

Comprehensive Analysis of Circumstances on the Korean Peninsula and Japan's Security Research Group

1. Research overview

This Research Group aims to examine and analyze (a) current circumstances on the Korean Peninsula (North and South Korea) and (b) short-, medium- and long-term prospects in light of these current circumstances, and to use its findings to present an “internal context for the region” that will be essential for considering Japan's security.

(a) Necessity for analyzing the status quo on the Korean Peninsula

North Korea has become a threat to Japan and the rest of Northeast Asia, and indeed to the entire international community, by taking such provocative actions as launching two missiles in April and December 2012 on the pretext of putting satellites into orbit and then conducting a third nuclear test in February 2013. Strong suspicions of North Korean involvement in the cyberattacks on an American film production company also left the strong impression that this threat had gone beyond provocation by conventional arms and nuclear proliferation into the realm of non-traditional security. Kim Jong-un has been consolidating his authoritarian regime, even using his position as First Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea to expel/purge his uncle and “guardian” Jang Sung-taek, Vice Chairman of the National Defense Commission of North Korea, from the Party in 2013, making the circumstances in North Korea more unpredictable than ever. At the same time, Park Geun-hye, who assumed office as South Korea's president in February 2013, has continued and expanded the previous administration's FTA policy and pursued diplomatic efforts aimed at maintaining the US-South Korea alliance while achieving rapprochement with China. Her policy of “confidence building” with North Korea has not made any progress, however, and North-South relations have fallen into a repeated-move stalemate. With the Takeshima issue and differences in historical perspectives dominating the ROK's relations with Japan, there has been no Japan-ROK summit meeting since she took office, and information sharing among Japan, the US, and South Korea on North Korea's nuclear weapon and missile programs has had to rely on the US as an intermediary, affecting cooperative relations in the realm of security. Given these circumstances, comprehensively analyzing the status quo on the geopolitically critical Korean Peninsula has become all the more necessary for Japan's security, and this will be the Research Group's primary purpose.

(b) Extraction of short-, medium- and long-term trends on the Korean Peninsula

The Research Group's second aim will be to join with specialists and experts in foreign policy and security to conduct sector-specific trend analyses of the Korean Peninsula, extract trends in regional circumstances from these analyses, and then utilize these to present a general approach that Japan should adopt. In addition to sector-specific analyses of circumstances and connected observations, the Research Group will take up discussion the circumstances likely to result from various contingencies on the Korean Peninsula in order to broaden the scope of policy considerations.

2. Research Group structure

<Group Leader>

Overall supervision:

OKONOGI Masao Professor Emeritus, Keio University

<Group Members (responsible for sector-specific trend analysis for North and South Korea)>

Domestic political circumstances in North Korea:

HIRAI Hisashi Visiting Editorialist, Kyodo News; Visiting Professor, Ritsumeikan University

North Korean economy (overall):

MIMURA Mitsuhiro Senior Research Fellow, Research Division, The Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia

North Korean economy (domestic):

IIMURA Tomoki Research Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs

North Korean foreign policy (US-North Korea and Japan-North Korea relations):

IZUMI Hajime Professor, Tokyo International University Foundation Institute for International Strategy(IIS)

North Korean foreign policy (China-North Korea relations):

HIRAIWA Shunji Professor, Kwansei Gakuin University

North Korean foreign policy (Russia's policy toward the Korean Peninsula):

HYODO Shinji Director, Regional Studies Department, National Institute for Defense Studies

North-South relations (security):

KURATA Hideya Professor, National Defense Academy; Adjunct Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs

Domestic political circumstances in South Korea:

OKUZONO Hideki Associate Professor, University of Shizuoka

South Korean foreign policy:

NISHINO Junya Professor, Keio University

South Korean defense policy:

MUROOKA Tetsuo Director, Security Studies Department, National Institute for Defense Studies

<Group Members (responsible for policy recommendations)>

Policy recommendations (foreign policy, especially US-Japan-ROK collaboration):

SAKATA Yasuyo Professor of International Relations, Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS)

Policy recommendations (security, military):

TOSAKI Hirohumi Senior Research Fellow, Center for the Promotion of Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, The Japan Institute of International Affairs

<Group Member/Secretary>

YAMAGAMI Shingo Director General (Acting), The Japan Institute of International Affairs

MAEKAWA Nobutaka Director of Research Coordination, The Japan Institute of International Affairs

IIMURA Tomoki Research Fellow, The Japan Institute of International Affairs