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Do the Ties Still Bind?

The U.S. – ROK Security Relationship After 9/11

Norman D. Levin

Prepared for the United States Air Force

Approved for public release, distribution unlimited

PROJECT AIR FORCE

The research reported here was sponsored by the United States Air Force under Contract F49642-01-C-0003. Further information may be obtained from the Strategic Planning Division, Directorate of Plans, Hq USAF.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Levin, Norman D.
Do the ties still bind? : the U.S.-ROK security relationship after 9/11 / Norman D. Levin.
p. cm.
"MG-115."
Includes bibliographical references.
ISBN 0-8330-3512-6 (pbk. : alk. paper)
1. United States—Military relations—Korea (South) 2. Korea (South)—Military relations—United States. 3. United States—Military policy. 4. Korea (South)—Military policy. I.Title.

UA23.L48696 2004
355'.031'0973095195—dc22

2003025864

Cover photos, left to right: Photo by Bri Rodriguez/FEMA News Photo, 9/27/01, "World Trade Center After 9/11"; Photo by Chung Sung-Jun, News and Sport, Getty Images, 12/7/02.

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Published 2004 by the RAND Corporation
1700 Main Street, P.O. Box 2138, Santa Monica, CA 90407-2138
1200 South Hayes Street, Arlington, VA 22202-5050
201 North Craig Street, Suite 202, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-1516
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Preface

This report was undertaken as part of a larger RAND assessment of U.S. military-to-military relationships in Asia. The assessment was designed to evaluate the structure and value of these relationships in a post-9/11 context and to identify potential initiatives for strengthening and improving security cooperation. "Military-to-military" was intentionally defined broadly to include not only technical or operational matters but also the full panoply of political and diplomatic issues that affect security cooperation between the U.S. and the respective countries. The assessment benefited from extensive interviews with knowledgeable government officials, military officers, and outside observers in both the United States and respective partner countries.

Research for this report was sponsored by the Deputy Chief of Staff for Air and Space Operations, U.S. Air Force (AF/XO), and the Commander, Pacific Air Forces (PACAF/CC) and conducted within the Strategy and Doctrine Program of RAND Project AIR FORCE. The Korea Foundation provided supplementary funding for the preparation of the report. An early draft was distributed for both client approval and professional review in February 2003. This final report, submitted for publication in September 2003, addresses the helpful comments offered in these reviews. Although the report makes no attempt to provide a detailed accounting of all the events since the draft was disseminated, it does update those major developments that affect the report's principal themes and recommendations.

The report should be of value to the U.S. national security community and interested members of the general public, especially those with an interest in U.S. relations with countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to this primary intended audience, Koreans interested in security trends and issues related to U.S.-ROK (Republic of Korea) relations should also find the report of value. Comments are welcome and should be sent to the author, Norman D. Levin, or RAND Project AIR FORCE acting director of the Strategy and Doctrine Program, Alan Vick:

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Summary

The U.S.-ROK (Republic of Korea) security relationship today is something of a paradox: It is being severely tested at precisely the same time that its importance in advancing critical U.S. and South Korean interests is arguably greater than ever. Because of the many benefits each side receives from close security cooperation, the relationship itself is not currently endangered. But the ground is shifting. Recent developments, although not currently constituting a crisis, do represent a turning point. The paramount challenge in the short term is ensuring that the two countries stay in lockstep in dealing with North Korea. Sustaining the relationship for the long haul, however, will require a focused effort to adapt it to the new global and domestic conditions.

Both sides recognize this need and have actively begun to address it, most conspicuously in the "Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative." Attention has focused in particular on the appropriate nature, size, and configuration of U.S. forces deployed in Korea. Along with the issue of command relationships, these are central questions that deserve heavy emphasis. But the answers provided to these questions will remain vulnerable to domestic political currents in both countries without affirmation of some larger common purpose. Such an affirmation should explicitly include the kinds of threats against which the partnership is targeted. Although the alliance can survive without a common definition of threat, it cannot survive without a common perception of what constitutes threats and a common commitment to prevent them from arising.

Adapting the security relationship to the new conditions will require movement on a number of other issues as well. At the top of the list is Yongsan, the sprawling U.S. military base in the heart of Seoul. The recent U.S.-ROK agreement to move the U.S. garrison out of Seoul in the next couple years is an important decision. Ensuring its timely implementation is critical to the relationship's long-term stability.

Another issue has to do with Korea's role within the alliance. Although both sides have long been committed to enhancing Korea's role and have made some progress, much more is required. The Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative provides an opportunity to address changes not only in the U.S. force posture but also in the mission and roles of the ROK military, with a view toward transferring responsibilities to South Korea that enhance its role in the alliance. This clear U.S. intention has already shown some success, with agreement reached on transferring a number of specific military missions to South Korea. The inquiry should also include broader issues pertaining to Korea's role in developing the next allied war plan, in conducting U.S.-ROK exercises, and in preparing for and managing problems caused by any potential North Korean collapse. Beginning a process of preparing South Korean military leaders for the transfer of wartime operational control should be an integral part of these discussions.

A third issue requiring movement relates to Korea's desire for a more "equal" relationship. The perception among South Korean civilians and military officers alike that Korea receives treatment "inferior" to that of other U.S. allies, particularly Japan, is both deep-rooted and highly resistant to change. Reducing it will take affirmative action. This might include, for example, examining whether restrictions on weapons sales to Korea can be relaxed in certain areas. It might also involve a look at restrictions on technology transfers and whether the bar on permissible transfers might be raised. More broadly, an effort should be made to craft a "vision" for future U.S.-ROK relations and create opportunities for South Korea to be seen as taking the lead in shaping a new security relationship to meet it. The overarching goal should be to provide South Koreans a greater sense

of ownership. This should help send the message that the U.S. takes Korea's desires for equal treatment seriously in what it considers more broadly a "special" relationship.

For its part, South Korea needs to act like an equal partner if it wants to be treated like one. At its core, this means taking its own responsibility for the health of the alliance. Repeated efforts to reaffirm the value of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the importance of the U.S. military presence would be a good place to start. Another important step would be for South Korean leaders to stop trumpeting the "differences" between South Korea and the United States on policy toward North Korea and start highlighting the common interests and shared policy objectives. Making clear that the ROK considers North Korea's nuclear program and the war on terrorism to be *alliance* issues, not just problems for the United States, would be a third important effort.

Taking responsibility for the health of the alliance also requires a demonstration that Korea takes both U.S. concerns and South Korea's own commitments seriously. The problem of dilapidated and inadequate housing for U.S. troops has already contributed to making Korea one of the most unpopular deployments in the U.S. Army. An even more serious problem is the lack of adequate training facilities and growing constraints on U.S. troop training. It is important that the South Korean government enforce its agreements with U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) to stop the encroachments on these training areas. Finally, at $11 billion over the next four years for force enhancements, the U.S. has made a major commitment to invest in the alliance. It will expect South Korea to fulfill its commitment to complement this investment with significantly improved capabilities of its own.

On the U.S. side, in addition to the "future of the alliance" issues described above, there are a number of issues relating to management of the alliance today. These might be reduced to five short phrases.

- First, *stay focused:* The U.S. has two overarching interests insofar as North Korea is concerned. In the short term, the U.S. wants to bring about an end to the North Korean nuclear program and Pyongyang's proliferation and other threatening activities. In the longer term, the U.S. wants to prevent potentially unfavorable developments after unification that would force it off the Korean Peninsula and undermine its position as an Asian power. Both interests require a concatenation of U.S.-ROK ties, as well as a stronger trilateral relationship among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. North Korea understands this and is working hard to exploit perceptual and policy differences between Washington and Seoul (and, to a lesser extent, between Washington and Tokyo) to undermine these critical relationships. The central imperative for the U.S. is to make sure Pyongyang does not succeed. It is particularly important for the U.S. and South Korea to speak with a single voice in dealing with North Korea. A failure to do so will not only diminish prospects for inducing changes in North Korea's confrontational behavior, it will also undermine U.S. long-term strategic interests (p. 68).
- Second, *don't overlook South Korea*. North Korea's rapid steps toward resuming its overt nuclear program suggest that it sees an opportunity to act while the U.S. is preoccupied elsewhere. The U.S. understands this well and has taken steps to ensure the effectiveness of its deterrent and defense capabilities. Although South Korea will remain firmly in the spotlight as long as the nuclear issue remains unsettled, if or when serious negotiations begin with Pyongyang there may be a tendency for this attention to dissipate. The U.S. needs to ensure that its commitment to South Korea's security—including its nuclear umbrella—remains credible and that the U.S.-ROK security relationship continues to receive high priority as it addresses its other strategic objectives. It also needs to ensure that U.S. forces in Korea remain adequately equipped, and backed up by replacement forces, to fulfill their missions as competing needs rise elsewhere (p. 69).

- Third, *lean forward*. This should be the general U.S. posture on alliance management issues given the heightened nationalism in South Korea today, but the need applies in particular to demonstrating sensitivity to Korean cultural norms and practices. It is particularly important that, when incidents involving U.S. troops occur, the U.S. responds immediately, at a high level, and in ways that appear supportive of Korean sentiments. Impressions that the U.S. is insensitive to Korea's laws and culture need to be countered more broadly. This will require stepped-up cultural awareness training for U.S. troops, as well as increased outreach activities with local communities. Both governments need to do a better job in getting information out to the public about the positive things the U.S. is doing already to demonstrate its respect for and sensitivity toward Korean cultural norms and practices (p. 69).
- Fourth, *be concrete*. This is particularly relevant to the global war on terrorism. Many Koreans see 9/11 as an isolated event and are dubious about the need for Korean participation beyond what they are doing already. Others recognize a need and are willing to consider ways to contribute but are unclear about what additional role Korea can usefully play. Both groups will look for U.S. leadership and guidance. Although responses will depend on a range of factors and cannot be taken for granted, Koreans will try to meet any specific U.S. request, particularly if they perceive it as a test of the alliance. In addition, there are steps the U.S. might consider that would increase the ROK's *ability* to make useful contributions. Encouraging enhanced ROK aerial refueling and long-range transport capabilities would bolster those South Koreans seeking to develop a rapid response capability for contingencies outside of Korea, thereby advancing both Washington's interest in increased contributions to the war on terrorism and Seoul's interest in greater Korean power projection capability and self-reliance. Increasing out-of-country training for ROK Special Operations Forces (SOF) would further improve the relatively high level of interoperability between U.S. and ROK SOF, while acclimating Korean SOF

to contingencies other than North Korea. Encouraging Korea to expand its participation in regional military consultations and multilateral exercises would also be useful. Such activities will reduce Korean skittishness about interacting militarily with Japan over time, while broadening Korean security perspectives and developing practical ways to engage Korea in regional security activities (p. 70).

- Finally, *remember Jimmy Carter*. Koreans understand and accept the need for change. What they are concerned, even neuralgic, about is the possibility that they will be presented with sudden *faits accomplis*. U.S. plans to reduce and redeploy its forces will stimulate this neuralgia. This is an issue that has to be carefully managed. Koreans take the elaborate consultation mechanisms developed over the years seriously. They want these mechanisms to be actively used as the U.S. considers its future posture on the peninsula and pursues its broader strategic interests. South Koreans do not have a scale by which they measure the importance of their multiple messages. But for most, "avoid sudden, unilateral changes" comes close to the bottom line (p. 71).

Cutting across the many uncertainties in the world today is one increasingly urgent question: Will the system that has maintained international order over the past half century survive the fissures building since the end of the Cold War and the rise of global terrorism? The answer to this question will have a significant effect on U.S. security relationships everywhere, including with South Korea.

Acknowledgments

I benefited enormously from the opportunity to conduct extensive interviews in both Seoul and Washington. I am grateful to the many South Koreans in and out of government who were willing to take the time to share their perspectives with me on the current state of the U.S.-ROK security relationship. I am also grateful to the officials, officers, and analysts on the U.S. side who shared their own views and did so much to facilitate field research in Korea. Although they are necessarily nameless, I hope they will recognize their contributions in the pages that follow.

In addition to these individual interviews, I led seminars at both the New Asia Research Institute (NARI) and the Korean National Defense University (KNDU) in Seoul with knowledgeable specialists from a variety of institutions to solicit informed Korean reactions to my preliminary research findings. I am very grateful to Rhee Sang-Woo (NARI) and Han Yong-Sup (KNDU) respectively for arranging these meetings, as well as to the specialists who attended. This report benefited greatly from their thoughtful and candid comments and observations.

I also want to acknowledge James Mulvenon for his strong and effective leadership of the larger RAND study. He not only provided clear direction but also set a tone of collegiality that could be a model for project leadership. Ted Harshberger, then director of the Strategy and Doctrine Program in RAND Project AIR FORCE, similarly offered active support at all phases of the project, which I also greatly appreciate. Ralph Cossa and Bruce Bennett provided exceptionally

thoughtful, helpful reviews of the draft report. My effort to address their insightful comments and suggestions, evident throughout the text it is hoped, significantly strengthened the analysis. General Kim Dong-Shin (ret.), former ROK Minister of National Defense, also read the draft report and graciously shared his unique perspective and informed observations.

I also want to express my deep appreciation to the Korea Foundation for its supplementary funding of this project. Among other things, this provided me an invaluable opportunity to solicit critical South Korean comments on my preliminary findings and fold these reactions into my final policy recommendations.

While indebted to all of these individuals, I alone am responsible for the analysis in this report, as well as for any errors of fact or interpretation.

Acronyms

ABM	Anti-ballistic missile
AEF	Aerospace Expeditionary Forces
AOR	Area of responsibility
AWACS	Airborne warning and control system
C4ISR	Command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
CACC	Combined Air Component Command
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
CENTCOM	Central Command
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CIOC	Combined Intelligence Operations Center
DCS	Direct commercial sales
DMZ	Demilitarized zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FMS	Foreign military sales
FOB	Forward operating base
FOL	Forward operating location
GDP	Gross domestic product

HNFC	Host Nation Funded Construction
HUMINT	Human intelligence
JSA	Joint Security Area
KATUSA	Korean Augmentee to United States Army
KCOIC	Korean Combat Operations Intelligence Center
KEDO	Korea Energy Development Organization
KNDU	Korean National Defense University
LPP	Land Partnership Plan
LST	Landing ship tank
MASH	Mobile army surgical hospital
MCM	Military Committee Meeting
MND	Ministry of National Defense
NARI	New Asia Research Institute
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPR	Nuclear Posture Review
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PACAF	Pacific Air Forces
PACOM	Pacific command
PPP	Purchasing-power parity
QDR	*Quadrennial Defense Review*
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific military exercise
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKAF	Republic of Korea Air Force
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting

SIGINT	Signals intelligence
SMA	Special Measures Agreement
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
USAF	United States Air Force
USFK	U.S. Forces Korea
WHNS	Wartime Host Nation Support
WMD	Weapons of mass destruction
WRSA	War Reserve Stocks for Allies

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The U.S. security relationship with the Republic of Korea (ROK) presents a curious situation.[1] On the one hand, it has played a major role in advancing both U.S. and South Korean interests for five decades, and it continues today to meet a broad range of the two countries' respective defense policy goals and strategic objectives. This is self-evident on issues such as peacefully resolving the continuing North Korean nuclear challenge, which is inconceivable without close U.S.-ROK cooperation. But it is true more broadly as well. Indeed, the U.S.-ROK military-to-military relationship—reflecting 50 years of efforts to improve interoperability and manifested in a *combined defense* system that transcends the current U.S. emphasis on *coalition* warfare—may arguably rank highest among Asia-Pacific countries in terms of its salience and efficacy.[2] Not surprisingly, both governments have expressed strong support for its long-term continuation.

On the other hand, the security relationship is currently being severely tested. On the Korean side, rising nationalism and broader political, generational, and social change are creating new demands

[1] In this report, the terms "Republic of Korea" (or "ROK"), "South Korea," and "Korea" are all used interchangeably, as are "Koreans" and "South Koreans." Any references to "North Korea" (the "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" or "DPRK") or "North Koreans" are so identified.

[2] For a notional comparison of U.S. military-to-military relationships in Asia based on these criteria, see James C. Mulvenon et al., *The United States Air Force and Security Cooperation in Asia*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, forthcoming.

for a more "equal" relationship and other challenges for alliance management, while weakening support in the United States for a continued heavy U.S. role in South Korea's defense. On the American side, ongoing developments in U.S. strategic thinking in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks are creating both new priorities and a sense of inexorable, long-term transition, while generating a sense in South Korea of a growing gap between U.S. and South Korean national interests. The process of dealing with North Korea exacerbates trends on both sides. Indeed, as indicated in the continuing nuclear standoff between Washington and Pyongyang, the challenge of establishing common ground in the respective Korean and American views of both North Korea and policy objectives is creating the potential for a major crisis of confidence between the two allies. A broader divergence in the two countries' threat perceptions is fueling growing questioning on both sides about the continuing value of and rationale for the security relationship.

A range of alliance management issues intensifies such questioning. Americans complain about inadequate ROK support for housing, facilities, and training space for U.S troops in Korea, which adversely affect everything from troop morale and skill levels to the broader sustainability of U.S. military deployments. Koreans complain about a lack of U.S. sensitivity to Korean cultural norms and practices and what they see as a U.S. tendency to confuse "informing" for "consulting" on major matters affecting Korean security interests. Both sides feel the other has done a poor job recently in educating its public about the value of the alliance and importance of a continued U.S. military presence. Broader strains on U.S. military deployments globally, which increase the perceived U.S. burden of maintaining a large troop presence in Korea, heighten the effect of such feelings. So too, on the other side, do unresolved tensions between South Korean security and unification objectives, which reinforce growing ambivalence in certain South Korean circles about the role of the United States. In this 50th year of the U.S.-ROK alliance, it is probably fair to say that more people are wondering about the alliance's future than are toasting its past.

This report addresses these conflicting aspects of the current security relationship. In doing so, it explicitly adopts an "inside-out" orientation. That is, instead of looking "outside" at the broad regional trends and assessing their implications for the U.S.-ROK security relationship, the report looks "inside" at the nature of the relationship itself and assesses its strengths and potential vulnerabilities. The report intentionally provides relatively greater attention to the situation inside South Korea and focuses its recommendations primarily on U.S. policy. But it also addresses the centrifugal forces inside the U.S. and offers some thoughts about steps needed on the South Korean side as well to help manage these cross pressures.

As indicated in the Acknowledgments, the report drew not only on the available literature but also on extensive interviews with Koreans and Americans active in or knowledgeable about the U.S.-ROK security relationship. On the Korean government side, these included both senior and junior members of the ROK military and civilian officials in several branches of the South Korean government. Outside government, interviews were conducted with a range of Korean security and foreign policy specialists, as well as with a number of retired officers and former high-level officials. On the U.S. side, the interviews included key foreign policy and defense officials in Washington, as well as U.S. officers, officials, and analysts serving in South Korea.

The structure of the report reflects this "inside-out," "South Korea-U.S." orientation. The next chapter briefly reviews the historical basis for U.S.-ROK security cooperation, then Chapter Three analyzes the current relationship from a Korean perspective, focusing on what Korea gains and wants from the relationship. Chapter Four describes U.S. policy goals and assesses the role security cooperation with Korea plays in achieving both enduring and post-9/11 U.S. interests. Chapter Five draws some broad conclusions and offers several recommendations for strengthening the U.S.-ROK security relationship and furthering U.S. strategic interests in the coming period.

CHAPTER TWO

The Historical Basis for Security Cooperation

From a Korean perspective, the roots of U.S. involvement in Korea's security go back nearly a century. Faced with Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and Japan's emergence as the dominant foreign power in Korea, the U.S. considered but rejected Korean appeals to safeguard Korea's independence. Instead, the U.S. signed a secret agreement with Japan in July 1905 (the Taft-Katsura Agreement) that recognized Japan's prerogatives in Korea in exchange for American freedom of action in the Philippines.[1] The U.S. also served as sponsor of and midwife to the Treaty of Portsmouth a few months later which involved, among other things, Russia's formal acknowledgment of Japan's paramount interests in Korea. Many Koreans see U.S. acquiescence in Japan's subjugation of Korea, which lasted until Japan's surrender in World War II 40 years later, as the start of America's "moral" responsibility for Korea's security.

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[1] President Theodore Roosevelt, seeing no way to prevent Japanese domination of Korea and personally contemptuous of Koreans, authorized Secretary of State Taft to sign the secret agreement. On Roosevelt's attitudes, see Andrew C. Nahm, "U.S. Policy and the Japanese Annexation of Korea," in Tae-Hwan Kwak et al., ed., *U.S.-Korean Relations, 1882–1982*, Kyungnam University Press, 1982, pp. 40–42. For standard historical accounts of the period, see Hilary Conroy, *The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868–1910*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960, p. 329; Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, University of Hawaii Press, 1974, especially pp. 447–448; and John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation*, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965, pp. 479–483.

This less than auspicious beginning was partially improved at the Cairo Conference in December 1943 when the U.S. publicly pledged that "in due course Korea shall become free and independent."[2] To be sure, the pledge reflected "more an attitude than a concrete program."[3] Neither President Roosevelt nor any other allied leader had any idea at the time how Korean self-rule could actually be accomplished. By committing itself to Korea's eventual independence, however, the U.S. became an active participant in peninsular politics and effectively linked Korean and American security fortunes.

Most directly, however, the historical basis for security cooperation lies in the U.S. role in Korea in the years immediately after World War II.[4] Three U.S. decisions were particularly consequential. The first, precipitated by Japan's sudden collapse, was to divide the Korean Peninsula along the 38th parallel as a means for processing the surrender and repatriation of Japanese troops.[5] The second was to govern the southern half of the country for three years (1945–1948) through direct U.S. military rule. The third was the 1948 decision to terminate the U.S. military occupation because of pressing needs elsewhere and support the establishment of a separate, independent state in the south. As a result of these decisions, the U.S. became the sponsor and de facto security guarantor of the Republic of Korea.[6]

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[2] The complete text of the statement, agreed to by the United States, China, and Great Britain, said that the "three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent." Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century*, The Ronald Press Company, 1970, p. 445.

[3] Fairbank, Reischauer, and Craig, *East Asia: The Modern Transformation,* op. cit., p. 844.

[4] Detailed accounts of the tumultuous 1945–1950 period in Korea may be found in Richard C. Allen, *Korea's Syngman Rhee,* Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1960; Gregory Henderson, *Korea: The Politics of the Vortex*, Harvard University Press, 1968; and Robert T. Oliver, *Syngman Rhee and American Involvement in Korea, 1942–1960*, Panmun Book Company Ltd., 1978.

[5] Since Soviet troops had already moved south of the 38th parallel, this decision reflected realities on the ground rather than some purely arbitrary U.S. decision. Nevertheless, it was highly controversial in Korea from the beginning.

[6] Notwithstanding its subsequent military withdrawal, the United States clearly saw itself in this position. As then-U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson described in his memoirs, the United States saw the North Korean military invasion of the ROK shortly after the U.S.

U.S. aid, equipment, and training for a ROK army numbering 50,000 date to this period.

The North Korean invasion of the ROK in June 1950 significantly broadened this foundation by transforming security cooperation from a supplementary means for maintaining South Korean independence to a critical component of the U.S. global effort to contain Communist expansion. It also strengthened the basis for security cooperation by giving the U.S.-ROK relationship a "forged in blood" quality. In the course of its three-year effort to defend South Korea, the U.S. suffered nearly 137,000 casualties. This included some 30,000 dead and another 8,000 missing in action. The ending of the Korean War with an armistice agreement rather than a formal peace treaty reinforced the need for close security cooperation between South Korea and the United States, given continued North Korean truculence and inter-Korean confrontation.

The U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, signed in 1953, codified this close relationship and remains today the central document underpinning the U.S.-ROK alliance.[7] The treaty commits both countries to consult together and take suitable measures "whenever, in the opinion of either of them," the security or independence of either is threatened by external attack (Article 2). It describes an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the parties as being dangerous to its own peace and safety and pledges both to "act to meet the common danger" (Article 3). And it grants the U.S. the right to station military forces "in and about" South Korean territory as determined by mutual agreement (Article 4). The Mutual Defense Treaty thus provides a legal basis for close security cooperation and assurance of U.S. military access. The Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), Wartime Host Nation Support (WHNS) agreement, and

withdrawal as "an open, undisguised challenge to our internationally accepted position as the protector of South Korea." See Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, The New American Library, 1970, p. 528.

[7] The complete text of the treaty and related documents may be found in Se-Jin Kim, ed., *Documents on Korean-American Relations 1943–1976*, Research Center for Peace and Unification, 1976, pp. 185–186. An online treaty text is available at http://www.korea.army.mil/sofa/mutdef.htm.

many of the hundreds of other military agreements between the U.S. and ROK are predicated on this central document.

The U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) is another pillar underpinning bilateral security cooperation. Established in 1978 as a by-product of President Carter's plans to withdraw the 2nd Infantry Division from Korea, the CFC was actually the result of a longer, evolutionary process. Indeed, efforts to increase ROK planning and operational responsibilities date back at least to the late 1960s. During this period, South Korean economic growth and military professionalization joined changes in U.S. strategic doctrine to spur support for expanded ROK roles in its own defense. These efforts led to the development of a combined operational planning staff in 1968 and establishment of an integrated field army headquarters in 1971, which were further transformed into a single command seven years later.[8] ROK planning and operational responsibilities were further enhanced in the early 1990s by a U.S. initiative to transition from a "leading to a supporting" role on the peninsula. As part of this initiative, operational control over South Korean forces was transferred to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff during everyday, "peacetime" operations.[9] Today, the CFC continues to serve as the alliance's war-planning and war-fighting headquarters and represents the heart of the combined defense system.

The CFC, moreover, is formally organized on an "equal assignment" basis. According to this principle, if the chief of any given branch is Korean then the deputy is American, and vice versa. Such tightly integrated, binational planning exists not only in CFC headquarters but throughout the command structure, including within the individual component commands. This binational composition

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[8] Combined Forces Command et al., "Mission of the ROK/US Combined Forces Command," *Backgrounder*, No. 2, Public Affairs Office, January 2000, available at http://www.korea.army.mil/pao/backgrounder/bg2.htm.

[9] "Peacetime" is actually a misnomer, since only a tenuous military armistice, rather than a state of "peace," exists on the peninsula. The term is used loosely here simply to describe all periods leading up to actual war. At that point, operational control over both ROK and U.S. forces formally reverts to the United States.

and tight organizational integration reinforce the foundation for close security cooperation between the two countries.[10]

A final historical basis for security cooperation lies in the extensive assistance provided by the U.S. over the years to South Korea. Between 1950 and 1988, for example, the U.S. gave South Korea over $5.5 billion in free military assistance, in addition to nearly $9 billion of military aid in the form of military sales, commercial sales, and military loans.[11] Nearly constant training and combined exercises significantly enhanced ROK operational capabilities, while providing Korea access to a range of advanced weapons and technologies. U.S. military assistance thus played a dual role in maintaining deterrence while modernizing the ROK military. It also familiarized Koreans with U.S. doctrine, tactics, and weapons systems, improving the ability of both sides to fight together.

Meanwhile, extensive U.S. economic assistance facilitated Korea's extraordinary economic development. Between Korea's "liberation" from Japanese rule in 1945 and the onset of its rapid economic growth at the beginning of the 1970s, for example, U.S. economic assistance totaled some $3.8 billion.[12] Together with strong and sustained political support, such U.S. assistance helped foster the gradual growth of a middle class that both propelled Korean democratization and underpins stability today. The gradual development of a common set of values emphasizing democratic norms and institutions and free, open markets is one by-product.[13]

The roots of U.S.-ROK security cooperation are thus extensive and deep. Out of them has grown a mature, highly institutionalized

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[10] For more details, see Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, May 2002, p. 51.

[11] Ibid., p. 40.

[12] Larry A. Niksch, "Korea: U.S.-South Korean Relations—Issues for Congress," *Issue Brief for Congress,* Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., June 19, 2002.

[13] For more on the development and importance of common values, see Victor Cha, "Values After Victory: The Future of U.S.-Japan-Korea Relations," *Comparative Connections—Special Annual Issue*, July 2002, an e-journal published by Pacific Forum CSIS and available at http://www.csis.org/pacfor/annual/2002annual.html/.

relationship, one that has played a critical role over five decades in advancing the strategic interests of both Korea and the United States. These strategic interests remain strong today. Both countries recognize their continuing importance and consider the security alliance and military-to-military relationship to be highly beneficial. Both countries are also experiencing difficulties, however, conveying this importance to at least parts of their respective leaderships and publics. The next chapter examines the current state of the relationship from a Korean perspective.[14]

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[14] Unless otherwise noted, such phrases as "Korea wants" or "Koreans believe" are intended to refer primarily to the military and security policy communities, as well as to the political mainstream in South Korea. Divergent views will be expressly noted.

CHAPTER THREE

The Korean Perspective

What Korea Gains from the Relationship

At a time when Western media are trumpeting the "rising anti-Americanism" in Korea and strident Korean "demands" for changes in the security relationship, it might be useful to begin by exploring the benefits Koreans have gained from security cooperation with the United States. These benefits, it turns out, are far-reaching. They are also highly valued, if not always widely appreciated.[1]

Topping the list is the formal U.S. defense commitment and credible U.S. capability to deter and, if necessary, defeat potential North Korean aggression. Despite North Korea's economic free-fall and the ROK's own significant military modernization, most South Koreans responsible for their country's security are not confident of their ability to handle Pyongyang without U.S. assistance. This is particularly true in the context of unconventional warfare. Although ROK military leaders feel increasingly able to deal with the North's conventional capability, they see themselves at a major disadvantage against North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They thus see a continued U.S. military presence in Korea as indispensable

[1] For a South Korean portrayal of these benefits, see Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, op. cit. This represented an attempt by then–Defense Minister Kim Dong-Shin and Deputy Minister Cha Yong-Koo to explain the history of the alliance to a Korean population increasingly without memory of the Korean War and to articulate some of the major benefits Korea receives from security cooperation with the United States.

to Korean security. This view is mirrored by public opinion. Polls over the last 15 years routinely show that an overwhelming majority of South Koreans regard the presence of U.S. military forces as important to their security.[2] Most South Korean leaders also see this presence as essential to successfully engaging North Korea in a pursuit of tension reduction and peaceful coexistence. Pyongyang's aggressive WMD programs and historic willingness to take risks highlight the importance of the U.S. military commitment.

Only slightly below the U.S. commitment as a top South Korean benefit is the "bang" the ROK gets for an exceedingly small Korean "buck." If war were ever to come to the peninsula, the combat power deployed by the U.S. would in aggregate more than double South Korea's combat power.[3] This additional power, moreover, would come from largely active duty, extremely well-trained U.S. personnel with equipment considerably better than Koreans could field on their own. The cost in dollar terms is paltry: Out of a total cost annually of nearly $3 billion for stationing U.S. troops in Korea, South Korea's direct financial contribution in 2002 was $490 million (up from $399 million in 2000).[4] The cost in terms of U.S. personnel is similarly small: a mere 37,000 U.S. troops deployed in peacetime, divided between a very small combat force and a modest-sized logistical base to facilitate U.S. force deployments. Few countries have Korea's ability to rapidly draw on such enormous combat power at so little expense in peacetime. If Korea had to replicate this power itself, the impact would resonate throughout South Korean society.

Security cooperation with the United States reduces the strain of defense on the ROK economy more broadly. Korean defense spending as a share of gross domestic product, for example, has been lower

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[2] The figures typically range between 75 percent and 90 percent. For recent data, see U.S. Department of State, "South Koreans See Two Faces of America," *Opinion Analysis*, October 17, 2002, p. 11.

[3] I am grateful to RAND colleague Bruce Bennett for this and related points in this paragraph.

[4] Larry A. Niksch, "Korea: U.S.-South Korean Relations—Issues for Congress," op. cit., p. 15.

over time than that of other newly industrializing countries and exponentially lower than such countries as Israel or Saudi Arabia with less of a U.S. forward presence.[5] It also has been modest in per capita terms: At only $271 in 2001, Korean defense spending is very small compared with that of other countries with similarly high threat environments, such as Greece ($513), Taiwan ($785), Saudi Arabia ($848), Israel ($1,512), and Kuwait ($1,628).[6]

More specifically, security cooperation with the U.S. significantly reduces strains on the ROK *defense* budget. For illustrative purposes: the U.S. War Reserve Stocks for Allies (WRSA) constitutes roughly 60 percent of the ammunition required in wartime; at roughly $4 billion, this would fund the ROK military training program for 30 years.[7] The relationship with the U.S. also frees up Korean defense resources for other purposes. By relying de facto on the U.S. to pick up some of the short-term readiness requirements for dealing with the North Korean threat, for example, Korea has been able to focus its military modernization program in recent years on longer-term objectives related to Korea's future *regional* role. Still another way to think about this aspect of the relationship is in terms of what effect a U.S. military withdrawal would have on Korean defense spending. According to one account, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) has estimated that an American departure would more than double South Korean defense spending from 2.7 percent to as high as 6 percent of Korea's gross domestic product.[8]

This U.S. role in ameliorating the effects of Korea's budgetary strains should not be underestimated. Although Korea's economic

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[5] Victor Cha, "Focus on the Future, Not the North," *The Washington Quarterly,* Winter 2002–03, p. 103.

[6] Sung-han Kim, "ROK-U.S. Relations after the Summit Meeting," *Korea and World Affairs*, Summer 2003, pp. 190–191. Both Kim and Cha ("Focus on the Future . . . ," op. cit.) cite an unpublished paper by Taejoon Han, entitled "An Economic Assessment of USFK," as the source for these points.

[7] Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, op. cit., p. 41.

[8] Joseph Coleman, "Experts Assess U.S. Forces in Korea," Associated Press, http://apnews.excite.com/article/200030115/D7OIGS100.html.

recovery in the past couple years has enabled the government to restore some of the cuts made in its force improvement program as a result of the Asian financial crisis, key items such as airborne warning and control system (AWACS), attack helicopters, and air refueling aircraft remain deferred because of insufficient funding.[9] It is uncertain whether Korea will even be able to procure some of the equipment currently budgeted.

Also important are the strategic benefits Korea receives from the broader U.S. role as regional stabilizer. At best Korean views toward Japan are ambivalent, and China looms large as a major uncertainty. Relations among the major Asian powers themselves are problematic, with an unstable mix of historical animosities, contemporary suspicions, and unresolved territorial and other issues. Close security ties with the U.S. relieve the ROK of the need to address these imponderables by itself and buy time for Koreans to sort out relations with their powerful neighbors. They also facilitate Korea's desire to play a larger security role beyond the Korean Peninsula, as reflected in U.S. political, military, and logistical support for Korea's constructive role in the Republic of Georgia, Western Sahara, and East Timor.

Linked to this role as a regional stabilizer is the importance of the U.S. in the South Korean economy. To be sure, the U.S. is no longer South Korea's largest trading partner. This position has now been taken over by China.[10] The relative U.S. share in South Korean exports and imports, moreover, continues to decline. Whereas the U.S. accounted for more than 50 percent of Korea's total trade in the 1960s, by the beginning of the 2000s the U.S. share had fallen to less than half of that. In 2002, the U.S. took less than 20 percent of Korea's merchandise exports and supplied less than 15 percent of Ko-

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[9] Some of these items have been reinstated in MND's draft budget request for 2004, although prospects for their approval remain uncertain.

[10] James Brooke, "China 'Looming Large' in South Korea as Biggest Player, Replacing the U.S.," *The New York Times*, January 3, 2003 (online edition).

rea's merchandise imports.[11] Still, the U.S. continues to play a major role affecting South Korean economic prospects. The U.S. remains a leading trade partner for South Korea, for example, taking in over the past decade between one-fourth and one-fifth of total ROK exports.[12] It is also the largest foreign investor in South Korea, accounting in 2002 for roughly half of all foreign investment.[13]

Close security ties with the U.S. reassure foreign investors more broadly, a critical role given the uncertain prospects in North Korea, the continuing nuclear standoff, and Pyongyang's demonstrable unpredictability. South Korea's former ambassador to the U.S., Yang Sung-Chul, implicitly highlighted the importance of this role in a recent speech by repeatedly stressing the connection between the level of tension on the Korean Peninsula and South Korea's economic prospects.[14] The new government of Roh Moo-hyun has stressed the linkage between security ties with the U.S. and prospects for the South Korean economy particularly heavily. This emphasis appears intended at least partly to appeal to young Koreans who no longer worry much about the North Korean threat but worry a great deal about the South Korean economy. A broader intention is to reassure foreign investors nervous about apparent strains between South Korea and the United States.

Korean military interests are directly advanced in at least three other ways as well. First, the U.S. is Korea's primary source for sophisticated weapons systems, as well as advanced military technolo-

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[11] Marcus Noland, *The Strategic Importance of U.S.-Korea Economic Relations*, NBR Special Report, No. 4, National Bureau of Asian Research, 2003, p. 2. Also see Hong Youl Kim, "Korea-U.S. Trade Structure since the 1990s," *Korea Focus*, Vol. 11, No. 3, May–June 2003.

[12] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs, *2001 Country Reports on Economic Policy and Trade Practices—Republic of Korea*, Washington, D.C., February 2002.

[13] James Brooke, "New Leader in Korea Emphasizes Foreign Ties," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2003 (online edition).

[14] Unfortunately, he attributed the relatively low level of tension almost wholly to his government's "sunshine policy" toward North Korea. For a slightly edited version of his speech, entitled "North Korean Nuclear Issue—The Big Picture," see *KOREAupdate*, Vol. 13, No. 10, November 2002. *KOREAupdate* is published by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Washington, D.C.

gies, designs, and component parts. Roughly half of all ROK military procurement comes from the United States, and the U.S. is the source for almost 80 percent of South Korea's foreign military purchases.[15] Hundreds of Koreans participate in U.S. training programs annually, at reduced cost, to familiarize themselves with major U.S. weapons systems acquired through foreign military sales (FMS) or direct commercial sales (DCS). Such technical training is in addition to an enormous amount of other training the U.S. provides, down to basic level officer training, to improve ROK military capabilities and ensure U.S.-ROK interoperability in systems, doctrine, tactics, and command, control, and communication.

This role as a supplier of advanced equipment and technical training is critical to Korean strategic interests. Since the mid-1990s, the ROK has pursued an ambitious force improvement program motivated by two major objectives. One is to develop a self-reliant defense capability that enables Korea to stand on its own in dealing with threats from Pyongyang. The other is to prepare the ROK so that it can deter potential longer-term threats and project military power beyond the Korean Peninsula. These objectives necessitate emphasis in military spending plans on such things as achieving air superiority against a hypothetical future enemy, securing sea lines of communication, and improving intelligence gathering and command and control capabilities—all areas in which the U.S. excels.[16]

Second, continual military exercises and exchanges with the U.S. help improve the operational ability of Korea's armed forces. This is true for all Korean services but it is particularly the case with the ROK Air Force (ROKAF). Large-scale exercises such as Ulchi Focus Lens and Foal Eagle significantly enhance ROKAF understanding of both air power strategies and tactics.[17] "Buddy wing" and other

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[15] Jane's, "Procurement, Korea, South," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment—China and Northeast Asia—05*, May 13, 2002 (online edition).

[16] Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper 1999* (English version).

[17] Ulchi Focus Lens is a large-scale joint and combined command post exercise that trains CFC and major component staffs on crisis response measures and procedures through ad-

longer-term pilot exchange programs improve communication and understanding between ROKAF and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) personnel.[18] The ROKAF also benefits from increased U.S. efforts over the past year and a half to turn over greater air defense responsibilities to South Korea. With the ultimate aim of achieving interchangeability in contingency control, the ROKAF has acquired equipment and skills that significantly improve its night, precision, and other attack capabilities.

Third, Korea benefits from extensive intelligence and information-sharing cooperation with the U.S. Indeed, with intelligence exchanges that may number in the triple digits annually and that take place between all major Korean intelligence agencies and their American counterparts, this cooperation is almost self-perpetuating. As with the command and control system, Korea's military intelligence system is highly integrated with U.S. intelligence assets through the Combined Intelligence Operations Center (CIOC) and other facilities operated by CFC. The Korean Combat Operations Intelligence Center (KCOIC) is particularly important in this latter regard. A combined USAF/ROKAF facility, the KCOIC processes and disseminates 24-hour, all-weather, real-time, multisensor intelligence data from U.S. satellites, reconnaissance aircraft, and other sources. Other centers linked to the KCOIC provide the capability to control and direct both Korean and American strike forces against North Korean targets.[19] Through these combined mechanisms, U.S. intelligence assets and information systems provide South Korea with a state-of-the-art capability to monitor military developments in the

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vanced computer simulations. Foal Eagle is the largest U.S.-ROK joint and combined field training exercise. Both take place annually.

[18] "Both of these forms of cooperation are critical to our national defense," a commander of Korea's 123rd Fighter Squadron has been quoted as saying. "These exercises and exchanges improve the ability of our joint operations in wartime. They also increase understanding between Korean and American forces. . . ." Eric Hehs, "The ROKAF at Fifty," *Code One Magazine*, April 2000, available at http://www.codeonemagazine.com.

[19] Taeyoung Yoon, "Intelligence and Warning Systems: Implications for ROK-U.S. Combined Crisis Management," *East Asian Review*, Vol. 11, No. 4, Winter 1999, available at http://www.iaes.or.kr/vol11_4/yoontaeyoung.htm.

North and gather early warning of any potential surprise attack. In both technical and financial terms, this U.S. capability is well beyond current ROK capabilities.[20]

Somewhat less directly related to core ROK military interests perhaps but still highly significant, security cooperation with the U.S. gives Korea an important voice in U.S. policy deliberations. This is reflected in part in the increasing number of summit meetings between the leaders of the two countries. In the first 13 months of the Bush administration alone, President Bush met formally with President Kim three times—or nearly once every four months on average. Such access would be difficult to imagine absent the close security relationship.

An elaborate set of consultative mechanisms strengthens this access. At the strategic defense dialogue level, for example, there are several major forums.[21]

- The U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting (SCM): The SCM involves roughly annual meetings by the defense ministers of the two countries and their top aides, including the chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other high-ranking military and diplomatic officials from both sides. Established in 1968, the SCM includes both a plenary session co-chaired by the two defense ministers and separate meetings of five working-level committees that deal with everything from major policy issues to security assistance, logistics, and defense industrial coopera-

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[20] According to Korea's Ministry of National Defense, U.S. U-2 reconnaissance aircraft alone cost $1 million per mission. Noting that the United States operates an overlapping reconnaissance and surveillance system manned 24 hours a day, it adds "the total sum of such operation is astronomical." Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, op. cit., p. 54.

[21] For details, see Soo-Hyong Lee, "Restructuring the Korea-U.S. Alliance," *Korea Focus*, March–April 2001, and Jeongwon Yoon, "Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises and CFC's Roles," p. 3 (unpublished, n.d.).

tion.[22] As such, the SCM serves as a vehicle for institutionalized, top-level consultations on major security issues. Many Koreans consider it an additional pillar underpinning the security relationship itself.

- The Military Committee Meeting (MCM): Established in 1978 along with the CFC, the MCM addresses the full range of military issues, from the nature of current threats and direction of military strategy to the development of combat resources. The MCM meets regularly, both annually in conjunction with the SCM and whenever requested by either side, to consult on pending military issues and provide operational guidance to the commander of CFC. Co-hosted by the chairmen of the U.S. and ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff, the MCM includes the commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, the commander of the CFC, and the director for strategy planning on the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff.
- The "Big-4" Meeting (sometimes called the "2 plus 2" meeting): This involves informal but regular meetings in Seoul between the ROK's defense and foreign ministers and the U.S. ambassador to Korea and commander of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK).

These strategic dialogue mechanisms are not completely trouble-free. Koreans sometimes complain, for example, about more SCM meetings being held in the U.S. than in South Korea, despite the principle that they rotate locations every year, and they are sensitive to instances where they feel that the meetings are being used more to "inform" than "consult." Still, even most complainers understand that such meetings provide Korea with opportunities for coordinating security perspectives and cooperation with the U.S. that are unique outside the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The general movement in these sessions over time, moreover, has been from formal declarations to in-depth discussions on policy issues and

[22] These committees are important components of the consultative process by providing opportunities for detailed consultations on a range of functional and technical matters. They also free up the defense ministers to focus on major issues and policy directions.

jointly determined policy directions.[23] This was evident in the most recent SCM on December 5, 2002. Included in the meeting agendas were issues ranging from the global war on terrorism and North Korea's continuing WMD activities to the need to adapt the U.S.-ROK alliance to changes in the global security environment.[24] Such policy coordination opportunities attest to the benefits Korea receives from close security cooperation with the United States.

In addition to these top-level strategic dialogues, there is a plethora of additional bilateral, trilateral (U.S.-ROK-Japan), and other meetings between defense and foreign policy officials. There is also a vast range of high-ranking officer visits and functional military exchanges. Indeed, the total number of meetings at all levels is so numerous that apparently no single U.S. list exists cataloguing the exchanges. Together with regular U.S.-ROK military exercises, the network of consultative, information-sharing, and planning mechanisms provides Korea direct access to its American counterparts and extensive opportunities to influence the shape and direction of U.S. policy. Imagining what these opportunities might be like in the absence of close ties between the two allies brings home this particular benefit from security cooperation with the United States.

The Internal Situation

For all these reasons, Korean leaders see the U.S.-ROK security relationship as having great value. It offers protection against a North Korean threat. It provides insurance against Korea's stronger neighbors. And it facilitates greater ROK military self-reliance, while enhancing Korea's power projection capability and regional military role. Close security ties with the U.S. also bolster prospects for con-

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[23] Jeongwon Yoon, "Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises and CFC's Roles," op. cit.

[24] U.S. Department of Defense, "Korea-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué," December 5, 2002, News Release, No. 619-02, available at http://www.defenselink.mil.

tinued economic growth and political stability, while providing Korea extensive access to U.S. leaders.

Not surprisingly, even the Kim Dae Jung administration—the most liberal ROK government in Korea's postwar history until the election of Roh Moo-hyun—repeatedly emphasized the importance of the alliance, a continued U.S. military presence in Korea, and close U.S.-ROK security cooperation. Indeed, characterizing U.S. forces stationed in Korea as the "core element" and "decisive factor" in the maintenance of peace and a balance of power in Northeast Asia, President Kim stressed virtually from the beginning of his tenure that Korea "must maintain close ROK-U.S. security cooperation."[25] He subsequently went on to stress the need for U.S. forces in Korea even after the threat from North Korea has receded. This emphasis on the long-term need for the alliance and for a U.S. military presence in Korea was formally endorsed by both allies at all four SCM meetings between the 30th SCM (January 1999) and the 33rd (November 2001). The 34th SCM (December 2002) emphasized "the need to continue to maintain a U.S. troop presence on the Korean Peninsula," while adapting the alliance "to changes in the global security environment."[26]

The December 2002 ROK presidential election campaign raised questions about whether this high evaluation would continue. During the campaign, ruling party candidate Roh Moo-hyun criticized the U.S. frequently, stoking "anti-American" sentiment (intentionally or otherwise) in an apparent effort to appeal to young Korean voters who want a more "equal" relationship with the United States. He provoked a strong reaction in the United States in particular by appearing to advocate a neutral position for Seoul between North Korea and the U.S. and greater distance between the U.S. and South Korea. Such statements reinforced a general image of Roh—dating from his youthful days as an activist in Korea's democracy movement when he

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[25] See, for example, his speech at the ROK Air Force Academy commencement ceremony on March 3, 1998, only a few weeks after becoming president, available at http://www.cwd.go.kr/english/library/press/print.php?f_nseq_tot=25557.

[26] The texts of the SCM joint communiqués are available at http://www.defenselink.mil.

sought the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces—as having an "anti-American" orientation. They also raised widespread concerns about prospects for U.S.-ROK security relations.

Roh has not put these concerns entirely to rest since his election. A particular source of tension is policy toward North Korea. On the one hand, Roh has agreed with the U.S. that North Korean nuclear weapons are intolerable. As he said in his inaugural address, "The suspicion that North Korea is developing nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to world peace, not to mention the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. North Korea's nuclear development can never be condoned. Pyongyang must abandon nuclear development."[27] On the other hand, Roh has insisted that the issue can only be resolved "peacefully through dialogue" and criticized the U.S. for refusing to negotiate with North Korea. More worrisome, he has shown a repeated tendency to highlight the "differences" between South Korea and the U.S., often in a way that implicitly portrays the U.S. as the source of danger and possible war. In one extreme formulation, for example, he called on all Koreans to unite to prevent a war even if it meant conflict between Washington and Seoul.[28]

Roh has done a better job since his election in alleviating concerns about his views toward the U.S.-ROK alliance itself. Although he has repeated his call for a "more mature and equal" Korea-U.S. relationship, he has strongly reaffirmed the importance of the alliance and the need for a continued U.S. military presence in Korea. He reportedly told U.S. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly privately, for example, that the U.S.-ROK alliance plays a "pivotal role" in

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[27] "Inaugural Address by President Roh Moo-hyun at the 16th Inaugural Ceremony," *KOREAupdate*, Vol. 14, No. 2, February 2003.

[28] "It is better to struggle than to suffer deaths in a war," Roh was quoted as saying. "Koreans should stand together, although things will get difficult when the United States bosses us around." "ROK GNP Characterizes No's Comments on DPRK Economic Cooperation 'Insane Arguments,'" *JoongAng Ilbo* (online edition), February 14, 2003. Insisting on a viewpoint different from that of the United States is okay, Roh also suggested, if such insistence prevents war. "It is a matter of which tactic to choose: whether to cooperate with the United States and risk a military attack [on the North] or to speak out so that there is a divergent opinion in the international community." "ROK President-Elect Roh's Statements Since Election Compiled," *The Korea Herald* (online edition), February 25, 2003.

South Korea's security and insisted that he has "consistently said that we need U.S. forces here and will continue to do so" in the future.[29] Roh reportedly followed this up in a private letter to President Bush before his visit to Washington in February 2003 stressing that he wants a closer alliance with the U.S. and that the majority of Koreans appreciate the U.S. troop presence.[30] In his public comments, Roh has lauded U.S. sacrifices for Korea's defense and characterized the U.S. military presence as "the driving force of security and the backbone of our prosperity."[31] He has stressed that "U.S. forces in Korea are necessary at present for peace and stability, and they will be welcome and needed in the future."[32] And he has characterized the alliance as being as "precious" now as it has been in the past and expressed the hope that "the United States will remain our ally in the future."[33]

Roh's meeting with U.S. troops stationed in Korea shortly after his election and his visit to Washington soon after his inauguration suggest that he understands the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the critical contributions of American forces in South Korea to regional stability. They also suggest that he is intent on healing any wounds that might have been caused by comments made during his campaign for president, lest these get his administration off on the wrong foot or cause lasting damage to U.S.-Korean relations. Suggestions that the new South Korean leadership "has now realized" that "South Korea can not play a third-party mediator's role" between the U.S. and North Korea and must instead "work closely with the U.S." in resolving the nuclear and other security issues are also encourag-

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[29] "Roh Stresses Alliance with U.S.," *The Korea Herald*, January 16, 2003 (online edition).

[30] *KOREAupdate*, February 2003, Vol. 14, No. 2.

[31] Howard W. French, "South Korea Leader Visits U.S. Military Base," *The New York Times*, January 15, 2003 (online edition).

[32] Peter S. Goodman, "Amid Crisis, South Korean Leader Assures U.S. Military," *Washington Post*, January 15, 2003 (online edition).

[33] Howard W. French, "Aides Declare U.S. 'Willing to Talk' in Korea Dispute," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2003 (online edition).

ing.[34] So too was his decision to provide humanitarian aid and send 700 South Korean medical and engineering personnel to support U.S. actions in Iraq. This decision, which dismayed many people in Roh's core constituencies who strongly opposed the Iraq war, both reflected and was intended to communicate the importance Roh places on the U.S.-ROK alliance.[35] Although he has also spoken of the need to plan for a potential departure of U.S. troops from Korea some day, this was as much in response to reports of U.S. plans to draw down its forces as it was a reflection of a yearning for Korean "independence."

The current situation inside South Korea, therefore, is probably better than generally portrayed. To be sure, security cooperation as close, and in certain respects as asymmetrical, as that between the U.S. and ROK inevitably carries its share of frictions, and working out the problems and differences is something of a continuing struggle. But this should not obscure the bottom line: South Korea's political leadership remains committed to the alliance. The military-to-military relationship is both extensive and effective in meeting its traditional purposes. And security cooperation with the U.S. continues to be generally perceived as beneficial to Korean interests. North Korea's rapid movement toward resuming its overt nuclear program, together with the sharp polarization inside South Korea over appropriate policies toward Pyongyang, reinforces a general South Korean reluctance to seek dramatic short-term changes in U.S.-ROK security relations. So too does the preoccupation of most Koreans today with political scandals, the economy, internal reform, and other domestic

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[34] Chung-in Moon, "ROK-DPRK Engagement and US-ROK Alliance: Trade-off or Complementary," a paper prepared originally for the U.S.-DPRK Next Steps Workshop, organized by the Nautilus Institute and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and held January 27, 2003, in Washington, D.C., available at http://www.nautilus.org. Moon is widely identified as one of Roh's principal foreign policy advisors.

[35] As Roh reported to the ROK National Assembly, "I came to the conclusion that helping the United States in difficult times and solidifying the South Korea-U.S. relations will help a lot in peacefully resolving the North Korean nuclear issue" and would boost ties between Seoul and Washington. The National Assembly voted 179 to 68 in support of this decision. Ministry of Unification, "Roh Appeals to Nation to Support Troop Dispatch," April 2, 2003, available at http://www.korea.net.

issues. North Korea's continuing refusal to deal with South Korea as a legitimate negotiating partner on security issues further bolsters South Korean incentives to maintain close security cooperation with the United States.[36]

The longer-term situation, on the other hand, is more uncertain. The end of the Cold War and economic free-fall in North Korea has significantly reduced the public's sense of external threat. Democratization has removed the security relationship from the exclusive purview of specialists and politicized foreign and security policy issues, while broadening the spectrum of debate to include environmental and other "quality of life" issues that resonate with Korean voters. And both social and attitudinal change have shifted the ideological center of gravity to the political left, while a new, younger generation is emerging that is increasingly confident, assertive, and focused on Korea's own national interest. That Roh Moo-hyun could win the presidential election—despite North Korea's reactivation of its nuclear reactors, in the face of daily newspaper allegations of ruling party corruption, and without changing his stance on either U.S. or North Korean issues—highlights the significance of each of these developments. It also signifies a major generational shift in South Korean politics.[37]

Stimulated by a number of serious recent incidents at U.S. military bases, including the accidental killing of two South Korean schoolgirls in June 2002, these developments have stirred strong public anger toward the U.S. and reopened long-standing societal fissures over the U.S. military role in Korea. They have also generated

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[36] North Korea's treatment of Lim Dong Won, a special envoy appointed by President Kim in January 2003 to seek a peaceful resolution of the nuclear weapons issue, is only the most recent example. Although Lim was carrying a letter from Kim to deliver personally to Kim Jong Il, and despite prior agreement by both sides on the purpose and substance of Lim's visit, the North Korean leader kept him waiting in Pyongyang for two full days and then refused to meet him. North Korea simultaneously stepped up its denunciations of countries seeking to "meddle" in the nuclear issue, reiterating its consistent position that it would deal only with the United States. For an account of Lim's visit, see Young-jong Lee, "Jilted Envoy Back from North," *JoongAng Daily*, January 29, 2003 (online edition).

[37] Byung-joon Ahn, "South Korea's Dangerous New Dawn," *The Korea Herald*, January 3, 2003 (online edition).

new questioning of the conditions under which U.S. troops are stationed in Korea, if not of the need for a continued U.S. military presence itself. Engagement with North Korea exacerbates these trends by stoking long-standing South Korean aspirations for greater political independence and strengthening public antipathy toward the more intrusive aspects of security cooperation with the United States.

Although Kim Dae Jung emphasized the importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance consistently during his term as president, as noted above, the nature of his particular version of "engagement" with the North contributed to the current uncertainties.[38] This too is probably not surprising. From the beginning of his tenure President Kim had one supreme goal: "reconciliation" with the North. To accomplish this goal, he believed it essential to change the view that South Koreans have always had of North Korea. Accordingly, he urged South Koreans to think of North Korea and its people not as "enemies" seeking to conquer South Korea but as "brothers and sisters" needing South Korean help. Kim's comments upon returning to Seoul following the historic North-South summit in June 2000 were an extreme, but representative, formulation of this argument.

> The Pyongyang people are the same as us . . . the same nation sharing the same blood. Regardless of what they have been saying and [how they have been] acting outwardly, they have deep love and a longing for their compatriots in the South. If you talk with them, you notice that right away. . . . We must consider North Koreans as our brothers and sisters. We must believe that they have the same thought. . . . Most importantly there is no longer going to be any war. The North will no longer attempt unification by force and at the same time we will not do any harm to the North. . . .[39]

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[38] For a detailed account, see Norman D. Levin and Yong-Sup Han, *Sunshine in Korea—The South Korean Debate over Policies Toward North Korea,* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002. For an excellent short summary, see Robert Marquand, "How S. Korea's View of the North Flipped," *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 22, 2003 (online edition).

[39] For the full text of his remarks, see "President Kim Dae Jung's Remarks on Returning to Seoul from the Inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang," *The Korea Herald*, June 16, 2000.

Kim also repeatedly stressed the need to "trust" the North, often in the absence of any obvious basis for this trust. Although he never made excuses for North Korea, he insisted that significant change was taking place in the North as a result of his government's policies and repeatedly overlooked manifestations of bad North Korean behavior.

Whatever the effect of Kim's approach in changing North Korea, it was remarkably successful in altering views of the North inside South Korea. Public threat perceptions declined dramatically. This decline helped erode the rationale on which the U.S.-ROK security alliance has always rested. More directly, Kim's approach contributed to a domestic political climate increasingly intolerant of anti–North Korean actions—or even of public criticism of Kim Jong Il.[40] In the context of stepped-up U.S. concern with North Korea after 9/11, his emphasis on "reconciliation" contributed to altering the popular image of the U.S. in certain circles from a protector of South Korean security to a potential impediment to inter-Korean unification.[41] It also bolstered public receptivity to the long-standing argument of South Korean radicals that the U.S. only "uses" South Korea to further its own strategic interests.

Such views represent an incipient paradigm shift of enormous potential significance. Particularly evident in the younger generations, it propels an increasingly distrustful stance toward U.S. leadership and palpable yearning for greater control over matters affecting South Korean interests. It also exacerbates the difficulty of bridging the con-

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[40] Seung-hwan Kim, "Anti-Americanism in Korea (II)," *The Korea Times*, December 9, 2002.

[41] President Bush's "axis of evil" remark during his January 2002 State of the Union speech, which elevated Pyongyang to the pantheon of regimes deemed to pose a "grave and growing danger" to U.S. security, is the most conspicuous example of heightened U.S. concern with North Korea. But there are many others as well: the U.S. withdrawal from the anti-ballistic missile (ABM) treaty in December 2001, which was based on the perceived threat posed by such "rogue" states as North Korea which was developing both WMD and long-range missiles; the explicit inclusion of North Korea in the January 2002 U.S. Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), which included a number of contingencies for which new "earth penetrating" and other nuclear weapons might be used; and the U.S. refusal in March 2002 to certify that North Korea was abiding by the requirements of the agreed framework to freeze its nuclear weapons activities.

flicting U.S. and South Korean views of North Korea and developing a joint, long-term approach toward dealing with the North Korean nuclear challenge.[42] Much of the longer-term uncertainty in U.S.-ROK security relations today is linked to such shifts in public attitudes.

A sharp rise in nationalism in South Korea exacerbates the situation. Indeed, with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and overwhelming success of the ROK in its competition with North Korea, nationalism has increasingly come to replace ideology in South Korea as the key measure of political legitimacy.[43] Korean nationalism has long been notable for its intensity, reflecting in part Korea's history as the frequent object of foreign domination and in part broader Korean cultural characteristics. But what makes it particularly significant is its nature, with a sharply ideological quotient rooted in long-standing, unresolved historical issues.[44] Nationalist critics who have historically blamed the U.S. for the division of the Korean Peninsula and long perpetuation of national division are now extending their critique to the "self-serving" quality of U.S. policies and fundamental "inequities" in U.S.-ROK relations.[45]

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[42] Thomas Omestad, "Crisis? What Crisis?" *U.S. News and World Report*, February 17, 2003 (online edition).

[43] For an excellent analysis, see Chai-bong Hahm, "The Ties That Bind: Capitalism, Democracy, and Modernity," a paper prepared for a Pacific Forum CSIS conference entitled "Future Relations Among the U.S., Korea, and Japan: Balancing Values and Interests," held April 17–19, 2002, in Honolulu.

[44] For a more extended account of the situation today, see Levin and Han, *Sunshine in Korea*, op. cit., pp. 52–55. For excellent historical accounts, see Michael Edson Robinson, *Cultural Nationalism in Colonial Korea, 1920–1925*, University of Washington Press, 1988, and Sung-Joo Han, *The Failure of Democracy in South Kore*a, University of California Press, 1974. Also see Han's more recent pieces: "The Koreas' New Century," *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 4, Winter 2000–01, and "The Shifting Korean Ideological Divide," *Policy Forum Online*, July 11, 2000, Nautilus Institute, available at http://www.nautilus.org/fora/security/0005G_Han.html.

[45] A more accurate characterization of the situation in Korea today is not of a single Korean "nationalism" but of "competing nationalisms," with one side defining nationalism in terms of Korean "people-hood" and class conflict and the other in terms of democracy, free markets, and human rights. Each side challenges the "nationalist" credentials of those on the other side. For details, see Levin and Han, *Sunshine in Korea,* op. cit., p. 59.

Not surprisingly, North Korea has actively stimulated this trend in an effort to inflame social tensions inside South Korea and increase its own leverage in North-South interactions.[46] One result in South Korea is a greater perceived linkage between security and unification issues. Another is more widespread portrayal of the U.S. as an obstacle to Korean self-determination. Incidents around U.S. military bases such as the crushing to death of two young South Korean schoolgirls by a U.S. military vehicle—while extremely serious in their own terms—are particularly worrisome in this context. They not only stimulate this aspect of nationalist sentiment but also intensify its "anti-American" flavor.

To be sure, the widespread sense of rising "anti-Americanism" in Korea needs qualification. For one thing, there has always been some resentment of and hostility toward the United States in South Korea. This was rooted in the historic U.S. role in Korea—particularly the post–World War II division of Korea—and was reinforced thereafter by American support for successive authoritarian South Korean regimes. Many Korean public opinion polls, moreover, show not only broad support for the U.S.-ROK alliance and U.S. military presence but also continued warm feelings at the personal level toward the United States. And the U.S. overwhelmingly remains the country of choice for both students seeking to study abroad and members of the elite considering future security partners. Although highly nationalistic civic groups are large in number, their membership is small and their leadership is overlapping.

Media use of the term "anti-American," moreover, has been sloppy and simplistic. Koreans are deservedly proud of their individual and collective accomplishments. They are increasingly confident and assertive in pursuing Korea's interests. Many openly chafe at their subordinate position in the U.S.-ROK alliance and resent what they perceive to be Korea's "inferior" treatment more broadly. But few are genuinely "anti-American" in the sense that they "hate" the United States or reject the values and principles for which America stands.

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[46] For a representative example, see Mark Magnier, "North Korea Urges South to Stand Against U.S.," *The Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 2003.

Not many more want to see a complete U.S. withdrawal from Korea, let alone a rupture in U.S.-South Korean relations.

The candlelight vigils and mass demonstrations at the end of 2002 protesting the acquittal of the U.S. soldiers involved in the tragic deaths of the two young Korean schoolgirls were instructive in this regard. At the height of the demonstrations, a group of nearly 50 Korean civil, religious, and other social leaders held a news conference to warn their fellow protesters against actions that might damage traditional ties between the U.S. and South Korea.[47] Even the demonstrators' demands for revision of the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement had a positive, if widely missed, dimension. By calling for treaty *revision*, rather than abrogation, the protesters were implicitly acknowledging the need for U.S. forces to *stay*. To this extent, the demonstrations can be seen less as protests *against* America than as appeals *toward* America. They were a "pro-Korean" demand for respectful, fair, and equitable treatment as much as a manifestation of "anti-American" sentiment.

Having said that, much anecdotal evidence and a growing body of empirical data suggest that public attitudes toward the U.S. have become decidedly more unfavorable in recent years. Views that the U.S. is interested in only its own interests and simply "uses" Korea to further these interests, for example, or that the "single-minded" U.S. pursuit of its war on terrorism is an obstacle to North-South reconciliation, are increasingly voiced by both government officials and the public at large. Such negative trends in Korean attitudes appear particularly pronounced among those in their 30s and 40s, fueled in part by radical non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and "leftist" civic groups that actively use the Internet to propagate their anti-American perspectives.[48] But they appear characteristic of Korean opinion more

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[47] "The United States is South Korea's traditional ally," the activists said in their statement. "The U.S. forces are absolutely needed for us to protect our interests and for the power balance in Northeast Asia." Jeong-ju Na, "Activists Try to Cool Off Anti-U.S. Sentiment," *The Korea Times*, December 11, 2002.

[48] Whereas the government traditionally suppressed such groups, the Kim Dae Jung government actively encouraged their growth in an effort to generate public support for its "sunshine policy" toward North Korea. Nor has the Blue House done much to help dampen

broadly. Such views foster antagonism toward the U.S. and stimulate a tendency to view Koreans in both the North and the South as being "one people." A decline in the "emotional" quotient of the U.S.-ROK relationship as memories of the Korean War fade, and as fewer and fewer young Koreans even visit the demilitarized zone (DMZ), heightens their potential significance.

What Korea Wants from the Relationship

Not surprisingly, perhaps, what Korea wants from security cooperation with the U.S. today reflects both the strengths and potential vulnerabilities of the relationship. Its wish list, accordingly, reflects a mixture of change and continuity.

At the top of the list, Korea wants a continuation of the U.S. military presence. Few people outside a very small minority want to see a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea. Korea's commitment to providing a stable stationing environment for U.S. forces is evidence of its desire for a continued military presence. So too are its efforts to enhance force protection for U.S. troops stationed in Korea. The government and foreign policy establishment would strongly like this stationing to include at least a symbolic U.S. presence north of Seoul, at least until the nuclear issue is resolved with North Korea. Korean leaders consider the immediate involvement of U.S. troops in any potential conflict with Pyongyang, which such a presence guarantees, as serving two simultaneous ends: deterring North Korean aggression, and providing concrete evidence of U.S. intent to honor its security commitment to South Korea should deterrence fail. The generally shocked Korean reaction to reports early in 2003 of U.S. plans to restructure its forces on the peninsula and official efforts to ensure "prior consultations" before the U.S. makes any final decisions

anti-American sentiment when incidents involving U.S. forces occur, leaving them largely to the Ministry of Defense to handle. In this sense, the government has been at least complicit in what appears to be the recent rise in anti-American sentiment.

are further indications of the value Koreans place on the U.S. military presence.[49]

At the same time, however, Korea wants the U.S. presence to be more compact and less visible. This reflects in part the exigencies of Korea's urbanization and growing competition for the use of scarce land and resources. But it also reflects the public's generally reduced sense of external threat, as well as increased public resentment of aspects of the U.S. presence in Korea's more "nationalistic" environment. Demonstrating decreasing dependence on a large U.S. presence further satisfies domestic critics seeking a more "equal" relationship between South Korea and the United States. Although Korea does not want to see a complete U.S. withdrawal, let alone an ending of the U.S.-ROK alliance, it generally welcomes a reduction in the size and footprint of the U.S. presence.

The Land Partnership Plan (LPP) signed in March 2002 is an important step toward meeting these two sets of objectives. This jointly agreed-upon plan is designed to stabilize the U.S. presence, while consolidating U.S. bases in Korea from 41 to 23 and reducing the amount of land used by the U.S. to roughly 43 percent of the current level.[50] The anticipated realignment of U.S. forces in South Korea will move further in this direction. This realignment, initiated under the framework of the U.S.-ROK "Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative," is designed to transfer more of the responsibility for South Korea's defense to the South Koreans and transition a reduced, but continuing, U.S. military presence to a more expeditionary, regional security orientation. As part of this initiative, both sides agreed in June 2003 to move the U.S. garrison at Yongsan out of central Seoul

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[49] As one moderate Korean vernacular editorialized: "We cannot overemphasize the importance of the U.S. military presence in South Korea. We hope that we could defend ourselves without depending on American troops in the near future. Now is not the time to raise the question of removing U.S. forces from the peninsula. They play a crucial role as a deterrent. Without U.S. troops the situation here would be extremely unstable, scaring off foreign investors and causing tremendous economic and social chaos. Washington and Seoul should not forget that." "Welcoming Social Chaos," *JoongAng Ilbo* (online edition), February 15, 2003.

[50] Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, op. cit., p. 74.

in the next few years and consolidate the U.S. 2nd Division in key "hubs" south of the Han River in a gradual, two-phased process.[51]

Thus far, Korean concerns about this realignment have not related much to the idea of reducing the number of U.S. forces and consolidating them in fewer bases. Indeed, South Koreans appear to generally support this part of the planned realignment. Rather they have to do with three other aspects of the plan. One has to do with the question of timing. Many South Koreans are concerned about the wisdom of initiating significant U.S. force reductions while the nuclear issue remains unresolved with North Korea. Some believe that instituting such reductions in the absence of broader changes in North Korea will only strengthen Pyongyang's refusal to deal with South Korea as a legitimate negotiating partner on security issues and weaken Seoul's position vis-à-vis Pyongyang.

Another concern has to do with the pace of the realignment. Planned U.S. changes will require both immediate needs—such as improved communications and intelligence-gathering equipment, better counter-battery capability, enhanced mobility, transport, and air defenses—and long-term requirements that South Korea will have to meet. Many South Koreans are concerned about the speed with which the U.S. is moving to reconfigure its military presence and the resulting ramifications for South Korean defense budgets and broader economic growth. Already the Ministry of National Defense has asked for a spending increase of more than 28 percent for 2004 which, if approved, would involve a hefty 42 percent increase for force improvement and raise South Korea's annual defense spending from 2.7 percent to 3.2 percent of the gross domestic product.[52]

A final concern has to do with inferences Koreans draw from the plan, most of which relate to the U.S. emphasis on moving its troops—especially those stationed for decades near the DMZ—to positions south of the Han River. Some South Koreans see this as re-

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[51] For details, see http://www.usfk.or.kr/en.

[52] Gordon Fairclough, "As U.S. Redeploys, Seoul Boosts Defense Spending," *Wall Street Journal*, June 27, 2003.

flecting a desire to minimize the automaticity of U.S. involvement in any potential conflict and hence fear it represents a weakening of the U.S. defense commitment. Others see it as an even more calculated "Koreanization" program designed to leave South Korea to fend for itself.[53] Still others see the plan as reflecting an effort to maximize U.S. freedom of action against North Korea by reducing the exposure of U.S. troops to potential North Korean retaliation. None of these concerns relates to "footprint" issues per se but to more fundamental questions about U.S. intentions.

The second thing Korea wants from the security relationship is access to advanced weapons, technologies, and management systems. The goal is straightforward: Korea wants to create a military over time that is self-reliant, technologically based, and regionally oriented. The importance of this goal is reflected in the rising share of Korea's defense budget—more than one-third—devoted to force modernization, with the focus being on advanced surveillance and power projection capabilities. It also is reflected in the escalating level of offsets Koreans are demanding in foreign purchase contracts.[54]

As indicated above, the U.S. has played a central role in meeting this desire and it remains Korea's preferred partner. But the ground is shifting. The issue of Korea's next fighter plane (F-X)—which South Koreans approached heavily in terms of technology transfer—is illustrative of the nature of the shift. Whereas in the past Korea often simply ordered whatever weapons system the U.S. was offering, in the case of the F-X it formally introduced competition in an effort to minimize costs, maximize ROK bargaining leverage, and demonstrate an open, transparent selection process.

Probably no one anticipated the intensity of Korean unhappiness that competitive process would uncover. This unhappiness was particularly acute among younger officers and officials. Many of this younger generation were impressed by the state-of-the art look and

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[53] Robert Marquand, "In Korea, a Quiet US Weapons Buildup," *Christian Science Monitor,* July 1, 2003.

[54] John Larkin, "South Korea Eyes Regional Power Status," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, July 5, 2001.

performance of Europe's Rafale and vigorously opposed selecting as Korea's next long-term fighter an upgraded version of a U.S. plane that was "already 30 years old." But resentment was strong even among some senior officers and officials, many of whom have chafed quietly for years over what they considered U.S. "discrimination" in refusing to sell weapons to Korea that it eagerly sold to Japan. The ultimate decision to "buy American" in the F-X case reflects the continuing importance Korea places on its relationship with the U.S. as much as a high evaluation of the technical capabilities of the U.S. F-15K. But like a cavity revealed in a dentist's x-ray, the process by which this decision was reached suggests a problem needing attention.

A third thing Korea wants is continued intelligence-sharing. As noted above, Korea is weak in certain critical areas, particularly signals intelligence (SIGINT) and imagery collection, for which the U.S. alone is able to compensate. Moreover, the tight integration and joint operation of U.S.-ROK command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) assets provide capabilities the ROK simply cannot get elsewhere. The relative paucity of U.S. restrictions placed on the sharing of intelligence and trend toward the *joint analysis* of intelligence gathered from both U.S. and ROK sources strongly reinforces Korea's desire to see this aspect of the relationship continue.

While maintaining this cooperation, however, Korea is striving to strengthen its independent surveillance, early warning, and other information-gathering capabilities, many of which have previously been the responsibility of the U.S. This reflects its fundamental goal of attaining greater ROK self-reliance. It also helps quiet domestic criticism, which is particularly conspicuous among the younger generation, that Korea's heavy dependence on the U.S. for early warning and other intelligence information excessively constricts ROK freedom of action. It also counters criticism of the government for doing little to prevent the U.S. from using its information superiority for its own "political" purposes.

Two other themes stand out in discussions with Koreans about what they want from the relationship today. First, Koreans want to be

treated more "equally." By this, they mean that they want to be accorded treatment comparable to that of other U.S. allies. The critical benchmark here is Japan. Koreans are increasingly open about their annoyance over what they consider their "inferior" treatment relative to Japan (regarding arms sales, missile and nuclear power development, Status of Forces Agreement, etc.). They are also increasingly dismissive of what they perceive as an American tendency to view Korea's security largely in the context of Japan (i.e., Korea as the "firewall" for Japan's security or means to achieve separate U.S. aims vis-à-vis Japan). U.S. insistence on a major role in planning for North Korean collapse contingencies is particularly sensitive in this context. Just as Japan is responsible for its own internal security, Koreans believe they should properly be responsible themselves for problems stemming from any potential Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) collapse. Some see U.S. insistence on a major role as coming close to treading on Korea's national sovereignty. Although some officers in the ROK military recognize the inadequacy of their own operational planning capabilities, many of them chafe at U.S. insistence on a major role in such planning. The way to address ROK inadequacies, they believe, is by improving ROK capabilities, not by inserting the U.S. further into the process.

This desire for more "equal" treatment has been stimulated further by the continuing standoff over North Korea's nuclear weapons activities. Many Koreans remain highly critical of the manner in which the nuclear crisis in 1993–1994 was handled. From their perspective, the U.S. took the crisis over, reached a separate deal (the Agreed Framework) without the due involvement of South Korea, and then insisted that the South Koreans (and Japanese) pay for the agreement. Accounts years later of how close the U.S. actually had come to authorizing military deployments that risked a major conflict shocked many of these Koreans and reinforced their sense that Korea receives demeaning, "inferior" treatment.[55]

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[55] On the U.S. military deployment plan, see Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense,* Brookings Institution Press, 1999, p. 131.

Since the election of Roh Moo-hyun, the South Korean government has appeared remarkably supportive of direct, bilateral talks between the U.S. and North Korea—at times even in ways that appear to undercut longstanding ROK security interests.[56] This reflects the high priority the new administration places upon moving the nuclear standoff with the North toward a peaceful, diplomatic resolution. But it does not negate the sensitivity most South Koreans feel about not being treated "equally," or the broader neuralgia about Korean interests being subordinated to outside powers. Ensuring South Korea's participation as a full, active partner in the development and implementation of a joint strategy toward North Korea is a nearly universal objective.

Second, Korea wants greater U.S. sensitivity to Korean cultural norms and practices. Few Koreans believe that anti-American sentiment can be eliminated completely. Indeed, they see the manifestations of "anti-Americanism" as both natural—given Korea's dependence on the U.S. and objective asymmetries in the security relationship—and unavoidable, particularly in the current "nationalistic" environment. But they believe that the issues Korean civic and other groups exploit to foster anti-American sentiment can be dealt with more effectively if the U.S. puts sensitivity to Korean "feelings" higher on its alliance management agenda. Even senior Korean military officers urge Americans to work harder at setting aside their own cultural practices and demonstrate respect for those of Korea when they come to the country. Popular reactions to the killing of the two Korean schoolgirls by a U.S. military vehicle and subsequent acquittal of the U.S. soldiers would have been significantly different, they believe, had the incident been handled in a more "culturally sensitive" manner. If the U.S. military moves toward shorter tours, the need for such sensitivity is likely only to get more acute.

From this perspective, Korea's criteria for success in the security relationship are relatively straightforward, although each criterion in

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[56] ROK support for a U.S.-DPRK non-aggression pact is one example. For a thoughtful analysis, see Ralph Cossa, "Unsolicited Advice to President-Elect Roh," *PacNet Newsletter #6*, February 6, 2003, available at http://www.csis.org/pacfor.

itself is complex and easier to identify than achieve. The relationship will be successful if the U.S.:

- Maintains a smaller and less visible forward presence, but one that is meaningful in terms of deterrence (i.e., continues to provide some form of "tripwire") and regional stability
- Meshes changes in U.S. deployments with South Korea's ability to take on new missions, while supporting greater ROK self-reliance and regional military capability
- Begins a long-term process of preparing South Korean military leaders for the transfer of wartime operational control as part of a larger effort to enhance Korea's role within the combined defense system
- Solves military base issues—especially Yongsan
- Demonstrates responsiveness to Korea's desire for more "equal" treatment (through SOFA improvements, arms transfers, etc.)
- Responds quickly and effectively to sources of anti-American sentiment, demonstrating sensitivity to Korean cultural norms and practices in the process
- Develops joint, collaborative strategies for dealing with North Korea's nuclear and related activities, emphasizing diplomatic and other measures designed to achieve a peaceful resolution
- Supports South Korea's broader engagement with the North—both in its own terms and as a means for achieving progress on the nuclear issue—while recognizing and implementing the ROK's leading role on issues dealing with North-South relations
- Actively uses existing consultation mechanisms to address issues in the bilateral security relationship and avoids sudden, unilateral decisions
- Manages a smooth, consultative transition to a more balanced and mature partnership.

CHAPTER FOUR

The U.S. Perspective

The situation in the U.S. presents a similarly complex, and similarly mixed, picture. On the one hand, the importance of security cooperation with Korea to deal with North Korea's nuclear challenge and meet the alliance's traditional purposes of deterring/defeating North Korean aggression and maintaining regional stability is widely understood. On the other hand, strong differences between the U.S. and ROK over appropriate policies toward North Korea are undermining the traditional sense of common interest, while erosion in the traditional rationale for the alliance is weakening its larger perceived value. This chapter reviews broad U.S. policy goals after 9/11, identifies benefits the U.S. receives from security cooperation with South Korea, and assesses Korea's role in furthering U.S. interests. Together, these help center U.S.-ROK relations. The chapter then describes some of the major forces on the U.S. side pushing in a centrifugal direction.

U.S. Policy Goals

U.S. policy objectives have been spelled out with unusual detail and clarity. The 2001 *Quadrennial Defense Review (*QDR) identifies several enduring national interests: ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action; honoring international commitments, including protecting U.S. allies and friends and precluding hostile domination of critical

regions; and contributing to economic well-being, including the security of lines of communication and access to key markets and strategic resources.[1] These fit nicely with traditional statements of America's "permanent" interests in Asia.[2]

To protect these enduring interests in the post-9/11 era, the QDR describes a new U.S. strategic framework built around four broad defense policy goals: assuring allies and friends; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and decisively defeating any adversary if deterrence fails. These goals require in turn that the U.S. strengthen its forward deployed forces to maintain favorable regional balances, while expanding security cooperation to ensure access, interoperability, and intelligence cooperation. Because the U.S. can no longer know precisely where and when its interests will be threatened, the U.S. must also shift its force planning paradigm to enable the building of a portfolio of capabilities that is robust across the spectrum of possible force requirements.

Defense planning identifies several subsidiary objectives as the focus of its new planning construct.[3] The first is to maintain "forward deterrence" in four critical regions of the world (one of which is Northeast Asia). The second is to swiftly defeat potential hostile actions by any two adversaries in these regions. The third is to win at least one of these conflicts decisively. Widely dubbed the "4-2-1" strategy, this new planning construct emphasizes the importance of security cooperation with U.S. friends and allies in these regions. Such cooperation is designed to improve U.S. ability to protect critical bases of operations, deny enemies sanctuary, and project U.S. forces to distant environments, among other things. Increasing the

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[1] U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

[2] U.S. defense policy statements have for years identified four interests that have remained remarkably consistent over the past two centuries: peace and security; commercial access to the region; freedom of navigation; and preventing the rise of any hegemonic power or coalition. See, for example, U.S. Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, Washington, D.C., February 1995, p. 5.

[3] The text of a Pentagon background briefing on defense planning and accompanying briefings slides are available at http://www.defenselink.mil.

capabilities of U.S. forward deployed forces so as to improve both their deterrent effect and ability to maintain favorable regional balances, while tailoring these forces over time to allow their reallocation to other missions, is an additional objective near the top of U.S. military transformation efforts.[4]

The 2002 U.S. national security strategy wraps these interests and defense policy goals in a larger strategy predicated on core American beliefs in liberty, justice, and human dignity.[5] Based on these beliefs, the strategy is designed to achieve a triad of broad objectives: Defend against threats from terrorists and tyrants; build good relations among the major powers; and encourage free and open societies. America is now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones, the report emphasizes, less by armies than by "catastrophic technologies in the hands of the few." The overarching goal, therefore, is to "promote a balance of power that favors freedom." Toward this end, the report stresses that the U.S. will strive to: strengthen alliances so as to defeat global terrorism and prevent attacks against itself and its friends; work with others to defuse regional conflicts; and "expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy." Sustaining cooperation with U.S. allies and friends is a theme running through all these objectives.

What the U.S. Gains from the Relationship

Korea shares U.S. basic interests and core beliefs. Many of the goals emphasized by President Roh in his inaugural address—fostering democracy, trust, and transparency; stimulating decentralization, autonomy, and better business conditions; and opposing [North Korea's] nuclear proliferation—have long been high

[4] U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress, 2002*, p. 53, available at http://www.defenselink.mil. For greater detail, see U.S. Department of Defense, *Transformation Study Report*, April 27, 2001, available at the same site.

[5] The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, D.C., September 2002.

on the U.S. policy agenda.[6] Some of Roh's goals, such as "creating a compassionate society," have even been found in the stump speeches of American politicians. This may not be surprising for a man who as a youth reportedly adopted Abraham Lincoln as his personal role model. Such shared goals and beliefs can help advance many of the related U.S. policy objectives. But Korea provides first and foremost some practical benefits.

Much as in the case of commercial real estate, these begin with location. Korea has been at the nexus of great power interests in Asia throughout its modern history—a geopolitical condition that made it the repeated focus of rivalry among the major powers and victim of three-and-a-half decades of foreign colonial rule. Its capital is geographically closer to Beijing and Vladivostok than it is to Tokyo. Today, some 700 million people live within a radius of 1,200 kilometers of Seoul.[7] As President Roh emphasized in his inaugural address, the combined population of Korea, China, and Japan is four times larger than that of the European Union, with business transactions in the region representing one-fifth of the global volume. This represents a potential market with global impact.

Not surprisingly, transforming Korea into a "hub" of intra- and interregional commerce over the next several decades is a key part of South Korea's long-term development strategy and ranks near the top of President Roh's policy objectives. To realize such a position, South Korea will need to build railroads, gas pipelines, and other infrastructure that better integrate the countries in Northeast Asia. ROK government plans to create a major science and technology zone, in addition to other planned special economic zones, are components of this larger vision. Although political, labor market, and other problems will need to be overcome to achieve this vision, the prospects are not negligible. South Korea's highly educated, creative populace, ad-

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[6] For the full text of President Roh's inauguration speech, see "Inaugural Address by President Roh Moo-hyun . . . ," op. cit.

[7] James Brooke, "New Leader in Korea Emphasizes Foreign Ties," op. cit.

vanced information infrastructure, and sophisticated transportation and logistics facilities provide a base on which to build.

Even short of attaining this status, however, South Korea will have an important weight in regional affairs. According to one estimate, for example, assuming that it continues its recovery from the financial crisis of 1997–1998 and North Korea continues to survive as a separate state, South Korea's gross domestic product and per capita GDP are likely to more than double between 2000 and 2015.[8] This would constitute a rise from roughly one-quarter of Japan's GDP to nearly one-half in purchasing-power parity (PPP) dollars. Military spending and capital will also likely see a dramatic rise, with the result that by 2015 South Korea's military capital could be approximately equal to that of Japan. Quite apart from shifting trade patterns, which already are drawing South Korea and China closer together and raising the salience of potential future political alignments, such trends will sustain Korea's traditional status as a focal point of great power interest.

Korea's ultimate unification will reinforce this status. A unified Korea could have in 50 years a population (around 80 million) only slightly smaller than that of Japan (around 109 million), and one almost surely much younger.[9] It would also have a geo-economic position that could bridge the huge economies of China and Japan, while drawing Russia into the East Asian economy and reaching down to and around Southeast Asia. With or without nuclear weapons, the political-military weight of a unified Korea will help determine the regional balance of power. For these reasons, Korea will continue to constitute an important center of Asia's strategic gravity.

Even if unification comes peacefully, of course, the costs associated with meeting the North's immediate needs and reconstructing the country will be substantial. Still, such potential difficulties should not be exaggerated. Depending on how unification is attained, the

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[8] Charles Wolf, Jr., et al., *Asian Economic Trends and Their Security Implication*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000, pp. 50–54.

[9] U.N. Population Division, *World Population Prospects—The 2000 Revision*, United Nations, 2001.

costs may well be manageable.[10] Moreover, although there will surely be major challenges, there will also be opportunities. An end to the bitter confrontation, for example, will allow a major reduction in military expenditures and new investment targeted on national prosperity. Stimulation of the complementary nature of the North Korean and South Korean economic structures (natural resources, labor forces, etc.) will contribute to economic growth.[11] Furthermore, Japan, China, and Russia will have their own incentives to facilitate a stable integration process.

It is also possible, however, that unification may not come peacefully. A unified Korea could materialize as a result of a North-South war, for example, or some form of civil unrest or other violent North Korean collapse. Such scenarios would have major implications for Korea, in both financial and human terms. But it would also have serious implications for the region. Korea could become a source of protracted instability. This could invite troublemaking by outside powers and perhaps even a late 19th century/early 20th century kind of struggle for influence. It could also raise new problems of Korean terrorism, warlordism, or loose nukes and endanger the historically overarching U.S. goal of regional stability.[12] Such dangers, although hardly inevitable, highlight the importance of the bilateral alliance. Whatever the prospects for managing post-unification dangers in the context of close U.S.-ROK ties, they will be significantly smaller in their absence.

One aspect of Korea's location makes it unique today: It is the only U.S. Asian treaty ally that directly borders one of the points of the "axis of evil." Unlike the case of Iraq, which has no counterpart, the ROK nails down North Korea. Moreover, it is indispensable to

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[10] Charles Wolf, Jr., *Straddling Economics and Politics*, Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2002, pp. 201–204.

[11] Young-Kyu Park, "Post-Unification Challenges," in Amos A. Jordan, ed., *Korean Unification: Implications for Northeast Asia*, CSIS, 1993, pp. 45–46.

[12] For the continuing importance of this historic goal, see Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly's prepared statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on March 26, 2003, available at http://usinfo.state.gov.

U.S. efforts to contain Pyongyang's nuclear program—few effective U.S. actions can be taken without South Korea's support and many can be taken only with it—as well as to achieving broader U.S. regional non-proliferation objectives. Over the longer term, Korea provides the geography and socioeconomic resources necessary to facilitate the ultimate change or demise of the North Korean regime. At the same time, Korea's location gives it an impact on U.S. relations with the other regional powers, as well as a potential role in major theater conflicts.

In this sense, Korea remains a critical part of the geostrategic equation. How the security relationship with Korea evolves could affect everything from U.S. power projection capability in Asia to the shape of major power relations and long-term prospects for regional stability. It could also affect prospects for the growth of democratic institutions and market economies in China and Russia—developments that, as indicated in the U.S. national security strategy report, are central to long-term U.S. strategic objectives.

In addition, Korea provides the U.S. with the benefits of 50 years as military allies. Many of these are concomitants of what the U.S. provides Korea. Near the top of the list is access. The Mutual Defense Treaty, as noted above, provides a guarantee of U.S. military access by formally granting the U.S. the right to station military forces "in and about" South Korean territory. This right ensures the U.S. the ability to bring its force to bear to deal with potential North Korean contingencies. The right, however, is also open-ended, in the sense that the only requirement stipulated in the treaty is that the stationing of U.S. troops be "determined by mutual agreement."

Until recently, the U.S. has understandably focused its deployments on the possibility of war with North Korea, and deploying aircraft or other forces out of Korea for off-peninsula contingencies would be a significant political decision. But there is no reason in principle why this cannot be done. Indeed, the legal guarantee of U.S. access underpins repeated high-level agreement that the U.S.-ROK alliance "should continue to contribute to the stability of the

region."[13] It also represents the foundation on which long-term plans are predicated to transition U.S. forces to a more expeditionary, regional security orientation. These plans include the deployment of an Interim Brigade Combat Team in Korea by 2007 or sooner and integration of Korea-based United States Air Force (USAF) assets into Aerospace Expeditionary Forces (AEF) for potential use in a wider range of contingencies.

A second benefit Korea provides as a result of our close military-to-military relationship is basing and training facilities. Although plans are to gradually consolidate U.S. forces, as noted above, some 37,000 U.S. troops are currently stationed at 41 major bases throughout Korea. This includes around 9,000 U.S. Air Force personnel who are located at Osan, Kunsan, and five other co-located operating bases. To maintain a high state of readiness, Korea provides realistic training opportunities on a regular basis. In contrast to the situation at many U.S. bases elsewhere, moreover, much of this includes regular live-fire, strafing, and other similar activities.[14] As the USAF's only live-fire range, Kooni Range near Maehyang-ri is valued particularly highly. But the USAF also shares ROK ranges elsewhere, including some that actually present better targets than at Kooni. The downside, addressed in the final chapter, is that there is increasing encroachment on U.S. training areas as a result of Korea's increasing urbanization. The LPP should reduce the effects of this encroachment, not least by providing the land necessary to create a consolidated Korean Maneuver Training Center, but the problem is serious and needs addressing.[15]

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[13] For the most recent example, see the statement issued after the June 27, 2003, meeting between U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and ROK Minister of Defense Cho, available at http://www.usfk.or.kr/en.

[14] John Tilelli, Jr., former CFC Commander in Chief, has been quoted as saying that these opportunities are more numerous than those available even to many continental U.S.-based units. See Douglas J. Gillert, "U.S. Forces in Korea Strengthen Alliance of Hope," available at http://www.defenselink.mil/specials/korea/usforces.html.

[15] For details, see the statement of General Leon J. Laporte, Commander of USFK, before the Senate Armed Services Committee, March 13, 2003.

A third benefit relates to the alliance's combined defense capability. In addition to the integrated planning, training, and command and control aspects of the Combined Forces Command, the combined defense system involves the commingling of U.S.-ROK assets down to the battalion level. A Korean brigade is "chopped" over to USFK (the 2nd Infantry Division) in the event of war until U.S. reinforcements arrive, and U.S.-ROK air forces are commingled operationally in terms of lift, air packages, and resupply.[16] Although numerous exercises and activities on each side do not include the other ally—hence numerous areas in which further improvements can be made—such use of assets both improves military effectiveness and stretches U.S. resources.

Fourth is interoperability. One of the "benefits" of having been locked together for 50 years in a suspended state of war (i.e., under an armistice rather than peace agreement) is that an enormous number of bilateral agreements have been worked out that enable the two allies to function together. Decades of efforts to improve interoperability in rules of engagement, standard operating procedures, tactics, strategy, intelligence, and other areas give substance to these agreements. This situation contrasts sharply with that between the U.S. and Japan, for example, which is overwhelmingly "joint" rather than "combined" and largely parallel. Indeed, finding ways to expand interoperability with Japan is a topic of growing interest in the United States. Holes certainly exist in the U.S.-ROK case, but interoperability in the military-to-military relationship is arguably further along than it is most anywhere else.

A fifth benefit stemming from the military alliance is extremely close like-service relationships. This is particularly true between the USAF and ROKAF, which share the daily mission of defending Korea's airspace. USAF and ROKAF pilots live, work, and socialize together, according to knowledgeable USAF officials, reinforcing shared experiences gained in the tactical environment. Close like-service rela-

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[16] Korea's *predisposition* to combined operations extends to its participation in the war in Afghanistan: Rather than come in more or less self-contained, the Koreans preferred to bring in the capabilities in which they are strong and mix them in with U.S. forces.

tions are reinforced by the nature of command relationships in the combined defense system. The commander of the 7th Air Force is dual-hatted as commander of the Combined Air Component Command (CACC), for example, where his deputy is his Korean counterpart. The permanent location of the air component commander in his area of responsibility (AOR) facilitates USAF-ROKAF interactions and helps sustain movement in military-to-military programs over time and minimize drift or deterioration.

Extensive, synergistic intelligence-sharing is a sixth benefit. Although Korea is heavily dependent on the U.S. in critical intelligence areas, as noted above, it also has certain comparative advantages. Not the least of these comes from the large number of people it can place along the DMZ and devote elsewhere (human intelligence or HUMINT) to monitor developments inside North Korea, which South Korea largely administers. U.S. ability to do sophisticated analysis creates a synergistic effect that maximizes the respective comparative advantages. More indirectly, perhaps, the combined, all-source intelligence centers provide U.S. forces with an ability to talk with their South Korean counterparts at high levels of classification. At its best, this sets a tone of openness and facilitates other discussions as well. The extensive network of intelligence cooperation more broadly enables active ROK contributions to information-sharing on terrorist and related issues.

Substantial host-nation support for the stationing of U.S. forces is another benefit the U.S. derives from its 50 years as Korea's ally. South Korea's financial support, for example, although small relative to the total cost for stationing U.S. troops in Korea, is significant and growing. In 2000, the ROK provided nearly $433 million in direct cost-sharing and more than $363 million in additional indirect cost-sharing, according to U.S. calculations. Totaling almost $800 million, this contribution was larger than that of any country other than Japan ($5 billion) and Germany ($1.2 billion).[17] In terms of percentage of total U.S. non-personnel stationing costs, the only countries

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[17] U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Allied Contributions to the Common Defense*, June 2002, p. III-35.

beside Japan that surpassed Korea's 42 percent were Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. According to the new U.S.-ROK Special Measures Agreement (SMA), moreover, Korea will continue increasing its contributions annually over the next three years until it reaches 50 percent of U.S. stationing costs in 2004.[18] Such cost-sharing is essential to maintaining both the readiness of U.S. forces in Korea and political support in the United States for a continued U.S. military presence.

In addition, Korea provides significant Host Nation Funded Construction (HNFC) support to improve housing conditions for U.S. forces. It also funds nearly 5,000 Korean Augmentees to the United States Army (KATUSAs) to serve with and assist USFK, filling many positions that the U.S. would otherwise have to fund itself. Although North Korea's nuclear activities have muddied prospects for the Korea Energy Development Organization (KEDO), an organization established to implement the terms of the 1994 U.S.-DPRK Agreed Framework "freezing" North Korea's overt nuclear weapons program, Korea has provided the bulk of funding for KEDO since its establishment. It will continue to play the central role as lead contractor, moreover, should the light water reactor project be resumed.

Still another benefit stemming from the decades-long military-to-military relationship relates to military sales. Supporting U.S. military contractors abroad and promoting their technology has always been an important U.S. interest and is particularly so post-9/11. Korea is one of America's best customers. As noted above, the U.S. is the source for almost 80 percent of Korea's foreign military purchases, an amount that totals roughly $2 billion annually. Moreover, the cost and complexity of the systems Korea wants to procure to achieve greater self-reliance and be able to counter potential regional threats after unification (advanced fighter aircraft, air defense missiles, Aegis-class destroyers, etc.) ensure that it will remain an attractive customer for many years to come. As also noted above, however, the Korea of today is not the Korea of old. And in fighter aircraft, submarine tech-

[18] Ibid., p. II-12.

nology, and other areas, it increasingly has options other than the United States.[19] While few would argue that the U.S.-ROK military-to-military relationship is the sole determinant of Korean procurement decisions on major weapons systems, even fewer would deny that it is a major factor influencing the internal deliberations.

Finally, Korea has provided active support for the U.S. global war on terrorism. Former President Kim sent a message to President Bush immediately after the terrorist attacks on September 11 expressing his shock and deep sorrow. In a follow-up message a few days later, he expressed Korea's full support for the U.S. war on terrorism. Emphasizing "that the Republic of Korea will provide all necessary cooperation and assistance as a close U.S. ally in the spirit of the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty," President Kim pledged that Korea "will take part in the international coalition to support the U.S. actions against terrorism."[20]

Building on this commitment, Korea put together a small but symbolically important military support package to assist U.S. activities in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). Although the package did not include combat forces, it did include four C-130 aircraft, a naval landing ship tank (LST), and a 150-member mobile army surgical hospital (MASH).[21] Korea also sent liaison officers to Central Command headquarters to coordinate ROK support for the continuing war, while establishing a permanent liaison position at Pacific Command headquarters in Honolulu. In addition, the Koreans pledged $45 million in aid to help rebuild Afghanistan. It also has provided aid to refugees in neighboring countries and other humanitarian assistance.

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[19] David Lague, "Gripes Over U.S. Grip on Arms Trade," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 26, 2002.

[20] A text of the message is available at http://www.cwd.go.kr.

[21] Interviews with individuals involved in the process on the U.S. side suggest that although the United States would have *liked* the Koreans to send combat troops as well, it made clear that the content of Korean assistance was a decision for the Koreans to make themselves. Accordingly, it neither expressed a strong desire for ROK combat forces nor pressed the Koreans to provide them.

Korea's response to 9/11 had one further dimension: An intensive effort to protect U.S. forces and personnel in Korea against potential terrorist attacks.[22] Immediately following the attacks in the United States, the Koreans worked very closely with their U.S. counterparts to secure U.S. bases in Korea. Osan, Kunsan, and the miscellaneous collocating air bases, for example, were battened down and heightened security measures were adopted. Since 9/11, the two sides have worked out detailed contingency plans to respond to potential terrorist attacks in Korea, including which aircraft would be on alert and who would do what in an emergency. USAF-ROKAF cooperation in anti-terrorist activities in Korea extended to the 2002 World Cup events, with the U.S. supplying AWACS aircraft and the ROK assuming responsibility for Combat Air Patrol (CAP).

Most recently, the ROK has supported the U.S.-led war in Iraq. Following the war's outbreak, the government announced it would provide humanitarian support for potential Iraqi refugees, as well as economic support to countries neighboring Iraq that might sustain economic damages from the war. It followed this up by authorizing the dispatch of 700 non-combat troops, including medical and engineering units, to Iraq despite significant public opposition. President Roh made clear in announcing this latter decision that it was intended to help solidify U.S.-ROK relations.[23] Korean leaders are currently considering a U.S. request to send a contingent of combat forces to supplement this package.

Such support illustrates a broader point not widely appreciated: South Korea has supported the U.S.—including political, material, and human support—in virtually every major conflict the U.S. has waged since World War II, from Korea and Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq. Not many U.S. allies can say that. Korea has also participated in smaller peacekeeping operations in such places as Mozambique and East Timor, usually at U.S. urging and with U.S. logistical

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[22] Admiral Dennis C. Blair, "Remarks to Korean American Association," February 7, 2002, available at http://usembassy.state.gov/seoul.

[23] Ministry of Unification, "Roh Appeals to Nation to Support Troop Dispatch," April 2, 2003, available at http://www.Korea.net.

and other assistance. Such support reflects the high value South Koreans place on their alliance with the U.S. and can legitimately be listed as one of the benefits the U.S. derives from the security relationship.

What Role Korea Plays in Furthering U.S. Interests

Security cooperation with Korea thus helps achieve U.S. interests in at least four broad respects. First, it is indispensable for meeting the traditional purposes of the alliance. Security cooperation deters North Korean aggression and provides the war-fighting capability necessary should deterrence fail. It also strengthens ROK confidence and capability, thereby bolstering its efforts to precipitate change in North Korea and steps toward reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. The nuclear umbrella and other military capabilities the U.S. provides, moreover, help constrain rivalry among the regional powers and prevent a destabilizing regional arms race.

Second, the security relationship strengthens ROK interests in supporting U.S. efforts to counter North Korea's WMD, missile, and arms transfer activities. It also increases ROK incentives to cooperate with U.S. counterproliferation objectives more broadly. By reassuring South Koreans of the U.S. commitment, moreover, security cooperation helps restrain ROK tensions with its neighbors, thereby diminishing potential ROK interest in its own WMD program. South Korea's move to develop nuclear weapons in the 1970s when it thought the U.S. defense commitment was waning is a good object lesson.

Third, security cooperation provides a means for strengthening Korea's role in the war on terrorism and in future coalition warfare. To be sure, this goal faces significant hurdles. Aside from the continuing threat from North Korea, which necessarily takes up the bulk of ROK attention and resources, few Koreans outside the policy and security communities have a fully globalized concept of security. To the extent that they think about a world after OEF, they see neither much threat to them nor much required of them. Many Korean citizens, moreover, are focused less on the war on terrorism per se than

on the war's effect on their relations with North Korea. And even given the will, Korea's lack of refueling, long-range transport, and other capabilities hinders a significantly expanded ROK role in coalition activities.

Still, the South Korean military is moving perceptibly in this direction. The ROK Army Chief of Staff is developing a rapid reaction force concept for use outside of Korea, for example, and the ROKAF has concrete plans for a power projection capability. The value Koreans place on the security alliance, moreover, creates the potential for continuing ROK support as the war on terrorism moves forward. And Korea has additional capabilities it could provide in such areas as engineering, medical, countermining, and special operations that could be helpful. Although the deployment of Korean combat troops will require either an increased sense of threat or a harder U.S. sell than was attempted for Afghanistan, the ROK has communicated that all options are on the table. This suggests that any specific requests that the U.S. might tender will receive serious examination. The U.S. request for combat troops for Iraq will be an important test case. As noted above, Korean support for the war in Iraq has been framed almost entirely thus far in terms of its importance for close alliance relations.

Fourth, security cooperation encourages broader Korean horizons and a positive ROK security role beyond the war on terrorism. This is reflected in Korea's decisions to deploy over 400 troops to East Timor and participate in Cope Thunder, RIMPAC, and other multilateral military exercises.[24] A second reflection is active ROK participation in the United Nations' (UN's) Standing Arrangement Program for Peacekeeping Operations, which designates forces to be ready for UN-led peacekeeping operations. Small, if hesitant, steps to foster expanded U.S.-ROK-Japan and ROK-Japan military cooperation might be considered a third reflection. To be sure, Korean wari-

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[24] Statement of Admiral Dennis C. Blair, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, before the House International Relations Committee Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific and Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, February 27, 2002.

ness about Japan remains an obstacle to major advances. Still, as a younger, self-confident generation gradually assumes power in South Korea, this obstacle may diminish. In the meantime, the U.S. connection is critical to fostering expanded Korean military interactions with Japan. Although it is true that U.S. security cooperation with Korea cannot by itself dictate progress in this area, it is also true that little progress is likely in its absence.

In addition to these four broad roles, security cooperation serves U.S. interests in a number of other ways. It helps ground the more volatile U.S.-ROK political relationship. It helps gear the respective U.S. and ROK military transformation objectives. And, to the extent that Asians are uncomfortable standing out alone, it helps minimize pressure on U.S. bases elsewhere in the region. Continued close cooperation also ensures the U.S. a place at the table during the process of inter-Korean reintegration, as well as a potential platform for force projection after unification. This has particular relevance to the USAF, which could be the main U.S. military presence in Korea after unification. Once the United Nations Command (UNC) is terminated, moreover, the status of the U.S. bases in Japan will formally change insofar as Korea is concerned.[25] In that environment, the USAF will need every base it can get. Even short of unification, however, security cooperation helps the U.S. maintain adequate countervailing power to prevent the rise of any power seeking regional domination—a role that will remain important as long as this historic U.S. concern remains a vital national interest.

In short, security cooperation with the ROK advances a wide range of U.S. defense policy goals and strategic objectives. It is critical to rolling back North Korea's WMD activities. It is essential for dealing with the twin dangers of North Korean aggression and violent

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[25] According to agreements between Japan and the United States dating back to the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty negotiations in the early 1950s, the key U.S. bases in Japan are double flagged as UN bases. This was to ensure that the United States would be able to stage forces through Japan in the event of conflict in Korea. If and when the UNC is ended, U.S. use of these bases for a Korean contingency under UN auspices will also be ended. For details on the agreements, see Martin Weinstein, *Japan's Postwar Defense Policy, 1947–1968*, Columbia University Press, 1971, pp. 52 and 99.

collapse. And it not only deters North Korean attacks and reassures key U.S. allies but also inhibits arms races that could undermine regional stability. In addition, the military-to-military relationship ensures U.S. access and provides a basis for expanding both intelligence cooperation and military interoperability. It also links South Korea's own military transformation to that of the U.S., while creating the potential over time for reallocating more tailored U.S. forces to other missions.

U.S.-ROK security cooperation advances many broader goals of current U.S. strategy as well. It aids in projecting U.S. power by ensuring access to and through Korea, while reducing pressures on U.S. bases and facilities elsewhere in the region. It also increases options for countering coercive threats and favorably prosecuting war on U.S. terms by reinforcing South Korean confidence and resolve, enhancing ROK capabilities and responsibilities in its own defense, and facilitating expanded South Korean roles in regional and global security. If or as inter-Korean reconciliation takes place, U.S.-ROK security cooperation will support the spread of democratic institutions and free-market economies to North Korea and beyond. It also will help reduce potential suspicions between Korea and its neighbors, while ensconcing the U.S. at the core of a critical region.

Centrifugal Pressures

The good news is that the U.S. government recognizes the interests furthered by security cooperation with Korea as well as the larger importance of the security alliance. The Bush administration's decision to invite Kim Dae Jung to Washington as its first official visitor from Asia was intended precisely to convey this recognition, as was its more optically successful hosting of Roh Moo-hyun's visit.[26] Because of

[26] Although the substantive results of Kim Dae Jung's initial visit were quite favorable for South Korea, the South Korean media universally seized on some of the more superficial aspects to portray the summit meeting as a diplomatic disaster. For details, see Levin and Han, *Sunshine in Korea*, op. cit., pp. 108–112.

this recognition, the U.S. has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment to South Korea's defense and to providing Seoul a nuclear umbrella. It also has stressed its desire to see the relationship continue. In the joint statement following the last (June 27, 2003) meeting of the two countries' defense ministers, for example, the U.S. stressed its commitment to the "strengthening," "enhancing," or further "development" of the alliance no fewer than five times.[27] The expressed hope is that the alliance will "continue to contribute to the stability of the region" and "meet the security challenges of the 21st century." Meanwhile, the U.S. has consulted extensively with South Korea on a broad array of issues, ranging from North Korea and alliance management issues to the global war on terrorism. It also has worked hard to ease problems caused by the U.S. military presence—as reflected in the signing of the LPP and revision of SOFA—with a view to creating the basis for an enduring U.S. presence in Korea.

This support for the alliance warrants emphasis. Since beginning the Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative in early 2003 the administration has repeatedly emphasized that its goal is not in any way to reduce the U.S. defense commitment to Korea, which "remains as firm as ever."[28] Rather the aim is to strengthen deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and regional stability more generally by maximizing the effectiveness and sustainability of the U.S. military presence. The administration has emphasized two themes in particular: Deterrence remains the central objective of the common U.S.-ROK defense posture; and any changes made should enhance combined U.S.-ROK capabilities and help sustain a strong alliance over the long run. As Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz put it in a recent speech, the focus of the effort is "improved deterrence based on the phased and carefully coordinated introduction of enhanced capabilities by both the United Sates and the Republic of Ko-

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[27] For the text of the joint statement, see "U.S. and Republic of Korea Hold Defense Ministerial Talks, June 27, 2003," available at http://www.usfk.or.kr.

[28] "U.S.-Korea Relations in Transition," remarks by the Ambassador Thomas C. Hubbard to the Korean Military Academy Alumni Association, March 25, 2003, available at http://seoul.usembassy.gov.

rea. . . . Our actions will enhance our continued presence on the peninsula and help to keep this alliance strong for another half century."[29] In the meantime, he added, "Let no one doubt the firmness of our resolve or the commitment we have pledged to the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance."

As a manifest of this resolve and commitment, the U.S. has stressed that it plans to invest over $11 billion over the next four years in force enhancements.[30] These will span over 150 capabilities, including upgrades to intelligence collection systems, increased numbers of improved precision munitions, missile defense units, and attack helicopters, and additions to U.S. pre-positioned stocks. The U.S. also emphasized its plans to sustain a U.S. military rotational training process north of the Han River even after the redeployment of U.S. troops south of the Han has been completed. Such emphases have helped calm—though certainly not end—jitters in South Korea caused by news of U.S. plans to pull back its forces from the DMZ.

The bad news is that such reassurances mask larger changes in the U.S. that are pushing in a centrifugal direction. One of these has to do with the thrust of U.S. global strategy itself. With its dual emphasis on terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction, the central focus of U.S. strategy is now on building a robust portfolio of new capabilities that is flexible, technologically advanced, and capable of rapid deployment to distant environments on short notice. In practical, operational terms, this suggests a determined U.S. move toward a more expeditionary global defense posture, with a particular emphasis on the Middle East and both South and Southeast Asia. It also suggests an emphasis more on forward operating bases (FOBs), forward operating locations (FOLs), and other temporary basing solutions, rather than on large fixed bases, as the U.S. seeks to adapt to a

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[29] "Deputy Secretary Wolfowitz Remarks at the Korea Chamber of Commerce," June 2, 2003, available at http://www.defenselink.mil.

[30] See the joint press release entitled "USFK Force Enhancement Initiatives," May 31, 2003, available at http://www.usfk.or.kr.

more unpredictable threat environment.[31] This emphasis, together with U.S. rhetorical stress on the importance of "coalitions of the willing," is contributing to a general sense overseas that U.S. priorities are moving away from traditional alliances toward new, ad hoc coalitions.

In the case of Korea, the thrust of U.S. global strategy is contributing to an explicit U.S. desire to turn over predominant responsibility for defending the peninsula to South Korea itself so that U.S. forces can be freed up to respond to other potential emergencies.[32] U.S. forces in Korea are well prepared to fulfill their traditional mission of deterring and defeating a massive North Korean invasion. As currently sized and configured, however, they are not geared toward such a mobile, expeditionary orientation. The symbolic trip-wire function of U.S. troops deployed near the DMZ and heavy dependence on U.S. ground troops in peninsular war plans are particularly problematic in terms of the new U.S. strategy. In this sense, the planned U.S. force restructuring is not simply about enhancing deterrence and reducing the U.S. "footprint" in Korea (although it is about both of these too). It is about a more fundamental transformation of the U.S. role on the peninsula. For South Koreans trying to discern long-term U.S. intentions, this is the handwriting on the wall. Initial U.S. plans have already caused ripples. Further steps will undoubtedly have their own ramifications.

A second source of centrifugal pressures is policy toward North Korea. Over the past two and a half years the U.S. has arguably worked harder to maintain allied solidarity on this issue than it has

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[31] Vernon Loeb, "New Bases Reflect Shift in Military—Smaller Facilities Sought for Quick Strikes," *Washington Post*, June 9, 2003 (online edition). Also see Barry Wain, "U.S. Considers Realigning Military Presence in Asia," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 2, 2003.

[32] "Results of the Third Meeting of 'Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance Policy Initiative,'" July 22–23, 2003, available at http://www.usfk.or.kr. For contextual discussions, see Mark Mazzetti, "Rethinking South Korea's Defense," *U.S. News and World Report*, February 5, 2003 (online edition); Chul-hee Lee, "Politics and War Plans: The U.S. Troop Debate," *JoongAng Daily*, February 11, 2002 (online edition); and James Gerstenzang and Esther Schader, "U.S. May Cut Troops in Europe, S. Korea in Force Restructuring," *Los Angeles Times*, February 12, 2003.

on almost any international issue other than Iraq. The U.S. has repeatedly endorsed South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea, for example, notwithstanding reservations within the government about the wisdom and efficacy of this policy. It also repeatedly praised former President Kim's leadership and emphasized South Korea's leading role on inter-Korean issues. In response to Seoul's urging, moreover, the U.S. had agreed to pursue its own engagement with North Korea, stressing its willingness to address priority North Korean concerns in return for a willingness by Pyongyang to address issues high on the U.S. agenda. Although the U.S. rescinded this agreement following North Korea's acknowledgment of a secret uranium enrichment program, it has conveyed both in the "Six Party Talks" in Beijing and elsewhere its willingness to deal with the North in the context of a rollback in its nuclear activities. Repeated U.S. emphasis on a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear weapons problem, although based on its own merits, is also correctly seen in part as an effort to align U.S. policy with that of South Korea.

Despite these efforts, there is a fundamental gap between the two allies that is increasingly difficult to paper over. This gap originates in sharp perceptual differences over the nature of North Korea and its leaders, but its most worrisome aspect involves divergent assessments of the threat the North Korean regime poses and the best way to respond. As a general statement, the new generation that has risen to power in South Korea has little fear of the North. It does, on the other hand, fear both war and North Korean collapse. It also is heavily focused on inter-Korean reconciliation and is reluctant to risk damaging prospects for long-term peaceful unification by supporting increased pressures on North Korea. Although the Korean military diverges in degree if not nature from this general description, similar attitudes can be found even there—especially among younger officers.

The United States, on the other hand, could hardly be more different. Put simply, it sees North Korea as an international menace. Indeed, North Korea embodies what most concerns Washington today: a failing, totalitarian state with weapons of mass destruction and a long record of terrorist activities that is willing to sell its missiles and weapons technologies to almost anybody willing to pay. Although the

U.S. shares South Korea's desire to avoid war and has committed itself to seek a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue, fundamentally it sees no alternative to increasing pressures on Pyongyang to stop what it considers a major threat to both U.S. security and regional stability. Keeping all options, including military options, open is thus seen as unavoidable.

Both sides have formally agreed that the Korean Peninsula should be "non-nuclear" and that the U.S. and ROK should cooperate to achieve this objective. These agreements are important, in the sense that they are a *basis* for building policy. But they should not be confused as a meeting of the minds. Fundamental differences in perspective remain and continue to hinder efforts to work out a common strategy. These differences have already begun to undermine trust on both sides of the alliance, with an increasing tendency to question not just the other side's perspectives but also its intentions. Should current multilateral efforts fail to achieve a diplomatic resolution of the nuclear issue, these differences could create enormous friction in U.S.-ROK relations. At the extreme, they could precipitate a rupture in the alliance. All this makes the way in which the nuclear issue is resolved both an immediate problem and critical determinant of the future of the relationship.

A third source of centrifugal pressures has to do with U.S. attitudes toward Korea itself. For all the attention to "anti-Americanism" in Korea, it is important to acknowledge a perceptible deterioration in American attitudes toward South Korea as well. In part, this is related to the perceptual and policy differences over North Korea described above. Many Americans have been surprised, even astounded, at the ROK's willingness to continue to send tourists, encourage private sector investment, and provide economic assistance to the North in the face of Pyongyang's active nuclear program. Some, recoiling at the South Korean government's repeated willingness to "turn the other cheek" at North Korea's verbal abuse and other disdainful treatment, have simply stopped taking it seriously as a partner in efforts to deal with the North Korean challenge. The biggest effect of the perceptual and policy differences, however, has been to diminish the perceived importance of South Korea to the United States. If the

U.S.-ROK alliance is predicated on a threat from North Korea and if South Korea continues to insist in both words and actions that North Korea is no longer a threat, then it is hard for many to conclude that the alliance remains very important.

Another reason for the changing attitudes toward South Korea has to do with the actions of the South Korean government inside South Korea itself. Here the issue is not the recent upsurge in "anti-American" sentiment per se. Rather it is the perceived indifference of South Korean leaders to this upsurge—and at times what appears to be at least tacit encouragement of it. The striking disinclination of the Korean leadership to defend the alliance over the past year or so in the face of massive demonstrations and the minimal efforts to try to dampen heated public sentiment when major incidents arose had a particularly big effect. Although the exigencies of domestic politics undoubtedly played a part, this disinclination raised serious doubts in the United States about Korea's commitment to the alliance—and even about its trustworthiness as a security partner. Few Americans believe an alliance can be sustained if the ally itself will not defend it. Even fewer are willing to keep U.S. troops where they are not wanted. Recent calls by a number of prominent Americans for a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Korea are one fully expectable by-product.

Long-standing irritants in U.S.-ROK relations acquire new significance in this context. There are numerous examples.

- *The lack of adequate housing and poor living conditions for U.S. soldiers stationed in Korea:* U.S. military commanders have complained about this problem for years, pointing to its deleterious effect on U.S. troop morale, retention, and, ultimately, readiness.[33] In the context of a declining sense of the alliance's importance (not to mention the pressing demand for U.S. forces else-

[33] See, for example, the statements of General Thomas Schwartz, Commander USFK, before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 27, 2001, pp. 26–28, and March 5, 2002, pp. 26–30. The Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, op. cit., also has a good summary of this problem on pp. 72–73.

where), such infrastructure problems reinforce a strong desire in the U.S. military to reduce its troops in South Korea and switch to some kind of short-term rotational system.

- *The continual South Korean demand for changes in the SOFA:* Many USFK officers, pointing to problems with the ROK justice system and significant differences in American and Korean cultural norms and practices, believe that the SOFA has already been changed too much. In the context of growing doubts about South Korea's commitment to the alliance (not to mention ROK insistence on the same kind of legal protections when it sends its forces overseas), such demands foster a sense of cynicism among U.S. military personnel and alter their troop presence "cost/benefit" calculations.
- *The South Korean plan to reduce the length of service for South Korean soldiers and perceived underfunding of ROK force improvements:* U.S. officials have long believed that Koreans can afford to do more, and pay more, for their own defense. In the context of new questioning of South Korea's trustworthiness as a security partner (not to mention the global demands on the U.S. defense budget), such activities stimulate a sense that Korea is taking advantage of the United States and generate resentment over the U.S. burden in South Korea's defense.

Such trends, if left unchecked, will not only create bad feeling. They will corrode the core of the relationship.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Potential Initiatives

Many uncertainties affect international security today. Cutting across these uncertainties is one increasingly urgent question: Will the system that has maintained global order over the past half century survive the fissures building since the end of the Cold War and rise of global terrorism? The answer to this question seems increasingly uncertain. How the international security system evolves will have a significant effect on U.S. security relationships everywhere, including with South Korea.

In addition to this "mega" question, the U.S.-ROK relationship faces its own uncertainties. The nature and extent of the uncertainties are somewhat puzzling, as described above. On the Korean side, the security relationship has played an absolutely critical role for more than 50 years and it remains vital to a plethora of South Korean interests. The objectively growing dangers emanating from North Korea—both from its WMD programs and its mounting economic desperation—highlight the continued essentiality of the relationship. On the U.S. side, the security relationship advances a broad range of enduring and post-9/11 interests. In contrast to the situation the U.S. faces with many Asian countries since 9/11, the issue for the United States in Korea is not how to create meaningful military-to-military relations. It is how to maintain the strengths of the existing relationship while adapting it to new conditions.

Precisely because of the benefits both sides receive from close security cooperation—and contrary to impressions conveyed by a

largely crisis-driven media—the U.S.-ROK relationship itself is not currently endangered. Both governments recognize the relationship's value and want to see it continue. Neither sees viable alternatives, moreover, to continued close cooperation, especially on such front-burner issues as rolling back North Korea's nuclear program.

Having said that, the ground is shifting. South Korea has undergone profound change in recent years, which the election of Roh Moo-hyun both symbolizes and reinforces. The U.S. has changed significantly as well in the wake of 9/11 and today has a very different worldview and strategic compass. The exigencies of dealing with North Korea amplify the impact of these changes on both sides. Although these developments do not currently pose a crisis for the relationship, they do constitute a turning point. The time for celebrating the alliance's accomplishments over the past 50 years is over. It is now time for looking ahead. Although the paramount challenge in the short term will be ensuring that the two countries stay in lockstep in dealing with North Korea, strengthening and sustaining the relationship for the long haul will require a focused effort to adapt the relationship to the new global and domestic conditions.

As indicated most conspicuously by the Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative, both sides have recognized this need and begun active efforts to address it. Attention thus far appears to have focused on the appropriate nature, size, and configuration of U.S. forces deployed in Korea, as well as on potential ways to expand and expedite implementation of the LPP. These are absolutely central questions and will need to receive heavy emphasis. But the answers provided to these questions will remain vulnerable to domestic political currents in both countries without affirmation of some larger common purpose. Examination of these central questions should thus be folded into a broader discussion of the nature and purpose of the security partnership itself in the new political and security environment.

Such a discussion should explicitly include the kinds of threats against which the partnership is targeted. As Jonathan Eyal noted in reference to NATO, an alliance can survive without commonly

shared threats "but it cannot survive without a common perception of what constitutes a threat."[1] This insight is particularly relevant to the U.S.-ROK relationship. In recent years the traditional argument of South Korean radicals that the U.S. simply uses South Korea for its own strategic interests—and that these are both different from and harmful to South Korea's own interests—has found growing support within mainstream public opinion. On the U.S. side, many Americans are increasingly incredulous at South Korean characterizations of the North Korean threat and what they perceive as the ROK's "head in the sand" orientation. Moreover, some suspect that South Korea is using low threat appraisals as a rationalization for purposefully underfunding defense, expecting that the U.S. will pick up the shortfall and in effect subsidize the South Korean economy. This suspicion is feeding a "fine, if South Koreans want a more equal relationship let them pay for it" mentality in key U.S. constituencies. Such attitudes on both sides are insidious. Left unaddressed they will undermine the alliance. Both governments need to develop a common perception of what constitutes a threat in the new era and communicate a shared interest in countering it.

As part of this long-term effort to adapt the security relationship to the new global and domestic conditions, movement will be required on a number of other issues as well. At the top of the list is Yongsan. This sprawling U.S. base in the heart of Seoul has long been a contentious issue.[2] After years of non-action, both sides formally agreed at the June 27, 2003, defense ministerial talks "on the need to move the U.S. garrison at Yongsan out of the city of Seoul at the earliest possible date."[3] This was an important decision. Occupying more than 600 acres of land, spanning three major areas linked by over 20 miles of paved roads, and containing all the support facilities

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[1] For Eyal's comment, see Richard Bernstein, "For Old Friends, Iraq Bares a Deep Rift," *The New York Times*, February 14, 2003.

[2] For more information on Yongsan, see United Nations Command et al., "History of U.S. Forces at Yongsan," *Backgrounder*, No. 6, available at http://www.korea.army.mil/pao/backgrounder/bg6.htm.

[3] "U.S. and Republic of Korea Hold Defense Ministerial Talks," op. cit.

of a small city, Yongsan is simply too big a can to keep kicking down the road. In the context of declining South Korean threat perceptions and rising nationalist sentiment, it is a growth on the relationship that will not stay benign. The acquisition of land lots, opposition from local residents, and other problems are likely to arise in the process of implementing the Yongsan relocation agreement. Overcoming these problems and ensuring the agreement's timely implementation are critical to the relationship's long-term stability.

Another issue has to do with the ROK's role within the alliance. Both sides have long been committed to enhancing Korea's role in the alliance, just as they have been formally committed to the ROK's "leading role" on inter-Korean issues. Over time, progress has been made toward these objectives. In practice, however, other priorities often intrude. In the case of Korea, enhanced roles mean enhanced responsibilities which, in turn, often requires a reallocation of resources away from long-term goals and priorities toward more immediate requirements. In the case of the U.S., considerations of "effectiveness" sometimes trump those of "responsibility sharing" on operational matters. The comfort of the familiar, along with simple inertia, also undoubtedly contributed.

The Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative provides an important opportunity to address changes not only in the U.S. force posture but also in the roles and missions of the ROK military, with a view toward transferring responsibilities to South Korea that enhance its role in the alliance. This clearly is the U.S. intention. According to press reports, agreement has already been reached on the transfer of eight military missions to South Korea, including guarding the Joint Security Area (JSA) at the DMZ, setting up minefields, monitoring possible infiltration by sea, and conducting decontamination operations against chemical and biological attacks.[4] This inquiry should also include broader issues pertaining to Korea's role in such things as developing the next allied war plan, conducting bilateral military exercises, and preparing for and managing problems caused by any po-

[4] Kim Ki-tae, "US Garrison Will Leave Seoul by 2006," *The Korea Times* (online edition), July 24, 2003.

tential North Korean collapse. Beginning a process of preparing South Korean military leaders for the transfer of wartime operational control should be an integral part of these discussions.

A third issue relates to Korea's desire for a more "equal" relationship. To some extent, progress on the issues described above should help address this issue as well. But it is unlikely to resolve the issue completely. The perception among South Korean civilians and military officers alike that Korea receives "inferior" treatment to other U.S. allies, particularly Japan, is both deep-rooted and highly resistant to change. Reducing it will take affirmative action. This might include, for example, examining whether restrictions on weapons sales to Korea can be relaxed in certain areas. It might also involve a look at restrictions on technology transfers and whether the bar on permissible transfers might be raised.

More broadly, an effort should be made to craft a "vision" for future U.S.-ROK relations and create opportunities for South Korea to be seen as taking the lead in shaping a new security relationship to meet the vision. The overarching goal should be to provide South Koreans a greater sense of ownership—that is, a realization that they are co-pilots of this flight to a new alliance and that any changes in course are based on *both* U.S. and South Korean calculations. This should help send the message that the U.S. takes Korea's desires for equal treatment seriously in what it considers more broadly a "special" relationship.

For its part, South Korea needs to act like an equal partner if it wants to be treated like one. At its core, this means taking its own responsibility for the health of the alliance. Repeated efforts to reaffirm both the value of the U.S.-ROK alliance and importance of the U.S. military presence would be a good place to start. Another important step would be for South Korean leaders to stop trumpeting the "differences" between South Korea and the United States on policy toward North Korea and start highlighting the common interests and shared policy objectives. Making clear that the ROK considers North Korea's nuclear program and the war on terrorism to be *alliance* issues, not just problems for the United States, would be a third important effort. In the current domestic environments these messages can-

not be delivered often enough. Conversely, allowing "anti-American" sentiment in Korea to fester for political or other purposes will simply undermine support for the alliance on both sides of the Pacific.

Taking responsibility for the health of the alliance also requires a demonstration that Korea takes both U.S. concerns and South Korea's own commitments seriously. The problem of dilapidated and inadequate housing for U.S. troops, which among other things necessitates long unaccompanied tours and a significant "rotation base" for morale purposes, has already contributed to making Korea one of the most unpopular deployments in the U.S. Army. Even with the further consolidation of U.S. bases, it could lead to the institution of short troop rotations that would only exacerbate intercultural frictions.

An even more serious problem is the lack of adequate training facilities and growing constraints on U.S. troop training. This problem, as noted above, stems from South Korea's increasing urbanization, which encroaches on training areas and restricts U.S. ability to train its forces. It is important that the South Korean government enforce its agreements with USFK to stop such encroachments. Put simply, U.S. military forces will not be stationed where they cannot train.

Finally, at $11 billion over the next four years for force enhancements, the U.S. has made a major commitment to invest in the alliance. It will expect South Korea to fulfill its commitment to complement this investment with significantly improved capabilities of its own. Rightly or wrongly, the U.S. will see an absence of parallel investments as an absence of a partnership.

On the U.S. side, in addition to the "future of the alliance" issues described above, there are a number of issues relating to management of the alliance. These might be reduced to five short phrases.

First, *stay focused:* The U.S. has two overarching interests insofar as North Korea is concerned. In the short term, the U.S. wants to bring about an end to the North Korean nuclear program and Pyongyang's proliferation and other threatening activities. In the longer term, the U.S. wants to prevent potentially unfavorable developments after unification that would force it off the Korean Penin-

sula and undermine its position as an Asian power.[5] Both interests require a concatenation of U.S.-ROK ties, as well as a stronger trilateral relationship among the U.S., Japan, and South Korea. North Korea understands this, of course, and is working hard to exploit perceptual and policy differences between Washington and Seoul (and, to a lesser extent, between Washington and Tokyo) to undermine these critical relationships. The central imperative for the U.S. is to make sure Pyongyang does not succeed. It is particularly important for the U.S. and South Korea to speak with a single voice in dealing with North Korea. A failure to do so will not only diminish prospects for inducing changes in North Korea's confrontational behavior. It will also undermine U.S. long-term strategic interests.

Second, *don't overlook South Korea*. North Korea's rapid steps toward resuming its overt nuclear program suggest that it sees an opportunity to act while the U.S. is preoccupied elsewhere. The U.S. understands this well and took steps during the Iraq War—including the deployment of bombers to Guam, F-117s to South Korea, and an aircraft carrier to the Sea of Japan—to ensure the effectiveness of its deterrent and defense capabilities. Although South Korea will remain firmly in the spotlight as long as the nuclear issue remains unsettled, if or when serious negotiations begin with Pyongyang there may be a tendency for this attention to dissipate. The U.S. needs to ensure that its commitment to South Korea's security—including its nuclear umbrella—remains credible and that the U.S.-ROK security relationship continues to receive high priority as it addresses its other strategic objectives. It also needs to ensure, as its commitments under the Future of the Alliance Policy Initiative intend to do, that U.S. forces in Korea remain adequately equipped, and backed up by replacement forces, to fulfill their missions as competing needs rise elsewhere.

Third, *lean forward*. This should be our general posture on alliance management issues given the heightened nationalism in South Korea today but the need applies in particular to demonstrating sensitivity to Korean cultural norms and practices. Koreans were uni-

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[5] For a more elegant version of this point, see Victor Cha, "Focus on the Future, Not the North," op. cit., esp. pp. 95–98.

formly outraged, for example, when a USFK spokesman initially dismissed the dumping of toxic material in the Han River as something that was done in accordance with U.S. regulations. They were equally indignant at the way the U.S. handled the cases of the two U.S. soldiers involved in accidentally crushing two Korean schoolgirls to death during a military exercise. It is critically important when such incidents occur for the U.S., without violating its own requirements, to respond immediately, at a very high level, and in ways that appear supportive of Korean sentiments. A precedent, and perhaps model, might be the apology by then President-elect Roh for the stabbing of a U.S. soldier outside Yongsan during his visit to the U.S. base in January 2003.

Impressions that the U.S. is insensitive to Korea's laws and culture need to be countered more broadly. This will require stepped-up cultural awareness training for U.S. troops, as well as increased outreach activities with local communities. On this score, both governments need to do a better job in getting information out to the public about the positive things the U.S. is doing already to demonstrate its respect for and sensitivity toward Korean cultural norms and practices.

Fourth, *be concrete*. This is particularly relevant to the global war on terrorism. Many Koreans see 9/11 as an isolated event and are dubious about the need for Korean participation beyond what they are doing already. Others recognize a need and are willing to consider ways to contribute but are unclear about what additional role Korea can usefully play. Both groups will look for U.S. leadership and guidance. It is misleading to suggest simply that "if you build it they will come." The recent U.S. request for combat troops for Iraq is a good example: Korea's response will hinge on many factors and cannot be taken for granted. But Koreans will try to meet any specific U.S. request, particularly if they perceive it as a test of the alliance. They will look to the U.S., however, to provide the "what" and the "why." An ability to communicate with clarity and confidence what roles the U.S. considers most important, and a commitment to respond persuasively to any concerns the Koreans may voice in reply, will be critical to generating support for increased ROK contributions.

In addition to "being concrete" about potential South Korean roles in regional and global security, there are steps the U.S. might consider that would increase the ROK's *ability* to make useful contributions. Encouraging enhanced ROK aerial refueling and long-range transport capabilities, for example, would bolster those South Koreans seeking to develop a rapid response capability for contingencies outside Korea. This would advance both Washington's interest in increased contributions to the war on terrorism and Seoul's interest in greater Korean power projection capability and self-reliance. Similarly, increasing out-of-country training for ROK Special Operations Forces (SOF) would further improve the relatively high level of interoperability between U.S. and ROK Special Operations Forces, while acclimating Korean SOF to contingencies other than North Korea. Encouraging Korea to expand its participation in regional military consultations and multilateral exercises would also be useful. Such activities will reduce Korean skittishness about interacting militarily directly with Japan over time, while broadening Korean security perspectives and developing practical ways to engage Korea in regional security activities.

Finally, *remember Jimmy Carter*. Koreans understand and accept the need for change. What they are concerned, even neuralgic, about is the possibility that they will be presented with sudden *faits accomplis*. U.S. plans to reduce and redeploy its forces will stimulate this neuralgia. This is an issue that has to be carefully managed. Koreans take the elaborate consultation mechanisms developed over the years seriously. They want these mechanisms to be actively used as the U.S. considers its future posture on the peninsula and pursues its broader strategic interests. South Koreans do not have a scale by which they measure the importance of their multiple messages. But if there is a bottom line for most, it would be to avoid sudden, unilateral changes.

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