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**Building a New Coevolutionary Order in Asia**

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On July 3<sup>rd</sup>, Chinese President Xi Jinping met with President Park Geun-hye in Seoul as part of his two-day state visit to Korea. However, for the meeting between the two leaders to go beyond mere pomp and circumstance and for it to be recognized as a historic milestone, the two countries must pay greater attention to the following three global and regional challenges.

**Towards a New Post-Cold War  
South Korea-U.S.-China relationship:  
A Coevolutionary Perspective**

First, South Korea, China, and the U.S. need to recognize the importance of overcoming the Cold War order. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Asia was not exempt to the Cold War order that began at the end of the Second World War. Particularly in this area, from the Korean War until the early 1990s, standoff between great powers has become a defining feature of the Asian region. Following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, however, Asia entered into a transformative period that became defined by the relationship between an emerging great power and an established great power, reflected in the U.S.-China relationship today. Although it may be the case that the U.S. is facing relatively more strategic difficulties in Asia, it seeks to construct a new type of major power relations with a rapidly emerging China and seeks to avoid conflict and confrontation, something that we have been used to seeing in the past. At the same

time, the U.S. continues to emphasize that its rebalance to Asia is fundamentally different from a Cold War containment policy while China continues to point out how the new type of major power relations does not seek to develop its own hegemony. Yet, China and the U.S. are failing to build mutual trust and have not fully embraced each other as friends.

To remedy the situation, Seoul-Beijing-Washington relations need to follow a new evolutionary path as a way of strengthening mutual trust. Under the Cold War order, South Korea's relationship with China and the U.S. was inevitably in conflict with each other. However, in order for Asia to break out of this Cold War order, South Korea, China, and the U.S. need to make genuine efforts to overcome the dichotomy of South Korea-China and South Korea-U.S. relations and develop the two into a more complex and complementary structure.

In doing so, China needs to adopt a post-Cold War coevolutionary perspective that shows how a stronger South Korea-U.S. relationship would be necessary for strengthening its own relationship with South Korea. At the same time, the U.S. should also break out of its misconception that the new and evolving South Korea-China relationship would compromise their relationship with South Korea. As a result of this new order, South Korea would be able to overcome the conventional dichotomy of "pro-U.S." or "pro-China" thinking and seek to develop a more complex network by deepening the traditional South

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Korea-Japan-U.S. relationship and expanding the new South Korea-China relationship in tandem.

### **From Core Interests to Mutual Benefits: Coevolutionary Order among South Korea, China, and Japan**

Another task important to security in Asia requires South Korea and China to build a coevolutionary order that includes Japan. Currently, the prospect for a coevolutionary China-Japan relationship is rather dim. Despite the fact that China proclaims its regional foreign policy to be based on the concepts of “amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness,” it has been prone to engage in serious conflict over issues that fall within its core interests. China’s marred relationship with Japan in relation to disputed sovereignty claims over islands in the East China Sea is a case in point. On the other hand, Japan’s national security strategy is based on the idea of “proactive pacifism” and interprets China’s emergence as the latter’s bid for regional hegemony. As a result, Japan is responding to China from a 19<sup>th</sup> century international political perspective and argues that South Korea, a country that shares similar values of democracy and market capitalism, must join its balancing efforts against China’s hegemonic rise. But China also thinks that South Korea, a country that shares the same experience of suffering under Japanese imperialism in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, should join its stand against Japan’s militarization.

However, these perspectives need to be moved along further. East Asia back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century suffered immensely because it could not keep pace with the positive competition brought about by the modern interna-

tional order of the West. If the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asia fails to overcome negative conflicts of the modern international order, there will be yet another potential profound challenge awaiting the people throughout the region. In order to prevent this folly from happening again, South Korea and China should engage Japan, with the support of the U.S., so that the three Asian countries can establish a common vision toward the future.

Most importantly, countries need to know that external conflicts over core interests, usually in traditional political or economic arenas, should not be abused in each of their domestic political processes. Likewise, they need to nurture and maximize mutual benefits in non-traditional arenas such as the environment, culture, and knowledge. In the long-term, South Korea, Japan, and China should develop and share a complex identity based on the notion of open nationalism among its younger generations that would allow them to embrace others at the national, regional, and global levels.

### **South Korea-China Cooperation on North Korea: A Coevolutionary Effort towards a Non-Nuclear *byungjin* 2.0**

Lastly, South Korea and China should join together to support North Korea so it can become a fair actor in 21<sup>st</sup> century Asia. In its new year’s address, North Korea proclaimed to usher in the Golden Age of *songun*, or military first politics, based on the *byungjin* line, or the two-track strategic line of nuclear weapons and economic development. But as long as North Korea continues its nuclear weapons development, it will not be able to achieve the economic status that can bring itself to the forefront of today’s 21<sup>st</sup> century

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global economy. For North Korea to succeed and advance in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, South Korea, China as well as the United States and other neighboring countries must work together to set up a global economic aid system and begin work on building a peace system in the region. But more importantly, such efforts should be able to develop hand-in-hand with North Korea’s new strategic choice, the *byungjin* 2.0 line that simultaneously seeks non-nuclear security and economic development. As its first step, the South Korean and Chinese leaders should strongly oppose a fourth nuclear test by North Korea as it would only bring negative consequences to North Korea, the Korean peninsula, and East Asia as well as the world. Also, they should engage in efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks in order to resolve North Korean issues through discussions and pave the way for coevolution in this relationship.

If President Park Geun-hye and President Xi Jinping show sincerity in their attempts to resolve these three important challenges facing the Korean peninsula, China, and Asia from the new 21<sup>st</sup> century perspective, the visit would open a new forum for the construction of a new coevolutionary order on the Korean peninsula as well as in Asia. ■

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