



THE FUTURE OF AMERICA'S ALLIANCES IN NORTHEAST ASIA

EDITED BY MICHAEL H. ARMACOST AND DANIEL I. OKIMOTO

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and
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ASIA-PACIFIC RESEARCH CENTER

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Asia-Pacific Research Center
Stanford Institute for International Studies
Stanford University
Encina Hall
Stanford, CA 94305-6055
tel 650-723-9741
fax 650-723-6530
<http://APARC.stanford.edu>

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KOREA

SHAPING CHANGE AND CULTIVATING IDEAS IN THE US-ROK ALLIANCE

Victor D. Cha

After half a century, the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK or South Korea) stands as one of the most successful political-military relationships forged out of the Cold War era. What started as a pact of mutual convenience—formed between two parties who knew little about each other and had little in common except a common threat—has emerged as a prosperous and militarily robust relationship between two market democracies. The alliance, from its humble origins to today, represents a model of success.

For fifty years, neither the governments nor their constituents on both sides of the Pacific questioned the alliance's rationale, its substance, or its purpose. However, a chain of events over the past fourteen months has shaken the foundations of the alliance. Growing anti-Americanism among a younger generation in South Korea, disparate perceptions of the threat posed by North Korea, and military transformation initiatives in the United States have created more forces for change in the last year than arguably existed in the previous forty-nine years.

The Past

The significance of the US-ROK alliance may not have been completely appreciated when it was first concluded. It certainly was not conceptualized as a centerpiece of the US security framework for Asia. It was once described as a “bribe” to persuade then-South Korean president Syngman Rhee to agree to the 1953 armistice ending Korean war hostilities.¹ Indeed, prior to the Korean War, the peninsula was not considered within Dean Acheson's famous “defense perimeter” of US postwar interests in Asia. Even after the Truman administration committed to defend the South after the North's invasion in June 1950, Korea remained a remote, unknown, and alien place that was strategically important to defend (i.e., keep out of communist hands), but intrinsically meaningless to Americans. Since those inauspicious beginnings, US-ROK relations have run the gamut from the fall of South Korean governments (e.g., Rhee in 1960), to military coups (by Park in 1961 and Chun in 1979), troop withdrawal plans (Nixon in 1969 and Carter in 1977), trade friction, radical anti-Americanism (1980s), democratization crises (1987), and financial crises (1997).² The alliance held despite these events, drawing its strength and cohesion from a clear combined mission and a commonly perceived threat.

The Present

For the United States today, a range of indicators determines the success of a military alliance. It (1) deters aggression; (2) facilitates US power accretion and projection; (3) shares risks and costs among the parties; (4) enables common tactics and doctrine through joint training; (5) promotes a division of security roles; (6) serves US security objectives in the broader regional context; (7) facilitates cooperation in production and development of military equipment; (8) facilitates a reasonable quality of life and hospitable environment for US forces stationed abroad; (9) reflects shared political values; and (10) elicits political support among domestic constituencies.³ The alliance with Korea has generally met these expectations, despite a number of significant bumps in the road along the way.

No relationship is without its problems. For nearly fifty years since the formation of the alliance, the United States' role in inter-Korean relations was relatively uncontroversial. The animosity in Seoul-Pyongyang relations and the Cold War structure of regional security dictated one basic algorithm. The United States guaranteed successful deterrence against a North Korean attack on the South; moreover, US-ROK unity on a policy of diplomatic isolation and non-dialogue toward the North was indisputable. In recent years, this algorithm has been called into question. Despite arguments to the contrary by policy elites, the US role in inter-Korean relations is being contested, with the spectrum of views ranging from supporters of the Cold War template to dissenters who see the United States as a fundamental obstacle to improvement in inter-Korean relations. The controversial nature of the US role became increasingly evident in the aftermath of the June 2000 North-South Korea summit, when South Koreans perceived a relaxation in peninsular tensions. The Bush administration's designation of North Korea as part of an "axis of evil" did not help matters. Moreover, as the South Korean presidential elections of 2002 showed, for the general public, the distinction between the United States as security guarantor and ally against the North and as a spoiler of inter-Korean reconciliation has become at best muddled, and at worst destroyed.⁴

The Future

The events of the past two years provide a window on the emergence of a historically unique collection of forces around the peninsula that compel inevitable, if not imminent, changes to the alliance.

- **US strategy:** The US troop presence has been tailored successfully to deter North Korean aggression. However, because they are single-mindedly focused on the deterrence mission, these forces are currently positioned, trained, and equipped in a manner that does not fully contribute to overall American strategy in East Asia.

- **South Korean capabilities:** While US forces on the peninsula remain inflexibly tied to one mission, the ROK military has grown more robust and capable of bearing a larger defense burden, a far cry from the feeble force trained by the United States fifty years ago.
- **Demography and democracy:** As noted above, civil-military tensions over the US military footprint have grown immeasurably in the past year. This is not the radical anti-Americanism of the 1980s, but the showcasing of a younger, affluent, and educated generation of Koreans, bred on democracy, who see the United States less favorably than their elders.
- **Sunshine policy:** The Sunshine or engagement policy toward North Korea had the unintended consequence of worsening perceptions of US troops among the body politic. On the one hand, the policy's (exaggerated) success caused the public to be less welcoming to the US presence. On the other, the policy's failure led to the search for scapegoats, in which the US presence was a ready target.
- **Military transformation:** Larger trends in US security thinking also presage change. The Pentagon's 100,000 personnel benchmark in Asia is viewed by experts and the Department of Defense (DoD) as hindering transformational changes in regional military capabilities. The focus, they observe, should be on military capability and not a mere number. As the US military continues to transform itself into a more expeditionary (i.e., mobile) force increasingly equipped with precise weapons, fully networked command, information, and surveillance systems, and long-range striking ability, the US forces stationed in East Asia will of necessity be part of this transformation.

For years the belief predominated that the United States was too comfortably self-interested with its position on the peninsula to contemplate serious change, even in the face of anti-American demonstrations in Seoul at the end of 2002. Events have shown this belief to be an inaccurate. With no imperial aspirations, the United States would withdraw forces in the face of an unwelcoming host nation. The demonstrations at the end of 2002 might well have affected the timing of decisions about change to the alliance, but such change was in large part inevitable. The forces described above are inexorable, in this regard, compelling fundamental change to the alliance.

The US Presence

As the United States contemplates changes to its force presence on the Korean peninsula (USFK), it faces the difficult task of meeting four notional and sometimes contradictory criteria:

- 1) **The force must be flexible.** The presence must be large enough to be militarily significant, but with enough flexibility to handle a broad range of tasks.

2) **The force must be deployable.** Combined with other US capabilities in the region (especially those in Japan), the US presence in Korea must be able to react swiftly to regional developments and offer an integrated joint force with the full range of mobility, strike, maneuver, and sustainability that capitalizes on US technological advantages in long-range precision warfare;

3) **The force must be credible.** In spite of any transformations that the USFK might undergo, the resulting force must still represent and preserve USFK's traditional role as a credible manifestation of the American commitment to Korea's defense and security.

4) **The force must be unobtrusive.** As critical as it is for the USFK to be potent, deployable, and credible, a transformed USFK must also be perceived as unobtrusive. The new presence must be equivalent to the old as a symbol of the alliance, but possess a footprint that is not viewed as an obstacle to peace by the Korean people.

The first phase of the realignment of forces proposed by the Bush administration in mid-2003 makes useful steps toward achieving these criteria.

Table 1. US Rebalancing Elements for Korea (Phase 1)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base consolidation from 40 to 25, including 15 bases near the DMZ, to two major bases (Casey and Red Cloud) • 14,000 2nd Infantry Division troops away from DMZ-Seoul to south of Han river (Phase I—Units north of the Han River will consolidate into bases in the Dongducheon and Uijongbu areas while facilities are prepared south of the Han River) • Consolidate forces at major air hub in Osan-Pyeongtaek, and major naval hub at Chinhae-Pusan • Relocate 7,000 troops of 8th Army at Yongsan out of Seoul and further south by 2006

The notion of a tripwire deterrent that puts US soldiers in the direct path of any North Korean invasion has been an anachronism for a number of years. The idea that the United States requires the deaths of many young Americans in order to respond to a North Korean invasion has never been a sensible argument. It was presumably made to convince both North and South Koreans that keeping US troops proximate to the DMZ had contributed to deterrence when the US military was heavily engaged elsewhere in the world during the Cold War.⁵ But this “proof of commitment” is now redundant and unnecessary. An equally lethal and more effective military deterrent could be fielded on the peninsula without the heavy ground-troop presence and the large military footprint in the capital city. Moreover, a presence in Korea that could move off the peninsula to

other regional or global contingencies—akin to that in Japan—would enhance overall US contributions to regional stability.

Providing Assurances

The United States can do more to ensure that this rebalancing effort enhances rather than jeopardizes the alliance. Of the four criteria above, the weakest element may be credibility. Some argue that changes to the alliance appear ill-timed, given the heightened threat from North Korea. Accordingly, critics of the plan say that it has cast the United States as an abandoning ally that is less committed to the defense of South Korea. Other critics have gone further, arguing that the rebalancing plans cast the United States as an aggressive ally, in the sense that it is moving forces out of harm's way for a preemptive attack on North Korea.

The latter argument, in many ways, is a function of how much cost the United States is willing to bear in seeking nonproliferation objectives on the peninsula. The cost function, in turn, may be beyond US control, as it will ultimately be determined by the level of North Korean provocation. For example, if the Kim Jong-il regime carries through with threats made in April 2003 of transferring nuclear materials to other groups, then the cost of some punitive US military measure will pale in comparison with the imminent threat to homeland security posed by North Korea's facilitating such transfers to potential terrorists.

The former problem, the fear of US abandonment, however, is a potential negative externality, and one that Washington and Seoul can control. Dealing with this anxiety is important for two reasons. First, abandonment fears may reduce South Korean faith in the US commitment. Second, abandonment fears may embolden North Korea. Historically, neither outcome has had positive results. In the first case, the two occasions that the ROK contemplated its own secret nuclear weapons programs were also historically the times when US withdrawal plans created acute fears of abandonment among South Koreans.⁶ In the second case, the last time North Korea was emboldened by a perceived absence of US commitment, the June 1950 invasion was the result. Assurances are now needed that assuage South Korean worries while making certain North Korea appreciates how deterrence is being increased. It is important that Pyongyang understand that rebalancing plans are being made from a position of strength.

The United States must provide both material and strategic evidence of its unflagging commitment to the alliance. This is particularly critical as subsequent phases of US realignment that raise the American base and troop profile in other parts of the region (e.g., Southeast Asia) might otherwise be misinterpreted by Koreans. Regarding material evidence, assurances can be provided by upgrading US defense capabilities even as forces and bases are rebalanced and eventually reduced. The US should continue to commit funds for the upgrading of US defense capabilities on the peninsula. The package of

\$11 billion over four years announced at the second meeting of the Future of the US-ROK Alliance Initiative of over 150 enhancements to the combined defense, including antimissile systems and augmented Apache helicopters, is a useful step in this direction (see appendices). The US should maintain joint combined training with the ROK. This includes training north of Seoul and near the DMZ. The US should improve intelligence-sharing with the ROK, including supporting Korea's longer-term efforts to acquire an independent satellite intelligence capability.

An Alliance That Looks beyond North Korea

Perhaps the most important message that could be sent about the US commitment to the alliance is to locate any changes within a larger strategic vision that not only deters North Korea, but also looks beyond the North as the primary rationale for the US-ROK relationship. Fears of US abandonment or US preemption emerge because observers focus on changes to the alliance only as they relate to the North Korean threat. The rebalancing plans should be presented as an investment in the long-term future of the alliance, even after Korean unification. In other words, the consolidation of bases and the footprint are necessary steps not to abandon an ally, but to ensure a South Korean (or united Korean) public more welcoming of a continued US military presence on their peninsula. The pullback of forces and their eventual reduction should not be framed as preparing for an attack against the North, but as preempting American/congressional backlash against the dated concept of a tripwire deterrent (especially when the South Korean public is perceived as unappreciative of this deterrent). The transformation of US capabilities from a heavy ground-based presence to a more flexible and mobile air and naval one represents a longer-term investment in the Korean peninsula's continued utility for US strategy and power projection in East Asia. Therefore, rather than being ill-timed, these changes are forward-looking. Making radical decisions to improve the alliance is never easy, and many critics would argue that now is a poor time for such decisions. But realistically, there is never a good time to make changes on this scale.

Strategic Rationale after Unification

The "packaging" of revisions to the US-ROK alliance as necessary to preserve the alliance after unification still begs the question: What purpose does the alliance serve? One cannot overemphasize the importance of creating a clear, definable rationale for the alliance for the present moment. American alliance resiliency in Asia is deceptive. On the one hand, support today appears strong. However, American acceptance of alliances in Asia today contrasts with a strongly negative attitude only a few years earlier. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, trade frictions, economic nationalist arguments, and complaints about

burden-sharing led many to envision the end of these Cold War relics. These complaints have largely disappeared among the public, media, and Congress but for reasons that have little to do with resiliency. The Asian financial crisis, security threats from North Korea, suspicions about China, and high levels of host nation support have ended them. The American alliances currently at work in Asia do not inspire domestic opposition. What we do not know is how much proactive support actually exists.

The domestic politics of our Asian alliances is like the story of the dog that didn't bark. ... Asian alliance issues also have been on the back burner. The value of these alliances is rarely contested in our national politics. ... [T]here seems little reason to alter the status quo. So long as peace persists and host-nation support remains robust, the burdens of these alliances seem relatively light. Yet therein lies the rub. US public support for alliances with Japan and Korea may be deceptive—"a mile wide and an inch deep."⁷

Even if domestic support exists in principle, the type of commitment that might be politically acceptable to a US audience in a military contingency is not the type that most contingencies would require. For example, air power would be the most antiseptic manner in which the US could fulfill alliance commitments but contingencies in Korea, and perhaps Taiwan, would require ground forces.⁸ The latter is a path the American public is unlikely to want to take again. In sum, the US-ROK alliance does not enjoy a resiliency equivalent to US alliances in Europe. While NATO could muddle through for an entire decade in search of a mission, the US-ROK alliance cannot afford to allow events to overtake a discussion of the future.

The most often-cited rationale for looking to the future is "regional stability," but this raises more questions than it answers.⁹ Many have defined regional stability with regard to Korea as a code word for contingencies implying the quasi-containment of China—a politically unacceptable mission for the alliance from the Korean perspective. Others have defined regional missions for the US-ROK alliance more broadly to include nontraditional security activities like humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, and counterterrorism operations.¹⁰ In one of the more useful characterizations of the term, Jim Kelly and Mike McDevitt define regional missions in military terms as preventing power projection by others beyond the East Asian littoral.¹¹

Yet these definitions still fail to get at the goal of the US-ROK alliance, beyond peninsular security. If regional stability includes peacekeeping and anti-power projection, then for what larger purpose are these missions pursued vis-à-vis the US-ROK alliance? How can the United States and South Korea define a rationale for their alliance that allows it to be more than ad hoc, reactive, and derivative of North Korea?

Answering such questions must begin with a frank assessment of the geostrategic landscape in Northeast Asia after Korean unification. This landscape

is *unfavorable* to American interests. For reasons of geography, history, culture, power, economics, and demography, one could imagine the following post-unification trends in Asia:

- 1) the domestic politics of Korean unification push the United States military off the peninsula;
- 2) for reasons of geography and history, the new Korean entity seeks a continental accommodation with China;
- 3) Korea joins China in heightened tensions with Japan, as a combination of resurgent Korean nationalism and new military capabilities incite security dilemmas with its historical enemy;
- 4) a demographically old Japan is isolated from the rest of Asia but simultaneously uncomfortable as the last remaining US “outpost” in the region.

A variety of other nonlinear dynamics might flow from Korean unification, but given current and past geostrategic trends, this is only a best estimate of how events might play out.¹² What is striking about this picture is how heavily it weighs against US interests. If the United States has the will to remain an Asia-Pacific power after Korean unification, then it will not allow itself to be pushed out. Moreover, this picture is not in the region’s interests because of its conflicting consequences. For example, an older, weaker, and isolated Japan that does not want to be labeled the last American “military colony” in Asia might finally choose greater self-reliance in security. This would set off balancing reactions in China and Korea such that the net assessment for the region’s security could be substantially worse with higher levels of tension and armaments, and almost certain nuclear proliferation.

American strategic planners must not merely seek to avoid future war in Northeast Asia, but must also contemplate avoiding this kind of future peace. Geostrategic currents in Asia following unification therefore create a “preventive defense” rationale for the alliances in Asia—that is, prudent and premeditated actions that need to be taken by the United States and its allies not to deal with an imminent threat, but to prevent the emergence of potentially dangerous situations.¹³ The imperative for the United States is to shape a direction away from these unfavorable geostrategic currents in Asia that could follow unification of the peninsula. A robust US-ROK relationship (tied tightly to Japan as well) would provide a strategic bulwark to ensure that post-unification events would neither expel the United States, isolate Japan, nor heighten tensions between Korea and its neighbors. In this regard, the alliance serves a nonproliferation function while also dampening security dilemmas and preventing the rise of regional hegemons.

Common Values

As critical as the alliance's post-unification vision is the infusion of the US-ROK and US-Japan alliances with meaning and identity beyond their Cold War roots. History shows that the most resilient alliances are those that share a common "ideational" grounding that runs deeper than the initial adversarial threats that brought the alliance into existence.¹⁴ The Anglo-Japanese alliance, for example, never lasted beyond the threats that gave it coherence. Few would argue that the post-9/11 relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more than a utilitarian relationship. On the other hand, the US-Australia relationship stands for more than defending against a common threat. It is the embodiment of the two countries' new-world heritage, common language, and a history of fighting together in wars.

A key determinant of alliance resiliency is the degree to which shared identities underpin interaction. By identity, we mean the degree to which alliances are grounded in commonly held norms, values, beliefs, and conceptions of how security is best achieved.

[W]hen an alliance either reflects or creates a sense of common identity ... [t]hen the entire notion of an individual national interest becomes less applicable. If elites and/or publics begin to view their own society as inextricably part of a larger political community, then members will find it difficult to conceive of themselves as separate and will see their interests as identical even if the external environment changes dramatically.¹⁵

Alliance identity can exist a priori based on similarities in regime type, religion, or ethnicity (e.g., the Anglo-American alliance). Common identities can also be constructed over time between unlike regimes through a wide range of economic and social interactions, development of elite networks, and high levels of communication.¹⁶ In the latter case, alliances become institutions of socialization where constituencies in both countries develop common standards and expectations of conduct. Most important, the type of commitment that emerges from shared alliance identities is fundamentally different from those that lack this component. The decision to help the ally in the latter case is based on a cold calculation of the overlap in interests. In the former case, the decision may have as much to do with promoting certain commonly shared values (even if there is comparatively less overlap in interests). At the extreme end, shared identities may lead to an emotive attachment and loyalty to an ally irrespective of the issue at hand.¹⁷

For the US-Japan-ROK relationships, this means deliberate efforts at maturing the alliance beyond its narrow "anti-DPRK" rationale to encompass a broader definition.¹⁸ Currently, this process has reached the level of "maintaining regional stability" as the alliance's future purpose, but there is room for further growth. Beyond regional stability, there are a host of

extra-regional issues that define the relationship (i.e., liberal democracy, open economic markets, nonproliferation, universal human rights, anti-terrorism, peacekeeping, open society, free press, rule of law).¹⁹ Moreover, the US-Japan-ROK alliances represent the “success stories” of these values in a region that does not yet readily accept them.

An Alliance That Stands for Something, Not against Something

Ideally, the US-ROK and US-Japan alliances should stand *for* something, rather than simply against a threat. The pressing task for the US-ROK alliance resiliency is therefore not only to deal with pragmatic, material alliance management issues, but also to lay the ideational foundation for the alliance in the post-Cold War era. As noted above, shared identities can be constructed even where they do not exist a priori. Deliberate efforts by US officials to frame the relationship in normative terms that resonate with the average—not specialist—American are helpful. In this vein, statements like those by former deputy assistant secretary of defense Kurt Campbell are a step in the right direction:

...the security alliance between the US and the Republic of Korea is more than treaty commitment: it is a close, mutually beneficial partnership built on a shared stake in democracy and free markets. Our alliance is an essential element of the strategy for achieving our long-standing security goal: a nonnuclear, democratic, and peacefully reunified Korean peninsula.²⁰

Former ambassador Bosworth’s statements offer similar attempts at reconstructing the alliance in ideational terms:

The third element of our relationship is philosophical: our shared commitment to democratic values and democratic practice. As Korean democracy has developed strongly in recent years, democracy has become in a real sense the cement of the overall relationship.²¹

Before a wider foreign policy audience, such statements help to construct an image of Korea as the successful embodiment of market democratic ideals in a region where skepticism of such ideals still remains. The May 14, 2003, joint statement between Presidents Bush and Roh—entitled “Common Values, Principles, and Strategy”—made useful strides in this direction. Specifically, the statement reversed the order in which we have grown accustomed to thinking about the alliance—all strategy and few values—and focused the key message not on North Korea, but on the alliance’s comprehensiveness: “Noting that 2003 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, the two leaders pledged to work together to promote the values of democracy, human rights and market economy shared by the people of both nations and to build a comprehensive and dynamic alliance relationship for continued peace and

prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.”²² This common ideational grounding not only gives the relationship permanency, but also provides the glue that prevents these alignments from being washed away by the region’s geostrategic currents after unification. In this regard, Washington and Seoul at the highest levels need to forge a common agenda of issues and actions, which will become the centerpiece of the alliance’s broadening significance beyond the peninsula. This document should state the global issues on which the two leaders and their countries will unite, as well as the material efforts, individual or joint, they have already made to resolve these issues. The United States should also consciously promote Korea’s political evolution as an example to newly democratizing countries in international institutions and other forums, such as the “Club of Madrid.” Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo also should forge a new institutional forum for democracy in Asia that includes government officials, experts, and scholars who focus on issues of democratic development, transitional justice, and equity and regulation within open societies.

China

One of the alliance’s biggest challenges is conjoining its continued resiliency with growing Chinese influence in the region. China will look on a consolidation of the US-ROK alliance after unification as a form of containment. South Koreans also hold a historical affinity for China that discounts the more recent half-century of Cold War hostilities as “aberrant” (the term used in their 1992 normalization), and celebrates the common Confucian heritage and traditional tributary relationship. China has been catching up to the United States as South Korea’s primary trading partner. In 1995 Korea’s total trade with the United States was \$54.5 billion, versus that with China at a paltry \$16.5 billion. By 2002, total trade with the United States was \$55.8 billion; trade with China stood at \$41.1 billion. And in 2003, China emerged as South Korea’s largest export market, surpassing the United States, which has been the main market for Korean products since 1965.²³ While South Korean exports to the United States grew at 2.7 percent, that with China grew by 48 percent in 2003. Semiconductor exports to China grew at 120 percent compared to 2002. Computer products and mobile telecommunications equipment grew at 85 percent.

Table 2. ROK Trade with the United States and China

Year	ROK imports from US	ROK exports to US	Total value of bilateral trade
1995	\$30,403,515,184	24,131,473,504	54,534,988,688
1996	33,305,378,793	21,670,464,688	54,975,843,481
1997	30,122,178,215	21,625,431,768	51,747,609,983
1998	20,403,276,346	22,805,106,108	43,208,382,454
1999	24,922,344,101	29,474,652,517	54,396,996,618
2000	29,241,628,233	37,610,630,128	66,852,258,361
2001	22,376,225,624	31,210,795,079	53,587,020,703
2002	23,008,634,858	32,780,188,163	55,788,823,021
Five-year totals (1998–2002)	119,952,109,162	153,881,371,995	273,833,481,157

Year	ROK imports from China	ROK exports to China	Total value of bilateral trade
1995	\$7,401,196,380	9,143,587,605	16,544,783,985
1996	8,538,568,223	11,377,068,035	19,915,636,258
1997	10,116,860,682	13,572,463,052	23,689,323,734
1998	6,483,957,641	11,943,990,428	18,427,948,069
1999	8,866,666,765	13,684,599,051	22,551,265,816
2000	12,798,727,524	18,454,539,579	31,253,267,103
2001	13,302,675,219	18,190,189,650	31,492,864,869
2002	17,399,778,956	23,753,585,754	41,153,364,710
Five-year totals (1998–2002)	58,851,806,105	86,026,904,462	144,878,710,567

Source: Korea International Trade Association (KITA), <http://www.kita.org>
All values are in US\$.

Polls show that South Koreans overwhelmingly view China as their most important economic partner over the next decade (see Table 3). This combination of economics and geographic propinquity could pull the Korean peninsula strategically away from the United States and toward its Asian mainland neighbor. South Korea (unlike Japan) has never allowed the Dalai Lama a visa. Moreover, South Korea was the only US ally in the region uninterested in joining US missile defense architectures.

Despite the ROK-China affinity, I believe that China will not fundamentally obstruct the growth of the US-ROK alliance after unification. First, the extent to which unification creates zero-sum choices for Seoul between the two great powers will be determined by the nature of US-China relations at that time. If US-China relations continue on the more constructive, pragmatic path that emerged after 9/11, and if Washington and Beijing are seen to be cooperating closely in resolving the North Korean nuclear problem, then the US-ROK alliance's consolidation may prove less threatening to Beijing.

Second, regime type matters. China's economic influence over the peninsula is one thing, but a full-blown political and strategic relationship that replicates and replaces what South Korea has with the United States is unlikely if China's political system remains as it is today. There are natural limits to how closely liberal democracies like South Korea can link themselves with nondemocracies. Moreover, despite the historical tributary relationship between the two countries, China has never provided the type of security guarantee that the United States has granted to Korea. Surrounded as they are by great powers, South Koreans will continue to find it in their interest, post-unification, to ally with the biggest and most distant power. South Korean polls confirm this eventuality. Even at the height of anti-American demonstrations in 2002 and 2003, South Koreans saw their economic future with China, but overwhelmingly viewed the United States as their primary strategic partner over the next decade.

Table 3. South Korean Views of Closest Economic Partner in 5–10 Years

	June 1996	April 1998	May 2000	July 2002
China	38%	43%	55%	53%
United States	18%	13%	17%	14%

Source: Obtained from INR, State Department May 2003. For similar poll results, see *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes toward the US*, Eric Larson and Norm Levin (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, December 2003).

Table 4. South Korean Views of Closest Security Partner in 5–10 Years

	June 1996	May 2000	July 2002
China	12%	13%	11%
United States	52%	60%	60%

Source: Obtained from INR, State Department May 2003. For similar poll results, see *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes toward the US*, Eric Larson and Norm Levin (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, December 2003).

Building the ideational aspect of the alliance is critical in this respect. If one takes a traditional definition of alliances that suggests they only arise when faced with a threat, then post-unification, the US-ROK alliance will be forced into a zero-sum trade-off between targeting China or falling apart. However, if one defines an alliance in more fluid terms—as an institution that also stands for values and ideals—then a non-zero-sum equilibrium may be attainable between China and the US-ROK alliance.

Persuading China to “Free-Ride”

It is important to remember that China’s geostrategic preferences on the Korean peninsula and in the region must be seen in relative terms. In absolute terms, China would probably like to be the dominant power in the region, and would oppose any unification scenario that keeps the United States on the peninsula. Realistically, however, Beijing’s choices are not absolute but relative. If the alternative outcome for China is Korean unification with a heavy US ground-troop presence in the northern part of the peninsula, then China may be less opposed to a recessed US presence south of the 38th parallel, with primarily air and naval hubs.

The latter point underlines how important it is to recognize the absence of any deterministic predictions about China’s role in the region. There is a “China-threat” school of thought that views a collision course between the United States and the region’s most dynamic economic and growing military power.²⁴ Given demographic and other indicators, there is no denying the credibility of these arguments. The historical experiences of Britain, Germany, Imperial Japan, the Soviet Union, and the United States show that major powers undergoing rapid economic development also simultaneously experience the most expansionist phases of their foreign policies.

An alternative view argues for a less ambitious and more pragmatic position for Beijing vis-à-vis the United States. This perspective, offered by some American and Chinese scholars, argues that China’s interests are best served by not undertaking a revisionist posture toward the balance of power in the region and challenging the American position.²⁵ Instead, the theory goes, China should continue as it has done since the early 1990s: to focus on its own development and growth provided by the markets and stability in Asia. This “free-riding” thesis implicitly means that Beijing neither desires nor aspires to underwrite prosperity and stability as the lead power in the system, instead preferring to cede that role to the US-based alliance system in Asia. “All this,” according to the Beijing media, “is part of a newly adopted ‘development strategy of peaceful ascendancy,’ a strategy which is aimed at integrating China positively into the existing world system despite differences in political systems, levels of economic development, and cultural traditions, and ‘seeking multilateral and constructive cooperation,’ instead of confrontations, with the world powers in solving differences and conflicts during China’s ‘ascendancy.’”²⁶

Corollary propositions emerging from this school, as Jing Huang states, are that first, China has not contested America's unipolar predominance in the international system. It accepts American unipolarity, but not American unilateralism. Second, people may not like China's free-riding, invoking arguments about long-term power transition and imperial overstretch, but the flip-side of free-riding is that China now accepts that the United States has historical and legitimate interests in Asia. As recently as December 2003, Chinese foreign ministry officials stated for the *first* time that "the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific is caused by historical process."²⁷ As one scholar interpreted this statement, "This is a significant change indeed, for until 1999, 'withdrawal of foreign troops in Asia' had been a principle in China's foreign policy."²⁸ Third, Huang observes that if China wants to free-ride on the status quo, then its primary concern vis-à-vis regional strategy is not the continuing US presence, but some concatenation of forces that might lead to Japanese military rearmament on a grand scale.

Whether the "truth" about Chinese intentions lies with either of these schools of thought is beside the point. In China, there are elements of both the "hegemon on the horizon" and the "free-ride" thesis. What matters is that US actions can shape which grand strategy will prevail in Beijing. An overwhelming deportment of US power, coupled with a resilient Northeast Asia alliance system, will "convince" China that any desires for dominance in the region take a back seat to peace and stability. There is no denying that the potential gains to China in becoming the dominant power in the region, displacing the United States, could be great. But with continued US power and US alliances, these gains for China are uncertain, and would come at great costs. On the other hand, Beijing could assure itself certain (though smaller) gains by recognizing the US position in the region as vital and legitimate, and continuing to benefit from this American system. By maintaining the Northeast Asian alliance system and US stature in the region, the free-riding thesis becomes the "rational" choice for China despite any grander aspirations it might harbor. Such an outcome is also best for the continued resiliency of the US-Korea alliance.

Why Now?

Why must the United States contemplate these changes now? Many critics and supporters of the alliance have argued that the timing does not work in the alliance's interests, creating fears of abandonment in Seoul. Others have suggested that the timing raises the specter of radical policies by the United States toward North Korea (the "preemptive attack" thesis), hence creating entrapment fears in Seoul.

First, the notion that the United States is drawing back forces on the peninsula for the purpose of preemptive attack is not credible. The United States has a significant expatriate population (plus allies and US bases in Japan) that would be held hostage by North Korea artillery. The so-called unilateral

nature of the US posture review is itself a poor way to impute US intentions. Historically, the United States has made its own decisions about the disposition of its troops on the peninsula; more recently it has done so in consultation with allies.²⁹ The fact that North Korea has disavowed earlier threats made in April 2003 that it might transfer WMD capabilities to others also reduces the sole likely contingency under which the United States might contemplate attack.

Second, to argue that now is not the time to pull back forces begs the question: when is it the time? Frankly, there is *never* a good time to contemplate such changes and allied anxieties about abandonment are never really avoidable. In addition, as Tom Christensen has suggested, the US decision to rebalance forces in the aftermath of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan actually offers the closest thing to ideal conditions under which to contemplate such changes. This is so because the United States can undertake such changes with little speculation about whether it remains willing to fight for a cause or an ally. That US-China relations and US-Japan relations are as strong as they have been in recent years also provides a window of opportunity to contemplate major changes in force posture with minimal allied anxieties.³⁰

All Is Not Lost ... Yet

Skeptics might argue that the new political reality in South Korea inveighs strongly against the alliance's future. The demonstrations of 2002 and 2003 led many to believe that public opinion in Korea had shifted markedly against the United States, which boded ill for alliance relations.³¹ Anger over a US military court's acquittal of two US soldiers for the accidental vehicular death of two Korean schoolgirls fueled many of the protests.

But Korean public opinion may be set against the United States indefinitely. Since the announcement of the rebalancing plan, South Koreans have taken a more realistic view of the alliance's utility. Polls in June 2003 (one year after the schoolgirls' deaths) show that those expressing a negative view of the United States declined most significantly among the 20–30-year-old age group. This group had previously been most strongly opposed to the United States.

Table 5. South Korean Attitudes toward the United States (June 2003)

	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Comments
June 2003	27.6	25.4	46.9	December 2002 negative perceptions of United States for 20-year-olds = 76%

Source: *JoongAng Ilbo* (English edition), July 26, 2003, p. 8.

Sample size: 1032.

Table 6. South Korean Attitudes toward Bush Administration Policy toward North Korea (June 2003)

	Strongly disapprove	Generally disapprove	Strongly approve	Generally approve
June 2003	9.4%	39%	11.2%	37.3%

20-year-olds positive = 36.7% / 50+ = 65%

20-year-olds negative = 63.3% / 50+ = 29.5%

Source: *JoongAng Ilbo* (English edition), July 26, 2003, p. 8.

More significantly, there exists a “silent majority” of Koreans with a right-of-center political orientation who still view the US-ROK alliance as critical to South Korea’s long-term interests. In early 2003, these groups countered anti-American demonstrations—which numbered in the hundreds of thousands—with pro-American demonstrations that numbered in the millions.

In both South Korea and in the United States, there remains a substantial percentage of people who are “undecided” or “have no opinion” on questions related to the alliance. For example, the June 2003 polls (*JoongAng Ilbo*) showed some 47 percent of South Koreans saying they had “neutral” feelings about the United States. In the United States, there is general ignorance about Korea, beyond *M*A*S*H** or the World Cup. There is thus a “soft middle” of impressionable opinion in both countries that can swing positively or negatively, depending on the course of events.

The long-term scope of this discussion does not diminish its urgency. Formulating a mutually agreeable vision and strategic rationale for the alliance ensures that future revisions to the force presence occur in the right political context and are not misinterpreted. If action is not taken now, the US-ROK alliance runs the risk of entering its middle age as a brittle Cold War relic, in danger of being overtaken and outpaced by events.

APPENDICES

Results of the First Meeting of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative”

http://www.usfk.or.kr/en/future_initiative_01.php

Joint Statement on the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative,” April 9, 2003.

1. The first meeting of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative” was held in Seoul on April 8–9, 2003. Lieutenant General Cha Young Koo, Deputy Minister for Policy of the ROK Ministry of National Defense, Mr. Shim Yoon Joe, Director General, North American Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Richard P. Lawless, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Asia-Pacific Affairs, and Mr. Christopher LaFleur, Special Envoy of the US Department of State, led their respective delegations, which included members of the ROK MND [Ministry of National Defense] and the US Department of Defense, as well as the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the US Department of State.

2. The “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative” was agreed upon by the ROK Minister of National Defense and the US Secretary of Defense during the 34th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) on December 5, 2002, to adapt the alliance to reflect changing regional and global security circumstances.

3. The US side conveyed the US Government’s special appreciation for the ROK’s decision to dispatch engineer and medical units to support the Coalition’s effort in Iraq.

4. Acknowledging that this year marks the 50th anniversary since the official establishment of the ROK-US alliance, the two sides assessed the bilateral relations between the ROK and the US, and concurred that the ROK-US alliance made significant contributions to national security and development of Korea. In order to further enhance deterrence through the solidarity of the ROK-US alliance and to ensure a strong alliance for the future, the two sides agreed on the following basic principles for their joint consultation.

- i. Both agreed on the need to adapt the alliance to the new global security environment and to take into account the ROK’s status as a prosperous democracy.
- ii. Both agreed on the need for both countries to invest in an enduring alliance.

5. The two sides shared a common view that the ROK-US alliance must be developed in ways to best contribute to security on the peninsula and beyond. Accordingly, both parties agreed in principle to expand ROK forces' role in defense of the Peninsula and to enhance US forces' contribution to regional stability. In the context of the ROK's own military transformation, it will assume responsibility for selected missions. The US presented a plan to invest in the future of the alliance by further developing twenty-first-century war-fighting capabilities.

6. The two sides agreed to consult on modernization of the ROK and US military capabilities in an effort to further enhance the ROK-US combined defense posture and deterrence capabilities.

7. The two sides agreed to consolidate the USFK base structure in order to preserve an enduring stationing environment for USFK, to achieve higher efficiency in managing USFK bases, and to foster a balanced development of ROK national lands. Both sides agreed to continue discussion on the timing of the overall realignment process. The US side expressed an understanding of the concerns of the Korean people regarding the alignment of USFK, including 2ID. The two sides agreed that there would be no compromise in the combined deterrence of their forces throughout the process of realignment.

8. Recognizing the need to foster a balanced development of the Seoul Metropolitan Area, to resolve inconveniences to Seoul citizens, and to provide a stable stationing environment for USFK, the two sides agreed to relocate Yongsan Garrison as soon as possible.

9. As a part of this process, the ROK JCS [Joint Chiefs of Staff] and the US JCS will consult regarding key topics required in developing concepts related to changes in the security environment, such as the development of ROK and US combined military capabilities. Additionally, they will form a consultative group to conduct a study of the ROK-US combined command relationship in the mid and long term.

10. Assessing that the first meeting has contributed to further strengthening the ROK-US alliance, the two sides agreed to hold the second meeting in the US in May.

Results of the Second Meeting of the "Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative"

http://www.usfk.or.kr/en/future_initiative_02.php

Joint Statement on the "Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative," June 5, 2003.

1. The second meeting of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative’ was held in Seoul on June 4–5. Lieutenant General Cha Young Koo, Deputy Minister for Policy of the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND), Mr. Shim Yoon Joe, Director-General, North American Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT), Mr. Richard P. Lawless, the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Asia-Pacific Affairs, and Mr. Christopher LaFleur, Special Envoy of the US Department of State (DOS), led their respective delegations, which included members of the ROK MND and the US DoD, as well as the ROK MOFAT and the US DOS.

2. The first meeting of the “Future of the US-ROK Alliance Policy Initiative” was held in Seoul on April 8–9.

3. The two sides reaffirmed that the US-ROK Summit between President Roh Moo-hyun and President George W. Bush in Washington, DC on May 14 provided the basis for further promoting and developing the US-ROK Alliance for the twenty-first-century, making the bilateral relationship closer and stronger as the two nations celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the alliance.

4. The two sides agreed on the need to develop detailed plans to carry out the vision of the two presidents on modernizing the alliance. They reaffirmed the relocation of Yongsan at an early date and the consolidation of US forces in Korea around key hubs, taking careful account of the political, economic, and security situation on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia. In this regard, they agreed to begin work on several important implementation plans with the goal of completing them by the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in late September:

- An Implementation Plan for Capability Enhancement
- An Implementation Plan for Yongsan Relocation
- An Implementation Plan for the Transfer of Military Missions
- An Implementation Plan for the Realignment of US forces in the ROK

5. The two sides had very productive and in-depth consultations on major issues for the transformation of the current ROK-US alliance. They agreed on a number of items designed to enhance, shape, and align the alliance.

6. Both sides agreed that our fundamental goal is to enhance deterrence and security on the Korean peninsula and improve the combined defense. The US side reiterated Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz’s recent statements on the US commitment to improving the ROK-US alliance. Both sides also agreed on the importance of structuring US forces in a manner that further promotes regional stability.

7. The US side presented a detailed explanation of its plan to invest in over 150 enhancements to the combined defense, valued at over \$11 billion, over the next four years. Both sides agreed that this is a substantial US investment in the future of the alliance and the security of the Republic of Korea. The ROK side indicated that it would substantially enhance ROK military capabilities to strengthen the Alliance. The two sides agreed to detailed consultation between the ROK and US JCS on transformation of combined forces.

8. The two sides agreed to proceed with transfer of certain missions between US and ROK forces, in conjunction with the ROK-US combined capabilities enhancement. Both sides agreed that this is in keeping with the agreement at the summit meeting that the ROK's growing national strength provides an opportunity to expand the role of the ROK military in defending the Korean peninsula. The two sides reaffirmed their agreement to study possible mid- and long-term changes to command relationships.

9. In order to support the early movement of US forces currently located in Yongsan out of Seoul and the overall realignment of US forces in Korea, to include those north of the Han River, both sides agreed that the ROK government would start procuring appropriate land in 2004. Once the implementation plan is finalized selected facilities can be returned in the first year. The consolidation will take a number of years and proceed in two phases. Under the first phase, US forces north of the Han River will consolidate in the Camp Casey and Camp Red Cloud area. In phase two, US forces north of the Han River would move to the key hubs south of the Han River. The two sides agreed to sustain a US military rotational training presence north of the Han even after the completion of phase two.

10. The two sides agreed to hold a ROK-US Defense Ministerial Talk in Washington, DC soon to consult on follow-up measures to the ROK-US Summit and the recent visit by Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz on enhancing, shaping, and aligning the Alliance.

11. Assessing that the second meeting has contributed to further strengthening the ROK-US alliance, the two sides agreed to hold the third meeting in the US in July.

Results of the Third Meeting of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative”

http://www.usfk.or.kr/en/future_initiative_04.php

1. The third meeting of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative” (FOTA) was held in Hawaii 22–23 July, 2003. Lieutenant General Cha, Young-Koo, Deputy Minister for Policy, ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND); Mr. Wi, Sung-Lac, Director-General, North American Affairs Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT); Mr. Richard P. Lawless, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for Asia-Pacific Affairs; and Mr. Christopher LaFleur, Special Envoy of the US Department of State (DOS), led their respective delegations which included members of the ROK MND and the US DoD, as well as the ROK MOFAT and the US DOS.

2. The two sides reaffirmed the basic aims of the “Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative” are to further strengthen the ROK-US alliance and its combined defense capabilities, provide a stable long-term stationing environment for the USFK, and ensure a robust alliance for the future. In particular, the US side reiterated its commitment to the maintenance of security on the Korean peninsula.

3. Both sides shared a common view that the ROK-US Defense Ministerial Talks held in Washington, DC on 27 June solidified agreements from the ROK-US Presidential Summit regarding the future direction of the ROK-US alliance and furthered their combined consultations. Both sides agreed to actively pursue consultations, so that the ROK Minister of National Defense and the US Secretary of Defense could approve relevant FOTA implementation plans at this year’s Security Consultative Meeting in October 2003.

4. Both sides used the meeting to reaffirm their commitment to ROK and US force enhancements of the alliance. In the meeting the two sides agreed that the combined military capabilities enhancements and additional force improvements for both ROK and US forces will continue. Additionally, the two sides verified that force enhancements are proceeding.

5. Both sides discussed plans to transfer some military missions from the US to ROK forces. The two sides reached agreement on the timing of the transfer of several of these missions and agreed to continue consultations for the timing of the remaining missions, with a view toward reaching agreement before the October SCM. Both sides agreed to consult on missions transfer with a view to establishing a more predominant ROK role in defending the peninsula and enhancing US forces’ contribution to security on the peninsula and beyond.

6. Based on the agreement of the ROK and US presidents to relocate Yongsan Garrison at an early date, the two sides agreed to work jointly for relocation by the target year of 2006. In doing that, the two sides agreed to start jointly drafting a relocation Master Plan this year. Land acquisition for relocation and facilities design will start in early 2004, to be immediately followed by the start of construction. The two sides also agreed to conclude all necessary implementation planning for the relocation of the US forces out of the Seoul metropolitan area prior to the Security Consultative Meeting in October 2003.

7. Both sides reaffirmed the agreement reached at the ROK-US Defense Ministerial Talks in June 2003 to align US forces, including the US Second Infantry Division, into key hubs south of the Han River in a two-phased process. In phase 1, units north of the Han River will consolidate into bases in the Dongducheon and Uijongbu areas while facilities are prepared south of the Han River. The second phase will be implemented through close consultation between the ROK and the US. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to sustain a US military rotational training presence north of the Han River even after the completion of Phase 2. Both sides agreed on the need to promote the awareness of the Korean public on this relocation's value to ROK security and to the future of the US-ROK alliance. Both sides reaffirmed the importance of continued US presence on the Korean peninsula.

8. The two sides reaffirmed agreements from the previous "Future of the ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiative" meetings to study the ROK-US combined command relationship in the mid- and long-term. The two sides agreed to report the results at the Security Consultative Meeting in 2005.

9. The two sides agreed to hold the fourth meeting in Seoul in early September.

USFL Force Enhancement Initiatives

http://www.usfk.or.kr/en/future_enhance.php

SEOUL, Republic of Korea (USFK) May 31, 2003—Gen. Leon J. LaPorte, Commander United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, US Forces Korea, met with Cho, Young-kil, Minister of National Defense and Gen. Kim, Jong Hwan, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to discuss future force enhancements for US Forces in Korea.

During the meeting, Gen. LaPorte discussed the operational requirement for both ROK and US capability improvements to enhance Combined Forces Command's capability to deter aggression and to guarantee the security of

the Republic of Korea. Gen. LaPorte then highlighted plans for US capability enhancements to be implemented over the next three years.

“These enhancements represent a more than \$11 billion US investment in peninsula security and regional stability,” said Gen. LaPorte. “Our upgrades in capabilities demonstrate our firm US commitment to the long-standing ROK-US alliance.”

Gen. LaPorte outlined several near-term enhancements during his meetings with Minister Cho and Gen. Kim, including upgrades to the intelligence collection systems, increased numbers of improved precision munitions, rotational deployment of the Army’s newest Stryker unit to improve responsiveness, and additions to Army pre-positioned stocks to increase readiness to defend the Republic of Korea.

Minister Cho, Gen. Kim, and Gen. LaPorte agreed that enhancing both the Republic of Korea and US deterrence military capabilities is critical to ensure the ROK-US alliance is postured to meet the requirements of the future. They also agreed to continue consultations as near-term enhancements are implemented on the Korean peninsula and plans for long-term force enhancements are developed.

NOTES

¹ Kim Kyung Won, “What Makes and Sustains Alliances in Asia,” paper presented at the IISS 38th annual conference, Dresden, Germany, September 1-4, 1998, pp. 3–5.

² For historical overviews, see Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), and a forthcoming book, Young Whan Kihl, *Transforming Korean Politics: Democracy, Reform and Culture* (M.E. Sharpe, forthcoming).

³ These indicators are borrowed from Dr. William Perry, “Comprehensive Remarks,” in *Alliance Tomorrow: Security Arrangements after the Cold War*, Yoichi Funabashi, ed. (Tokyo: Tokyo Foundation, 2001), pp. 295–98. Alliances serve the purpose not just of providing for one’s security, but doing so in an efficient and relatively less costly manner than would otherwise be the case. In this vein, an alliance’s success is measured by the extent to which it serves as a facilitator of power accretion and projection; operates as a unified command; enables common tactics and doctrine through joint training; promotes a division of security roles; facilitates cooperation in production and development of military equipment, and elicits political support among domestic constituencies.

⁴ For elaboration, see Victor Cha, “The Ambivalent Alliance,” *Current History* (September 2003).

⁵ For one of the few detailed histories of US forces in Korea, see James P. Finely, *The US Military Experience in Korea, 1871–1982: In the Vanguard of ROK-US Relations* (Command Historian’s Office, Secretary Joint Staff, Hqs., USFK/EUSA, APO San Francisco 96301, 1983).

⁶ Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States–Korea–Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), chapter 3.

⁷ Michael Armacost, “Asian Alliances and American Politics,” APARC Working Paper, February 1999, pp. 5, 12. See also Tom Berger, “Set for Stability? An American Perspective on the Prospects for Conflict and Cooperation in East Asia,” Presentation at the Graduate Institute of Peace Studies, Kyung Hee University, Seoul, September 24–26, 1998), pp. 24–25.

⁸ Dibb, "The Strategic Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region," in *America's Asian Alliances*, p. 14.

⁹ Ralph Cossa, "The Role of US Forces in a Unified Korea," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 5.2 (fall/winter 2001), p. 131. In a related vein, another often-cited mission is for the US presence in Asia to "shape" the region. One study defined this in a fashion that obscures more than clarifies:

The United States must also seek to maintain stability in the region through "shaping" activities aimed at providing positive incentives for cooperative behavior and disincentives against the use of force to achieve geopolitical goals. These shaping activities must seek to convince nations of the region that their security will be attained more easily if the United States maintains an active military role in the region than would be the case if it did not. (Zalmay Khalilzad, et al., *The United States and Asia: Toward a New US Strategy and Force Posture* [Arlington, VA: RAND, 2001, pp. 43-44.])

¹⁰ Gen John H. Tilelli (Ret.) and Maj. Susan Bryant, *Keeping the Calm: Northeast Asian Regional Security* (Arlington, VA: Association of the United States Army, 2002), pp. 39-40.

¹¹ James Kelly and Michael McDevitt, "In Search of Stability: Designing for a Better Peace in East Asia," in Ralph Cossa, ed., *US-Korea-Japan Relations: Building toward a Virtual Alliance* (Washington, DC: CSIS, 1999). See also Michael McDevitt in Eberstadt and Ellings, *Korea's Future and the Great Powers* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), p. 286.

¹² This is not my own view of how the region will or should evolve. It is merely a representation of the most commonly accepted concerns about how international relations might progress after unification. For others who share these concerns on Japan, see Cossa, "The Future of US Forces," p. 123; Charles Wolf, *Asian Economic Trends and Their Security Implications* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2000); Nicholas Eberstadt, *Prosperous Paupers and Other Population Problems* (Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2000); Robert Ross, "The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the 21st Century," *International Security* 23, 4 (Spring 1999); and Michael Armacost and Kenneth Pyle in Eberstadt and Ellings (2001), p. 126. On China and Korea, see Jiyul Kim, "Continuity and Transformation in Northeast Asia," *Korean Journal of Defense Analyses* 13.1 (Autumn, 2001); David Kang, "Hierarchy and Stability in Asian International Relations" in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); Robert Manning and Jim Przystup, "The Great Powers and the Future of Korea," <http://www.columbia.edu/dlc/ciao/wps/mar02/>; *Global Trends 2015: A Dialogue About the Future with Nongovernment Experts* (Washington, DC: CIA, 2000); Tilelli and Bryant, *Northeast Asian Regional Security*, p. 34; and Khalilzad, *The United States and Asia*, pp. 10-16, 48-9.

¹³ Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1999), p. 14.

¹⁴ Victor Cha, "The Future of American Alliances in Asia: The Importance of Enemies or Ideas?" Paper presented at the APSA annual meeting, Philadelphia, August 2003.

¹⁵ See Stephen Walt, "Why Alliances Endure or Collapse," *Survival* 39:1 (Spring 1997), p. 168. Walt, however, is skeptical about the causal role of identity in alliance commitments.

¹⁶ See Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 5.

¹⁷ Historical precedents for identity-determining behavior in international relations were classical empires and colonialism, where common identification of remote territories with the core often led to imperial wars over objectively insignificant things. See G. John Ikenberry and Charles Kupchan, "Socialization and Hegemonic Power," *International Organization* 44: 2 (Summer 1990); and Kupchan, *Vulnerability of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 258.

¹⁸ Victor Cha, "Focus on the Future, Not the North," *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2002-2003); and Mike Mochizuki and Michael O'Hanlon, "A Liberal Vision for the US-Japanese

Alliance,” *Survival* 40: 2 (Summer 1998), pp. 127–34.

¹⁹ For theoretical elaboration, see Cha, “The Importance of Enemies or Ideas?”

²⁰ Statement by Dr. Kurt Campbell, Hearing on US Policy Toward the Korean Peninsula, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, September 10, 1998.

²¹ “The Korean-American Relationship: Continuity and Change,” Address before the Korean-American Society and the American Chamber of Commerce, January 23, 1998, Seoul (<http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul/wwwwh0100.html>). Also see public statements by Peter Tarnoff and Edward Royce in C. Fred Bergsten and Sakong Il, eds., *The Korea–United States Economic Relationship* (Washington, DC: IIE, 1997); and “Perspectives on US-Korea Relations,” *US-Korea Tomorrow* 1: 1 (August 1998).

²² See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/04/20030409-5.html>.

²³ Korea International Trade Association, *Bridging the Pacific*, No. XXXIV (January 2004).

²⁴ Representative works include Denny Roy, “Hegemon on the Horizon? China’s Threat to East Asian Security,” *International Security* 19: 4 (Summer 1994); Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, “The Coming Conflict with America,” *Foreign Affairs* 76: 2 (March/April 1997); Aaron Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,” *International Security* 18: 3 (Winter 1993/94).

²⁵ Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?” *International Security* 27: 4 (Spring 2003).

²⁶ Jing Huang, “China and America’s Northeast Asian Alliance: Approach, Policy, and Dilemma,” January 2004, paper presented at APARC Northeast Asia Alliances conference, January 14–15, 2004, p. 4.

²⁷ Speech by Wang Yi, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs, at CSCAP meetings, December 12, 2003, <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2003-12-15/14091346610s.shtml>.

²⁸ Jing Huang paper, p. 10

²⁹ Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, chapter 3; and Nam Joo-Hong, *America’s Commitment to South Korea* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

³⁰ Victor Cha, “Not Bad for a Non-Policy,” *Financial Times*, October 22, 2003.

³¹ For a good new study, see Eric V. Larson and Norman D. Levin with the assistance of Seonhae Baik and Bogdan Savych, “Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes Toward the US” (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation), DRR-3225-SRF, December 2003.

THE UNITED STATES AND SOUTH KOREA: AN ALLIANCE ADRIFT

Donald P. Gregg

As an American asked to assess the current status of the US–South Korean alliance, I find myself looking for an appropriate image to begin with. Three come quickly to mind. The first is Humpty Dumpty, having fallen from a wall and lying in pieces at its foot. That image does not work well because I cannot picture “all the king’s horses and all the king’s men” standing around anxiously. The alliance may be in pieces, but no one seems to recognize that fact, or, more ominously perhaps, no one seems anxious to try to put it back together.

The second image is of an old, traditional Korean house which having suffered lots of wear and tear over the years has been carefully disassembled and lies on the ground in pieces prior to being put back together by artisans with some new and stronger elements being added to the old parts. This image also does not work. The alliance has not been systematically disassembled; it has at least in part collapsed. Furthermore, I do not see policy artisans standing around with any capability of building a new and improved alliance structure.

The third image seems to work best. It is an image of the alliance as an old wooden warship too long at sea, leaky and barnacle-encrusted but still afloat. That raises the question of who is at the helm, and I’m afraid that I do not see anyone like “master and commander” Jack Aubrey in the vicinity.

During my time as ambassador, 1989–1993, President Roh Tae-woo used to express the hope that the US–Korean alliance could play the role in Asia that the US-UK alliance has long played in Europe and the Middle East. During the first Gulf War, that seemed to be a viable possibility. Today, it would be impossible for any South Korean to even voice that concept.

The American perception of Korea has been strongly influenced by press reports of what appear to be increasingly hostile views of the United States held by Koreans. I would hasten to add that press reports are an inexact measure of anti-US feelings. For example, in the three and one half years that I served as ambassador in Seoul, I was never able to make a publicized appearance on a university campus. As soon as it became known that I had been invited to appear as a campus speaker, radical students would threaten to riot, and the invitation would be withdrawn. These non-events were never reported in the press, and so the impression was conveyed that things on the anti-American student front were more tranquil than they actually were.

The fact is that there has always been a lot of anti-US feeling in South Korea, and it has been getting worse by leaps and bounds over the past several years. In 1998, for example, a poll of 220 university students in Seoul showed that 65 percent felt that the alliance was deteriorating, 70 percent felt that there should not be an American military presence in Korea after North-South unification, only 2 percent felt that the United States was favorable to Korea in economic terms, and less than 15 percent felt that the United States was being helpful to Korea in dealing with the so-called IMF crisis.

More recent reporting, by the Pew Global Attitudes Country Profile of South Korea (May 2003), produced some shocking statistics:

- Only 24 percent of those polled supported the US war on terrorism, and 58 percent said they were disappointed that Iraqi armed forces had not put up more of a fight against America and its coalition allies.
- 46 percent viewed America favorably, 50 percent viewed us unfavorably.
- Three in ten said they had considered boycotting US products to protest American foreign policy. (This was by far the largest figure on this issue found in the non-Arab world.)

At a Georgetown University conference on anti-Americanism in Korea held earlier in 2003, a strong consensus emerged among the participants that official attitudes on the part of both governments mask deep fissures in the relationship that need to be directly addressed. Koreans spoke of the current relationship as being more a façade than a pillar, and stressed that the façade hides a variety of tensions, antagonisms, and emotions.

An opinion leaders seminar on US-Korea relations held last summer by the Korea Economic Institute found that trust between the two countries had never been lower. The view was strongly expressed by distinguished Korean participants that “9/11 has changed everything in the US,” and that this has badly damaged Seoul’s relations with Washington. By this the Koreans meant that Americans seemed to be obsessed by the war on terrorism, and that we were mistakenly looking at the situation on the Korean peninsula through that prism.

Five factors have made major contributions to the deterioration in the alliance.

First has been South Korea’s radically changing view of North Korea. This was largely triggered by the North-South summit meeting of June 2000. Since then, North Korea has metamorphosed in South Korea’s perspective from an implacable enemy to something like a long-lost brother, who has acquired some bad habits and is in need of help and rehabilitation, not punishment. This major shift in the Korean view places US Forces in Korea (USFK) in an awkward position. Our force’s long-range utility to Korea is now doubted by many

Koreans, particularly those under forty, and toleration of accidents involving USFK personnel has been reduced to almost the zero level.

The second factor is the Bush administration itself, particularly the way it is playing its role as the only global superpower. The Clinton administration had had some very difficult days in dealing with Seoul, around the time of the major nuclear crisis of 1994. Toward the end of his term, however, Clinton had appointed a distinguished former secretary of defense, William Perry, to assess our relations with North Korea. Perry did his work so well that by the fall of 2000 a declaration ending hostile relations between North Korea and the United States had been signed in Washington, and President Clinton came very close to making a visit to North Korea in the last weeks of his presidency.

It was expected in both Seoul and Pyongyang that the Bush administration would take up where Clinton left off (Secretary of State Powell said as much) but such was not the case. Bush entered office with contempt for anything that President Clinton had achieved, and a seething, ad hominem hostility to Kim Jong-il that he did nothing to hide. The Sunshine policy of Kim Dae-jung went into eclipse and a bristling new phase of US–North Korean relations opened up.

The third factor is the political maelstrom in South Korea. President Roh Moo-hyun is threatening to hold referenda that have had no previous place in Korean politics, and openly questions America's hard-line policy toward North Korea. With a National Assembly election looming in April 2004, South Korea seems headed for a period of intensive, inward-looking political infighting, with President Roh's future effectiveness as a national leader very much at stake.

At a conference on Cheju Island, held on 31 October 2003, President Roh showed just how strongly he feels on the North-South issue. In a small Q-and-A session former defense secretary William Perry asked what could be done to stop the slide in trust and understanding between the United States and South Korea, which had taken relations to the lowest point Perry had ever seen.

President Roh replied without hesitation that North Korea is the only issue on which Washington and Seoul disagree, but that in regard to that issue a wide perception gap exists. Roh stated that half a century ago, Korea had endured a horrible fratricidal war in which millions had died. He said that any repeat of that tragic experience must be avoided at all cost. Roh added that most South Koreans believe that Pyongyang will renounce and abandon its nuclear weapons programs once its security has been guaranteed. He urged both the United States and Japan, which were represented at the Cheju conference, to engage North Korea directly in substantive dialogue. Roh ended his response to Perry by asking, "Why does the US insist on such a hard-line policy, when it puts at risk so many lives?" Roh then asserted flatly that it is the US policy toward North Korea that causes the current high level of anti-American feelings in his country.

The fourth factor is Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's decision to reposition the 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) from its position close to the DMZ to a more southerly location. This decision is part of the defense secretary's global program

to make US forces more mobile, harder hitting, and highly technically competent. Rumsfeld believes that repositioning the 2ID will give it a more flexible role in defending South Korea against a North Korean attack, and would make our forces more easily adapted to a regional defense role. To South Korea's citizens, already deeply concerned about what an American attack on North Korea might mean for them, the shift of the 2ID away from the DMZ is seen as putting the main bulk of US forces out of range of North Korea's missiles and artillery so that we would be less constrained in launching a pre-emptive strike against North Korea's nuclear weapons facilities.

The fifth factor is that South Korea is rapidly integrating into the larger Asian economy and is seeking to capitalize on that integration by becoming a business hub for Northeast Asia. Although this process began when South Korea normalized relations with Japan in 1965, complete integration was only possible after relations were normalized with China in 1992. China has rapidly become the largest customer for South Korean exports and will soon displace the United States as South Korea's major trading partner. Moreover, South Korea was the third largest investor in China during 2003, ranking behind only Hong Kong and Japan. Indeed, the growth in trade with China has played a substantial role in South Korea's recovery from the 1997 economic crisis. A major disruption in this new relationship—such as might be caused by a conflict with North Korea or even growing instability in the North brought about by sanctions—would have serious negative economic and political ramifications for South Korea. Any US policy that is even perceived as increasing tensions with North Korea is therefore subject to criticism in South Korea as being inimical to important South Korean economic interests.

Given its new but substantial economic interests in China, South Korea's moves to reinforce stability on the peninsula by strengthening its commercial ties with North Korea and encouraging North Korea to modernize its economy are interlocked with South Korea's efforts to integrate into the larger Asian economy.

The *New York Times* on December 17, 2003 quoted the then South Korean foreign minister Yoon Young Kwan as follows: "The key of our North Korean policy is helping North Korea adopt market mechanisms. That will help them rebuild their own economy, which will in turn bring about some positive domestic impact and some positive impact in terms of North Korea's international behavior."

Asked by the *Times* whether he thought DPRK chairman Kim Jong-il could play the reformer's role in North Korea that Deng Xiaoping had played in China, Minister Yoon replied without hesitation, "I think so."

The same *Times* article quoted Deputy Unification Minister Park Chan Bong on parallels between Kim Jong-il and Deng. Mr. Park said, "In the case of China, reforms were made possible because Deng maintained strong leadership and political stability. In the case of North Korea Kim is in full control of North Korea. If he decides to reform, then I think he can do it."

With South Korea's economic presence and influence burgeoning in North Korea, and with roads and railroads being reconnected, any US consideration of coercive options against the North becomes more problematical. The spectrum of realistic American options vis-à-vis North Korea has narrowed to the point where any sort of pre-emptive military action seems completely out of the question. South Korean president Roh put this very bluntly on 18 December when he spoke to a group of foreign reporters. Roh said that his country "...would not remain idle if the United States tries to resolve the DPRK nuclear crisis with fists."

Contrast these Korean views with some thoughts of Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz, cited in the *Washington Post* of December 23. Wolfowitz, in many ways the intellectual godfather of the Iraq war, was commenting on the removal of Saddam Hussein. He placed Saddam in the same league as Hitler, Stalin, and Kim Jong-il. Wolfowitz opined that men of that deeply evil character were never content to inflict their horrors on their own people alone. Sooner or later their evil work spills out over their borders, making them international security threats that must be dealt with.

President Bush has distanced himself from rhetoric of this sort, and now speaks of diplomacy as being the preferred option in dealing with North Korea. This presidential preference has not yet, however, been clearly translated into a viable policy toward North Korea. The administration, or at least part of it, remains fixated on "not rewarding bad behavior on the part of North Korea," and "not submitting to North Korean blackmail."

I personally had the opportunity to see how these rigid policy tenets played out at a "track two" six-party meeting held in Qingdao, China, in early September. The meeting had been arranged by Susan Shirk of the University of California as one of a long series of unofficial multiparty meetings designed to shed additional light on knotty policy issues affecting Northeast Asia. China was the host of the meeting, and it was led by Ambassador Fu Ying. Some of the Russian and Japanese attendees had been at the official six-party talks held a few days previously in Beijing. The same issues were discussed at Qingdao as had been discussed in Beijing.

Fu Ying, one of China's leading female diplomats, summed up the situation succinctly, based on her participation in the Beijing talks. She said that all six of the countries represented, including North Korea, wanted a nuclear-free Korean peninsula to emerge from the six-party talks. All six countries also agreed that the final result of the talks should be a verifiably nuclear-free Korean peninsula, with issues arising from North Korea's legitimate security and economic concerns having been dealt with adequately. The problem, Ambassador Fu Ying asserted, was that no one had any idea how to get from the starting position to the end objective. Who was to make the first move? Could moves be made simultaneously? Should a sequenced series of moves be worked out in advance? She made it clear that US insistence that it "would not reward bad behavior or submit to North Korean blackmail" made it very difficult to get any negotiating

process started. The best that the US representative could say in reply was, “Well, North Korea does not have to do everything before we do anything.”

The core group at the Qingdao meeting comprised China, South Korea, and Russia, who seemed to be in agreement on all major issues. Three countries were isolated to one degree or another: North Korea because of its WMD programs; Japan because of nagging historic issues, such as the comfort women and other World War II atrocities; and the United States because no one could ascertain what our specific policy toward North Korea was—except that it was hostile.

Negotiations are now under way designed to produce a more positive agenda for the next six-party meeting. That meeting, originally scheduled for late fall 2003, has been put off indefinitely. On 28 December, however, the North Koreans signaled that they were ready to attend another six-party session to be held early in 2004.

The difficult position in which we find ourselves has been evolving for years. In 1994, having seized control of both houses of Congress in the off-year elections, the Republicans, under Speaker Newt Gingrich’s strident leadership, refused to fulfill several obligations the United States had entered into less than two months earlier as part of the Agreed Framework with North Korea. Diplomatic relations with North Korea were not entered into, North Korea was not removed from the US list of terrorist nations, and we did not start to develop economic relations with North Korea.

In 1998, after North Korea surprised us by firing a multistage rocket, a report by Donald Rumsfeld on missile threats to the United States made North Korea the poster child for national missile defense. A foundation of hostility between the Republican Party and North Korea had been laid.

Then came the Pyongyang summit of June 2000 between Kim Dae-jung of the South and Kim Jong-il of the North. In July of that year, I was asked by a Korean-language paper in Seoul to assess the summit meeting from an American perspective.

In my article, which appeared in Korean on 1 August 2000, I cited the Pyongyang summit and the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 as two events that had ushered in new eras by creating paradigm shifts that required the United States to reevaluate its role in the regions concerned. As I put it in the article, “The relevant question is whether the US will do better in dealing with the changed situation in Northeast Asia that the Pyongyang summit is producing than it did in reacting to developments in Southeast Asia in the wake of France’s defeat and withdrawal from Vietnam.”

In mid-2000 warning signs were already quite clear that we were heading for new tensions in the US–South Korean alliance. As I put it: “Initial public Korean reactions to the Pyongyang summit have in some cases included open opposition to a continuing US military presence in the country and anti-American demonstrations have once again erupted. The initial American reaction to the summit was seen by some Koreans as being too negative and skeptical. This had suggested to them that our main concern about the Pyongyang summit was that

it might weaken the rationale for a continuing military presence in the region, and the deployment of a national missile defense system.”

My article ended with these words: “In President Kim Dae-jung we have a staunch friend and ally whose creative diplomacy with Korea’s neighbors and with North Korea has released new forces in the region. The next American president, whoever he is, can use President Kim’s final two years in office as a time to create a new posture for the United States in Northeast Asia. How well he does this will largely determine the future pattern of America’s relations with Korea and its neighbors in the era that is now beginning.”

What has eventuated in the three and one-half years since those words were written has been far more negative than positive in terms of US-Korean relations.

- President Kim’s first meeting with President Bush, held in March 2001, did not go at all well. President Bush made it clear that he did not trust Kim Jong-il, and that an American policy review had to take place before any endorsement of President Kim’s Sunshine policy could be made.
- The US policy review was completed in late spring 2001, endorsing a continuation of engagement with North Korea. The review stipulated, however, that some of the most difficult policy issues, such as North Korean troop deployments along the DMZ, had to be dealt with early in any resumption of engagement. This was a marked change from what had been worked out by President Kim with the Clinton administration. This change in priorities did not go over well in either North or South Korea.
- The terrorist attacks on the United States of September 11, 2001, came before any contacts between the United States and North Korea had taken place. The United States became preoccupied with the war on terror.
- In his State of the Union speech in January 2002, President Bush placed North Korea in an “axis of evil,” along with Iran and Iraq. This infuriated the North Koreans, and shocked the South Koreans.
- In June 2002, during the height of the World Cup tournament, one of South Korea’s most triumphant moments was marred by the accidental death of two young girls, killed by a US armored vehicle as they walked along a narrow country road on their way to a birthday party. As far as South Korea’s younger generation is concerned, the US government has never properly addressed this tragedy.
- In October 2002, the Bush administration held its first meeting in Pyongyang with North Korean government officials. The sole purpose of the meeting was to inform North Korea that through intelligence sources,

the United States had come to believe that North Korea, with the aid of equipment acquired from Pakistan, was developing a highly enriched uranium program in direct violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework.

- Over the next several months, in a series of retaliatory moves, the United States and North Korea moved to a posture of confrontation. The United States cut off oil shipments to North Korea required by the Agreed Framework. North Korea evicted IAEA inspectors, withdrew from the NPT, and began reprocessing plutonium fuel rods.
- North Korea asked for a nonaggression pact with the United States. The United States refused to talk directly to North Korea on this or any other issue, as that would have been “rewarding bad behavior” on their part.
- Taking advantage of its improved relations with China, the United States has asked Beijing to convene and manage a series of six-party talks, designed to solve the North Korean nuclear question. The world now awaits the scheduling of the next session in Beijing.

Where does that leave the Korean-American alliance, and US relations with other Northeast Asian countries?

The South Korean government is clearly interested in maintaining the alliance with the United States. The latest evidence of this is Seoul’s decision to send troops to Iraq. This was not an easy decision to make, and is an admirable extension of support to an ally (the United States) dealing with a difficult political/military situation. The United States for its part also wants to continue the alliance, although with a different deployment pattern for USFK. These hopes are held hostage by the widely diverging views of North Korea held by the Roh and Bush administrations. Only a cooperative and ultimately successful joint approach to Pyongyang by Seoul and Washington will allow the alliance to continue in anything like its current form.

Seoul will never acquiesce to the preemptive use of force by the United States against North Korea. The United States, so far at least, refuses to enter into direct negotiations with North Korea. North Korea for its part feels fundamentally under threat from the United States, and will not dismantle its WMD programs in advance of a US security guarantee and extension of economic assistance. With the passage of time, North Korea moves closer and closer to becoming a full-blown nuclear power. This pattern of events brings into clear focus a time when the Bush administration may feel vulnerable to the politically devastating charge that it sat idly by while North Korea joined the “nuclear club.” What, if anything, the Bush administration intends to do to avoid such a charge is not at all clear. Sanctions associated with the so-called proliferation security initiative will not come close to solving this dilemma for Washington, despite enthusiastic vocal support from neoconservatives in the Bush administration.

The Bush administration scored a significant success in its efforts to convene the six-party talk process. These talks take advantage of the historic fact that for the first time ever, China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea are at peace with each other. Intraregional trade is flourishing, and there will never be a better time to draw North Korea out of its isolation and make it part of an economic boom in Northeast Asia. The fundamental problem is that Washington sees North Korea essentially as a proliferation threat that must be disarmed, while China, Russia, and South Korea see the North as a neighbor and potential economic partner in regional development.

None of North Korea's neighbors want it to become a nuclear power. They all believe that direct negotiations involving Pyongyang and Washington can solve the current impasse. If the Bush administration continues its refusal to negotiate, and North Korea declares itself a nuclear power, its neighbors, with the possible exception of Japan, will adjust to that reality through accommodations. The US position in South Korea will be drastically undercut, and the alliance will almost certainly cease to function in any significant way. Beijing and Seoul will move closer in terms of trade and policy coordination.

American influence on the mainland of Asia will be markedly diminished, and we will be forced to place greater reliance on our bases in Japan in order to maintain a significant military presence in the region.

The long-range costs of not talking directly to North Korea now would appear to be so high and so evident as to force Washington to rethink its moralistic policy of stiffing Pyongyang. But as we proved in our catastrophic misreading of the new situation in Southeast Asia that began at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, we are capable of strategic miscalculations of enormous consequence. Will this same pattern repeat itself in Northeast Asia, exactly fifty years later? The answer to that question is now being shaped by debates and discussions within the Bush administration.

CHALLENGES FOR THE ROK-US ALLIANCE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Won-soo Kim

The alliance between the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the United States has endured, with impressive achievements and through resilient adjustments, for the last fifty years. The deterrence provided by the alliance enables South Korea to accelerate its economic development and political maturity. The alliance has been clearly a cost-efficient mechanism contributing to peace and prosperity for South Korea and the Northeast Asian region. It has also managed to make occasional adaptations, geared to the changing environment at global, regional, and peninsular levels, and has taken into account the changing dynamics within the alliance, most notably the growth of South Korea.

In 2003, however, the alliance encountered an unexpected turn of events, even as it celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The tragic death of two young schoolgirls in June¹ sparked a nationwide anti-American protest, leading to a series of massive candlelight vigils on the streets in the run-up to the presidential elections in December. The protest was generally assessed as the highest both in the number of protesters and the sustained intensity of demonstrations during the fifty years history of the alliance.

The protest sparked heated debates, both in South Korea and the United States, on a number of issues, ranging from the sources of such a surprising outburst of anti-American emotions, to the factors that sustained it for so long, and the possible cures. These debates were also entangled with the nuclear drama that unfolded in October, as North Korea disclosed its secretive uranium enrichment program for nuclear weapons. The alliance governments have been careful in handling this problem so that it will not develop into a full-fledged crisis with damaging spillovers into other areas.

Despite the damage-control efforts, the North Korean nuclear problem escalated in November, when North Korea announced its intention to restart the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon. Soon afterward, both issues—anti-American sentiments and the North Korean nuclear problem—seriously affected the political campaign for South Korea's presidential elections. Surprisingly, the election result indicated that the problems in the alliance relationship played a more significant role than did North Korea, a threat common to both South Korea and the United States.

This finding defies conventional wisdom on two counts. First, prior to the 2003 election, it was believed that an event or crisis highlighting the North Korean security threat boosted the standing of candidates with conservative

credentials. The most cited example of this phenomenon was the bombing of a Korean Airlines plane by North Korean agents, on the eve of the 1987 election,² which was deemed to favor the former president Roh Tae-woo, a retired general and the then-presidential candidate. Second, the security threat from North Korea has the effect of cooling down political differences between South Korea and the United States. The South Korea-US alliance has never been free from political differences. Among the three pillars of bilateral relations, politics, security, and economics, domestic political issues dominated until the late 1980s, when South Korea began to move toward genuine democratization. All of these issues relate to irregularities with power transition, the unpredictability of democratization programs, various political scandals such as Korea-gate, or alleged human rights violations (including the treatment of dissidents in South Korea). The North Korean threat, as perceived by the alliance, had actually kept many of these political differences from surfacing to the public and facilitated the management of those differences through a quiet and mutually acceptable diplomacy.

The events of 2003 called into question the viability of the South Korea-US alliance. Many opinions and policy recommendations have been offered about the alliance's future, but even these postmortem analyses expose a wide divergence of views not only in South Korea but also across the Pacific.

Notwithstanding this divergence, it is not contested that the alliance is now in serious distress. None of the challenges looks easy to tackle. In South Korea, anti-American sentiment has been expressed in three different forms, ideological, policy-oriented, and emotional. But these are the symptoms, not the causes. The candlelight vigils in 2002 were a unique hybrid case in which all three types of anti-American sentiment combined in reaction to a single incident.

As to what lies behind these symptoms, a number of populist myths have been floated. A closer look at these myths reveals that they do not offer explanations for the real causes, but merely oversimplified pictures with ill-based prescriptions. This paper examines the four myths about problems with North Korean policy: two that blame the South Korean and US governments; one that blames the generational change in South Korea; and one that blames the basic difficulty of the North Korean nuclear problem. This paper shows that these myths are not only inaccurate, but also counterproductive. Blaming their own policy is the last thing the allies should do, and blaming generational change or the nuclear problem is putting the cart before the horse. If the allies cannot handle common challenges, whether internal (generational change) or external (the nuclear problem), something deeper must amiss in the relationship. The challenges themselves are not the issue.

This paper identifies four structural factors which have been simmering for some time to cause the recent rise of anti-American sentiment in Korean society. These are:

- 1) diverging security perceptions;
- 2) discord in the alliance rationale;
- 3) presence fatigue; and
- 4) inadequate cultural awareness.

None of these factors is easy to overcome. What makes their handling more difficult is their dual interface with the domestic political developments in South Korea and the United States and the dynamics of the North Korean nuclear problem. Still, the fundamental interests of both countries point to the need for strengthening the alliance. Whether this need will be translated into reality depends on how effectively the two governments tackle the challenges together. This paper concludes with a detailed suggestion of what should be done toward this end.

I. Three Types of Anti-American Sentiment

1. Ideological Anti-Americanism

Ideological anti-Americanism has the strongest roots among student and left-wing activists in South Korea, who have viewed the United States as the main obstacle to realizing their ideologically driven socialist vision of one Korea. These groups remain relatively small in number, but tend to be the most active and often violent. Their involvement in anti-American demonstrations dates back to the 1980s, the most shocking of which was a burning incident at an American cultural center. This type of anti-Americanism garnered little popular support, and waned as the Cold War ended in the early 1990s, along with the consequent retreat of socialist ideologies. Even so, these groups have adapted and survived, continuing to produce left-wing slogans and anti-American propaganda.

2. Policy-Oriented Anti-American Sentiment

Policy-oriented anti-American sentiments are a relatively recent phenomenon. They became evident among liberal intellectual and civil society groups in South Korea after the Bush administration took office in 2000.

Such policy-oriented groups are not anti-American per se; they might be more accurately labeled anti-Bush policy.³ Comprising a variety of diverse nongovernmental organizations (e.g., human rights advocacy, environmental protection, economic transparency, and greater political participation), these groups are generally regarded as more moderate in their views and more centrist than the ideologically driven group described above. Accordingly, their socio-political campaigns garnered relatively larger popular support from the South Korean people. One example was the successful campaign by a civil rights group, the Participatory Coalition, in the 2000 parliamentary elections.⁴

Policy-oriented groups object to the Bush administration's policies toward North Korea, as well as stances on other foreign policy issues that they perceive as too unilateral and hawkish to justify the world's sole superpower's moral leadership. These groups come mostly from the South Korean civil society, who strongly supported the political and social agenda of former president Kim Dae-jung, and particularly his Sunshine policy toward North Korea. Many in these groups were angered by the way they perceived the Bush administration to have treated, or mistreated, then-president Kim on his visit to Washington in March 2001. In their view, the US relations with North Korea began to deteriorate soon after, and the South–North Korea relationship also got into trouble. These groups tend to blame this worsening situation on the Bush administration, and further argue that once the United States changes its North Korea policy, anti-Americanism will dissipate in South Korea.

3. Emotional Anti-American Sentiment

Emotional anti-American sentiment does not usually materialize unless other factors come into play to mobilize it. The death of the two schoolgirls was a good example of an unexpected incident unleashing public anger and anti-American energy.

Emotional anti-American sentiments are more dangerous than their ideological and policy-oriented counterparts for two reasons. First, they may be easily manipulated by opportunistic leaders or groups with hidden political agendas. Second, they are the most powerful, and can be massive in their expression, when mobilized. In short, those engaged in this type of anti-Americanism are the swing bloc. Without a catalyst, they remain silent with relatively neutral views. When an issue arises, their reaction largely depends on how they perceive the issue's merits. The need for the government, political and social leaders, and the media therefore to provide an objective picture of the alliance—and an educated assessment of what should be done in the best interests of the South Korean people and state—cannot be stressed enough.

In 2002, we witnessed an exceptional hybrid case, in which all three types of anti-American sentiment combined to explode over a single incident, that of the death of the two schoolgirls. In one (marginal) quarter, student activist groups raised radical anti-American slogans. In another, ordinary citizens—middle-aged parents together with their young children—mourned the deaths with candles in their hands. Both conspicuous and problematic was the fact that the supposedly small group of ideologically oriented activists appeared to take control of events, even though the majority of protesters did not share their same anti-American fervor. In fact, many joined the demonstrations out of a mixture of sympathy for the deceased girls and anger over the perceived injustice of releasing the American soldiers involved in the incident. This public anger mostly arose (and was often misconceived) from a lack of understanding about differences in the American and South Korean legal systems. Nevertheless, it

was embraced not only as a miscarriage of justice, but also as evidence of the unequal South Korea–US relationship, in which South Koreans were treated as junior partners.

It is not clear what these emotional participants wanted to do about the alliance. Later polls showed that the majority of South Korean people still supported the continued presence of US troops on Korean soil.⁵

Over fifty years, a variety of grievances and perceived inequalities in the alliance relationship had accumulated in the minds of South Koreans; the schoolgirl incident merely sparked the fire. It is noteworthy that one mishandled incident could mobilize so many people under one banner. From a policy perspective, this has two implications. First, among the South Korean people, the level of latent emotions critical of, or at least not favorable to, the United States could be higher than conventional wisdom previously expected. Second, if a similar incident happens again, much more serious collateral damage could be done to the alliance.

II. Four Myths

In South Korea, foreign policy discussions tend to juxtapose the alliance relationship with the North Korean problem, along dichotomous lines—pro-alliance or pro-nation; pro-war or pro-peace; or pro-denuclearization or pro-stability. This polarizing tendency of foreign policy debates makes it more difficult to handle anti-American sentiment in South Korea.

These either-or debates usually offer overly simplistic explanations, which do not fit with real-world situations in which many gray area options exist between two extremes. A pro-alliance or pro-nation dichotomy pits South Korea–US relations against the South–North Korea relations. But in the real world, these two issues might well be worked out together and simultaneously. For instance, measures generally perceived to increase the likelihood of war could also end up compelling the other side to behave, thereby promoting peace. Measures for denuclearization are also likely to avoid a nuclear arms race, thereby contributing to the maintenance of strategic stability.

A by-product of such polarizing debate is a variety of populist myths that are intended, in a simplistic way, to explain what lies behind the emerging distress in the ROK-US alliance. The four myths are examined below.

*1. The current trouble was caused by the Sunshine policy of former South Korean president Kim Dae-jung.*⁶

Argued by conservatives in Seoul and echoed by neo-conservatives in Washington, this view argues that the Sunshine policy is based on an incorrect premise—that North Korea will change and should be encouraged to do so through more outside help. It further argues that the Sunshine policy does not produce the result it intends, but rather brings trouble to the alliance by weakening the South Korean perception of the North Korean threat.

This view goes to the heart of the South Korean people's changing perception of North Korea, as a complex mixture of an enemy and a brother. This mix may change over time and over generations. Currently, however, North Korea is perceived as a country whose economy has been declining for more than a decade, with serious shortages in food, energy, and hard currency. While it is true that Kim Dae-jung took bold steps to initiate inter-Korean reconciliation, his critics unwittingly give his policies too much credit, claiming that they had brought about a sea change in the minds of the South Korean people. A policy cannot have such an impact unless it reflects the prevailing views of its adherents.

A more accurate assessment might be that the Sunshine policy reflected a fundamental and preexisting change in South Korean perceptions of North Korea. This change could have resulted from media imagery that depicted an increasingly vulnerable North that badly needed South Korean help. Containment appeared to be an undesirable approach, given that it might have backed North Korea into a corner from which it could have lashed out in desperation.⁷

*2. The current trouble is a result of the Bush administration's hawkish policy toward North Korea.*⁸

The converse of blaming the Sunshine policy is the argument that blames the Bush administration's policy. Liberal intellectuals in South Korea, who tend to express policy-oriented anti-American sentiment, have held this view, echoed by the Democrats in Washington who were involved in Korean affairs during the Clinton administration. This view looks right in pointing to the allergic reaction that conservative Republicans have long shown for the Geneva Agreed Framework (AF) since its conclusion, and in the Bush administration's strong distaste for some Clinton policies, popularly known as "ABC: Anything But Clinton." But this view also runs the risk of oversimplification. Nobody knows for sure how a Democratic administration would have reacted to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, nor how it would have treated the North Korean violation of the AF with its secretive pursuit of a uranium enrichment program.

One cannot rule out the possibility that a Democratic administration would have reacted more strongly to North Korea's cheating, in order to co-opt Republican criticism against the AF. It is also likely that security imperatives following 9/11 would have forced a Democratic administration to take tough stances against North Korea, in order to prevent nuclear weapons material landing in terrorists' hands. The US concern about nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) has certainly increased after 9/11. In this respect, North Korea is clearly the *worst* case, since it is the most advanced among a group of countries of concern, in nuclear weapons, other WMD capability, and in missile technology for WMD delivery.

In fact, those involved in handling North Korean affairs during the Clinton administration now tend to argue for a not-so-soft approach that will leave

all options open, including a military solution, while pursuing a negotiated settlement.⁹ In case the latter fails, they further argue, all options should be employed to deal with the North Korean nuclear problem.

Republicans and Democrats seem to share the same strategic objective for denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, although they may differ over a detailed methodology to achieve it. One such difference supposedly lies in the conditions for a negotiation to take place. The Bush administration clearly abhors the idea of providing North Korea with any carrots to get them to the negotiating table. They see the negotiation itself as a reward to the outlawed North Korean regime, and do not want to entertain any impression of giving in to North Korean blackmail by offering pre-negotiation incentives. On the other hand, Democrats and a number of Korean experts do not subscribe to this view. They instead argue for the need to increase dialogue with the North Korean regime, at least as a way to test North Korea's real intentions and move toward the next step.¹⁰

3. The strain in the alliance was caused by generational change going on in South Korean society—the emergence of a younger generation which did not experience the Korean War in the early 1950s.

According to one survey, those under the age of twenty-nine constitute around 46 percent of Korean society, and this group shows the highest rate of dislike of the United States.¹¹ This finding offers a confusing and troublesome scenario for two reasons. First, this age group grew up in the most affluent environment and under the heaviest influence of American pop culture, as represented by Hollywood movies, video games, hamburgers, Coca-Cola, and the like. This leads one to wonder where the popular dislike of the United States among this age group comes from. It is not easy to digest this seemingly contradictory cultural orientation: on the one hand, they enjoy American culture, while on the other, they do not like *American-ness*. Second, if the anti-American trend of this generation is not reversed, emotional anti-American sentiment will continue to rise and to dominate South Korean society for many years to come, as this group gets older.

Presidential elections in 2002 also highlighted generational politics in South Korea. A clear generational cleavage manifested itself in preferences for candidates with liberal or conservative credentials. With those in their mid-forties as a dividing line, those under that age preferred a liberal candidate, while those above it leaned toward a conservative one. One simplistic argument ascribes this ideologically driven generational cleavage to the fact that the younger generation did not experience the Korean War. It goes on to argue, therefore, that this cleavage will persist for the next several decades. Another equally simplistic argument is that younger voters supported the liberal candidate, because, as a younger politician from a political minority group, he is more likely to bring about change. The fact is that the motivation for the younger generation's electoral behavior in 2002 is hard to decipher. It remains to be seen whether

the voting tendency along age lines will be sustained and whether this group's political orientation will hold over time.

Without empirical data, the answer to these question remains elusive, and only a wait-and-see approach for the next several elections will yield more insight. As often happens, the political orientation of the young generation may evolve and change as they age and mature. In the future, the younger generation might even split the vote if they must choose between candidates of the same age, but with liberal and conservative orientations, respectively.

4. The North Korean nuclear problem made coordination of policies difficult for the alliance. The North Korean nuclear problem should therefore be blamed for stress in the alliance; its resolution will ease the stress.

The North Korean nuclear problem resurfaced at a time when difficulties in the South Korea–US alliance were also on the rise. This coincidence, combined with the complexity of the nuclear problem, led to a popular belief that the nuclear problem was the main culprit for stress in the alliance.

If the alliance is unable to deal with something it is intended to handle, the viability of the alliance itself is called into question. If this is so, then something serious must *already* have damaged the alliance, before the external challenges, such as the nuclear problem, came to the fore. In this case, a more plausible explanation would be that, after the nuclear problem resurfaced, its complexity highlighted *existing* distress in the alliance by further complicating the already strained policy coordination. It also follows that, unless the real sources of the existing strain are tackled, alliance coordination will remain difficult, both on more mundane security and foreign policies and on particular policy related to the North Korean nuclear problem.

III. Four Sources of Distress

The above examination of the four myths indicates that factors such as policy differences, generational change, or an exogenous variable such as the North Korean nuclear problem do not explain the whole story. Closer scrutiny is required to identify deep-seated structural causes at both the domestic and the alliance level.

1. *Diverging Threat Perception*

During the Cold War, Seoul and Washington's threat perceptions were identical, since it was in the alliance's interest to deter the threats represented by the former Soviet Union and North Korea. With the end of the Cold War, this picture began to change. The end of the Cold War expedited South Korea's pursuit of the Northern Policy, which resulted in normalization of relations with both the former Soviet Union (1991) and China (1993), two erstwhile North Korean allies. It also coincided with the simultaneous entry of both South and North

Korea into the United Nations (1991) and the conclusion of the inter-Korean agreements on basic relations and nonaggression (1992).¹²

The inter-Korean detente reached a stalemate in early 1993, when the North Korean nuclear crisis intensified. In contrast, South Korea's relations with Russia and China continue to develop both in quantity and quality. North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan have yet to normalize, and those with Russia and China lag far behind where they were in the Cold War era. These developments, together with South Korea's continuous economic growth and the continuous decline in North Korea's economy, helped to change the South Korean people's threat perception of North Korea. Now, the majority of the South Korean people see an increasingly weak and vulnerable North Korea as an entity to be engaged rather than contained.

On the other hand, Washington's perception of the North Korean threat has not changed much since the Cold War, mainly due to North Korea's continuous pursuit of WMD, including nuclear weapons. As noted earlier, US concern about North Korea's WMD capability may even have increased following 9/11, given the possible nightmare scenario of WMD falling into terrorists' hands.

These divergent perspectives opened a gulf, or more accurately, signaled a change in priorities between South Korea and the United States in their threat perceptions of North Korea. Seoul was more concerned with the conventional threat posed by North Korea, while Washington focused on the North Korean WMD threat. This gulf was tacitly reflected in the agenda-setting of US–North Korean relations that forced Seoul to accept, reluctantly at first, direct negotiation between Pyongyang and Washington on the nuclear problem in 1993–94, the Kumchangri (suspected nuclear site) problem in 1999, and missile issues in 1999 and 2000.¹³

The South Korean people tend to perceive the threat posed by North Korea in conventional military terms. Their biggest fear has been the military scenario of North Korea's raining artillery shells onto Seoul, a "sea of fire" image. Seoul took seriously the first nuclear crisis in 1993, as well as North Korea's testing of the Taepodong missile in 1998. Seoul's sense of seriousness, however, did not match the degree of shock that Japan and the United States felt over North Korea's display of its ability to wreak havoc on them. Put another way, Seoul's perception of the seriousness of the WMD threat may be relatively less in qualitative terms, since it has long been exposed to the artillery threat, which it views as the greatest cause for concern. Washington and Tokyo's level of apprehension is likely much higher, since they are exposed to North Korea's long range and direct threats for the first time.

As described above, the security perception of the South Korean people is complex and evolving. This is mainly due to a dynamic interplay of triple fears: (1) abandonment; (2) the security dilemma; and (3) exclusion. Ever since the Korean War erupted in 1950,¹⁴ the fear of being abandoned by the United States has remained alive in the minds of many South Koreans. A recent example is the public reaction to the reported redeployment of US forces in

Korea (USFK) south of Seoul, which has been interpreted as weakening the USFK's "tripwire"¹⁵ role.

The sticking point in the alliance's dealings with the 1993 nuclear crisis was South Korea's exclusion from the negotiation process with North Korea over important issues affecting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. This time, the South Korean people's biggest worry seems to stem from the security dilemma the nuclear problem poses. Measures intended to enhance security (for nonproliferation) may inadvertently increase the likelihood of a conflict (a scenario they seek to avoid through the deterrence provided by the alliance), whether by miscalculation or misunderstanding of the other side's intention due to poor communication. South Korea would then once again be a battlefield in a conflict that would bring immediate devastation. Behind this concern there is the US's new security strategy,¹⁶ which emphasizes the doctrine of preemption. The possibility of a unilateral preemptive strike by the United States against North Korea seems to loom larger in South Korean people's minds whenever tension rises, although in reality this scenario is unimaginable without South Korean consent.¹⁷

So, this time, unlike a decade ago, Seoul's sensitivity about the format of negotiation is secondary to its focus on the desirability of a negotiated settlement. In other words, South Korea's main concern lies in reducing the security dilemma by addressing the nuclear problem through peaceful means. All of this, in turn, runs counter to Washington's mood. US doubt about the negotiated settlement increases with the perceived failure of the AF, which reduces its eagerness for negotiation and raises its sensitivity about the format of negotiation.

2. Discord over the Alliance Rationale

The end of the Cold War and the demise of the overriding common threat blurred the rationale of the alliance relationship at the global level. As a result, almost all of the alliance systems underwent serious readjustments, many of which are still going on. The anti-terrorism campaign following 9/11 added a new trend: a coalition of the willing that depended on the context of situations requiring collective intervention. Today, it is fair to argue that the alliance relationship in general is in flux, and its ultimate form remains unclear.

In the meantime, coalition-building among the willing nations seems to be taking over the fixed alliance in handling international crises. Given the changing dynamics in modern warfare technology, context-specific coalition-building could be a more efficient and less costly method. The strategic importance of forward bases is changing as projection capabilities improve. Terrorism also makes the threat diversified and harder to deter, and requires a more agile and flexible response. This new requirement does not fit well with conventional conceptions of an alliance that is formed with a single focus to deter a predetermined threat in a specific theater.

The trends of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peace-enforcing in the 1990s in general, and the anti-terrorism campaign that ensued after 9/11 in particular, show that the United States is increasingly depending on ad-hoc coalition-building, taking into account the geopolitical context of each military intervention and trying to solicit participation from its traditional allies whenever possible. The invitation is not limited to them, however, and the United States shows readiness to go without them when necessary. For the United States, the focus of the alliance is now more global, which also means that the US forces stationed in one theater under a specific alliance could be deployed in other areas should it become necessary.

The South Korean people, by contrast, tend to see the alliance through a more peninsular lens. Although South Korea's threat perception of North Korea is changing, that threat still dominates its strategic calculations. This apparent contradiction manifests itself in the South Korean people's mixed reaction to the possible relocation of the US forces to the south of Seoul.

While some in South Korea are arguing that South Korean forces should increase their role, and US forces decrease theirs, others strongly oppose any move in that direction. The majority of South Koreans support the continued US presence¹⁸ and are uncomfortable with the idea of initiating a premature restructuring of the USFK at a time critical for peace and security on the peninsula.

The narrow geographical definition of the South Korea–US alliance treaty¹⁹ also makes it harder to justify South Korea's participation in a US-led military campaign in a third area. For example, Australia invoked its alliance treaty in joining a campaign in Afghanistan, while South Korea acted in the “spirit” of the treaty, even though the action was largely endorsed at the UN. The recent controversy over South Korea's participation in the Iraqi campaign highlights the difficulty of justifying a campaign in another region to the domestic audience. This difficulty seems to arise most frequently when a campaign is launched without UN authorization.

3. Presence Fatigue

The USFK has been stationed on South Korean soil, in large numbers, for more than five decades. The length of its stay, combined with a focus on ground troops, has inevitably resulted in many incidents or accidents involving the US soldiers on the one hand and South Korean soldiers and civilians on the other. It has also given rise to a steady stream of complaints from local residents about traffic violations, environmental contamination, disturbances from military firing exercises, and so on.

The local South Korean community increasingly views the presence of the US bases as an obstacle to regional development. Many restrictions are placed on local residents, which they view as a burden—examples include the increasing direct costs of environmental cleaning and the opportunity costs

of stagnant real estate. Now, it is incumbent on both governments to devise a joint scheme to alleviate the US presence fatigue, and to recast the USFK as a plus to local economies and environments. Both governments should also take joint measures to create the impression that the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) is dealing with complaints from local residents as expeditiously and equitably as possible.

4. Inadequate Reciprocal Awareness of Cultural Diversity

The protest following the schoolgirls' deaths in 2002 escalated out of proportion, in part due to mishandled public relations about the incident. Early mistakes in media and public relations were damaging, and the measures taken to allievate public fury tended to come late, weakening their impact. In large part, the public anger was fed by the perceived inequality in treating the victims and the accused soldiers. At bottom, the two militaries and governments misread or underestimated public emotions, and failed to lead them. The majority of South Koreans simply could not accept a verdict that acquitted the accused, with no punishment, while the victims were dead. Many South Korean parents and students were overcome with sympathetic feeling for the victims and their families. This instant assimilation of pain may well be unique to a country with one people and one culture.

Differences in the two countries' legal systems also contributed to the downward spiral. The criminal code of South Korea holds anyone involved in traffic accidents with a loss of a life criminally accountable with immediate detention. Under US law, traffic accidents are usually not subject to criminal charges unless backed by other criminal activities, such as reckless driving, speeding, or the use of drugs or alcohol. The jury system of the United States also contributed to public suspicion about the verdict's objectivity, because the jury was composed of fellow US soldiers.

Overall, for a host of reasons, the Korean public never developed an objective perspective on the situation. The fracas that followed clearly shows that poor reciprocal knowledge of an ally's culture can not only dent social relations between two countries, but also cause devastating damage to the crucial political relationships.

IV. Conclusion: Tasks Ahead

As discussed above, the sources of disagreement relate to almost all areas of bilateral relations—security, political, social, and cultural. Accordingly, an urgent, comprehensive plan for joint action must take shape. Stopgap measures will only aggravate the trouble. But addressing the key points of disagreement will be a tall order. The two governments should recommend a blueprint to address specific, long-term measures, ranging from security and

political to social and cultural. This vision should extend even beyond the possible reunification of Korea.

Below is a list of principles and recommended measures that should be stressed in devising a master plan for revitalizing the South Korea–US alliance in the twenty-first century. The rule of thumb is to highlight strong points, while downplaying weak ones. Currently, the balance sheet of strong fundamentals to weak spots in the alliance is in the black. It is therefore incumbent upon policymakers and opinion leaders in both countries to provide the general public with a comprehensive, redefined rationale for a revitalized alliance, one that stresses partnership, peace, and prosperity, and that is easy for the public to understand.

1. Addressing the Sources of Distress

A. Bridge the gap in threat perception: Readjust priorities and realign perceptions

The two allies cannot have identical priorities in their respective threat perceptions nor in their strategies to deal with them. What really matters is whether they can devise a joint security strategy that accommodates both sides' concerns and interests in a mutually agreeable manner. Differing priorities in handling threat perceptions at the global, regional, and peninsular levels should be fully discussed and reflected in a joint strategy.

In devising a strategy to deal jointly with conventional and WMD threats from North Korea, special attention should be paid to the need to accommodate both sides' concerns equally. In other words, the South Korean fear of a conventional conflict breaking out on the peninsula, and the US fear of WMD proliferation in general as well as WMD transfer to terrorists in particular, should be treated with equal sensitivity.

Peace and nonproliferation should be the alliance's guiding pillars. It should be noted here that peace is not just a means to a higher objective, but an end in itself to the South Korean people. Accordingly, the allies should devise a strategy that will convince the South Korean people that, before taking any forcible measures (e.g., sanctions), all other avenues have been tried and exhausted to preserve peace. Likewise, greater sensitivity and understanding should be given to the US need to deal with the global terrorist threat.

In this regard, two points should be highlighted. First, any readjustment or restructuring of the USFK ought to be done in genuine consultation with the South Korean government, since it will have a major impact on the primary South Korean security concern, a conventional North Korean military threat. At this critical juncture, any US move that the South Korean people perceive to be unilateral will be damaging to the alliance. It would fuel South Korean grievances, working on the triple fears of the South Korean people. Some may interpret it as a sign of US abandonment. Others may interpret it as an

indication of US unilateralism preparing for a preemptive attack—by moving the USFK out of harm’s way—thereby substantiating the combined fears of security dilemma (by increasing the risk of a conflict) and exclusion (by not being fully consulted).

Second, the alliance may ultimately face the difficult question of whether to pursue denuclearization of the peninsula through regime change in North Korea, in the event that peaceful avenues do not lead North Korea to more compliant behavior. Given the North Korean regime’s unique characteristics, seeking its change as a policy objective will not be feasible without risking a conflict. At least for now, South Korea, China, and Japan appear reluctant to entertain that risk, for fear of a conflict and its potential spillover effects in the region.

B. Redefine the alliance rationale: A comprehensive value-based partnership for the twenty-first century

In the post–Cold War world, a viable alliance must move toward a more comprehensive partnership with multiple focuses. Dealing with diverse threats requires broadening the alliance focus and redefining its rationale. But the real challenge is how to redefine the rationale in a manner that accommodates both partners’ seemingly conflicting priorities, global and peninsular. The new rationale should specify joint goals for the alliance to achieve on the Korean peninsula, in the Northeast Asian region, and beyond, through jointly employed means.

Such redefinition can be done in a positive way, in order to achieve something, rather than in a negative manner, intended to work against or prevent something. It will be far more effective to base the redefinition of the alliance rationale on common values, and on securing broad support, not only from the peoples of both countries but also from the international community, including major powers in the region. The redefinition of the USFK’s role will require careful consultation between the two governments. Whether the USFK assets will be allowed to be used in a theater beyond the peninsula will be a sensitive issue, and should be treated delicately.²⁰

C. Reduce presence fatigue: Improve SOFA implementation and carefully reconfigure the force structure

Emotional anti-Americanism has deep roots in the US forces’ extended presence in the region. Complaints from local residents are inevitable, as are grievances occurring over unexpected accidents or incidents involving US soldiers. What matters more, however, are the efforts to reduce the likelihood of such complaints, and to establish mechanisms to control damage as soon as it occurs. Overall, the current SOFA with South Korea, as revised in 2000, is no less equitable than the other SOFAs of the United States. If the current SOFA provisions are implemented as well as intended, then most public grievances will dissipate. It is particularly important to show to the Korean people that the SOFA’s operation is being substantively improved, in order to dispel popular

misconceptions that the terms of America's SOFA with South Korea include more concessions in criminal jurisdiction and other provisions than those with Japan or Germany.

A wide range of joint measures can be examined with respect to reducing presence fatigue. These include (1) rebasing in a less populated area; (2) improving the local environment for a smoother presence; (3) strengthening the soldiers' code of conduct; (4) improving the SOFA implementation, including a 24/7 emergency standby; (5) upgrading coordination for military exercises with the local authorities; and (6) devising a joint scheme for local employment. Through these efforts, the US presence could become a benefit to the local economy and environment, not a burden.

D. Improve mutual understanding through cultural awareness programs and targeted public diplomacy

A variety of programs should be institutionalized to address this persistent and sometimes explosive problem. These include (1) increasing the cultural awareness of US citizens and soldiers before and after their arrival in South Korea; (2) expanding interactive community relations of the US military with the local community; (3) strengthening public diplomacy toward weak spots such as local media, students, and labor activists; and (4) launching a specially timed, nationwide campaign about better understanding each other's culture and social systems. This campaign could productively be timed to coincide with the anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic relations, or to highlight the sacrifices of the US soldiers on such occasions as the Korean War anniversary.

2. Getting Back to Basics

A. Restore strong, joint leadership

When facing a complicated problem, it is always a good idea to return to basics to solve it. Strong leadership is most needed at times of troubling transition. In the case of the South Korea-US alliance, both governments must take a leading role to address and successfully implement the urgent tasks that lie before them.

For instance, a military restructuring plan would be difficult to sell to a domestic constituency without the support of the media and the civil society. Due to the growing political maturity of the South Korean society, managing government-private sector relations becomes more important for any policy to succeed. Due to the country's changing demographics, the importance of educating younger generations has also risen. In fact, some blame the young generation's anti-American tendency on the generally liberal inclination of teachers in South Korea. Whether or not this is true, it is impossible to overemphasize the importance of education, since the alliance's future lies on the shoulders of the younger generation.

Government leadership is all the more crucial, given that 2004 will be a volatile year in terms of domestic politics. Both South Korea and the United States will be consumed by electoral politics almost all year long. The coming general elections of South Korea in April will be politically critical in many respects, and as will the US presidential elections in November. Given these significant distractions, both governments should do their best to maintain domestic bipartisanship on South Korea–US relations, before, during, and after the electoral process.

B. Highlight the alliance's existing strong fundamentals for a comprehensive partnership: Hedging against uncertainty

A comprehensive examination of the South Korea–US relationship clearly shows that a strong partnership serves both countries' interests—political, security, economic, and socio-cultural. For South Korea, the US presence on its soil not only provides a deterrent against North Korean adventurism, but also a base for its peace and prosperity. Were the United States to withdraw, it would place a huge financial burden, both direct and indirect, on South Korea. Directly, it would drain the South Korean budget, which would have to compensate for the withdrawn strategic assets of the United States. Indirectly, the US withdrawal will also be a serious blow to investors' confidence in South Korea's stability.

The United States' presence in South Korea provides a valuable forward base and continues to allow America to play the role of balancer in Northeast Asia, one of the tripolar economic centers of the world. A US withdrawal would cause a big security vacuum in the region, with increased uncertainty for Japan in particular. South Korea is a good example of success in the US alliance systems in that South Korea has grown into a market economy with an increasingly mature democracy. The South Korea–US alliance can become a model of a comprehensive partnership based on common value perceptions as well as national-interest calculations.

Put simply, the South Korea–US alliance is an efficient, cost-effective tool for maximizing both countries' interests and increasing their respective roles in a security equation in the region and beyond. A revitalized alliance will serve both as a regional balancer and a hedge against future uncertainty.

C. Improve policy coordination: Working out policy differences in private and maintaining one voice

As discussed above, policy differences should not be blamed for the alliance's current troubles. Allies cannot have identical priorities in foreign and security policies. The important thing is coordinating differing priorities in a mutually beneficial way.

The process of recent policy coordination between the governments of South Korea and the United States has not been smooth. These disagreements over policy gave rise to the 1999 creation of the trilateral policy coordination process among the United States and the two US allies, South Korea and Japan.

This process improved policy coordination significantly,²¹ but much remains to be done.

One recent problem between the allies has been a pattern of uncoordinated leaks or premature announcements to the press which create public policy differences that might be better kept private. Although such announcements are usually followed by a denial from the government in question, they create serious problems for alliance management regardless of their truth, since the public tends to take them at face value. To be sure, enormous damage can be caused by a single press leak, but to make matters worse, each country's commentary invites the other to respond, thereby perpetuating a vicious cycle. Each government should do everything possible to make policy announcements only after both the intra- and intergovernmental coordination process has concluded. To achieve this goal, it would be worth appointing a senior policy coordinator within the US government²² who would oversee Korean affairs and directly report to the president. The danger of premature announcements is that the public might compare the final result with earlier announcements, and use them as a yardstick to gauge success or failure in obtaining concessions from the other side. Generating unfavorable public opinion in this manner makes negative emotional perceptions of the alliance much more likely.

Maintaining one voice before an inquisitive and skeptical public is a difficult public relations exercise. It is vital, however—not only for sustaining domestic support, but also for ensuring the effectiveness of any policy chosen by the alliance vis-à-vis its main target, North Korea. The North is well known for its strategy to drive a wedge between Seoul and Washington whenever possible, and to wait and see how it works to its advantage. Only when North Korea realizes there is no room for a wedge will it begin to move toward compromise. Preserving an outwardly unified voice is strategically important as a hedge against the North Korean wedge.

D. Broaden the support base: Network-building

One noticeable problem of late is the weakness of a network that connects leading figures from major sectors of both countries. Despite a long period of ever-increasing exchanges at many levels, the network-building lags behind the needs of the times.

A more closely knit network should be in place, and should include opinion leaders both within and outside the government, as well as from conservative and liberal factions of the two societies. This should be done sooner rather than later, since it takes time to build a network and to reap its benefits. Therefore, network-building should begin immediately, and be targeted toward middle-aged opinion-makers from the government, politics, academia, media, and civil society in both South Korea and the United States.

V. Concluding Remarks

The ROK-US alliance now stands at a crossroads. Which road the alliance takes from here will depend on *how* the two governments jointly address structural factors and handle common challenges. Symptoms of anti-American sentiment in South Korea are likely to get worse unless the root causes are addressed. Many of these causes relate to the internal transition that South Korea is now undergoing. The country's economic growth and political democratization has transformed South Koreans' perceptions of themselves, and of their relationships with the United States, their most important ally, and North Korea, a complicated mix of brother and security threat. A clear new consensus has yet to emerge in South Korean society. To the extent that the alliance is experiencing distress, it is because South Korea is in serious transition.

In times of transition, the prerequisite for addressing the causes of alliance stress is to maintain—or more accurately *restore*—the unity of the two governments on policy priorities. Care should thus be given to the South Korean people's growing demand for more equitable recognition and treatment as an alliance partner. Modalities should be refined to ensure that South Korea is genuinely consulted on common challenges and issues affecting the alliance, and that differences can be sorted out as quietly as possible. Through such consultation, the two governments should present a redefined rationale of the alliance for the twenty-first century that looks beyond the Korean peninsula, is in tune with the South Korean people's changing perceptions, and takes into account the evolving US security imperatives following 9/11. This requires a comprehensive strategy both to accomplish the short-term tasks and to present a long-term vision that looks beyond the reunification of Korea.

The tasks suggested above are easier said than done. Joint, strong government leadership is all the more vital given the uncertainty arising from both allies' fluid domestic politics in 2004 and the unpredictability associated with the North Korean problem. Fundamental interests demand that the alliance rise to the occasion. Serious efforts should begin now, to educate the younger generation and to build a stronger network for the alliance's future as a vehicle for peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia for the next fifty years.

NOTES

¹ On June 13, 2002, two Korean middle-school girls were killed by an armored mine-clearing vehicle during a US military exercise. Two US soldiers, the driver and the commander of the vehicle, were put on trial by the US military court in accordance with the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement), which allows the US side to exercise criminal jurisdiction over on-duty crimes. They were later found not guilty on charges of negligent homicide on November 20 and 23. These rulings sparked mass rallies to protest their acquittals and to demand the revision of the SOFA to return criminal jurisdiction in similar cases to the Korean side.

² For details of the incident, see Don Oberdorfer, *Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*, pp. 183–86 (Basic Books, 2002). Oberdorfer discusses the incident in the context

of North Korean attempts to sabotage the 1988 Seoul Olympics, and does not comment on its possible impact on the presidential election.

³ These groups are composed of diverse entities from South Korea's civil society, but are loosely connected in consultative capacities. This enables them to form coalitions, and thus enhances their impact on certain issues.

⁴ This movement for "non-nomination and non-election" attracted significant public support by designating certain candidates for national assembly seats as ineligible, whether for party nomination or election.

⁵ See the survey done by the *Joongang Ilbo* in June 2003. The survey shows that Korean perceptions of the United States have bounced back from the lowest point of winter 2002. For example, those who supported the revision of the SOFA have dropped from 64 percent in December 2002 to 29 percent in June 2003. In another poll conducted by the *Joongang Ilbo* in cooperation with the Center for Strategic and International Strategy (CSIS) in September 2003, over 90 percent of respondents considered the relations with the United States as "important" and about 63 percent supported the continued presence of the US forces.

⁶ In a poll conducted by the *Joongang Ilbo* in September 2003 (see note 5, above), about 24 percent of respondents pointed to the "inter-Korean rapprochement" as a factor contributing to the weakening of the alliance.

⁷ For a detailed discussion of cost-benefit analysis of various options, see Victor Cha, "Hawk Engagement and Preventive Defense on the Korean Peninsula," *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Summer 2002), pp. 40–78. Cha argues that "the 'default' prescription for North Korea remains engagement. The alternatives—containment-plus-isolation or containment-plus-coercion—only increase North Korea's rational incentives for engaging in hostilities even though victory is unlikely." (p. 70)

⁸ In a *Joongang Ilbo* poll (see notes 5 and 6, above), about 27 percent pointed out the "US hard line policy toward North Korea" as a factor contributing to the weakening of the alliance.

⁹ See William Perry, "It's Either Nukes or Negotiation," *Washington Post*, July 23, 2003, p. A23, and "US, N. Korea Drifting Toward War, Perry Warns," *Washington Post*, July 15, 2003, p. A14.

¹⁰ See the Report of an Independent Task Force, sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations: Morton Abramowitz and James T. Laney, "Testing North Korea: The Next Stage in US and ROK Policy" (2001). The report recommends a comprehensive approach whose essence is to trade economic benefits and security assurances for threat reduction and the prospect of change in North Korea. It also argues that a dialogue must start at the level of vice foreign minister or higher and that North Korea's intentions must be tested.

¹¹ Sook-Jong Lee, "The Roots and Patterns of Anti-Americanism in Korean Society: A Survey-Based Analysis," Unpublished paper presented to the Fourteenth US-Korea Academic Symposium, "The US and South Korea—Reinvigorating the Partnership," APARC, Stanford University, October 2003.

¹² For details, see Oberdorfer, *Two Koreas*, pp. 260–65.

¹³ For details of the development of these problems and the allies' dealings with them, see Oberdorfer, *Two Koreas*, pp 409–41.

¹⁴ In 1949, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson stated that the Korean peninsula was outside the US line of defense. This declaration was generally considered to be one of the factors probably taken into account by Stalin prior to his endorsement of the North Korean plan to wage a war on South Korea. Before his endorsement, Stalin seemed to have turned down Kim Il-sung's war plan at least twice. See Don Oberdorfer, *Two Koreas*, p. 9.

¹⁵ “Tripwire” is the term used to describe the situation in which the physical presence of the US forces in Korea near the Demilitarized Zone would automatically trigger the US involvement in any military confrontation initiated by the North. Now, with evolution in modern warfare strategy, this term is generally considered inappropriate in defining the role of the USFK. Nonetheless, it shows well the symbolism that the South Korean people attach to the USFK presence as a guarantee to avoid US “abandonment.”

¹⁶ “The National Security Strategy of the US,” the White House, September 17, 2002. Section V, entitled “Prevent enemies from threatening us, our allies and our friends with WMD,” states that “the United States has long maintained the option of preemptive actions to counter a sufficient threat to our national security. The greater the threat, the greater is the risk of inaction—and the more compelling the case for taking anticipatory action to defend ourselves, even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy’s attack. To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”

¹⁷ One of the most popularly raised, though without substantive basis, scenarios for South Koreans is that the United States may preemptively respond to North Korean brinkmanship without prior consent of or full consultation with South Korea, and North Korea may react by pouring artillery shells on South Korea. Then South Korea will be a battlefield in a conflict that it does not initiate. This scenario is a combination of fears of exclusion and security dilemma.

¹⁸ Recent polls continue to show that majority support still exists for the US presence. See, for example, a poll conducted by the *Joongang Ilbo* (note 5, above) in September 2003.

¹⁹ See Article 3 of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the Republic of Korea and the United States, 1954. “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.”

²⁰ For example, if part of the USFK or its assets were deployed in a potential hot spot such as the Taiwan Strait, it would have huge domestic and regional implications, particularly vis-à-vis China.

²¹ The result of the 1999 trilateral coordination in 1999 was the so-called Perry Process. For details, see the unclassified report by William J. Perry, US North Korea Policy Coordinator and Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State, *Review of United States Policy Toward North Korea: Findings and Recommendations*, Washington, DC, October 12, 1999.

²² For a similar recommendation in dealing with the North Korean nuclear problem, see the Report of an Independent Task Force, sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations: Abramowitz and Laney, “Meeting the North Korean Nuclear Challenge” (2003), pp. 37–38.

US-ROK DEFENSE COOPERATION¹

William M. Drennan

By any objective standard of evaluation, the US-ROK alliance has been a big success. It has succeeded in preventing a renewal of the Korean War and provided the security upon which South Koreans have built one of the world's leading economies from the devastation of the 1950–53 war. Despite this success, the alliance partners have been described as “the closest of strangers,” and the alliance as a marriage of inconvenience, irreverent observations that contain grains of truth: the alliance has always been “high maintenance,” with more than its fair share of tensions and controversies.

This paper will examine adjustments to the alliance that have occurred in the past and attempt to illuminate other changes the Bush administration is likely to promote in the near term. Some analytical and concluding thoughts are offered in the last two sections.

I. What adjustments have occurred in recent years in the operational arrangements underlying US-ROK defense cooperation?

Background

Defense cooperation between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) dates from July 14, 1950, when President Syngman Rhee placed ROK forces under the “operational command” of General Douglas MacArthur in his capacity as commander-in-chief (CINC) of the nascent United Nations Command (UNC) following the North Korean invasion. For twenty-five years following the signing of the Armistice in 1953, the US-led UN Command had the missions of maintaining and managing the Armistice for the allies, deterring further aggression by North Korea (and its allies, China and the Soviet Union), and defending the ROK if deterrence had failed (in which case CINCUNC would once again have become the “warfighter” leading United States, ROK, and allied forces in the defense of South Korea).

With the signing of a mutual defense treaty on October 1, 1953, the United States and the ROK entered into a security alliance that forms the basis for the continuing defense cooperative relationship; that relationship is now entering its fifty-first year. In agreeing to a unique military command arrangement in which the defense of South Korea is a responsibility shared by the ROK and the United States, South Korean authorities ceded a degree of national sovereignty

in exchange for the security that a defense partnership with the United States afforded (in the words of a former CINC, “the most remarkable concession of sovereignty in the entire world”).

This command arrangement—with the United States leading a multinational military command that both complemented and underwrote the US commitment to help defend South Korea—remained unchanged between 1953 and 1978. Stability in military command arrangements, however, tended to mask what was clearly a contentious US-ROK relationship. Ties between Washington and Seoul were tested on a number of occasions:

- The 1961 military coup led by Major General Park Chung-hee overthrew an elected government, in the process violating UNC rules by using South Korean units under CINCUNC’s operational control (OPCON) to effect the coup.
- The Nixon (Guam) Doctrine and the subsequent withdrawal of the US 7th Infantry Division from the ROK shocked South Korea, as did Nixon’s subsequent opening of relations with the People’s Republic of China, leading to a short-lived thawing of relations between South and North Korea.
- The transition in the early 1970s away from providing South Korea with military assistance via grants and to a loan-based arrangement under the US foreign military sales program.
- The clandestine program by President Park to produce nuclear weapons, an effort that was discovered and stopped by the United States.
- The initiative by President Carter to withdraw all US forces from South Korea (later reduced to the withdrawal of all remaining ground forces). While ultimately unsuccessful, Carter’s troop withdrawal initiative fed into South Koreans’ fear of abandonment, a fear that had been heightened by the US withdrawal from the Republic of Vietnam and its subsequent conquest by North Vietnamese forces.

Partly as a result of Carter’s attempt to withdraw US forces, the first major change in military command arrangements was initiated in 1978 with the creation of the US-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), which assumed the deterrence and defense responsibilities of the United Nations Command (with UNC retaining responsibility for maintaining the Armistice). CINCCFC became the new “warfighter,” reporting to two masters—the National Command and Military Authorities of both the United States and the ROK²—and exercising operational control over those military units assigned to CFC by US and ROK authorities.

As was the case in the initial twenty-five years of the defense relationship, the first sixteen years of CFC's existence (1978–1994) proved challenging for US-ROK defense cooperation, beginning with the assassination of President Park in October 1979. Park's death led to a rolling coup by Major General Chun Doo Hwan, whose seizure of the ROK military in December 1979 began a process that culminated in his takeover of the ROK government in 1980. Similar to Park's violation of UNC OPCON to carry out his coup in 1961, Chun violated CFC OPCON in December 1979 in his takeover of the ROK military. His disinformation campaign following the suppression of the uprising in the southwestern city of Kwangju in May 1980—in which he falsely claimed to have had US backing for his actions—was a betrayal whose aftershocks are felt to this day, both in terms of relations between the US and ROK militaries and in the rise of anti-Americanism among South Koreans in the years since.

Other challenges to defense cooperation in the 1978–1994 timeframe included:

- The effort—begun at the ROK government's request in 1988—to relocate United States Forces Korea (USFK) facilities and especially those at the 660-acre Yongsan Garrison out of Seoul (more on relocation below);
- The East Asia Strategy Initiative (EASI) of 1990, designed unilaterally by the first Bush administration to move the United States from a leading to a supporting role in the bilateral relationship;
- The first nuclear confrontation with North Korea (1993–94), a crisis in which policy coordination between the two allies proved to be extremely difficult, a crisis that almost led to war with the North.

Concerning the relocation of US facilities out of Seoul, the effort never really got off the ground (save for the return of the Yongsan golf course), despite the signing of a comprehensive bilateral memorandum of understanding in 1990 codifying the agreement, listing the responsibilities of each side, and establishing a timetable to complete the move by 1996. The project initially stalled over concerns about the costs involved (under the terms of the MOU, the move was to be made at no cost to the US government) and second thoughts among ROK policymakers about the wisdom of removing the US military from Seoul. Concerns about North Korean nuclear weapons also led to EASI being suspended after completion of Phase I, in which a small number of noncombatant troops were withdrawn from Korea.

The US decision in 1993 to engage North Korea directly on its nuclear weapons program strained relations between Washington and Seoul, but with the signing of the US-DPRK Agreed Framework on October 1994, allied cooperation improved as the United States and South Korea worked closely with their international partners on the Korean Peninsula Energy Development

Organization light water reactor project. In 1996 the allies jointly proposed the convening of four-party peace talks (South Korea, North Korea, the United States, and China), and the Clinton administration supported President Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine policy. Kim's hope for reconciliation between the two Koreas seemed to have been realized when he visited Pyongyang in June 2000 for the first-ever summit meeting between the leaders of South and North. Seoul's engagement policy was mirrored by Washington's, leading to the October 2000 visit of Marshal Cho Myong-nok to Washington, followed by Secretary of State Albright's trip to Pyongyang and talk of President Clinton visiting North Korea in the waning days of his administration.

Policy Context

In retrospect 2000 was a watershed year in US-ROK relations. The euphoria felt in much of South Korea over the June 2000 inter-Korean summit had a darker side, with latent anti-Americanism in the ROK coming to the surface as South Koreans began to question the need for the 37,000 US troops in South Korea in the new era of (assumed) South-North reconciliation. The new orthodoxy in South Korea following the summit—that North Korea is a partner for peace and is as committed to reconciliation and peaceful coexistence as is the South—was questionable from the beginning, certainly from the US standpoint, and quickly became an issue between the allies following the November 2000 US presidential election.

George W. Bush entered office skeptical of Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine policy, a skepticism made public during Kim's star-crossed visit to the White House in March 2001. Kim was determined to visit Washington as early as possible in an effort to enlist Bush's support for Sunshine, but the rush to Washington served neither side well. The Koreans had soured the mood of the summit through two missteps just days before leaving for Washington: implicitly criticizing national missile defense—a Bush priority—by agreeing officially with Russia that the 1972 ABM treaty, from which the United States would soon withdraw, was “the cornerstone for strategic stability”; and announcing its intention to sign a “peace declaration” with the North, a proposal having potentially momentous implications for the US position in Korea, and about which Korean officials could provide no details, because there were none. These missteps only reinforced the impression of amateurish ROK diplomacy under President Kim, and his subsequent embarrassment on these two counts was compounded when he appeared to be rebuked by Bush—indirectly but publicly—on his approach to North Korea. Three years later, US-ROK relations have yet to recover.

Allied Divergence

If June 15, 2000, was a watershed date for South Korea, September 11, 2001, was a turning point for the United States; both have had serious implications for US-ROK defense cooperation. Despite efforts to paper over their differences,

the two allies are no longer pulling in harness nearly to the extent that they used to.

The foundation for the alliance, the shared perception of a common threat from North Korea, has been seriously weakened since the Pyongyang summit.

South Korea has been operating since the summit on the assumption of a new benign intent on the part of North Korea. Kim Dae-jung returned from Pyongyang declaring that “the greatest achievement of the inter-Korean summit talks is the disappearance of the threat of war on the Korean peninsula,” and South Korea has adhered to a policy of unreciprocated assistance to the North ever since.

The US position, on the other hand, is that the summit and its aftermath have had no measurable impact on the security situation on the peninsula. For the United States North Korea remains a clear, present, and—with its two nuclear weapons programs—growing danger to the ROK and to US interests.

The divergence in positions of the alliance partners became public when the Kim Dae-jung administration disputed the analysis of the North Korean threat provided by CINCCFC in congressional testimony in the spring of 2001. For the first time in the history of the alliance, the professional judgment—and even the motives—of the military commander charged by both governments to deter the North and defend the South were called into question by ROK authorities. The rift has yet to be healed.

The US position would appear to have been vindicated in light of the revelation that the Kim government paid the North at least \$500 million under the table to host the Pyongyang summit (and has continued to pay for engagement since). But Kim stuck with his Sunshine policy for the duration of his presidency, a policy that has been continued by his successor, Roh Moo-hyun (whose only adjustment was to rename it the Peace and Prosperity policy).

Recent Operational Adjustments

Three significant adjustments have occurred in recent years (i.e., during the presidencies of Kim Young-sam (1993–98) and Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003)).

Peacetime OPCON. In December 1994, in recognition of political sensitivities and rising nationalism in South Korea, peacetime OPCON of ROK forces was transferred from CINCCFC to ROK authorities, with a new arrangement called Combined Delegated Authority (CODA) devised to ensure that the CINC would be able to continue to meet his deterrence and defense responsibilities. Peacetime operational control of the ROK military thus has resided with ROK authorities for the last nine years.

Arms Upgrades. US Forces Korea have undergone a significant upgrade of equipment in the last decade, with older equipment being replaced by newer,

more capable gear (the Army Tactical Missile System—ATACMS, counter-battery radar, Apache helicopters, newer tanks, the Stryker combat vehicle). These upgrades have significantly enhanced the combat power of USFK.

The ROK has also embarked on a major upgrade of its equipment, agreeing to purchase F-15K fighters to replace older F-4s, and has plans for modern replacements for the other services as well, including tanks, helicopters, artillery, tactical missiles, destroyers, and early-warning aircraft.

As a result of these upgrades, long-standing gaps in the combined defense structure are being addressed, interoperability is being enhanced, and the overall combat capabilities of US and ROK combined forces are being significantly improved.

The Land Partnership Plan (LPP). At the 2001 Security Consultative Meeting the allies agreed to a sweeping adjustment to the US military “footprint” in South Korea. The US agreed to a major consolidation of its existing base structure in the ROK, enabling it to return approximately half of the forty-one major installations currently in use to the ROK, representing over 54 percent of the total amount of land USFK occupies. The LPP addresses not just the Yongsan Garrison and the US 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) in the area north of Seoul. Installations in other major cities will be consolidated or closed as well, including those in Pusan, Taegu, Chunchon, and Inchon, all of which have been the subject of protests by local residents objecting to the presence of US military installations in or near their cities. Existing facilities in Osan-Pyeongtaek and a few other areas south of Seoul will be expanded to handle the influx.

II. What additional changes is the Bush administration likely to promote?

Despite a growing divergence in threat perception and therefore policy among the allies in the last ten years (and especially since the Pyongyang summit), the military structure of the alliance remained stable.

It appears that that is about to change. The next several years are likely to see major adjustments in the US military presence and in the roles and responsibilities assigned to each partner. When completed, these changes will reshape the alliance in fundamental ways.

Under the “Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative” (FOTA) begun in the spring of 2003, the allies have embarked on a major restructuring of the combined military structure. The FOTA process, though, has become controversial, as the US presses for significant changes in the near term and the South attempts to slow the entire process down.

The changes being pushed by the United States include:

Elimination of the “tripwire.” The essence of deterrence for fifty years has been the presence of US ground troops between the DMZ and Seoul. Their vulnerability (coming under fire and taking casualties with the opening salvo of a renewed war) is designed to ensure that the US will join the fight if North Korea attacks. The necessity—indeed, the morality—of this “mission” has been rejected by the Bush administration, contributing to the decision to move the division south.

Consolidation. In the first phase of the move, elements of 2ID currently dispersed at numerous posts between Seoul and the Demilitarized Zone will be consolidated at Camp Red Cloud and Camp Casey, beginning as soon as possible, with 2006 as the target date for completion.

Relocation. In the second phase of the consolidation, the division will move to new bases south of Seoul (most likely to Camp Humphreys in the vicinity of Pyongtaek).

In addition, Yongsan will be vacated, with the headquarters of USFK moving to Osan Air Base and the Eighth US Army to Camp Humphreys. Originally, the headquarters of Combined Forces Command and the United Nations Command were to remain on a small portion of Yongsan, along with about a thousand US military personnel, but, since the United States and ROK were unable to agree on the amount of land to be retained, the US announced that CFC and UNC will also relocate to the Osan-Pyongtaek area as well, and in early 2004 the ROK government agreed. US installations in cities other than Seoul (see above) will also be closed.

Transformation. Presidents Bush and Roh have signaled their shared intent to take “advantage of technology to transform both nations’ forces and enhance their capabilities to meet emerging threats” with lighter, more agile and adaptable forces. This is consistent with the Bush administration’s desire to transform the US military around the world (see “The war on terrorism” below), to include moving away from “static defenses” tied to large bases.

Force reductions. While officials have yet to confirm it, there are strong indications that the US plans to withdraw some of its forces currently stationed in the ROK during the consolidation and relocation process. In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee in February 2003, the secretary of defense indicated as much, with some experts speculating that as many as a third of the 37,000 US troops currently deployed to the ROK will be withdrawn, a view echoed by CINCCFC in remarks at a conference in Seoul in early 2003.

Force enhancements. The United States has committed to a program of further enhancing the defense capabilities of the ROK, pledging \$11 billion to the effort over the next three years and encouraging the ROK to continue to take advantage of advances in military technology as well. In Defense Secretary Rumsfeld's view, "It's not the numbers, but the capability to impose lethal power where needed with the greatest flexibility" that is needed.

Mission transfers. The United States has announced its intention to transfer responsibility for up to ten specific missions from US to ROK forces. These include guarding the Joint Security Area; decontaminating chemical, biological, and radioactive materials in southern areas of the ROK; laying land mines in emergency situations; preventing naval infiltration of North Korean special operations forces; countering the North's tactical missiles and long-range, hardened artillery; and search and rescue missions. Consolidated, relocated, and resized US forces would take on more of an expeditionary role, capable of executing missions both on and off the peninsula.

Command arrangements. CINCCFC is reported to have suggested that wartime operational control of ROK forces could be returned to Korean authorities, and at its first meeting in the spring of 2003 the FOTA agreed to form a joint consultative body to conduct a study of combined command arrangements. Transferring wartime OPCON to the ROK would almost assuredly mean disbanding Combined Forces Command and moving toward a command arrangement similar to that in Japan, where US Forces Japan (USFJ) and the Japanese Self-Defense Force have separate chains of command. In addition, there have been public reports that the US four-star position in South Korea will be downgraded to three stars to match the rank of the commander of USFJ.

Taken together, these adjustments—and especially the transition of USFK from a peninsula-only mission to a regional, power-projection role—represent a historic, fundamental alteration to the US approach to the defense partnership with the ROK.

III. Analysis

Noting "the opportunity provided by the Republic of Korea's growing national strength to continue expanding the role of the ROK armed forces in defending the Korean peninsula," Presidents Bush and Roh agreed in May 2003 to "work closely together to modernize the US-ROK alliance" and to "work out plans to consolidate US forces around key hubs and to relocate the Yongsan Garrison at an early date." The two chief executives also agreed that the "relocation of US bases north of the Han River should be pursued."

In that regard 2006 is shaping up as an important year in the relocation effort. US authorities are pushing for the 2ID and Yongsan relocations to be completed that year, and for the ROK to take over responsibility for the JSA and other missions currently assigned to USFK as well. During his visit to the ROK in November 2003, the secretary of defense said he agrees with President Roh's vision of a South Korea that takes more responsibility for its own defense. "It is time for [South Koreans] to set a goal for becoming somewhat more self-reliant," Rumsfeld said, and the United States seems intent on pressing ahead with relocation despite ROK reluctance.

Despite the understanding reached between presidents Bush and Roh in May (and reaffirmed at the APEC meeting in October 2003), the pace and scope of these changes ensures that they will be controversial; indeed, they are troubling both to some officials of the ROK government and to many South Korean citizens as well, which has made it difficult to get beyond general "agreements in principle" to proceed in a coordinated manner to implement these changes. Currently ROK officials are balking, insisting on the need for more time.

- The prime minister has publicly opposed the move of the 2ID, insisting that the tripwire function must be maintained.
- Led by the majority opposition Grand National Party, more than half of the 273 members of the National Assembly have signed a resolution opposing the relocation of USFK.
- The governor of Kyonggi province, which encompasses the area around Seoul up to the DMZ, also opposes the move, concerned about the economic impact on the province and the security implications of removing the screening force of US ground troops.
- The senior Blue House aide for defense matters voiced his opposition as well before being replaced early in 2004.

In the face of significant opposition, the United States is persisting with the changes out of a recognition that the context in which the alliance operates is quite different now than it was during its first half-century. At least three main reasons for this can be discerned.

The war on terrorism. The imperative to combat terrorism with a global reach has stretched US military capabilities, particularly those of the Army. Currently the Army has only ten active-duty divisions (down from eighteen at the end of the Cold War); nine have been, are, or soon will be deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. Only the 2ID in Korea has been unaffected by the war on terror. As part of a larger effort to transform the US military for the threats of the new century, Pentagon planners are reported to be looking at

the war plan for Korea with an eye to capitalize on growing ROK national strength and technological advances in weaponry to free up US ground forces in South Korea for missions off the peninsula.

The growth in ROK capabilities. South Korea has more than double the population of the North, and an economy thirty times greater. It can and should do more for its own defense.

Domestic changes in the ROK.

Threat Perception. Nations form security alliances to counter common threats. When the threat diminishes or disappears, or when an alliance member's perception of the threat declines, the foundation for the alliance is weakened and possibly destroyed. As mentioned above, South Korea after the Pyongyang summit appears determined to operate on the assumption that the North has fundamentally changed and that a new cooperative relationship has been forged. For the United States, however, North Korea remains a threat, part of the axis of evil, and a potential supplier of weapons of mass destruction to anyone willing to pay for them.

The US-ROK alliance cannot long endure in its current form if the United States is seen as more concerned with the security of South Korea than are South Koreans themselves. Recent polls show that a majority of South Koreans think the United States benefits more from the alliance than does the ROK, and that only 9 percent of South Koreans consider North Korean nuclear weapons to be a major concern. Another poll shows Americans, Europeans, and Australians more worried about North Korea's going nuclear than are South Koreans.

Demographics. The older conservative majority with memories of the Korean War and its aftermath has been supplanted by politically active younger generations whose views of the two countries of greatest importance to the security of the ROK—the United States and North Korea—are decidedly different from those of their parents and grandparents. Voters in their twenties and thirties now make up 50 percent of the electorate; when those in their forties are included, they exceed 70 percent. They are educated, affluent, nationalistic, skeptical of (if not outright hostile to) the United States, and see the North more as an object of pity than as a threat. While currently a (bare) majority of South Koreans supports the continued presence of USFK, the numbers are steadily declining as the population becomes more “progressive.”

Pressures on USFK. After half a century, South Korea is becoming less hospitable to US forces. Lingering embarrassment over not being self-reliant in defense matters often manifests itself as resentment

against the presence of USFK. US military installations that used to be in the countryside have been enveloped by urban sprawl. A “not in my backyard” sentiment has surfaced—while Yongsan is the best known, it is not the only installation that is the target of protests by local citizens objecting to the presence of foreign military bases in their cities. The area between Seoul and the DMZ is increasingly urbanized and congested, making it harder for US ground forces to train. The chances of accidents happening, such as the deaths in June 2002 of two schoolgirls run over by a US armored vehicle on maneuvers, will only increase.

The South Korean media, some of it government controlled, have added to the pressure, accentuating the negative aspects of hosting US forces. The Status of Forces Agreement has become a lightning rod, with denunciation of the “unfair SOFA” a staple in the media. (Polls show that more than 85 percent of South Koreans want the SOFA to be revised; they also show that two-thirds of Koreans admit to knowing nothing about the provisions of the agreement.)

The above, coupled with a long-standing reluctance on the part of ROK governments to intercede with their citizens on controversial issues associated with the presence of USFK, have left American forces in the untenable position of trying to contend with local concerns that clearly are the responsibility of the host government.

Mainstreaming of Anti-Americanism. The “candlelight” demonstrations in 2002–2003 were different from previous outbreaks of anti-Americanism in South Korea. For the first time, members of the critically important middle class joined elements in South Korea long opposed to the US (and USFK). Individual Americans—and especially US military personnel—were subject to abuse and assault. Moreover, neither the government nor any of the candidates in the 2002 presidential election—including the candidate from the right—defended the alliance or criticized the excesses of the anti-American demonstrations, perhaps foreshadowing the future of ROK politics.

For the first time in the five-decades-old relationship, anti-Americanism in South Korea elicited a reaction in the United States. Protests in Korea received an unusually large amount of press coverage in the United States, triggering a reaction in post-9/11 America. There does not appear to be much patience for an ally long protected by the United States who is seen as turning away from its alliance partner and toward its principal adversary. Former supporters of South Korea in the United States began publicly questioning the utility of continuing to protect people who seem not to value or desire that protection. There are indications that anti-Americanism accelerated the Korea portion of

the global transformation of the US military that the administration already was planning.

Accusations of an “unfair SOFA” are now being countered by US officials, who cite the “unfair” (and immoral) tripwire. In answer to demands from anti-American protesters for “American forces out of Korea,” a Pentagon official asserted just before the initial meeting of the FOTA that USFK could be gone “in a day” if that was the desire of Koreans.

IV. Conclusion

US plans for a major adjustment to the defense relationship and the anti-Korea backlash in evidence in the spring of 2003 seem to have gotten the attention of the Roh Moo-hyun government as well as many ROK citizens. Anti-American demonstrations have largely died out, at least temporarily. President Roh, who as an opposition member of the National Assembly had once advocated the withdrawal of USFK, now emphasizes the continuing importance of USFK and the need to modernize the alliance. His visit to the White House in May 2003 was a success, and he and President Bush seem to have established a good working relationship. In the face of strong public opposition, he has ordered an additional 3,000 ROK troops to Iraq to augment the 500 medical and support personnel already there.

His political position at home is precarious, however. A year after his election, Roh’s approval rating has plummeted to the 30 percent range, with half of his former supporters saying in December 2003 that they regretted having voted for him. Relations with the opposition-dominated National Assembly are strained, and allegations of corruption swirl around him, his family, and his presidential staff. Roh has weakened his own political standing by publicly questioning his own ability to govern, going so far as to propose a referendum on his leadership (something for which there is no provision in the constitution).

The United States is contending with the North Korean nuclear challenge while trying to prevent further deterioration of its alliance with the ROK as it simultaneously attempts to make historic changes to the nature of the alliance. The deep divisions within South Korean society compound the difficulty of these tasks—President Roh presides over a South Korea badly split on ideological, generational, and regional lines, conflicted over how to deal with the North, and ambivalent about the alliance with the United States. (Incredibly, a poll taken in early 2004 showed that 39 percent of South Koreans viewed the United States as the biggest threat to South Korea’s security; only 33 percent identified North Korea. Koreans in their twenties chose the United States over North Korea by a 3 to 1 margin, those in their thirties by a 2 to 1 margin.) And while other polls show a majority still considers the presence of USFK to be necessary, the numbers are down significantly in recent years, and even larger majorities have an unfavorable opinion of the United States, with two-thirds of those in their twenties and thirties saying that they either dislike or hate the United States.

To borrow a phrase from Wall Street, the Korean peninsula is “in play,” and it is far from clear what the future holds for the US-ROK alliance or for the security of South Korea. One thing, though, is increasingly clear: by the end of President Roh’s term in 2008, the US presence in South Korea and the US-ROK alliance will look substantially different than it looks today.

NOTES

¹ The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the author writing in a private capacity.

² The National Command and Military Authorities are the secretary of defense and the president on the US side and the minister of national defense and the president on the ROK side.

CHANGES IN THE COMBINED OPERATIONS ARRANGEMENT IN KOREA¹

Kim Jae-chang

The United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) established an effective alliance during the Korean War and formalized that alliance following the war by signing the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The essence of this treaty calls for the two nations to maintain a strong military alliance.¹ Based on this agreement, the United States dispatched combat units to the Korean peninsula and formed combined forces with the combat units of the ROK. During the Cold War, the alliance successfully maintained security on the Korean peninsula, which contributed to the regional stability of Northeast Asia. Although they have not yet resolved the Korean question, both nations have expressed their intent to maintain the alliance even after the reunification of the peninsula.²

During the Cold War, the alliance used a strategy of deterrence against North Korea even as both nations prepared to defeat the enemy in case deterrence failed. This strategy worked well for both partners of the alliance because the US and the ROK wanted the *status quo* on the peninsula.

After the Cold War, however, neither alliance partner felt bound to the restrictions required for maintaining the *status quo* on the peninsula as they had previously. In January 2002, President Bush declared the North Korean regime a member of the “axis of evil”; this statement sent a strong message to both nations on the Korean peninsula. The ROK did not remain passive in its relations with North Korea, but adopted an engagement policy in an attempt to reduce military tension and to achieve a peaceful solution on the peninsula.

Both partners of the alliance are now using their own dynamic methods in dealing with North Korea in contrast to the more static modes used during the Cold War. During the Cold War, North Korea was an important part of the Soviet bloc and thus played a bigger role in the United States’ policy of containment of communism. Now, from the US perspective, it is no more than a rogue state that is located adjacent to one of its key regional alliances. The US also views North Korea as an adversary in its global war on terrorism. Thus the US deals with North Korea from a global or regional perspective while the ROK must consider the implications of dealing with a neighbor who also resides on the same peninsula. Because of the difficulties associated with a reunited Korea, the ROK government is determined to achieve a peaceful unification with the North.

The operational arrangements reflect the strategy of the country they serve. The US strategy is based mostly on a global perspective whereas the ROK's strategy is focused more on the Korean question. For the US-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), planning for operational employment on the basis of two different strategic visions is proving difficult. In the coming decades the CFC must attempt to harmonize the changes in each nation's operational force arrangements to serve the combined objective on the Korean peninsula.

Historical Background

When the Korean War ended in 1953, there were 302,000 US troops in Korea deployed along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). In 1954 the US began to withdraw a major portion of the forces that participated in the Korean War, leaving only two divisions along the western corridor of the Korean peninsula. In 1969, President Nixon declared that US allies would bear the primary responsibility for their own security.³ By March 1971, one of the two US divisions of the US Forces Korea, amounting to 20,000 troops, withdrew to the United States and an ROK army division took over the sector.

The two governments took the prudent measure of creating the US-ROK Combined Corps Headquarters in order to fill the gap created by the reduction of US ground troops.⁴ The Third Tactical Fighter Wing of the US Air Force was also created at Kunsan. This new headquarters took charge of the defense of Seoul. The two governments also began combined exercises: Focus Retina, Freedom Bolt, and Team Spirit. These exercises demonstrated not only US commitment to Korea but also US capability of rapid deployment of combat troops from the US continent to Korea in case of hostilities.

In 1977, President Carter devised a force withdrawal plan from Korea, but the US canceled this plan before it was completed. The plan consisted of three phased withdrawals of US forces from Korea. The first phase of the plan was implemented starting in June 1977, and by December 1978, 3,400 ground forces troops had returned to the United States, leaving 37,000 US troops in Korea. In 1978, the two governments created the US-ROK Combined Forces Command, which took charge of the entire defense of the Korean peninsula. In late 1979, President Carter reassessed the strategic situation in Northeast Asia and finally scrapped his withdrawal plan.

Current discussions of the US troop redeployment in Korea reflect the North Korean nuclear threat, the change in the South Korean threat perception, and advancements in military technology.

Changes in Korea's Strategic Environment

Increased North Korean Military Threat

Kim Jong-il's regime persistently pursues a military-first policy for North Korea. Despite its miserable economic conditions, North Korea allocates 20–25 percent of the nation's GNP to sustaining and improving its armed forces. According to statistics, in 2003 Kim Jong-il visited 87 places in North Korea to deliver direct teachings to North Korean workers and officials. Among them, 61 military units were included, thus accounting for 70 percent of all his activities outside of his office.⁵ With their alleged nuclear weapons, North Korean missiles threaten not only the ROK but also all neighboring countries. Military experts claim that the North Korean military threat has grown bigger, closer, and deadlier since 2000.

North Korea's Psychological Offensive

Since the division of the Korean peninsula, there have been indigenous communist activist groups and pro-Pyongyang sympathizers in the South. During the Korean War, North Korea's attempt to subdue the South through a combination of armed attack and an activist-led uprising in the South failed miserably. Now, it is clear that North Korea is trying to use this sympathy in the ROK to drive a wedge between the US and the ROK. If North Korea adopts Sun-Tzu's theory of warfare, then disrupting the alliance between the US and ROK will have a higher priority than destroying the armed forces of South Korea.⁶ It is clear that the North Koreans never miss an opportunity to use anti-American rallies in the South to show up the problems in trying to maintain the US-ROK alliance.

Advancement in Military Technologies

The US-ROK alliance is determined to defend Seoul from a possible North Korean attack. Since Seoul is located less than forty miles from the DMZ, it is vulnerable to North Korean surprise attack. Tactically, it made sense for the Combined Forces to deploy as many troops as possible to the forward area for the defense of Seoul. Advancements in modern military technology, however, have enabled us to change the concepts, organization, processes, and equipment used to achieve gains in operational effectiveness, operating efficiencies, and cost reductions. The US confirmed the need for military transformation and new concepts during the recent Iraqi war. The time has come to rethink operational arrangements in Korea in light of the advantages of modern military technologies.

Discussions on Changes in Operational Arrangements

Defense officials in the United States and South Korea began discussing redeployment of the US forces in Korea in early 2003. For the last fifty years the US has deployed its combat units north of the Han River close to the MDL, providing a strong defense capability in the event of a renewal of hostilities. These forces are thus at significant risk from North Korean artillery. Taking advantage of advances in military art and science, the Pentagon has proposed redeployment of the US ground forces further south in Korea.

Redeployment of US Combat Units South of the Han River

In the 35th Security Consultative Meeting between Secretary Rumsfeld and Minister Cho, both nations reaffirmed the principle of realignment and consolidation of the US forces in Korea into two hubs south of the Han River. Both men said that although realignment of the ground units would begin as soon as possible, the timing of the relocation would be determined by the highest national authorities. The US 2nd Infantry Division and its supporting units, which are deployed north of the Han River and oversee one of North Korea's major avenues of approach to Seoul, would be the largest US combat force that would move south.

Although Pentagon officials have said that repositioning US forces away from the DMZ will actually increase deterrence and correct an outdated deployment plan from Cold War days, the move alters the security equation on the peninsula. First, since the new locations are out of the range of North Korean artillery, the US ground assets would be better protected in the beginning of an outbreak of hostilities. From an operational perspective, keeping the US ground forces in the rear area comparatively safe in the first stage of conflict increases efficiency in the use of forces in the Korean theater. This is positive.

Second, relocating US ground units south of the Han River also warns North Korea of the increased possibility of a preemptive strike, at least from the North Korean perspective, on its nuclear facilities. On July 6, 2003, North Korea's Radio Pyongyang claimed that the redeployment of the 2nd Infantry Division was an attempt by the US to position its forces to launch preemptive strikes on North Korea. Secretary Rumsfeld helped to confirm North Korean fears when he said that "with North Korea threatening war, a US threat to strike against Yongbyon will not be credible while American forces remain deployed in positions vulnerable to North Korean rocket and artillery attack."⁷

Third, the redeployment of US forces is compatible with the concept that the US takes a leading role in regional stability and the ROK a supporting role, whereas the ROK takes a leading role in the security of the Korean peninsula and the US a supporting role. The new arrangements certainly increase the strategic flexibility of the US in Northeast Asia, while they place a greater burden on the ROK for its defense. In order to create this new arrangement, the US will have to transfer selected missions to the ROK military. Military experts

are now trying to determine how the ROK army can effectively take over the missions that the US ground units maintained in the forward area, especially the counter-artillery measures.

Fourth, the expectation that relocation of US combat units further south will reduce anti-American sentiment among South Koreans may not be well founded. Those who lead anti-American rallies are not the people living around the US forward camps but are usually from somewhere else. Actually, those who live in the forward area are more sensitive to the North Korean military threat and have maintained good relations with the US troops. US troops and local residents have had a long time to adjust themselves overcoming their cultural differences. Although South Korea has a few US units in the rear, an increased number of ground troops there will create new civil-military issues and will require time for mutual adjustment.

Fifth, successful deterrence rests in theory on the counterbalance provided by the combined forces. The effective combination of the US capability of maneuver warfare supported by long-range precision weapons and that of the forward-deployed Korean army would create enhanced deterrence. In practice, however, deterrence relies more on North Korea's perception of the new operational arrangements and US intent concerning defense of the Korean peninsula than on the counterbalance of the combined forces. Considering North Korean paranoia over the illusion of unification by means of military force and its military-first policy, redeployment may send the wrong signal to the North.

Relocation of US Forces from the Seoul Metropolitan Area

The two governments reviewed agreements for the relocation of US forces from the Seoul metropolitan area during the Security Consultative Meeting in Seoul last November. In Seoul are the command structures of the US forces and their supporting units: United Nations Command (UNC), US-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), US Forces Command in Korea (USFK), and the Eighth United States Army (EUSA). Seoul was a small city with a population of 2 million at the end of the Korean War when USFK established bases in Yongsan, a suburb on the outskirts of Seoul. In the last fifty years the city of Seoul has grown to 17 million people and the Yongsan Garrison is now in the middle of the Seoul metropolitan area. Large numbers of US forces based in Seoul, stationed on prime real estate, have become a focal point for anti-American demonstrations. The two governments agreed to work jointly on relocation of the Yongsan Garrison at the earliest possible date.⁸

Compared with the relocation of the combat units, the move of the command group has political and psychological implications. First, the location of USFK's command group has symbolic meaning for the alliance: its presence helps to demonstrate US resolve on deterrence. In deterrence is rooted the stability of the Korean peninsula for the last several decades, which provided a favorable environment for economic prosperity and political development. Deterrence

was built on the combination of the demonstrated resolve of the US government to defend the Korean peninsula and its ability to reinforce forward deployed forces with continental-based US forces. In that sense, the location of the USFK command group in Seoul has not only its real military value but also uncountable symbolic meaning. Although the US and South Korea agreed that relocation of the Yongsan Garrison would serve the overall interests of both governments, measures are necessary to help ease the psychological concerns of those who fear that relocation will weaken the bond between the two partners.

From the ROK perspective, it is better to have the operational command element of the alliance, US-ROK Combined Forces Command, close to the Korean national command authority. From the military operational perspective, the CFC is the link between the two military organizations in peace and in war. Since the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Korean armed forces is located in Seoul, locating CFC away from Seoul would not serve the effective coordination between the two alliance partners. In the event of a crisis it might be hard to coordinate between political objectives and military means if the operational command were located far from the national command authority.

Increasing the Quality and Decreasing the Quantity of the US Forces in Korea

The US plans to invest \$11 billion to enhance the combat power of the US forces in Korea over the next three years: this program includes upgrading missile systems and reinforcing military intelligence assets. Military experts believe that the improvements the US military has made in firepower, accuracy, and rapid force deployment capabilities mean that fewer US forces are required on the Korean peninsula. They believe the US force in Korea will be more agile and more lethal in the near future although it will be smaller.

To achieve effective teamwork, both partners will need to take proactive measures. First, ROK forces need to prepare to take over missions from the US forces in the forward area of operations. Second, the ROK needs to transform its military to more effectively adapt to the new environment. Third, the relocation of the US ground units should be timed in connection with the progress of the military transformation of the ROK forces so as not to create a defensive gap in the process of relocation.

Further Adjustments Required

Although both partners of the alliance are pressuring North Korea to take measures to show positive change, the most important goal of the US-ROK alliance is to prevent a repeat of the Korean War. Deterrence capability is essential to sending the proper signal to the North that the alliance has both the intent and the capability to defend the Korean peninsula. In the 1970s, when the US withdrew 20,000 troops from Korea, it was necessary to make North Korea understand that the US had the capability of rapid force projection in case of

hostilities. Combined exercises were one of the effective tools for communicating US commitment and capability. In Focus Retina, the US demonstrated its force projection capability by moving 2,500 troops to Korea from the US continent in only 31 hours by mobilizing seventy-seven C-130 aircraft. Furthermore, the US and ROK decision to locate the 2nd Infantry Division north of the Han River and close to the DMZ conveyed a clear signal to the North. These measures certainly contributed to the deterrence of war even though the alliance reduced the number of troops in Korea. In deterrence, perceptions matter as much as capability.

The redeployment of US troops south of the Han River is distinguished from the operational changes of the 1970s in terms of effective deterrence. Military experts say that the goal of realignment is to most effectively deter a North Korean attack and defend South Korea should an attack come. From North Korea's perspective, however, consolidation and relocation of the US troops into two hubs south of the Han River might be interpreted as a weakening of the intent of the US. Based on the experience of the 1970s, proper measures are required to convey the right signal to the North of both US intent and capability concerning the defense of the Korean peninsula.

Conclusion

Redeployment of US ground troops in South Korea to the south of the Han River will open a new era in the security alliance between the US and the ROK. Although the alliance has not solved the Korean question, it is undertaking a new operational arrangement for a new division of labor in Korea. For regional stability, the US takes a primary role whereas the ROK takes a supporting role; and for the security of the peninsula, the ROK takes the primary role whereas the US takes a supporting role. Although advances in modern military technology have made these changes possible, measures for preventing North Korea from misunderstanding them are necessary.

NOTES

¹ According to Article 4, "The Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air, and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement."

² See the Joint Research Report by Jonathan D. Pollack and Young Koo Cha, *A New Alliance for the Next Century: The Future of US-Korean Security Cooperation* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1995).

³ The Nixon Doctrine. In 1969, President Nixon claimed that although the US would honor all the commitments it had made in the quarter of a century since the end of World War II, its allies, outside of Western Europe and Japan, would bear the primary responsibility for their own security. Douglas J. Murray and Paul R. Viotti, eds., *The Defense Policies of Nations* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p. 25.

⁴ The Corps was named the First Corps (ROK-US) Group in 1971 and renamed as Combined Field Army (ROK-US) in March 1980 and decommissioned after the ROK Third Army took over its mission in July 1992.

⁵ Ministry of Unification, Weekly Report on North Korea, No. 673, Dec. 12–Dec. 18, 2003, p. 5.

⁶ Roger Ames, trans., *Sun-Tzu, The Art of Warfare* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), p. 111.

⁷ Robyn Lim, “Rumsfeld Warns China on Korea,” *New York Times*, March 13, 2003.

⁸ Joint Press Conference of the 35th US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting (November 17, 2003).

DOMESTIC POLITICS AND THE CHANGING CONTOURS OF THE ROK-US ALLIANCE: THE END OF THE STATUS QUO

Lee Chung-min

As the Republic of Korea and the United States celebrated their fiftieth anniversary in October 2003, both sides could rightfully claim to have built one of the most successful, unique alliances in the post-World War II era. To be sure, other alliances have also surpassed the symbolic half-century threshold—NATO and the US-Japan alliance are among the more prominent strategic relationships forged in the aftermath of World War II and the Korean conflict. The rebirth and reconstruction of Germany and Japan as democratic, economic giants in the postwar era would have been impossible without alliances that were conceptualized, led, and sustained by the United States. Likewise, the ROK-US alliance's overall success can be summarized as follows.

I. The End of the Status Quo

First, despite the accidental nature of the alliance, it has persevered and prospered for five decades. Although the ROK-US alliance continues to function as South Korea's key security pillar, virtually no one could have predicted in the late 1940s that South Korea would be enjoined firmly in an alliance with the United States well into the twenty-first century.¹ Second, notwithstanding the preponderance of military and security issues, the alliance has branched out incrementally since the late 1970s to cover increasingly important economic and trade issues as well. In the aftermath of the first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993, the alliance has also coped with nonproliferation as a major security and political agenda, as illustrated by the ongoing second North Korean crisis. Third, the alliance has survived key political and generational transitions. These include South Korea's democratization since the late 1980s and Seoul's changing security consensus and threat perceptions vis-à-vis North Korea that began in earnest under the Kim Dae-jung administration (1998–2003). The latter only sharpened with the inauguration of Roh Moo-hyun in February 2003.

Despite a strong *raison d'être* for maintaining the alliance in the face of security and military threats emanating from North Korea and the uncertainties associated with the unification process, the alliance today is undeniably in the midst of major change and transformation. The arrival of the Roh government in February 2003—the most liberal regime to be voted into power in South

Korea since the country's founding in 1948—in many respects has hastened ongoing discussions to modify the alliance. However, even if the conservative opposition party had won the presidential election in December 2002, changes in the alliance would likely have been inescapable.² In other words, while there is little doubt that the Roh administration accelerated the pace of revamping the alliance (such as the recent decision to relocate the US 2nd Infantry Division to an area south of Seoul), adjustments in the alliance were, in many respects, long overdue.

In large part, the propensity for maintaining the status quo was shaped by the rigid nature of the inter-Korean and Northeast Asian strategic balance, coupled with successive South Korean and American governments that placed a premium on managing rather than modernizing the alliance. The rationale for maintaining an alliance with a focused mission—namely, successfully deterring the outbreak of another major war on the Korean peninsula—remains as valid today as it was five decades ago. Nonetheless, though deterring the outbreak of a second Korean conflict continues to drive the alliance, almost all of the central elements that contributed to a focused strategic outlook have changed over the past two decades. For example, North Korea's revelations since October 2002 that it was working on a highly enriched uranium nuclear weapons program, and intermittent assertions that it deserves the right to have nuclear deterrent capabilities have shifted the contours of the security debate on the Korean peninsula.³ While Seoul has repeatedly stated that it would not tolerate a North Korea with nuclear weapons, it remains uncertain what South Korea would do if North Korea is verified to have nuclear weapons capabilities already.⁴ Equally worrisome is the growing possibility of structural change in North Korea, including regime or state collapse. Worsening economic conditions, the rising number of refugees, high-level defectors, and Pyongyang's narrowing exit strategy suggest that the status quo within North Korea is probably not sustainable.⁵ If so, the ROK-US alliance would be forced to reckon with a range of offline or nonlinear scenarios that would entail comprehensive crisis management, the reconfiguration of the US Forces Korea (USFK), and co-drafting post-unification alliance management requirements. In short, the "alliance menu" has broadened and both sides have to make new accommodations if the strategic partnership is to be sustained into the post-unification era.

The inauguration of the Roh administration also brought to the fore new political forces and agendas including a growing desire on the part of South Korea to foster a more balanced and equal alliance.⁶ While President Roh Moo-hyun toned down his rhetoric vis-à-vis the alliance since entering *Chongwadae* (the official presidential residence), his limited foreign policy experience, coupled with populist streaks, caused significant unease throughout the summer and fall of 2003.⁷ As a result, revamping or reengineering the alliance emerged as one of the new government's most important agendas. This impetus coincided with matching moves in the United States fundamentally to review the alliance, including the desirability of maintaining some 37,000 US troops in South Korea.

As an example, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stated in February 2003 that a review of US troops levels in South Korea would be initiated once President Roh assumed office. More recently, Rumsfeld noted that the USFK could be moved away from the “Seoul area and from near the DMZ, and be more oriented towards an air hub and a sea hub.” In late April 2003, when asked whether he expected to see some withdrawal of US forces from East Asia (including Korea), Rumsfeld answered that while he had no intentions of announcing such a move, “it’s an appropriate time for us to review that [changing the status of US forces] and so we will be reviewing.”⁸ In addition, Secretary of State Colin Powell noted on February 25 after a round of meetings with Roh administration officials that the United States reaffirmed its security commitment to the ROK and “our intention to keep a presence in the region.” Powell also went on to say, however, that “*we of course should constantly review that presence*, in close coordination and consultation with the South Korean government, and we should have transparency in these discussions and rules should be no surprises.”⁹ (emphasis added).

At the tail end of the Kim Dae-jung administration, the South Korean government maintained that no official discussions had yet taken place on relocating the US 2nd Infantry Division to an area south of Seoul. However, following the inauguration of the Roh government in April 2003, the ROK and the United States began the first round of the so-called Future of the Alliance Initiative dialogue. The first meeting took place in Seoul from April 8-9, and the second conference was held from May 6-7, just prior to the first Roh-Bush summit.¹⁰ According to remarks made by a senior US defense official who participated in the first round of discussions, the future status of the US forces in South Korea was not a part of the official agenda. Rather, the primary impetus for the talks was to set the stage for “preparing the alliance to meet emerging challenges.”¹¹ Nonetheless, by the time the third round of talks was held in June 2003, the two sides announced that a reconfiguration of the USFK would be implemented in a two-phased plan. In the first phase, US forces currently deployed in areas north of Seoul would be consolidated onto larger more modern camps, with final relocation into key hubs south of Seoul during the second phase.¹² Following the annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in Seoul in November 2003, Secretary Rumsfeld confirmed that the reconsolidation of the USFK would be implemented as part of a joint transformation effort. In particular, Rumsfeld noted that:

...Any changes to US military posture in Northeast Asia will be the product of the closest consultation with our key allies. Most important, they will result in increased US capabilities in the region. Whatever adjustments we make will reflect the new technologies that are available, the new capabilities, and they will strengthen our ability to deter and, if necessary, defeat any aggressions against allies such as South Korea. Above all nothing we do

will diminish our commitment to Korea's security or our ability to fulfill our obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaty.¹³

II. The Limitations of Default Alliance Management

South Korea today confronts five interlocking challenges that are likely to drive the future shape, roles and missions, and political makeup of the alliance. Each of these tasks demands the closest of consultations and policy coordination with the United States, although it is equally important to note that both sides must contend with a significantly different political milieu. The critical issue for South Korea is to understand that henceforth, the choices it makes vis-à-vis the alliance will have direct consequences for its security as it heads into the unification tunnel.¹⁴ A certain level of angst has always permeated the alliance, given Korea's historical mistrust of the great powers and growing desire to pursue greater security autonomy commensurate with its relatively increased national capabilities. The alliance has also weathered significant disagreements and tensions, such as the spillover from the so-called Koreagate affair in the late 1970s and the Carter administration's initial decision to withdraw US forces from South Korea. The enunciation of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, the strategic opening with China and the withdrawal of the US 7th Infantry Division in 1972, and the fall of South Vietnam in 1975, among other developments, resulted in significant doubts about the depth of US commitment to the defense of South Korea.

If the Korean strategic template undergoes significant change, South Korea will have to grapple with a range of issues with which it has not contended before. Alliance management by design, rather than default, will become the hallmark of the Seoul-Washington relationship in the years to follow. Specifically, five major areas are going to drive alliance futures. First and most urgent is North Korea's nuclear quagmire and attendant consequences. Thus far, Pyongyang has been able to solicit significant assistance and aid from South Korea, the United States, Japan, the European Union, and selective international organizations, owing to its nuclear brinkmanship. If North Korea chooses not to roll back its nuclear weapons program and opts to make permanent its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would have to consider coercive measures, including economic sanctions.¹⁵ Conversely, a comprehensive package could thwart North Korea's nuclear ambitions, provided that the Bush administration can convince the North that while it would not support the signing of a nonaggression pact, it would provide the North with equally strong political assurances. South Korea, the United States, and Japan could also entice North Korea by agreeing to provide their own version of a "Marshall Plan" toward the North if Pyongyang rescinds its decision to withdraw from the NPT and agrees to submit to IAEA safeguard agreement provisions.

Second, the status of the USFK (including its relocation south of Seoul), concomitant force improvement measures by ROK armed forces, and redefining roles and missions of the US-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) are bound to assume the lion's share of the alliance's forthcoming political and military discussions. To be sure, this is not the first time that changes have been sought in the US military presence in South Korea. Reassessing the optimal USFK footprint on the Korean peninsula dates back to 1949, when all US combat forces were withdrawn a year before the outbreak of the Korean War. In 1971, the Nixon Administration chose to withdraw the 7th Infantry Division in tandem with the so-called Nixon or Guam Doctrine.¹⁶ During the 1976 US presidential campaign, Jimmy Carter asserted that given South Korea's growing economic edge, continuing US commitment to South Korea's defense, and ongoing force modernization program in the South Korean military, it was time to withdraw US ground troops from the ROK. In 1977, the Carter administration announced that it would begin just such as incremental withdrawal, pending close consultations with Seoul. In February 1979, Carter stated that "further troop withdrawals from the ROK would be held in abeyance pending assessment of a number of North Asian developments" after it was revealed that North Korea's military strength continued to grow in the late 1970s, contrary to earlier intelligence assessments.¹⁷

One major reason for concern is that new domestic political forces in South Korea are accelerating a change in Seoul's security consensus. These include sharp internal divisions on the reality of the North Korean military threat, the need for a sustained deployment of US forces in South Korea, and whether a US alliance is warranted in the post-Cold War era. Clearly, despite the rise in anti-American demonstrations in late 2002, following the accidental death of two South Korean students by US soldiers during a training exercise in June of that year, most South Koreans remain wary of a sudden US military withdrawal from South Korea. That said, if reengineering the alliance is driven primarily on the basis of South Korean sentiments such as growing nationalism, a desire for greater autonomy, and mismatched threat perceptions, the consequences for South Korea's long-term security could be high, and more importantly, irreversible.

Third, in order for Seoul and Washington to sustain the alliance well into the twenty-first century, both sides must jointly formulate a longer-term strategic rationale. As South Korea and the United States celebrated the alliance's fiftieth anniversary in October 2003, the two sides could have issued a comprehensive joint declaration akin to the April 17, 1996 "US-Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century," signed by President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto. The joint declaration emphasized the need to accentuate bilateral, regional, and global cooperation, and concluded by noting that "the three legs of the US-Japan relationship—security political, and economic—are based on shared values and rest on the mutual confidence embodied in the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security."¹⁸ Moreover, during the fiftieth anniversary

of the Atlantic Alliance in April 1999, the heads of state and government of the North Atlantic Council declared, in part, that “we will maintain both the political solidarity and the military forces necessary to protect our nations and to meet the security challenges of the next century.” The joint declaration also noted that “our Alliance remains open to all European democracies, regardless of geography, willing and able to meet the responsibilities of membership.”¹⁹ The changing political and strategic contours of the ROK-US alliance mean that preparations should begin in earnest to enable the alliance to transition smoothly into the post-North Korean threat era. In this respect, it would also be worthwhile to pay serious attention to launching a “two plus two” foreign and defense ministers’ conference between South Korea and the United States, akin to the annual US-Australian and US-Japanese foreign and defense ministers’ meetings. Although the US-ROK SCM has been held annually since 1968 and the annual Military Consultative Meeting (MCM) since 1978, outstanding security issues dictate the need for a new format that would formalize a “two plus two” meeting.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly in the context of evolving South Korean politics, is the need to begin a concerted public diplomacy campaign in South Korea to build a new consensus for the alliance. Public support for the alliance has shifted over the years but pronounced differences began to surface in the early 1990s, coincident with the end of the Cold War and South Korea’s accelerated democratization. While the majority of South Koreans continue to believe in the need for a strong alliance that includes the presence of US forces, perceptions remain sharply divided across generational and ideological lines. The outpouring of unprecedented anti-Americanism in South Korea in fall 2002 was largely situation-specific, related to the public outcry against the two students’ deaths and two US servicemen’s subsequent exoneration. But it cannot be denied that deeper forces were also at work, notably South Korea’s increasingly ambiguous perception of the North Korean threat. Indeed, although still a minority, some South Koreans believe that North Korea, as a sovereign state, should have the right to develop nuclear weapons, and moreover, that even if North Korea has nuclear weapons, it would not use them against fellow Koreans. Coupled with unease at the preponderance of American power in the post-Cold War era but particularly in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, many younger South Koreans no longer equate South Korean security as intimately tied to the ROK-US alliance.

Fifth, South Korea must set key policy priorities as it seeks to address a condominium of security interests and long-term threats. For the time being, the ROK has no choice but to focus its primary defense efforts on deterring threats from the North. Under the rubric of its “New Defense for the 21st Century,” the Ministry of National Defense has emphasized its own version of defense transformation with a greater focus on capabilities-based defense planning.²⁰ The ROK envisions the creation of an “Advanced Elite Defense” structure based on an “omni-directional” defense posture. To this end, it seeks to implement force-

restructuring schemes with a greater emphasis on more maneuverable, flexible forces. That said, South Korea must also set in place force planning measures that will enable it to meet short-term threats (principally from North Korea) and mid- to long-term threats (regional and unconventional)—all within very limiting budgetary constraints. By most indicators, the ROK armed forces have grown into a fairly robust force. Among seventeen nations in the Asia-Pacific region, South Korea's cumulative defense spending from 1998 to 2002 ranked fourth following Japan, China, and India.²¹ In terms of troop strength, South Korea's 690,000 force level rank fifth in the Asia-Pacific region. Notwithstanding the importance of quantitative capabilities, however, South Korea has to think seriously about converting its force once unification occurs. For the past five decades, the ROK has devoted almost all of its force planning and defense contingencies to the North Korean threat, with a premium on its central military relationship with the United States. But domestic political change in South Korea, accelerated transformation in North Korea, or a combination of these two phenomena, could expedite South Korea's defense posture and strategies.

As the ROK seeks to exploit the advantages in emerging military technologies and selectively applies lessons learned since the early 1990s (such as the Gulf War, the NATO campaign in Kosovo, the ongoing Afghanistan campaign, and the recently concluded war in Iraq), it has little choice but to downsize its ground forces. More importantly, the ROK must also decide the type of forces it would require when the North Korean threat recedes significantly—in the event of rapid South-North reconciliation and rapprochement—or conversely, if North Korea collapses. In either case, for the first time since 1910, when Korea was colonized by Japan, a unified Korea would have to contend directly with the militaries of China, Russia, and Japan. Some have argued that a unified Korea should assume an equidistant security posture between the United States and China. Others advocate strict neutrality, so that Korea will no longer be entangled in great-power alliances. A minority of defense and security experts even emphasize the need for a unified Korea to possess nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missiles to act as a counterweight against great-power ambitions and potential intervention on the Korean peninsula.

All of the options noted above, however, would most probably result in heightened security concerns for a unified Korea, despite the proclivity to weigh national sentiments in favor of more dispassionate calculations of Korea's core security interests in the post-unification era. If a unified Korea harbors nuclear weapons or other weapons of mass destruction (WMD), it would only compel the regional powers to pinpoint Korea as a central security threat, and in doing so, serve as a catalyst in spurring a dangerous new arms race in Northeast Asia. A nuclearized, unified Korea would also mean the *de facto* end of the ROK-US alliance. The prevalence of "nuclear naiveté" in South Korea—the belief in some quarters that a nuclear-armed North Korea should not concern South Korea since North Korea would never use nuclear weapons against fellow Koreans, or the equally fallacious argument that a nuclear Korea would provide a new

strategic buffer against the great powers—does not serve its strategic interests in the event of unification. Thus, one of the principal challenges that South Korea must overcome in this transitional period is to distinguish clearly the costs associated with a national security strategy that places a premium on national sentiments, versus more objective assessments of its national interests. A unified Korea should forsake nuclear and other WMD options simply because it would not only downgrade significantly Korea's strategic posture, but would also force Korea to compete militarily, head-on, with the great powers at a time when many of its financial, technical, and manpower resources will be devoted to post-unification reconstruction. In other words, the ROK must set in place security and defense paradigms that would enable it to transition relatively smoothly into the post-unification era. For the time being, the ROK-US alliance offers the best security guarantee and the best option to aid in such a transition.

III. New Alliance Dynamics: Political Change and Strategic Consequences

The election of Roh Moo-hyun as South Korea's president in December 2002 ushered in a bold new era in South Korean politics, and by extension, in the ROK-US alliance. Changes in the alliance began to emerge during the presidency of Kim Dae-jung (1998–2003), when contrasting threat perceptions (particularly after the inauguration of the Bush administration in 2001) vis-à-vis North Korea and attendant policy prescriptions often soured the relationship. Roh's victory initially caused significant consternation within and outside South Korea given his relatively novice views on foreign affairs coupled with only limited contact with the United States. Indeed, when President Roh traveled to Washington for the ROK-US summit on May 14, 2003, it was his first-ever visit to the United States. In his earlier years as a human rights lawyer and a member of the National Assembly in the late 1980s, Roh advocated distinctly unfavorable views on the alliance and at one time, even called for the withdrawal of US forces.

Throughout the campaign in fall 2003, then-candidate Roh emphasized the need to construct a more balanced relationship. In September 2002, he stated that “the Korean-American alliance should be transformed into a horizontal alliance based on a mature partnership in an era of significant change.”²² He also noted that the alliance played a key role in deterring war during the Cold War, in addition to maintaining a security environment that was conducive to South Korea's economic development. But Roh also maintained that “it is time to define a new role for the alliance as a partner that is able to extricate the Cold War from the Korean peninsula.”²³ In another speech delivered in October 2002, Roh said that if the revelations of a North Korean nuclear weapons program were true, it was necessary for the North to compromise on inspections and other aspects related to WMD. In return, he emphasized that “it is critical for the United States to desist from pursuing an adversarial

posture towards North Korea” and that “once North Korea stops its nuclear weapons efforts and at the same time, the United States drops its adversarial stance towards the North, both sides can then move towards a comprehensive solution.” Roh also stressed that “not only South Korea, but Japan can also play the role of a mediator” in order to resolve the nuclear problem between North Korea and the United States.²⁴

Roh continued to advocate a new paradigm for the ROK-US as president-elect, although his rhetoric toned down significantly compared to his prepared and impromptu remarks during the campaign. In January 2003, Roh stated that “there is a lot of concern related to the candlelight vigils in the aftermath of the death of two middle-school students...including misconceptions of the candlelight vigils as being anti-American. The key demand of the candlelight demonstrations was to call for a revision of the SOFA [Status of Forces Agreement] with a parallel desire for a more mature ROK-US relationship, but keeping in mind for the continued need for the presence of US forces.”²⁵ In his inauguration address, President Roh reemphasized the need for a strong ROK-US alliance.

... This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Korea-US alliance. It has made a significant contribution in guaranteeing our security and economic development. The Korean people are deeply grateful for this. We will foster and develop this cherished alliance. We will see to it that the alliance matures into a more reciprocal and equitable relationship. We will also expand relations with other countries, including traditional friends.²⁶

Roh’s rhetoric vis-à-vis the alliance began to shift in the aftermath of the May 2003 ROK-US summit in Washington, DC. In a joint statement issued after the summit, the two leaders announced that “they will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea” and reiterated “their strong commitment to work for the complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of North Korea’s nuclear weapons programs through peaceful means based on international cooperation.”²⁷ President Roh mentioned at a press conference that “when I left Korea, I had both concerns and hopes in my mind. Now, after having talked to President Bush, I have gotten rid of all of my concerns, and now I return to Korea with hopes in my mind.” During a second meeting that was held in Bangkok during the annual APEC meeting, Bush and Roh issued another joint statement which emphasized that they discussed the North Korean nuclear issue, Iraq reconstruction, and upgrading the ROK-US alliance. Roh’s decision to dispatch an additional 3,000 troops to Iraq in addition to the 670 noncombatants already stationed in Iraq, as well as the first round of the Six Party Talks that were held in Beijing in August 2003, all contributed to a successful summit. However, the deployment of additional combat forces to Iraq continued to simmer in South Korea as a major political issue.

As President Roh marked his first anniversary in office in February 2004, significant aspects of alliance discord had been resolved. The most challenging issue facing the government now is how to offset its instinctively nationalistic sentiments vis-à-vis security dependence on the United States coupled with the need to foster a more cooperative relationship with Washington in the midst of the North Korean nuclear quagmire. But as noted below, the rise of new political forces in South Korea and increasingly polarized national security and foreign policy perceptions in South Korea (including the alliance with the United States) may well result in more, not less, turbulence in the years ahead.

IV. Shifting Public Attitudes on the ROK-US Alliance

One of the most interesting and vexing aspects of South Korea's shifting attitude toward the United States resides in parallel shifts in how the public perceives North Korea and the US's related role on issues vital to the future of the Korean peninsula. It is critical to understand that public opinion in South Korea has a tendency to change rapidly and is prone to reflect situation-specific phenomena such as the 2002 incident involving the two schoolgirls. At the same time, even in the midst of sporadic outbreaks of anti-American sentiment, the public at large continues to oppose any abrupt withdrawal of US forces. As a case in point, at the height of the anti-American demonstrations in the weeks preceding the December 17, 2002, presidential election, a *Munwha Daily* poll showed that 85.7 percent of the respondents felt that the upsurge in anti-Americanism was "inevitable in light of the need to revise the unequal nature of the Korean-American relationship" and only 8.7 percent felt that such feelings "were not desirable in the context of the ongoing South-North military confrontation since it could contribute to security instability."²⁸ According to an April 2003 survey conducted by the *Donga-Ilbo* (South Korea's third-largest daily), a majority of respondents felt that bilateral relations were not good (61.4 percent), but at the very same time 84.8 percent of the respondents answered that the USFK were important (44.2 percent replied "somewhat important" while 40.6 percent answered "very important").²⁹

Other survey data bear out these bifurcated views. For instance, a joint US Gallup and Korea Gallup survey conducted in February 2002 and December 2001 respectively showed that 37 percent of Koreans "did not like" the United States, while only 37 percent said they "liked" the United States. Conversely, 58 percent of American respondents said that they "liked" Korea while 31 percent replied that they did not. Compared to an earlier Korea Gallup poll conducted in 1993, the percentage of Koreans who had favorable impressions of the United States fell from 66 percent in 1993 to 37 percent in 2001.³⁰ Still further, a poll conducted by the Sejong Institute in 1995 and a similar poll conducted by South Korea's MBC station illustrates South Korea's changing attitude toward both North Korea and the United States. In the 1995 poll, 53.7 percent of the respondents felt that North Korea could launch another war, while 36.8 percent

felt that there was little or no chance of a North Korean attack. In the 2002 poll, 68 percent of the respondents felt that North Korea should be seen as a partner to pursue peaceful unification, while 30.6 percent replied that North Korea still pursued war aims. Insofar as the US forces are concerned, 41.5 percent of the respondents stated in the 1995 poll that US forces should continue to be deployed while 45.6 percent stated that they should be withdrawn incrementally. Only 5.9 percent called for their immediate withdrawal. In 2002, only 27.6 percent of the respondents said that US forces should continue to be based in South Korea, while 55.6 percent called for an incremental withdrawal, and 16.7 percent called for an immediate withdrawal.³¹ In a January 2003 survey (after the election of Roh Moo-hyun), a KBS poll resulted in the following findings.

Poll 1: Alliance with the United States

Question: "The United States is the most important ally."

Agree Very Strongly	16.9%
Agree Strongly	44.4%
Agree Somewhat	25%
Not Really	10.6%
Not At All	3.2%

Source: "Survey on Korean-American Relations," January 16, 2003, KBS.

Poll 2: US Exploitation

Question: "The US exploits South Korea for its own interests."

Agree Very Strongly	48.2%
Agree Strongly	37.1%
Agree Somewhat	11.0%
Not Really	3.3%
Not At All	0.4%

Source: "Survey on Korean-American Relations," January 16, 2003, KBS.

Poll 3: The United States and Korean Security

Question: “The United States is necessary for Korean security.”

Agree Very Strongly	22.8%
Agree Strongly	47.2%
Agree Somewhat	20.7%
Not Really	7.2%
Not At All	2.1%

Source: “Survey on Korean-American Relations,” January 16, 2003, KBS.

Poll 4: Deployment of US Forces

Question: “US Forces should be deployed for Korean security.”

Agree Very Strongly	22.7%
Agree Strongly	30.3%
Agree Somewhat	28.0%
Not Really	13.8%
Not At All	5.2%

Source: “Survey on Korean-American Relations,” January 16, 2003, KBS.

Poll 5: US Forces and the Regional Balance of Power

Question: “US Forces are necessary to maintain stability in Northeast Asia since the presence of US forces contributes to the maintenance of a balance of power between Russia, China, and Japan.”

Agree Very Strongly	17.5%
Agree Strongly	36.2%
Agree Somewhat	28.7%
Not Really	12.6%
Not At All	5.0%

Source: “Survey on Korean-American Relations,” January 16, 2003, KBS.

If this poll can serve as a guide, one of the most interesting results is that anti-Americanism in South Korea is situation-specific. It is also shaped by “national sentiments” that the alliance is “unequal” or that the preponderance of American power is equated with American dominance over South Korea. At the same time, however, a majority of South Koreans—*over 80 percent*—believe in the need for the continued presence of US forces for South Korea *as well as*

regional stability. In part, South Korea's anti-American sentiments can also be understood in the context of antiwar sentiments, both in the Korean and other contexts. For example, according to a March 18, 2003, Gallup Korea survey on attitudes toward the US war on Iraq, only 10 percent of South Koreans supported the impending US war against Iraq—down from a 37 percent support rate reported in a February 8, 2003, survey.³² Public attitudes toward the South Korean government's decision to send an engineering battalion to Iraq were more evenly divided: 48.2 percent of respondents favored the deployment of noncombatant forces to Iraq, while 45.1 percent were opposed and 6.7 percent did not respond.³³

Public attitudes in South Korea to the alliance reflect two equally strong strands. The first is pent-up frustration and resentment against the United States, owing to the perceived heavy-handedness of US policy, the prevailing public belief that South Korea's SOFA is unfair. The second, opposing view is a realistic, abiding appreciation for the importance of maintaining US forces in South Korea and a close strategic relationship with the United States. As noted above, these mixed attitudes toward the United States and the ROK-US alliance also stem from an increasingly bifurcated view of North Korea.

Most of the South Korean public continue to believe that North Korea cannot be trusted, yet they do not perceive North Korea as a central threat to the ROK. In a late March 2003 poll, the percentage of respondents who answered that they did not like the United States (29.5 percent) slightly outweighed those who said they did not like North Korea (29.1 percent). Equally alarming was the fact that the same percentage of respondents (23 percent) answered that they liked the United States *and* North Korea, while 46 percent were neutral in their feelings toward the United States and 45.9 percent were neutral in their feelings toward North Korea.³⁴

A very wide generation gap is evident in virtually all polls, including this one, since 47.3 percent of respondents who said they did not like the United States were in their twenties, while 45 percent of those who answered that they liked the United States were in their fifties or above. At the same time, 24.8 percent of respondents who said they liked North Korea were in their twenties, while 17.7 percent of those in the fifties-and-over group answered that they liked North Korea. Of those respondents who said they did not like North Korea, 48.3 percent were in their fifties or above. In a subsequent poll taken in September 2003, however, 42 percent of respondents said they had a more favorable impression of North Korea, compared to 46.1 percent for the United States, or a slight decrease from the earlier poll.³⁵

Since the beginning of the Roh presidency, public attitude toward the United States, the USFK, and the alliance has been affected by more objective perceptions of the United States, which relate largely to North Korea's continuing nuclear threats and reduced volatility in postwar Iraq. For the most part, however, deep feelings of ambiguity remain. The following polls, conducted in September 24, 2003 by Gallup Korea, illustrate some of these changes. For example,

attitudes toward the USFK have improved slightly over the past year. Only 4.5 percent of respondents noted in September 2003 that the USFK should withdraw immediately, although 40.6 percent said that they should withdraw incrementally. Conversely, a very slight majority of 50.5 percent responded that the USFK should remain for a significant period of time, or continue to be deployed.

Poll 6: US Forces Korea

Question: “What are your feelings about the US Forces Korea?”

Withdraw immediately	4.5%
Incrementally withdraw	40.6%
Should be deployed for a significant period	31.2%
Continue to be deployed	19.3%
Don't know	4.3%

Source: Gallup Korea, September 24, 2003.

Poll 7: Feelings toward the US and North Korea

Question: “Between the United States and North Korea, toward which country do you have a more positive feeling?”

Much more toward the United States	14.7%
A bit more toward the United States	31.4%
Combined	46.1%
A bit more toward North Korea	28.4%
Much more toward North Korea	11.8%
Combined	40.2%

Source: Gallup Korea, September 24, 2003.

Poll 8: George W. Bush and Kim Jong-il

Question: “Between President George W. Bush and Chairman Kim Jong-il, which leader do you think is more threatening to peace in Korea?”

Kim Jong-il	42.1%
George W. Bush	38.0%
Don't know	19.9%

Source: Gallup Korea, September 24, 2003.

Poll 9: Approval of Roh Moo-hyun

Question: "Are you satisfied with the performance of President Roh Moo-hyun? Or not?"

Doing well	28.6%
Doing poorly	52.9%
Average	11.7%
Don't know	6.9%

Source: Gallup Korea, September 20, 2003.

While there was a slight improvement in public perception toward the United States and the role of the USFK between fall 2002 (at the height of anti-American demonstrations) and the end of 2003, it is startling to note that nearly 38 percent of South Koreans perceive President Bush as more threatening to peace on the peninsula, compared to 42.1 percent for Kim Jong-il. If the ongoing second North Korean nuclear crisis is resolved peacefully through the Six-Party Talks or parallel discussions between Washington and Pyongyang, South Korean public attitudes toward North Korea and Kim Jong-il could improve significantly. In such an instance, however, there is a strong possibility that positive attitudes toward the United States, and more importantly, toward the continuing need to maintain the USFK, could be diluted, perhaps even significantly.

In the future, it appears that the ideological and generational divide in South Korea will continue to pose serious challenges to building a national consensus on North Korean policy as well as ROK policy toward the United States. The key litmus test is likely to come if North Korea crosses the red line. For example, if Pyongyang refuses ultimately to accept International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections and proceeds with its nuclear weapons program, test fires another long-range Taepodong-1 missile (as it did in August 1998), or conducts an underground nuclear test, it will be in serious breach of previous IAEA resolutions, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the self-imposed moratorium on long-range missile tests, and the above-mentioned 1992 South-North Joint Denuclearization Declaration of the Korean Peninsula. In such an instance, South Korea will be forced to deal with two issues: whether it will continue to oppose a nuclearized North Korea, and the extent to which it will coordinate its policy with the United States, particularly in the event that North Korea crosses the red line. To be sure, the Bush administration is also in the midst of an intense debate on what to do with North Korea if Pyongyang ultimately refuses to give up its nuclear weapons program.

Before sanctions could be enacted against North Korea, the UN Security Council would have to vet the nuclear issue. Thus far, however, the council has not discussed sanctions in the context of the North Korean nuclear problem because China and Russia continue to oppose them. While negotiations are

likely to intensify and Seoul hopes to increase its leverage in the multilateral talks, the key issue is how far the United States and South Korea will be able to formulate a joint roadmap. Notwithstanding South Korean ambivalence, the Bush administration also faces a gap between rhetoric and implementable policy choices. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly testified before the US House International Relations Committee in February 2003 that US policy toward North Korea is based on four major pillars. First, the United States remains critically concerned about North Korea's plutonium, as well as its highly enriched uranium weapons program, since both programs violate the Agreed Framework, the NPT, the IAEA safeguards agreement, and the Joint South-North Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Second, despite Pyongyang's rhetoric, the nuclear program is not "just a matter between the DPRK and the United States," since it impacts international security and the global nonproliferation regime. Third, in addition to its nuclear weapons program, North Korea has seriously to address its human rights problem, issues related to its appearance on the US State Department's list of states sponsoring terrorism, the proliferation of missiles and missile-related technology, and its conventional force configuration. Fourth, the United States is not going to reward North Korea for living up to its international obligations, although the United States remains "prepared to pursue a comprehensive dialogue about a fundamentally different relationship with that country, once it eliminates its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable and irreversible manner and comes into compliance with its international obligations."³⁶

Kelly's benchmarks on the Bush administration's policy toward North Korea have remained relatively unchanged. In the aftermath of Libya's surprise announcement that it was ridding itself of WMD, some have alluded to the possibility of a similar policy decision by North Korea. For example, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage stated in an interview in December 2003 that if North Korea followed Libya's example, it "would very rapidly find herself integrated into the vibrant community of East Asia." He added that "I don't think she is going to do that, but it would be wonderful."³⁷

How South Korea reconfigures its relationship with the United States is likely to hinge significantly on a combination of four key issues: (1) whether the United States and South Korea will be able to convince North Korea to give up its WMD capabilities (including its nuclear weapons programs) in return for some type of a security guarantee and matching political and economic incentives; (2) the ROK government's shaping of the public debate over a range of security issues including its push for a more self-reliant defense posture while maintaining the ROK-US alliance; (3) continued politicization and exploitation of South Korea's relationship with the United States by civic groups, NGOs, and the media; and (4) the hold on power of a new generation of political leaders with growing disregard for the comprehensive strategic benefits flowing from a robust ROK-US alliance.

In conclusion, although it may be tempting for South Korea to contemplate a strategic future that includes a significantly reduced security dependence on the United States, such a move would entail major costs for the ROK or even a unified Korea under the auspices of the ROK. Beyond the financial, technical, and intelligence burdens that would be placed on South Korea if it chose to downgrade—however incrementally—its alliance with the United States, the most important cost would lie in foreclosing the critical support the United States would most likely play in fostering Korean unification. As the case of the former West Germany aptly illustrated in the period leading up to unification in 1990, it was Bonn's critical alliance with Washington that crystallized and finalized German unification, rather than West Germany's *Ostpolitik* or its growing ties with the former Soviet Union. Notwithstanding South Korea's burgeoning economic relationship with China or the latent promises of Seoul's Sunshine policy, South Korea must remember to balance the search for greater autonomy with a strong dose of realism as it enters the unification tunnel.

NOTES

¹ In June 1949, US forces that were stationed in South Korea during the period of US military occupation from 1945 to 1948 were withdrawn except for five hundred military advisors based on assessments made by the US Joint Chiefs of Staff. With the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950, however, President Truman decided to dispatch US forces to South Korea, resulting in a sharp policy reversal. The ROK-US Treaty of Mutual Defense was signed on October 1, 1953.

² Based on personal discussions with high-level US officials in July and December 2002. A Bush administration official commented in December 2002 prior to the South Korean presidential election that "whoever emerges as the next president [of South Korea], changes in the status of US forces are inevitable. If the South Korean government continues to assert that there really is no serious military threat from the North but the United States continues to advocate the opposite, we are willing to support the continuing 'Koreanization' of Korean defense but it also means that South Korea has to bear the consequences."

³ During the course of trilateral discussions among the United States, China, and North Korea in Beijing from April 22 to 24, 2003, US Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly was apparently told by Deputy Director General Li Gun of the North Korean foreign ministry that "we already have a [nuclear] bomb" and "now what are you going to do about it?" See "North Korea Tells US It Has Bomb," *Financial Times*, April 25, 2003. Subsequent press reports, however, indicated that North Korea proposed a comprehensive deal with the United States, including a promise to accept international inspections and to discard its nuclear program if Washington restarts the shipment of oil and agrees to safeguard North Korea's security. A coordinated response from Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo, however, is unlikely to crystallize until the ROK-US summit slated for mid-May and parallel trilateral consultations have taken place.

⁴ During his February 25, 2003 inauguration speech, President Roh stated that "North Korea's nuclear development can never be condoned. Pyongyang must abandon nuclear development. ... It is up to Pyongyang whether to go ahead and obtain nuclear weapons or to get guarantees for the security of its regime and international economic support." "President Roh Moo Hyun's Inauguration Address," Yonhap News Agency, February 25, 2003. Despite the president's strong warnings, which have since been reiterated after the

April trilateral meeting in Beijing, Seoul has continued to stress that dialogue is the best means to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis.

⁵ According to an Australian press report, a group of North Korean military and scientific elites, including top nuclear specialists, has defected to the United States since October 2002. Some twenty senior North Korean officials apparently defected under the codename of “Operation Weasel” through a network of NGOs and individuals spanning eleven countries. US officials have neither confirmed nor denied high-level North Korean defections. Martin Chulov and Cameron Stewart, “N. Korean Scientists Defect,” *The Australian*, April 19, 2003.

⁶ South Korean foreign minister Yoon Young Kwan stated on February 27, 2003, that “while we will continue to strengthen our alliance with the United States, our closest ally, we also seek to develop this relationship into a more balanced and mature one.” See “Foreign Minister’s Inauguration Speech,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Office of Press Affairs, February 28, 2003.

⁷ During the presidential campaign in fall 2002, then-candidate Roh stated on several occasions that he would not “kowtow” to the United States and that if necessary, South Korea should mediate between the United States and North Korea to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Coming on the heels of unprecedented anti-American demonstrations throughout the period preceding the December 12 election, candidate Roh accused his conservative opponent, Lee Hoi Chang, of being a “war-prone” candidate and asserted that if Lee was elected, South Korea would be enmeshed in an extremely serious crisis. He stated on December 15 that the election was about “war or peace” and that if Lee was chosen, the threat of war would be heightened on the Korean peninsula. “A New Seoul and a Peaceful Korean Peninsula,” Office of the President, Republic of Korea, March 10, 2003, http://www.president.go.kr/warp/app/pre_speech.

⁸ “Rumsfeld: US May Cut South Korea Forces,” February 13, 2003, CNN: <http://cnn.worldnews.com>. See also “Secretary Rumsfeld Interview with the Associated Press,” April 24, 2003, <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts>.

⁹ “Powell Cites Asian Support for US Proposal on North Korea,” Office of International Information Programs, US Department of State, February 25, 2003, <http://usinfo.state.gov>.

¹⁰ “Korea, US to Resume Future of Alliance Talks,” April 19, 2003, Ministry of National Defense, Office of Press Affairs.

¹¹ Comments made by a senior US official during a closed conference entitled “Managing Weapons of Mass Destruction and US-ROK-Japan Cooperation,” co-sponsored by the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis and Yonsei University on April 11, 2003.

¹² “Two-Phase Relocation Plan Reaffirmed,” *News Release*, Seoul, UNC/CFC/USFK, July 24, 2003.

¹³ “Rumsfeld Says US Troops Adjustments Will Benefit South Korea,” *Washington File*, November 17, 2003, <http://usembassy.state.gov/seoulwwwh41bd.html>

¹⁴ The term “unification tunnel” refers to the process whereby the inter-Korean balance or the status quo begins to shift such that it could accelerate the pace of South-North unification. How South Korea emerges from the unification tunnel remains unknown. But, contrary to the prevailing school of thought in South Korea, the unification process is likely to result in pockets of volatility, particularly if unification occurs in the aftermath of a North Korean collapse or implosion. In such an instance, the military posture of South Korea, or a unified Korea, could face an abrupt transition into the post-unification era that would result in significant changes in the force structure, command arrangements within the US-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), key weapons procurement priorities, and accompanying doctrines and strategies.

¹⁵ If the UNSC considers any type of economic sanctions against North Korea, the key question is whether China and Russia would support them. Assuming that ongoing

diplomatic measures ultimately fail to persuade North Korea to discard its nuclear weapons program, Beijing and Moscow are still unlikely to support economic sanctions against North Korea unless Pyongyang crosses the red line—either by conducting an underground nuclear test, test-firing its long-range Taepodong-1 missile, or a simultaneous move. Under these conditions, Beijing would be hard pressed not to support UNSC sanctions.

¹⁶ In essence, the Nixon Doctrine was an effort to expedite a US disengagement from South Vietnam by accentuating the need for Asian states to assume primary responsibility for their defense. On July 25, 1969, President Nixon announced in Guam that (1) the United States will keep all of its treaty commitments; (2) that the United States will provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation allied with the United States or of a nation whose survival the United States deems vital to its own security; and (3) in cases involving other types of aggression, the United States will furnish military and economic assistance when requested in accordance with existing treaty commitments. But Nixon added that “we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing manpower for its defense.”

¹⁷ See “Korean Response to President Carter’s Troop Withdrawal Moratorium,” February 26, 1979. Declassified US State Department Document. For an engaging overview of the tense period in South Korea following President Park Chung Hee’s assassination in October 1979, one of the worst periods in ROK-US relations, see John A. Wickham, Jr., *Korea on the Brink* (Washington, DC: Brassey’s, September 2000), especially the preface and chapter two, “Aftermath of the Assassination.”

¹⁸ “Japan-US Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century,” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, April 17, 1996, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security/html>.

¹⁹ “The Washington Declaration,” NATO Press Release NAC-S(99)63, April 23, 1999, <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/1999/p99-063e.htm>.

²⁰ New Defense for the 21st Century (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2001), <http://www.mnd.go.kr/english/html02/2001/2-1-1.htm>.

²¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, “Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers in Asia,” (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2002), p. 6.

²² “Speech before the Asia-Europe Press Forum,” September 12, 2002, Office of the President, Republic of Korea, http://www.president.go.kr/warp/app/pre_speech.

²³ “Speech before the Asia-Europe Press Forum,” September 12, 2002.

²⁴ “Speech before the Peace Forum,” September 24, 2002, Office of the President, Republic of Korea, http://www.president.go.kr/warp/app/pre_speech.

²⁵ “Speech before the American Chamber of Commerce and the EU Chamber of Commerce in Korea,” January 17, 2003, Office of the President, Republic of Korea, http://www.president.go.kr/warp/app/pre_speech.

²⁶ “President Roh Moo Hyun’s Inauguration Speech,” February 25, 2003, Press Release, Office of the President, Republic of Korea.

²⁷ “Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea: Common Values, Principles, and Strategy,” The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, May 14, 2003, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/05/print/20030514-1>.

²⁸ “85.7% of Respondents Say That Anti-Americanism Is Not a Surprise,” *Munhwa Ilbo*, December 12, 2002.

²⁹ *Donga-Ilbo*, April 1, 2003, <http://www.donga.com/fbn/news>.

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