

Trilateral Development Cooperation in North Korea: The Beginning of Regional Development Cooperation in Northeast Asia

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This paper seeks to elaborate upon the status and prospects of multilateral development cooperation in Northeast Asia through a comparative review of literature on the development cooperation of South Korea, China, and Japan. This paper categorizes the multilateral development cooperation systems of other regions such as the EU, AU, and ASEAN, in order to provide a model the three countries can follow. The paper also identifies barriers to cooperation in order to explain the current absence of cooperation among the three countries. Finally, the paper interviews the Secretary General of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS) in order to propose a potential solution. The paper concludes that the potential for cooperation exists, with the ASEAN 'influx' system being the most appropriate. Although discrepancies in ideology, practices, and public perception may hinder cooperation, the paper argues that such differences are not exclusive to Northeast Asia and exist more severely in other regions. Subsequently, the competition over soft power is identified as the reason for inaction and a work package based on the TCS's internal system, as well as recent changes in North Korea's geo-political stance, is proposed as a solution. The paper provides unique findings that build upon the current atmosphere of cooperation in Northeast Asia, while incorporating lessons from the cooperation systems of other regions. Moreover, it goes a step further by identifying the limitations exclusive to Northeast Asia and providing novel solutions.

Keywords: North Korea, South Korea, China, Japan, Trilateral Development Cooperation, Regional Development Cooperation, Northeast Asia, Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS)

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Research Background

Trilateral Cooperation

The regional partnerships shared and treasured by the Republic of Korea (ROK), China, and Japan can be considered catalysts for comprehensive regional development. Geopolitically, their dialogue on international issues like denuclearization and counter-terrorism contributes greatly toward regional peace and stability. Moreover, socio-economically, the three countries together possess the world's third largest regional economy as well as significantly higher levels of welfare and prosperity than many other parts of the globe. Finally, with respect to the environment, cooperation between the three in matters like combating micro-dust has played a crucial role in ensuring regional sustainability.⁴

Understanding the importance of such cooperation, the three countries have established an international organization known as the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat (TCS). Through this institution, the ROK, China, and Japan have facilitated various high-level summits and joint projects, furthering regional cooperation. These actions take place through the TCS department of political affairs, economic affairs, and socio-cultural affairs and management, which are equally funded by the three governments. However, rather than building sustainable cooperative systems necessary to bridge national, regional, and international divides, evaluations of the TCS and its various projects point toward only temporary improvements in the mutual trust and understanding among the three.⁵ For these reasons, assessments argue that the institutionalization of concrete action is imperative toward improving trilateral relations.⁶

These assessments are particularly true in the case of development cooperation – the process of a relatively developed country assisting the development of a relatively lesser-developed country. The fact that the TCS is one of the only regional organizations without such a system is regretful because the intertwining sectors and interests of the three converge on development cooperation. For example, the three

⁴ “Trilateral Statistics,” Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, accessed October 5, 2018, http://tcs-asia.org/?doc_id=statistics_chart.

⁵ Kimura Kan, “Northeast Asian Trilateral Cooperation in the Globalizing World: How to Re-establish the Mutual Importance,” Kobe University, January 31, 2014, 51, 2019, http://www.research.kobe-u.ac.jp/gasics-publication/jics/kimura_21-2&3.pdf.

⁶ Alexandra Sakaki and Gudrun Wacker, “China – Japan – South Korea: A Tense Ménage à Trois,” German Institute for International and Security Affairs, 2017, 6, https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/2017RP05_skk_wkr.pdf.

countries are currently cooperating in the areas of education, healthcare, governance, agriculture, and energy,⁷ the five main domains of development cooperation. Consequently, enhancing partnerships in development cooperation could contribute toward strengthening cooperation efforts in all relevant sectors, thereby leading to more comprehensive relations. For this reason, it is imperative that the three countries formulate a means to sustain regional development cooperation efforts.

Geo-Political Situation in Northeast Asia

In this regard, recent geopolitical changes in Northeast Asia must be taken into consideration, especially in the context of the evolving North Korea issue. In rhetoric and practice, Pyongyang has recently diverted from its traditionally 'closed' stance towards the international community to become more 'open'. North Korea's behavior is likely an attempt to alleviate the issues associated with its severe underdevelopment. Changes can be most prominently observed in North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's bid to engage in direct dialogue with his South Korean, Chinese, and American counterparts for the first time in his incumbency. Although North Korea still maintains its distance from Japan, geopolitical changes regarding North Korea have led to the first trilateral summit held by South Korea, Japan, and China in three years.

By gradually changing the three countries perceptions of North Korea, it has become evident that the recent changes in North Korea's political stance have initiated a paradigm shift in the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia. To be sure, the strategic and economic interests of these Northeast Asian countries related to North Korea serve as a major incentive for cooperation, and the opportunities for engagement are numerous. Therefore, it can be expected that the three countries will become increasingly interested in ameliorating their relationships with North Korea, thereby entering its markets, providing humanitarian assistance, and cooperating together to solve regional and international problems (the primary reasons for countries to engage in development cooperation).⁸ Accordingly, the three nations have recently affirmed their willingness to cooperate in the development sector, particularly in regards to North Korea. A 2018 joint declaration states

⁷ "Trilateral Statistics."

⁸ "국제개발협력의 개념과 목적," KOICA, last modified February 23, 2019, accessed March 1, 2019, http://www.oda.go.kr/opo/odin/mainInfoPage.do?P_SCRIN_ID=OPOA602010S01.

that the three will “explore the 3+1 modality to promote sustainable development in the region by sharing our development experiences and deepening practical cooperation in various areas.”⁹

Research Design

This paper seeks to provide a sustainable framework the three nations can follow toward achieving a higher level of regional development cooperation. To that end, the paper will begin by analyzing the national development cooperation of each trilateral partner in an attempt to identify mutual compatibility. Subsequently, the paper will conduct a comparative analysis on the different types of regional development in the world, demonstrating the different policy directions and options available to the three. Following this, we will review past literature to identify the barriers to cooperation, before finally providing a cooperation model that enables the three countries to overcome such barriers and achieve regional development cooperation.

Comparative Analysis: Development Cooperation in Northeast Asia

Trends of Each Country

The development finance capacities, combination of official development assistance (ODA), private sector flows, and the other official flows of the three countries have increased over the last five years. In regards to the ROK, its total development financing has increased from 1.7 billion USD in 2013 to 2.2 billion USD in 2017.¹⁰ Moreover, the ROK planned to further increase its gross development finance to upwards of 2.6 billion USD in 2018.¹¹ In the case of Japan, it has recently increased its development finance to 11.475 billion USD in 2017, following an abrupt decrease from 11.469 billion USD in 2013 to 9.2 billion USD in 2015.¹² In order advance its development efforts, the development agency of Japan announced that it would seek to increase its budget to a total of 16.7 billion USD in 2018. For its part, China has increased its development finance from 30.6 billion USD in 2010 to over

⁹ “Joint Declaration of the Seventh Japan-China-ROK Trilateral Summit,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, May 9, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/a_o/rp/page4e_000817.html.

¹⁰ “OECD Statistics,” Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://stats.oecd.org/>.

¹¹ “South Korea donor profile,” Donor Tracker, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://donortracker.org/country/south-korea>.

¹² “OECD Statistics.”

37.3 billion USD in 2014.¹³ Although recent statistics on China's development finance are not currently available, China did invest approximately 240 billion USD into its "Belt and Road" initiative in 2017, signifying a significant increase in development financing.¹⁴ Based on the increasing development budgets of each country, it can be deduced that the potential for cooperation is also increasing in accordance with the growing scale of their respective development cooperation programs.

Sectorial Analysis

Next, the trilateral partners have initiated development cooperation projects in a variety of sectors. In the ROK, the top three prioritized sectors are infrastructure, education, and health, which constituted 19.6%, 14.9% and 12.7% of all official development projects in 2016, respectively.¹⁵ For Japan, the largest share of its development projects are allocated toward infrastructure, energy, and water, which comprised 25.6%, 13%, and 9.5% of the total projects in 2016.¹⁶ Lastly, China focused primarily on education, environment, and infrastructure, which accounted for 31.4%, 17.8%, and 12.1% of its gross bilateral ODA in 2011.¹⁷ Based on these statistics, it can be affirmed that the three nations share a common interest, and thus a high potential for cooperation, in infrastructure.¹⁸

Regional Analysis

The development cooperation programs of the ROK, Japan, and China exhibit distinctive patterns in regard to regional preferences. For instance, the ROK has focused primarily on providing Asia and Africa with development assistance, with each region making up 53.8% and 23.7% of ROK's development projects from 2012 to 2016, respectively.¹⁹ This

¹³ "China's Global Development Footprint," AidData, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.aiddata.org/china-official-finance#first-panel>.

¹⁴ Lily Kuo and Niko Kommenda, "What is China's Belt and Road Initiative?" *The Guardian*, July 30, 2018, accessed February 1, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/ng-interactive/2018/jul/30/what-china-belt-road-initiative-silk-road-explainer>.

¹⁵ "South Korea donor profile."

¹⁶ "Japan donor profile," Donor Tracker, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://donortracker.org/country/japan>.

¹⁷ "Investments to End Poverty," Development Initiatives, September 2013, accessed December 25, 2018, http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Investments_to_End_Poverty_full_report.pdf.

¹⁸ Barbara Stallings, "Japan, Korea, and China: Patterns of ODA in East Asia," UNESCAP, 2013, accessed December 5, 2018,

https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session3_Stallings_Patterns_of_ODA_in_East_Asia.pdf.

¹⁹ "Results and Data: Asia," ODA Korea, accessed October 1, 2018,

is because the ROK prioritizes nearby countries that share common cultural characteristics.²⁰ In the case of Japan, the majority of its development projects are also focused on Asia and Africa, comprising 61.2% and 19.4% of its projects in 2016.²¹ This allocation can be attributed to its national interests in enhancing regional integration and stability within Asia, as well as diversifying its resource via Africa.²² For China, development assistance is concentrated on Africa and Asia, which made up 51.8% and 30.5% of its development projects in 2012.²³ China is known for prioritizing Africa for its historical and political connections, and Asia for its cultural similarity and geographic proximity.²⁴ Despite possessing different motivations for engaging in cooperation, the three nations share a high potential for cooperation in both Asia and Africa.

Conceptual Analysis: Regional Development Cooperation

International Overview

Regional development cooperation refers to a system in which member nations of a regional international organization cooperate in order to address the economic, social, and environmental needs of a developing country multilaterally. Such development cooperation does not necessarily take the form of ODA, but rather embodies public efforts to overcome development deficiencies in the region. In the context of this paper, the concept must be understood differently from other traditional forms of multilateral development cooperation that are managed by international organizations like the United Nations and World Bank, to the extent that such efforts reflect strategic, national, and regional interests rather than humanitarian values. Similarly, because states outside of a certain region are not incorporated in the deliberation

http://www.odakorea.go.kr/eng.result.RegionCountry_Asia.do.

²⁰ “한국 ODA의 이모저모: 지원실적,” ODA Korea, accessed October 1, 2018,

http://www.odakorea.go.kr/eng.result.RegionCountry_Overview.do.

²¹ “Priority Policy for Development Cooperation: FY2017,” International Cooperation Bureau, MOFA, April 2017, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000259285.pdf>.

²² “White Paper on Development Cooperation 2016: Japan’s International Cooperation,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017, 4, accessed January 7, 2019, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000282089.pdf>.

²³ 전익호, “중국의 대신중국 대외원조 현황과 전망,” 한국은행 조사국 국제경제부

신흥경제팀, 2015, 6, accessed December 8, 2018,

<http://csf.kiep.go.kr/file/download.do?fileId=4228>.

²⁴ Dennis D. Trinidad, “China and Japan’s Economic Cooperation with the Southeast Asian Region: The Foreign Aid of a Rising and a Mature Asian Power,” The Japan Institute of International Affairs, 2012, 5, accessed January 31, 2019,

https://www2.jiia.or.jp/pdf/fellow/Trinidad_Revised_Draft_JIIA_Study0326.pdf.

process, such partnerships also differ significantly from the multilateral development cooperation efforts supervised by regional development banks, such as the Asian and African Development Banks. Taking this into consideration, our paper will attempt to categorize the various forms of regional development cooperation in order to present policy directions the three countries may choose to take.

To begin with, the first form of regional development cooperation can be understood as one that “out-fluxes” capital from the region. In other words, this system is used to augment the development efforts of nations outside of the region, particularly those that of strategic significance to the region. Through this process, nations are able to exert soft power on other nations, thereby obtaining benefits like international political support as well as access to resources and markets. As this system requires the region to be fairly developed, it is primarily utilized within Europe.

To illustrate this point, the European Union (EU) employs a system known as “joint programming.” The system enables developmental partners of the EU to cooperate in analyzing and responding to the developmental needs of nations where they have strategic interests. Furthermore, the various aspects of a certain development project are divided amongst relevant stakeholders, thereby allocating responsibilities to the national entity possessing the most adequate ability to fulfill them.²⁵ By utilizing this system, the EU has been able to consolidate its current position as the world’s leading donor of ODA.

The second type of regional development cooperation is one that “influxes” capital within its own region. These systems operate in order to reduce disparity within the region while also enhancing regional integration. This occurs through “south-south cooperation,” a form of cooperation in which the relatively more developed “south” nations of a certain region attempts to assist the relatively lesser developed “south” nations of that region. Being the more common of the two types of cooperation systems, this “influx” model is used in regions like Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America. For example, the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) utilizes the Initiative for ASEAN Integration in order to alleviate the development gaps between tier one

²⁵ “Joint Programming.” International Cooperation and Development, last modified October 1, 2018, accessed December 4, 2018, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/eu-approach-aid-effectiveness/joint-programming_en.

powers, such as Singapore and Malaysia, and tier two powers, such as Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam.²⁶ Similarly, the African Union (AU) has recently established the African Union Development Agency in order to enable the western and southern regions of Africa to assist the sub-Saharan and eastern regions to achieve the development agenda known as Agenda 2063.²⁷ Likewise, the General Secretariat for Ibero-America has reported that Spain, Portugal, and Andorra are currently assisting its Ibero-American partners in overcoming economic struggles through its regional cooperation architecture.²⁸ All three institutions have been able to facilitate consistent regional growth throughout the past few years.²⁹

Northeast Asian Overview

However, unlike other regions, Northeast Asia does not yet have a practical framework for development cooperation. Rather, it currently only pursues dialogue through the annual Northeast Asia Development Cooperation Forum, which facilitates discourse among relevant stakeholders in the ROK, Japan, China, and Russia. Through this platform, the region has attempted to “identify potential areas for cooperation among Northeast Asian countries in development cooperation,” having achieved great progress over the past several years. In 2014, the forum was primarily focused on identifying a common area to initiate cooperative efforts.³⁰ Subsequently, the forums in 2015, 2016, and 2017 dealt with the joint-implementation of development cooperation efforts, as they incorporated matters such as joint financing, transparency, and knowledge sharing.³¹ Finally, in 2018, the forum dealt with cooperation in the field of multilateral evaluation of development

²⁶ “Initiative for ASEAN Integration and Narrowing the Development Gap,” ASEAN, accessed October 2, 2018, <http://asean.org/asean-economic-community/initiative-for-asean-integration-iai-and-narrowing-the-development-gap-ndg/overview-2>.

²⁷ “Africa: NEPAD’s transformation into the African Union Development Agency,” *AllAfrica*, July 9, 2018, accessed February 10, 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201807090975.html>.

²⁸ “Report on South-South Cooperation in Ibero-America 2009,” Secretaria General Ibero-Americana, accessed October 2, 2018, https://www.segib.org/wp-content/uploads/South-South_.pdf.

²⁹ Mario Obiols, “World’s GDP Growth by Region 2017,” *Global Finance*, November 2, 2017, accessed December 20, 2018, <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/economic-dataworlds-gdp-growth-by-region>.

³⁰ “Concept Note for North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum 2014,” United Nations ESCAP, 2014, 2, accessed October 2, 2018, <http://www.un-rok.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NEADCF-Concept-Note.pdf>.

³¹ “Concept Note for North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum 2017,” United Nations ESCAP, 2017, 7, accessed October 2, 2018, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/NEADCF2017_Concept_note_7June2017.pdf.

projects.³² This transition from dialogue on joint planning to joint implementation, and most recently to evaluation, is of noteworthy significance because the three primary phases of a development project have been discussed. Accordingly, because the institutional framework for cooperation has now been comprehensively deliberated, it can be inferred that the next step is devising the mechanism that enables the three nations to engage in regional multilateral cooperation efforts.

Literature Review: Barriers to Cooperation

Political Ideology

Several barriers hinder multilateral cooperation, however. Therefore, differences in political ideologies among the ROK, Japan, and China must be taken into consideration. The ROK and Japan are member states of the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which is a committee that complies with strict standards when implementing development projects.³³ Accordingly, the committee members call for democratic values and good governance mechanisms to be incorporated recipient countries in exchange for development assistance, viewing such standards to be a prerequisite to achieving genuine development.³⁴ Within this committee, the ROK in particular has adhered to these values in order to solidify its position as a newly affiliated member.³⁵ Similarly, being a traditional OECD-DAC member state, Japan also imposes strict adherence to these standards in its development projects.³⁶ However, as a non-democratic state, China does not enforce these democratic values – instead choosing to pursue principles such as non-interference.³⁷ As

³² “Concept Note and Programme for North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum 2018,” United Nations ESCAP, 2018, 1, accessed October 2, 2018, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/NEADCF2018_Concept%20note%20and%20programme%203-Sep-2018.pdf.

³³ Tatjana Chahoud, “Financing for Development Series: Southern Non-DAC Actors in Development Cooperation,” *German Development Institute Briefing Paper* 13, 2008, 3, accessed March 1, 2019, https://www.die-gdi.de/uploads/media/BP_13.2008.pdf.

³⁴ Trinidad, “China and Japan’s Economic Cooperation with the Southeast Asian Region: The Foreign Aid of a Rising and a Mature Asian Power.”

³⁵ Axel Marx and Jadir Soares, “South Korea’s Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea’s Development Cooperation Policy,” *International Development Policy / Revue internationale de politique de développement*, 4.2 (2013), accessed December 10, 2018, <https://journals.openedition.org/poldev/1535>.

³⁶ Jin Sato, Hiroaki Shiga, Takaaki Kobayashi, and Hisahiro Kondoh, “How do “Emerging” Donors Differ from “Traditional” Donors?” *JICA-RI Working Paper*, no. 2 (2010): 13, accessed December 9, 2018, http://www.ioc.u-tokyo.ac.jp/~satoj/images/research/JICA-RI_WP_No.2_2010.pdf.

³⁷ Dennis D. Trinidad. “The Foreign Aid Philosophy of a Rising Asian Power: A Southeast Asian View.” In *A Study of China’s Foreign Aid: An Asian Perspective*, edited by Y. Shimomura and H. Ohashi. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

different political values have resulted in differences in both long-term interests and the means to achieve them, it is evident that such discrepancies act as an obstacle to deeper trilateral cooperation.³⁸

Developmental Practices

As the three countries have different attitudes towards transparency, differences in developmental practices must also be taken into consideration. Since the ROK and Japan are members of the OECD-DAC, these two nations have an international obligation to comply with the DAC's periodic self-reporting system on development cooperation projects.³⁹ This is because transparency is deemed to be imperative in terms of improving accountability, reducing waste, and monitoring corruption.⁴⁰ For this reason, the ROK and Japan periodically disclose and publicize all official documents relevant to their development projects, especially regarding finance and project results.⁴¹ In contrast, China does not enforce such transparency practices, which has led to a lack of information on its development projects.⁴² Despite the fact that China has been slowly improving its transparency practices,⁴³ efforts are severely insufficient in meeting the DAC requirements because China does not take part in reporting specific country-level or financial-level information.⁴⁴ Reports show that China is reluctant to participate in the DAC data reporting, instead preferring to strengthen its own internal data

³⁸ Zhang Chun, "Possibility of China-Japan-South Korea Cooperation in the Context of South-South and Triangular Cooperation." Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, 2014, accessed January 15, 2019, http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2014-S3-3_Zhang.pdf.

³⁹ "What is the common standard for aid information?" Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, accessed October 1, 2018, https://www.oecd.org/dac/aid-architecture/Common%20Standard%20Communications%20Note_ENG.pdf.

⁴⁰ Sven Grimm, "Transparency of Chinese Aid: An analysis of the published information on Chinese external financial flows," International Aid Transparency Initiative, August 2011, accessed December 1, 2018, https://www.aidtransparency.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Transparency-of-Chinese-Aid_final.pdf.

⁴¹ "2018 Aid Transparency Index Guidelines," Publish What You Found, accessed December 2, 2018, <http://www.publishwhatyoufound.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/2018-Aid-Transparency-Index-Guidelines.pdf>.

⁴² Alex Dreher, Andreas Fuchs, Bradley Parks, Austin M. Strange, and Michael J. Tierney, "Aid, China, and Growth: Evidence from a New Global Development Finance Dataset," *AidData Working Paper* 46, (2017): 24, accessed December 5, 2018, http://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/WPS46_Aid_China_and_Growth.pdf.

⁴³ Institute of Development Studies, "China's Development Finance: Ambition, Impact and Transparency," *IDS Policy Briefing* 92, (2015): 2, accessed December 30, 2018, https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5996/P92_AGID353_ChinaDevFinance_Online.pdf;sequence=1.

⁴⁴ Anthea Mulakala and Nina Schuler, "The Changing Aid Landscape in East Asia: The Rise of Non-DAC Providers," The Asia Foundation, 2014, 18, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/ChangingAidLandscapeinEastAsia.pdf>.

system.⁴⁵ Hence, the credibility of its development assistance has been harmed, preventing further cooperation efforts.⁴⁶

Public Perception

Adverse public perceptions among the Northeast Asian countries also weaken the motivation to cooperate. Geopolitical issues in the region involve particularly sensitive controversies such as comfort women, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands dispute, and US deployment of THAAD on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁷ To illustrate this point, we can examine the mutual public perceptions of the three countries via polling data. The ROK and Japan share mutual negative public perceptions: only 26.8% of the ROK citizens viewed Japan favorably, while 27% of Japanese viewed the ROK favorably in 2017.⁴⁸ Similarly, in the case of China and Japan, only 11% of Japanese viewed Chinese favorably in 2016, while only 14% of Chinese viewed Japanese favorably.⁴⁹ Furthermore, citizens of the ROK and China share similar perceptions: only 34% of the ROK held favorable opinions of China,⁵⁰ while 55% of Chinese viewed ROK favorably in 2017.⁵¹

Positive public perception towards another nation plays a crucial role in promoting foreign policies like development cooperation. In order to satisfy public opinion and maintain political power, policymakers also pay close attention to their domestic audiences when making policy. Accordingly, due to the unfavorable bilateral relations and perceptions among the three countries, it is difficult to initiate new forms of trilateral cooperation. This conclusion is supported in an interview conducted with the TCS Secretariat General, Lee Jong-Hyun, who stated that mutual understanding is the most essential factor in initiating regional development cooperation. Therefore, as adverse public perceptions have limited the ability of the three nations to begin development cooperation

⁴⁵ Grimm, "Transparency of Chinese Aid: An analysis of the published information on Chinese external financial flows."

⁴⁶ Witney Schneidman, "A Trilateral Dialogue on the United States, Africa and China: Response Paper 2," Brookings, 2016, 6, accessed February 10, 2019, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/All-China-Aid-Papers-2.pdf>.

⁴⁷ Sakaki and Wacker, "China – Japan – South Korea: A Tense Ménage à Trois."

⁴⁸ The Genron NPO, "The 5th Japan-South Korea Joint Public Opinion Poll," The Genron NPO and East Asia Institute, 2017, accessed January 21, 2019, http://www.genron-npo.net/en/archives/170721_en.pdf.

⁴⁹ "Hostile Neighbors: China vs. Japan," Pew Research Center, September 13, 2016, accessed October 1, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2016/09/13/hostile-neighbors-china-vs-japan/>.

⁵⁰ "Global Indicators Database," Pew Research Center, accessed October 1, 2018, <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/24/survey/19/>.

⁵¹ Sakaki and Wacker, "China – Japan – South Korea: A Tense Ménage à Trois."

efforts, solutions should seek to ameliorate these perceptions.

Insights

It should first be understood that the aforementioned barriers are not exclusive to the Northeast Asian region. To begin with, the political ideologies in many of the regional organizations mentioned earlier differ as well. For example, the ten nations of the ASEAN have installed a variety of political regimes: monarchies, communist regimes, military regimes, semi-democratic states, as well as struggling democracies.⁵² Moreover, differences in developmental practices exist in other regions as well. For example, the Organization for Ibero-American states consists of both OECD-DAC members such as Spain, as well as emerging donors such as Brazil.⁵³ Finally, low levels of mutual public perception exist in other regions as well. Adverse bilateral relations among the AU nations are prevalent as territorial conflicts and civil wars are pervasive in the region.⁵⁴

As these limitations are not exclusive to the Northeast Asian region, it can be argued that there exist other limitations – either overlooked or unaddressed – by the existing literature. In order to identify this gap, an interview was conducted with the Secretary General of the TCS. In the interview, the Secretary General stressed that although the three nations need to explore new opportunities for cooperation, the TCS can only provide support after countries have expressed their national desire to cooperate in such areas. However, as previously mentioned, unfavorable discrepancies in political ideology, development perceptions, and public perceptions have only contributed to the deteriorating ability of the three countries to cooperate. For this reason, this paper seeks to elaborate upon a newly identified limitation preventing regional development cooperation.

This paper highlights the TCS Secretary General's opinion that the three nations' competition for influence over ASEAN and African countries is one cause for the unwillingness to cooperate trilaterally. This is exacerbated by the fact that all three countries utilize development

⁵² Endy Bayuni, "ASEAN is a neighbourhood, not yet community," *The Straits Times*, July 29, 2017, accessed November 29, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/opinion/at-50-asean-is-a-neighbourhood-not-yet-community>.

⁵³ "Ibero-American Organizations," Ibero-American General Secretariat, accessed October 1, 2018, <https://www.segib.org/en/ibero-american-organizations/>.

⁵⁴ Peter Dörrie, "The Wars Ravaging Africa in 2016," *The National Interest*, January 22, 2016, accessed October 31, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-wars-ravaging-africa-2016-14993>.

cooperation as a means of exerting their own soft power. As a result, the three nations are currently in a trilateral competition over benefits, such as trade and political support, within these regions. Because cooperation would entail the strengthening of a geopolitical rival's soft power, it appears that the three nations are hesitant to cooperate.

To reiterate, the TCS Secretary General's stance is that the three nations tend to initiate cooperation in order to address common challenges. This can be observed through the first ASEAN+3 meeting, which took place directly after the 1997 IMF Crisis, as well as the first China-Japan-ROK trilateral summit, which occurred directly after the 2008 Global Financial Crisis. The Secretary General stated that peace and prosperity are the driving forces for regional cooperation. Therefore, he proposed that North Korea play a potential role in expanding Northeast Asian cooperation.

Policy Recommendation: Trilateral Development Cooperation in North Korea

Conceptual Definition

Building upon the previous analysis, this paper advocates the implementation of a Trilateral Development Cooperation (TDC) model, a development cooperation model consisting of South Korea, Japan, and China cooperating for the purpose of implementing development projects within North Korea. This regional development cooperation model would operate on the institutional agreements made on regional development cooperation during the aforementioned Northeast Asian Development Cooperation Forum. Importantly, this would deter potential conflicts in differing practices during the implementation process. Moreover, this model would adopt the 'influx' system that promotes development within one's own region in order to reduce regional disparity and enhance regional integration. The process must be structured in a manner that allows South Korea, Japan and China to each focus on their respective sectors of expertise within a common area of interest. As identified earlier, the three nation's development activities are primarily engaged in the infrastructure sector. Therefore, each country can effectively utilize their comparative advantages in infrastructure. This paper argues that it is imperative to devise a mechanism which identifies the comparative advantages possessed by the three in any potential project.

Conceptual Necessity

Such mechanisms are necessary due to the volume of development required in North Korea; absolute poverty and basic human rights violations are ubiquitous to the country. This observation is supported by the OECD-DAC list of ODA recipients where North Korea is categorized as an ‘Other Low-Income Country.’ Consequently, as quantitative limitations exist due to the regime’s lack of transparency, qualitative enhancements must be taken into consideration. In this regard, TDC must take place in a manner that augments development effectiveness.

First, this can be acquired by implementing development projects in a manner that incorporates national comparative advantages. This is possible because all three nations specialize in the infrastructure sector of development cooperation, which means large amounts of experience has been accumulated in this sector. Consequently, each national entity can be assigned a role that best meets the required standards in human resources expertise and technical capacity. As a result, development donors can reduce unnecessary costs and increase developmental impact.⁵⁵

Moreover, aid fragmentation can be reduced by development effectiveness. Aid fragmentation refers to the situation in which development efforts mutually overlap, resulting in resources being used redundantly and thus allocated inefficiently. This practice is detrimental because fragmentation exacerbates the overall cost of developmental processes.⁵⁶ Thus, by harmoniously aligning their developmental efforts through clearly established communication channels and processes, the three nations can significantly reduce unnecessary costs.

These improvements in development cooperation will increase the total of potential development projects in North Korea, thereby increasing the number of opportunities for the three nations to enhance their ability to pursue strategic interests. For its part, South Korea hopes to bring an official end to the Korean War as well as eventually achieve the denuclearization of the peninsula. These desires and goals were stated in the Panmunjom and Pyongyang Declarations, which also affirmed the importance of expanding economic cooperation between

⁵⁵ “North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum,” United Nations in the Republic of Korea, October 2014, accessed October 31, 2018, <http://www.un-rok.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NEADCF-Concept-Note.pdf>.

⁵⁶ “Concept Note for North-East Asia Development Cooperation Forum 2017,” United Nations ESCAP, 2017, 10.

North and South Korea.⁵⁷ Furthermore, as North Korea's traditional ally, China has a strong incentive to establish economic ties with their neighbor. By expanding partnerships, China can pursue its goal of becoming further solidified as a regional hegemon. Finally, as Japan lags severely behind its geopolitical counterparts due to historical and territorial complications, Tokyo seeks to engage politically with Pyongyang. In this regard, engaging in economic cooperation is imperative to establishing the mutual trust required to initiate such comprehensive bilateral dialogue. Cooperation can only be achieved by initiating projects in North Korea, giving each country political incentive to opt into trilateral cooperation.

Implementation Process

In order to implement this mechanism in a practical and effective manner, existing platforms must be fully utilized. This argument is supported by the 'OECD-DAC's main findings and recommendations. In the report, recommendation (iv) requires South Korea to: 1. Deepen policy dialogue with partner governments, using existing co-ordination mechanisms where possible; and 2. Further strategic-level policy dialogue with other development co-operation providers, starting with a deeper engagement in existing donor co-ordination mechanisms.⁵⁸ Thus, this paper will seek to utilize a pragmatic mechanism that can complement the institutional mechanism that already exists in the UNESCAP Northeast Asia Development Cooperation Forum.

In this sense, the TCS, which is divided into political, economic, socio-cultural, and logistic departments⁵⁹ must be taken into consideration, as it represents the most institutionalized platform for cooperation that exists between the three nations. Institutionalization occurs as relevant departments delegate new responsibilities whenever trilateral cooperation takes place. For this reason, sub-units that are exclusively devoted to tasks related to the TDC must be established in the economic department of the TCS. These sub-units will become the starting point for implementing TDC policies on a project basis.

⁵⁷ "Pyongyang Declaration," *The Korea Times*, September 19, 2018, accessed October 5, 2018, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2018/09/103_255848.html.

⁵⁸ "OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews Korea 2018," OECD, accessed October 5, 2018, <https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Main-findings-recommendations-DAC-Korea-2018.pdf>.

⁵⁹ "Structure," Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, accessed October 5, 2018, http://en.tcs-asia.org/?doc_id=structure.

Consequently, when the developmental agencies of South Korea, Japan, and China identify a potential field of development cooperation that is worth cooperation on in North Korea, a concept note on the project will be drafted and sent to the relevant TDC sub-unit within the TCS. Afterwards, four official stages of policy process will be undertaken. First, the TCS will invite researchers and policy practitioners from all three nations to analyze the situation in-depth in order to determine why certain problems are occurring in North Korea. Next, with proper consultation, the TCS will ‘formulate the policy’ by devising the necessary project and the roles that each country can play within the project. Afterwards, the detailed project plan will be adopted as the final policy and ‘be implemented’ in North Korea in a multilateral manner by the development entities of each nation. Finally, researchers and policy practitioners from each country will be invited to evaluate the project based on various indicators in order to measure policy effectiveness. Through this process, they will analyze methods to ameliorate and address any potential issues that may exist.

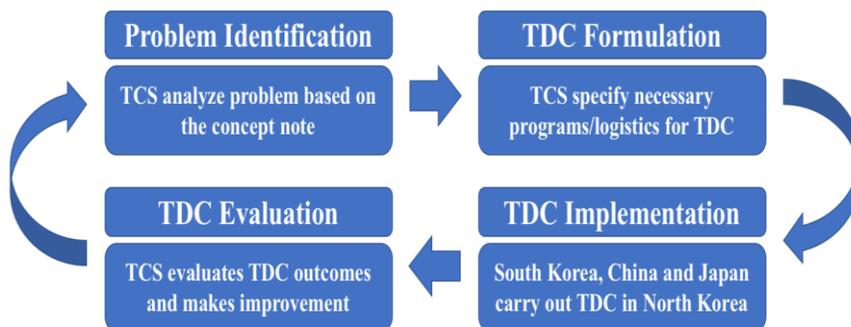


Figure 1. Problem Identification and the TDC Formulation, Evaluation, and Implementation

Expected Effectiveness

Improvements in various sectors can be expected with this mechanism. To begin with, TDC will lead to the betterment of political relations among Northeast Asian countries. Repetitive interaction through development cooperation projects will create issue linkage mechanisms within relevant sectors, as development cooperation embodies many other pre-existing sectors of cooperation within its processes. As cooperation processes become iterated, the technical costs of cooperation will incrementally decrease, thereby rendering cooperation more feasible

(and thus more likely) in other functional sectors. Together, the results will create ample opportunity and incentive for the three nations to further engage in cooperative efforts by creating an environment conducive to dialogue. This dialogue could potentially even contribute towards the resolution of political differences in a number of existing territorial and historical disputes shared by the three countries.

Additionally, TDC will result in enhanced economic prosperity within the region. This is because the TDC projects in North Korea, when combined with national economic reform, will likely lead to the advancement of North Korea's overall economy. Consequently, investment opportunities for other countries will rise as well. Further investment will be especially beneficial for the ROK, Japan and China, as the three nations will already have their resources strategically positioned in North Korea through TDC projects. When North Korea eventually takes bold economic reform, such as opening its market, mobilizing resources for financial investment in North Korea will become relatively easier for the three donor nations. This would enhance the potential for successful investments, as well as trade, further increasing the incentives for regional continued economic cooperation.

Finally, regional people-to-people connectivity is also expected to expand sharply. Development cooperation can also serve as a mechanism to improve public perception of North Korea towards the three nations. As a result, North Korea will become more receptive towards the various institutionalized platforms that exist between the ROK, Japan, and China. This could potentially lead to further interaction on a socio-cultural level, strengthening mutual understanding in the region. For example, development cooperation in the education sector will lead to an improved level of education in North Korea. This may ultimately lead to the initiation of student exchange programs between the donor nations and North Korea through relevant higher education institutions. Improved levels of people-to-people interaction and understanding can act as the vehicle needed for the citizens of Northeast Asia to engage in individual forms of cooperation with their counterparts.

Prospects

Northeast Asia is one of the only regions in the world without a pragmatic regional development cooperation mechanism. However, as observed in the second section of this paper, national trends as well as sectoral, regional and strategic analysis of the ROK, Japan, and China all

point towards a direction where multilateral cooperation is not only possible, but highly desirable. It is therefore imperative to identify a mechanism that can transcend the competitive nature of development cooperation in order to initiate regional development cooperation in Northeast Asia.

In this context, this paper argued that an influx-oriented form of TDC must be implemented in North Korea under the guidance of the TCS to enhance development effectiveness. By doing so, the institutionalized frameworks established to initiate development cooperation could cause spillover effects and create cooperation opportunities in other sectors as well. This assertion was supported by the Secretary General of the TCS, who stated that development cooperation has the potential to augment pre-existing, relevant forms of cooperation. Accordingly, these acts of cooperation will gradually reduce economic disparity within the region and enhance regional integration. As a result, Northeast Asia's capacity to implement regional development cooperation will heighten, eventually enabling it to make the transition from the influx to outflux-oriented development cooperation. Future research programs should explore the potential of out-flux projects in order to inform the creation of a systematic framework in which regional development cooperation, and the regional partnership that follows it, can expand exponentially.

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