We asked experts from the U.S. and South Korea to share their views on the future of trilateral cooperation among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea.

The Practical Importance of Cooperating to Counter North Korea

Mr. James Schoff, Senior Director, Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA

The Hiroshima G7 Summit seemed to indicate improved relations between the U.S. and Japan. It was also significant in that it demonstrated how President Yoon Suk Yeol’s choice to strengthen ties with Japan was correct, and how Japan-South Korea shuttle diplomacy is essential in strengthening the trilateral relationship with the United States.

Security cooperation among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea has practical importance. Sharing indications or early warning data on North Korean missile launches in real time would have significant tactical advantages. American, Japanese, and South Korean ammunition is interoperable, and can be used to support one another in case of shortages. The three countries could also supplement each other’s naval vessels. The military strength of Japan, the U.S., and South Korea could serve as a psychological deterrent, decreasing the likelihood that North Korea would make a move.

But challenges remain. Japan’s “counterstrike capabilities” and other operations are already difficult to coordinate between Japan and the U.S. and would be even more complicated among three countries. It would be very beneficial for the heads of the three governments to ensure smooth coordination among the SDF, the U.S. military, the South Korean military, and diplomats and other officials.

To maintain strong Japan-South Korea relations, it is important to focus on common strategic interests and enhance the three countries’ economic and security benefits. The Biden administration is actively trying to bring the three countries together to achieve this goal.

(Taishi Tajima, Washington Bureau)