase because right now, the Yoon administration, although they're starting, has about 50% approval rating, the lowest ever in Korean history.

So, we need to help the Yoon administration make its decisions. And how do we do that? By dialogue. The Yoon administration must understand how the Japanese feel and how the United States feels about its actions and vice versa. So, dialogue, at all levels at government, two-track, three-track, whatever it is about each other's position is critical in achieving this common goal, which is in the best interest of all our countries against the challenges that we face. Thank you.

H. R. McMaster:

Well, General Chun, thank you for those great remarks. And I should have said congratulations upfront to all of South Koreans for a very closely contested election, but also, an extremely successful exercise of democracy. And lately, it's become fashionable for us to self flagellate all the time, right? And for authoritarians that portray their system as superior, but I think that's not the case. I think totalitarianism is brittle and our democracies are strong, and I think South Korea's demonstrated that.

I was interested how both you and Jimbo-san said it, "Hey, it's really important to talk to the people, to make sure the people of South Korea and Japan understand how working together is in everybody's interest." And I want to ask all three panelists, maybe go in a reverse order.

And General Chun, I'm giving you the first crack at this. What are your perceptions? What should the people of South Korea's perception be about the nature of the threat from North Korea? And what are the scenarios that we ought to be most concerned about, as we develop our cooperation further, and we develop... As Jimbo-san said, these advocated force or these complimentary defense capabilities. But general, would you mind taking that first? And then, we'll just go in reverse order there.

General In-bum Chun:

Thank you. So, what I observed, there is a large part of the Korean population who do not believe that North Korea is a threat, either because North Korea is a poor country and is incapable, or because they are idealist who think that North Korean nuclear weapons would never be used against their own race, the Korean people. This is very idealistic, to put it mildly.
When you think like that, you don't see a threat. And therefore, it leads to other second and third order effects, where why should you invest in defense, or a better relations with Japan or even the United States, so to convince these people is very difficult. But in the middle, we have people who really don't know, who are more interested in their daily lives, what prices are, gas prices, or is it going to rain or not today? The usual. For these people, they have no hatred of Japan or no love of Japan, either. They just like Japanese food, and they like some parts of Japanese culture and all that. But the people in the middle are swayed by little instances, little one word here, one word there, very, very simple actions.

So, these are the people that we need to present with facts, so that they can understand how important Japan is for us, not only economically, not because of Japanese sushi, but how important Japan is for our security. And as we do that, we must emphasize the fact that you never know what the North Koreans or other neighbors in our region will do. Now, notice how I do not use the word China, because we, Koreans, are not as liberal in the use of China as an enemy or an adversary as we used to be, it's just the shift in the mood on the Korean peninsula.

Now, it's changing, but this is something that's very interesting. Again, I feel that the thing that we must do is to try to lay the facts about the threat from North Korea, as well as what China presents to us in our values and the way of our living, and then proceed to the importance of the alliance of the United States, which most Koreans understand. But at the same time, that alliance is based upon a strong relationship with Japan.

H. R. McMaster:

Thanks, General Chun. And Jimbo-san, I wonder how much what's happening in the assault on... The renewed assault, I guess, I should say on Ukraine is affecting people's calculations and connection with the threat from North Korea as well. It's difficult to try to think of these conflicts. It's easy, I guess, to think of these conflicts as unimaginable until they happen, right? And I think this is part of General Chun's point as well.

What is the perception of the threat in Japan? What is your perception of it? And what more needs to be done, maybe, to emphasize the danger associated with a North Korean regime with the most destructive weapons on earth?

Dr. Ken Jimbo:

Sure. I think that comparing with General Chun has just mentioned that, one of the significant difference of the threat perception that Tokyo and Seoul may have is that... I think that is the evaluation of the capability and willingness of the China, and I think epicenter of our security concerns are now shifting towards China in the past one or two decades, and we are more vocal in addressing that threats and need to upgrade preparedness to deal with that.

But at the same time, as General McMaster just mentioned, that the capability, especially on the missiles and also the nuclear weapons have evolved in the past few decades, that has been slow but it's opposing the grave danger to the Japanese security. And then, I think we have pointed out two, I think, specific threats that we are currently concerning. That is, one, is the potential of the escalation during the crisis. I think that North Korea has more weapons than before, and the potential of the using of the nuclear weapons during the contingency may grow. And especially, if they learn from the so-called, the
escalatory deterrence concept that the Russian has adopted, and if they calculated that the utility of emphasizing the nuclear threat might be the best methods to deter the aggression by the third party, they may, I think, emphasize the role of the nuclear weapons in the early phase of the conflict. That is number one.

And the second is, as I mentioned, the fear of decoupling as they developed the ICBM capability, that might grow the Tokyo's anxiety, whether United States security commitment, especially on the nuclear domain, we remain effective while that the North Korea will post to retaliate against the United States during the contingency. So, these are, I think, of two sets of the emerging concern that we need to be addressed in our political leaders.

H. R. McMaster:

Jimbo-san, thank you so much. And Admiral Harris, there's probably nobody better than to talk to us about the scenarios that concern you because for decades, you've worked on these scenarios trying to imagine what we might have to respond to, or better yet, really, what we hope to deter.

So, would you mind talking about what concerns you the most, and how that fits into General Chun's and Jimbo-san's comments about the threat?

Admiral Harry Harris:

Yeah, for sure. H. R, thanks for the question. I'm worried about a number of scenarios, I guess, or misperceptions, if you will. I worry that Kim Jong-un will withdraw the wrong lessons from the terrible end game in Afghanistan. I worry that he's going to draw the wrong lessons from Ukraine and only underscore even more to him, the need to maintain his nuclear weapons. I worry about the fact that Kim Jong-un could draw the wrong lessons from our divisions in Washington and our own political divide, that somehow that translates in his mind as weakness. And I think that our strong bipartisan approach, our reaction rather to Ukraine is probably going oppose that view. I worry about the result of the pandemic, and all that causing some catastrophic collapse of the North Korean government and some lashing out by Kim Jong-un. So, that's something we all ought to be sensitive to.

I worry about third party intervention. I'll name it directly, that's the People's Republic of China, the PRC, and Russia. I also worry about nuclear proliferation in other countries in the area. And by that, I mean, if Japan or South Korea decide that they need to arm themselves because they don't trust or they feel America's commitment to providing strategic deterrent is somehow in question. So, that's on us to reinforce our alliances with both Tokyo and Seoul.

And finally, I worry about a scenario where Kim Jong-un decides to attack Japan, and how that would play out in Washington, in Tokyo, and in Seoul. Or if not attack Japan, the land mass then attack a Japanese ship or an aircraft or something operating in the region, so I worry about that as well. So, I'll stop there.

H. R. McMaster:

Almost like Saddam attacking Israel in 1991 type scenario.
Admiral Harry Harris:

Right.

H. R. McMaster:

You know what? I think it is logical, I guess, for us to talk next about, really, how do we deter North Korea? I mean, we tried to test the thesis early in the Trump administration, that we could convince Kim Jong-un that he was safer without the weapons than he was with them. This was the thesis behind the campaign of maximum pressure that seems to dissipate it a bit. But in terms of deterrence, it's very important as we've all been talking about that every provocation should be seen by both the North Koreans and the Chinese as driving us closer together, right? To making us more and more inseparable across the bilateral relationships. But it really, across the three of us, what more can we do?

And General Chun, what more would you want to see, in terms of joint planning, defense planning, operational planning, development of defense capabilities? What do you think is most important to ensure that we can deter the Kim family regime, and then, ideally, I guess, develop a range of capabilities that would convince him that he's safer without the most destructive weapons on earth than he is with them?

General In-bum Chun:

I wish I had the answer, but I know what the problem is. The main problem in my view is that, North Korea, and even China, and most of our adversaries or enemies don't respect us. And the reason that they don't respect us is because they don't believe in the will of the United States to react forcefully in a contingency or a war scenario. Now, everybody knows that the United States has the greatest military in the world. Capability, there is no question, but the will is always in question, and I think that's what we're talking about here.

And in that process, North Korea does not think that the United States is serious about going to war. Now, during the Trump administration, I think for a moment, they were scared, and that prompted some of the actions that we saw. So, we know that North Korea, countries like China and Russia, they understand strength, so we need to remember that. As a Korean, I am constantly reminded that the United States will provide me with extended deterrence, and that any attack, nuclear attack or even chemical attack, would be considered as an attack against the United States as well.

But then, I hear that you are defunding the B83 bomb, which is the only weapon system that can capably destroy North Korean underground command bunkers. That does not make me feel comfortable. I would even go as far as to say, we Koreans would pay for the maintenance or development of the B83. So, I think the United States is sending us contrary messages. The presence of USFK is a token force that guarantees stability on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia, so I think that is more than not only a capability, but a symbol of the will of the United States.

But as you know, even that, is sometimes becomes a political issue. This is something that we must guard against. We must always remember to understand that not only are we sending a message to North Korea, but every action that we take is sending a message to the South Korean people.
I'm sorry to mention to Admiral Harris that, one of his nightmare scenarios, which is South Korea having its own indigenous weapons is something that 70% of the Korean people are looking into, so it's another reality that we must understand. And I, myself, ask my American friends, "How come we, South Koreans, are not allowed to reprocess the spent fuel from our nuclear reactors, when our neighbor, the Japanese are allowed to do this?" This is something, at least, a first step and a message that we need to consider, because we have a serious nuclear spent fuel issue, as well as a North Korea that is armed with nuclear weapons, and it seems they will never give it up. Thank you.

H. R. McMaster:

Well, you raised a really important issue, and that's really the breakdown potentially in the nonproliferation regime associated not only with doubts about extended deterrence, which had to be addressed directly, but also associated with the North Korea pursuing the most destructive weapons on earth or ran for that matter. So, this is going to be one of the greatest challenges of this century, I think.

And Jimbo-san, I'd like to ask you to comment on that, but also to... Just to go back to your ideas, you already mentioned integrated air defense, for example, integrated missile defense in the region, but what other areas do you see for collaboration? Obviously, with the U.S., in terms of our defense strategy, alignment and defense capabilities, but what space do you see politically to begin with the new government in South Korea, to start talking about integration of Japanese and South Korean defense capabilities?

Dr. Ken Jimbo:

Well, thank you very much. First on, the deterrence. I think it's always important reminder that there's a no one fits all deterrence in Northeast Asia, but those posture needs to be tailored and customized to the each of the threat that we face. And as for North Korea, what we see is that, they are evolving their capabilities and also diversifying their methods in their terminology, or pursuing the escalation control capability by themselves.

But I think that the remaining, I think, the sets of the nuclear power that the United States can for deploy, we can still pursue the jointness, and also that extended deterrence can be work in the progress, would sending the message to North Korea that there will be umbrella that should not be broken by the North Korean tactics, so that whenever B-52 or B-2 fly over to Northeast Asia, it is crucial that our self defense force in Korean Air Force can jointly operate together under the concept of the asset protection, so that the alliance agenda for the nuclear extended deterrence can work quite effectively vis-a-vis them.

And also, that the missile defense is crucially important. We would like to see that missile defense assets in Japan and South Korea can be further integrated as a integrated MD architecture, as we need to detect, track, and intercept the different sets of the missiles that the North Korean are now operating. We got to have multiple, I think, radar and the intelligence sharing in order to have a maximization of the interception ratio against those type of threat.

General McMaster also asked me about what could be the political feasible way to approach to the idea. I think the first thing is that, I wish to see that the meeting between the heads of governments as early as possible, because the bottom upper approach that we have may have its own limits, because the
remaining anxiety and distrust among the branch members in both in the military and also in the political side.

But once that leader will give the green lights to those operational divisions to go [inaudible 00:43:52], that will be, I think, a great, I think, leap forward for this. And as for the low hanging fruits, there are so many things that we have already have operationalized in the past, including our search and rescue, ISR operations, intelligence sharing. And those could be utilized as a usual practice between Japan and Korea, and then that would be upgraded into the high level operation that could be potentially pursued in the future.

**H. R. McMaster:**

You know what? Admiral Harris, I don't know of anybody who's engaged more with South Korean and Japanese defense leaders over time, and I think you and I are just about old enough to remember when South Korea first pursued a nuclear weapon in terms of doubts about extended deterrence.

So, I wonder if you might comment about both of these topics that have come up. The need for strengthening of extended deterrence, and in light of the threat of proliferation and all the dangers that provides, as well as what more you think can be accomplished in this political environment, in the areas of joint operational planning and defense planning and capabilities development, and so forth?

**Admiral Harry Harris:**

Yeah. Thanks, H. R. You and I have certainly have worked this issue for decades, probably not successfully, at least, I'll speak for myself in that regard. Let me back up just a little bit and just tell you what I think that Kim Jong-un wants, and I've felt this for a long time, and I don't see anything new on the horizon. I think he wants sanctions relief. He wants to keep his nux. He wants to split the alliance between South Korea and the United States. And he wants to dominate the peninsula, the Korean peninsula real large.

And last year, during the 8th Workers' Party Congress, he talked about strengthening their nuclear deterrent. The IEA has expressed formally concerns about the trajectory of North Korea's nuclear program. And last year, the U.S. Intelligence Community formally assessed that Kim Jong-un views nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent against foreign intervention. And now, we see him watching Ukraine and that issue very closely.

I think all of this adds up to sounding to me like he's not going to give them up anytime soon, and I think we need to continue to keep the pressure on North Korea. Now, while we hope for diplomacy to be successful, we have to recognize that hope alone is not a course of action. The quest for dialogue with the North must not be made at the expense of our ability to respond jointly or combined fashion with South Korea, like [inaudible 00:47:09] threats from the North. And this is where I think the current administration in South Korea took us down a wrong path.

So far, this year, North Korea has launched over a dozen missiles, including hypersonics and intercontinental ballistic missiles, and this is no path toward peace on the peninsula. So, dialogue and military readiness must go hand in hand, and idealism must be firmly rooted in my opinion, and realism.
Therefore, I think we can't relax sanctions or reduce joint military exercises just to get North Korea to come to the negotiating table. We've tried this for years. This is a proven path to failure. If exercises and sanctions are reduced as an outcome of negotiations, that's fine, and that's why you have negotiations, but don't give them away in advance just as an inducement to come to the negotiating table, that would be a fool's errand, in my opinion.

And finally, I'll just touch on this end-of-war declaration, that we've heard a lot about over the past several years. We should ask ourselves, I think, what will change the day after such a declaration is signed? It's not a peace treaty. The armistice will still be extent. Our treaty obligations to defend South Korea will still be extent. And North Korea is considerable chemical, biological, conventional, and now nuclear weapons capabilities will still be extent, so let's not be seduced by another piece of paper signed by Kim Jong-un.

To your question of proliferation and what to do about it, but I agree with Jimbo-san's say... I mean, we have to start this off with a top down approach. Any level less than the heads of government at negotiating, and I'm talking about now, negotiating in the trilateral context, Japan, South Korea, and United States. The people, even at the foreign ministerial level won't be empowered in, and so in Tokyo to move the needle forward in any demonstrable way, unless they get clear and unequivocal guidance from the presidents and the prime ministry.

And so, therefore, I agree completely that as soon as we can get ahead of government, heads of government meeting between President Biden and President-elect Yoon on the one hand, and President Biden and Prime Minister Kishida on the other, only then, as soon as possible, can we then move this thing forward. And then, we're talking about our president going to East Asia here in the next month or two. If that happens, I think it would be really important for President Biden to emphasize trilateral cooperation and each stop. And also, to encourage... I mean, this doesn't happen a lot because of schedules and stuff. Let's have a trilateral heads of government meeting.

There's been some talk of a Quad meeting, that would be really important. I'm a big fan of the Quad, but it would be a lost opportunity if we were to have a Quad meeting and not a trilateral meeting with Korea, Japan, and the United States on different issues. The Quad is not an alliance and it's not a defensive pact like NATO or AUKUS is, but our treaties with Japan and South Korea are defensive pacts, they are defensive treaties.

We've spent the last 45 minutes or so talking about how important trilateral cooperation is, and yet we're left wanting. And so, here's the opportunity. We have a new leadership team in South Korea, and we have a new team relatively in Japan and in the United States. I mean, here's the opportunity. It may present itself only once and the Biden administration, and here it is, it's coming upon us. We must take advantage of this, in my opinion.

**H. R. McMaster:**

Admiral Harris, I think we're all in agreement that we do need some top-down, to emphasis on this, to drive cooperation. I mean, I think you made a really important point that we have to at least be open to the possibility that Kim Jong-un wants the most destructive weapons on earth to achieve red color unification, right?
And I think we have to at least consider that a possibility, and then to recognize, because that's a possibility, we have to develop our military capabilities to respond to the worst case. So, what I'd like to ask all of you again, and we'll start with General Chun again, if we get that top-down, that top-down guidance to all of our governments and our militaries to find ways to work together even better, how would you like to see the command structures evolve? What would you like to see happening in terms of contingency planning or other initiatives that we might take on together?

And then, also, I'd like you just to add onto that, what are your final remarks? Because we're running out of time, but I don't want to lose the opportunity to hear from each of you one last time on your overall assessment or recommendations as well. So, General Chun, over to you.

General In-bum Chun:

Thank you. Just two days ago, the North Koreans fired a tactical missile, but Kim Jong-un himself was present. What does this imply to me? It implies that, that tactical missile probably had a miniaturize nuclear warhead. That's the worst case scenario. This is how close and dangerous we are right now. We all know, as military men, that there is no real effective way of countering this kind of threat, unless we have a very strong and credible deterrent. It also increases the dangers of nuclear war in this region. So, we're in a difficult quagmire.

I think the first thing that we need to do is really re-look at OPCON transition, and the command structure that we are looking, that we have been planning on so far. Is it really in the best interest of security on the Korean peninsula? It'll make some Koreans feel good, that they're in the lead on Korean peninsula military issues. But leading, as you know, has a lot of responsibility. And leading coalition warfare is not leading like it used to be, it's about collaboration, negotiation, and I don't think the Korean military, or the Korean politician, let alone the Korean people realize what this really means.

So, I think that's the first thing that we need to review and be honest about what the responsibilities and the actions will entail for that new command relationship. We have a big problem, and I think that's where we should start. In the interest of time, I'll just stop here. Thank you.

H. R. McMaster:

Thanks, General. Jimbo-san, over to you.

Dr. Ken Jimbo:

Thank you. And I do share with the Admiral Harris' concern about the potential wrong lessons that the Kim Jong-un have learned from the past events. And within those, I think what I most fear is the unilateral recognition of so-called the stability-instability paradox. They think that there are nuclear weapons capability may give North Korea a confidence to deter United States' involvement, military engagement in the Korean peninsula that will give the room for their level of provocation, even in a much more escalatory manner.

And knowing that we don't really have the capability to deal with, for example, those nonstrategic nuclear weapons provocation against South Korea and Japan, they may think that they may have the kind of tactical advantage in pursuing whatever the political mission they wish to pursue. Definitely, that do we need to upgrade our capability in every spectrum of the escalatory level that we need to think
about. And then, the trilateral cooperation in dealing with those kind of different levels of the threat needs to be addressed firmly by our trilateral leaders.

In terms of the command structures, I believe that we have to start by integrating further about the Japan-U.S. context of the combined headquarter functions. We are having alliance coordination mechanism in our defense cooperation guidelines since 2015, but I think we have to aim for much higher level of the integration, sharing of intelligence, sharing of the decision making, targeting, and also those operational, and then all the evaluation of the consequences. Those kind of the cycles need to be, I think, are mutually addressed by both joint chiefs of the United States and the self defense force.

And then, what we need to extend is to pursue the trilateral sets of the loop of decision making, so that we can be more responsible in the decision making process and also the consequences of the crisis that we face in the Korean peninsula. Let me stop here.

H. R. McMaster:

Thanks, Jimbo-san. Admiral Harris?

Admiral Harry Harris:

Yeah. Let me just say a couple of things, H. R, and thanks for the opportunity. With regard to how to set up command and control architectures, we have that in Korea already where the command forces command structure, where U.S. and South Korean forces operated under a common leadership structure and they trained to this, they've been doing this for decades, and we know how to fight together, but we don't have the same in Japan. We have U.S. forces, and we have Japan Self-Defense Forces, and if there's a need to fight to defend Japan, there's no overlay for a single command structure, so we're going to spend a lot of time on coordination as opposed to the leading and fighting. So, that's something that I think we need to think about.

Heads of governments are supposed to lead. So, permission granted to work hard and do that. And by this, I mean, there are these vexing issues that continue to be played up for domestic political gain, that are things like the Japanese naval ensign, the rising sun flag. It's things like Takeshima and Dokdo, the naming of those islands in that body of water, which is another vexing issue. Is it the Sea of Japan, is it the East sea, or is it something else? If we can't solve those problems, then we should defer them for later generations. This is a big champagne model. Defer to them to later generations to resolve, so that Japan and South Korea can work together for the common defense and the common good.

Now, that said, I'm not downplaying the importance of the forced labor issue and the comfort women issue. Those have to be resolved, I believe, as hard as it's going to take permission grant and work really hard to get those resolved. You can't put them off. I mean, I think they have to be addressed. And the two leaders or the two governments ought to be able to lead their own nations, in a way forward that those issues can be resolved.

I think the two countries have to absolutely reinvigorate their joint military exercise program, so that we can have joint naval exercises, joint ground exercises, and air exercises. We played this game for a long time when strategic American bombers would fly from the United States over to the Japan, South Korea area to demonstrate or to do that, and then the Japanese fighters would go up and work with that
bomber, and then they would stop midway between that body of water that separate Japan and South Korea, and South Korean fighters would go up and work.

Why can't they all three occupy the same general aerospace at the same time and work together? So, we have to get through that. And that means, somehow, acknowledging or whatever this rising sun flag that Japanese use as a naval ensign, if the Japanese ships are going to go on the port in South Korea. I think we have to reinvigorate the presence of U.S. strategic assets in South Korea, whether it's a aircraft carrier, which hasn't made a poor visit, I think since 2017 or so. B-52s, B-1s, the bomber, forced administrations and all of that. It's time to bring that back. It's time to demonstrate to Kim Jong-un the reality of what's extended deterrence and strategic deterrence means, and we haven't done that in far too long.

And finally, I think we ought to get created. I've been thinking lately about the Standing Naval Force in NATO, the NATO Standing Naval Force, SNF for NATO. Why can't we have a standing naval force with Korean, Japanese and American ships, probably P-1s on the Japan side, and P-8s on the U.S., and South Korean side maritime patrol aircraft that are commanded on a rotational basis between Japan and South Korea.

We don't even need a U.S. commander in that picture, but we all ought to have U.S. ships and assets in there. A Standing Naval Force East Asia, for example, or something like that. And with a fixed staff, a standing staff with men and women that are assigned to that staff, and then the leadership of that for two or three years at a time, and then the leader of the staff can rotate every year, every six months or whatever, and the leader ought to be a flag officer, and it ought to be somebody from South Korea for one rotation, and then immediately relieved by somebody from Japan for another rotation.

I mean, this is not hard work. We know how to do this, and we ought to do this as a demonstration, not only to each other that we can do this, but what a powerful signal that would be to the PRC on one hand, and North Korea on the other, that Japan and South Korea recognize the importance of getting beyond the issues that have held them apart and grappling with the security challenges that should be bringing them together. I'll stop there. Thanks.

H. R. McMaster:

Hey, well, thank you so much, Admiral Harris, Jimbo-san, General Chun. I'll tell you, what a wide ranging and beneficial discussion for me. I mean, I learned a lot, and then I think what we've done is we've left our listeners with a lot of concrete recommendations on the way ahead.

Hopefully, we'll get the ears of our policy makers as well. Thank you, on behalf of the Hudson Institute and the Japan chair, it was wonderful to host you. And thanks, especially for all of you've done over many, many years to strengthen our relationship and help defend the free world. Thank you.