



CENTER FOR U.S.-KOREA POLICY

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WHAT CAN WE EXPLORE TO ENHANCE THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE?

JIN HA HWANG

The traditional strategic foundation of the ROK-U.S. alliance has been security cooperation based exclusively on bilateral issues. Today the alliance is faced with a complex set of future challenges and opportunities in a regional and global context beyond the Korean Peninsula. It is imperative for the Republic of Korea and the United States to articulate a joint vision and, accordingly, make mutual efforts to attain common strategic goals for a deeper, broader, and global alliance.

I would like to propose the following strategic principles for strengthening, expanding, and upgrading the ROK-U.S. alliance.

First, it is unquestionable that the success of reshaping and managing the alliance depends on balancing the national interests of the two partners. Balancing interests requires both governments to build political confidence and trust, articulate a joint vision for achieving mutual goals, and continue strategic consultation. This process takes place at both domestic and bilateral levels. At a domestic level, public consensus is a primary goal. In democratic societies like the ROK and the United States, a number of actors in the government and the private sectors can influence decision-making on how best to achieve national interests as a result of negotiations between the allied partners. An obvious example is the Korean public's opposition to the U.S. beef import agreement in 2008. Due to public demonstrations in the streets of Seoul, the two nations made an additional agreement to strengthen the safety conditions of U.S. beef imports in Korea.

Balancing does not mean equalizing each area separately, but a comprehensive pursuit of balanced trade-offs. For instance, the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) is a result of balanced trade-offs among all provisions negotiated. Some provisions may grant greater benefits to one side, but the end result was a balanced trade-off between the two parties. In order to maintain a successful balance of national interests, it is critical to expand the benefits of the alliance and create public consensus about the mutual interests of the two nations.

Second, although the ROK-U.S. alliance is no longer solely a security-oriented alliance, North Korea's military threats such as nuclear weapons development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) must be significant variables in the future of the alliance. The ROK-U.S. alliance has indeed traveled a troubled road for the past decade because of the two nations' different perspectives on addressing North Korean issues. But we should not assume that the alliance is solely a strategic means to discuss and resolve North Korean issues. And, North Korea should not become an obstacle to achieving the future-oriented strategic goals of the alliance. In a strategic context, the alliance covers a range of issues directly or indirectly associated with the broad national interests of the ROK and the United States.

The U.S. strategic priority regarding North Korea is denuclearization and prevention of WMD proliferation off the Peninsula. In order to achieve these goals, the United States has initiated multilateral efforts such as the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2003 and close cooperation with the

UN Security Council. Currently, the ROK actively participates in U.S.-led multilateral efforts. In this context, alliance-based cooperation between the ROK and the United States aims to promote international consensus and consistency in dealing with North Korean issues.

We should not underestimate the importance of resolving North Korean issues such as devising a collective strategic plan for preparing for sudden change in North Korea. But we also have to remember the danger of North Korea's traditional approach of driving a strategic wedge between the ROK and the United States by luring the alliance to excessively focus on North Korean issues at the expense of broader strategic interests.

Third, exploring new areas of cooperation is vital to enhance the ROK-U.S. alliance. As a responsible member of the international community and the world's 15th largest economy, the ROK has taken new initiatives in addressing international issues. In this light, it is a welcome signal that the two major highlights of the Lee administration's foreign policy are to strengthen its commitment to international peacekeeping operations and to increase the volume of Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA). At this point, I would like to emphasize a significant importance of the ROK to actively participate in international peacekeeping operations. Koreans have incalculable debt to the international community in saving this country during the Korean War. For this reason, I am very pleased that the ROK government recently announced to send troops to Afghanistan. Furthermore, I must stress that the ROK is required to consult with the United States and the international community for a more active contribution to international efforts in maintaining global peace and stability.

Fourth, compared to the past history of the alliance which was focused on explicit and short-term mutual goals, the future of the alliance should be guided by common values such as democracy, a market-oriented economy, and human rights. As the alliance expands extensively in political, economic, social, and cultural contexts, a values-oriented alliance would provide a sustainable foundation for the alliance's future. The alliance is now faced with global issues such as the international financial crisis and climate change which cannot be addressed through a short-term plan but through enduring and consistent mutual efforts. In addition, addressing these global issues benefits not only the ROK and the United States but also the international community. Establishing a robust and solid foundation for the future ROK-U.S. alliance requires shifting the basis of the alliance to one that is building on common values.

Assemblyman Jin Ha HWANG is serving as the Chairman of the Second Policy Coordination Committee of the Grand National Party. The committee is responsible for coordinating national policies in the areas of national defense, foreign relations, international trade, and unification between the ruling party and the ROK government.

NEWS & EVENTS

NOVEMBER 12, 2009 – UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO, LA JOLLA, CA

CHINA'S INFLUENCE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

4:00-5:30pm, Robinson Complex, Gardner Room

Scott Snyder, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director, presented a public lecture on China's influence on Korea at the University of California, San Diego. Event details are available at: http://irps.ucsd.edu/events/event_20091021.htm.

NOVEMBER 17-18, 2009 – KOREA INSTITUTE OF FINANCE and INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE, SEOUL, KOREA

THE KOREAN G-20 LEADERSHIP: ASSESSING THE KEY ISSUES FOR 2010

Sheraton Grande Walkerhill, Mugunghwa Hall

Co-organized by the Korea Institute of Finance (KIF) and the Institute of International Finance (IIF), this two-day roundtable conference will consider priority issues facing South Korea's G-20 leadership next year. Scott Snyder, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director, will serve as a panelist on global governance and the G-20's role. Event details are available at (Korean):

http://www.kif.re.kr/kif/etc/event/2009/1117_kif.htm.

NOVEMBER 30, 2009 – NATIONAL SECURITY NETWORK and DRAKE UNIVERSITY, DES MOINES, IA

NORTH KOREA AND THE SIX PARTY TALKS

7:00-8:30pm, Bulldog Auditorium, Olmsted Center, Drake University

Scott Snyder, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director, will serve as a speaker on North Korea and the Six Party Talks as part of a town hall event series in Iowa. The lecture is sponsored by Drake University's Center for Global Citizenship and the National Security Network. Event details are available at: <http://www.drake.edu/international/cgc/eventsf09.php>.

JANUARY 5, 2010 – THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION,
WASHINGTON, DC

**EXPANDING THE AGENDA FOR U.S.-ROK
ALLIANCE COOPERATION:
NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY**

2:00–5:00pm, 1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW,
Falk Auditorium (Lobby Level)

This joint-seminar of the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and the Brookings Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies will examine U.S.-ROK alliance cooperation on non-traditional security issues. Michael Finnegan, National Bureau of Asian Research; Peter Beck, Stanford University; and Heejun Chang, Portland State University; will discuss prospects for U.S.-ROK cooperation on post-conflict stabilization, human rights, and climate change respectively. To RSVP please contact cnaps@brookings.edu.

JANUARY 20, 2010 – THE STIMSON CENTER,
WASHINGTON, DC

**WORKSHOP ON NUCLEAR ENERGY AND NON-
PROLIFERATION**

This event is closed to the public.

The Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, the Stimson Center, and the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute (KAERI) will hold a joint workshop on prospects for U.S.-ROK nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear energy industry cooperation from American and South Korean perspectives and in the context of global nonproliferation efforts.

PUBLICATIONS

Scott Snyder and See-Won Byun (Oct. 15, 2009), “China’s Nuclear North Korea Fever,” in Brad Glosserman and Carl Baker, eds., *Comparative Connections*, Vol. 11, No. 3, Pacific Forum CSIS.

James Clay Moltz (Oct. 8, 2009), “Prospects for Enhancing U.S.-ROK Space Cooperation,” Abstract of paper presented at Center for U.S.-Korea Policy-Brookings seminar on “Opportunities for U.S.-ROK Alliance Cooperation: New Issues on the Agenda.”

James L. Schoff (Oct. 8 2009), “Cooperation on Functional Issues: Pandemic and Biological Threats,” Abstract of paper presented at Center for U.S.-Korea Policy-Brookings seminar on “Opportunities for U.S.-ROK Alliance Cooperation: New Issues on the Agenda.”

Kevin Shepard (Oct. 8 2009), “Counter-Terrorism Cooperation and the U.S.-ROK Alliance: Ongoing Efforts and Upcoming Opportunities,” Abstract of paper presented at Center for U.S.-Korea Policy-Brookings seminar on “Opportunities for U.S.-ROK Alliance Cooperation: New Issues on the Agenda.”

Scott Snyder, (Oct. 6, 2009), “Wen Jiabao Gets the Red Carpet Treatment From Kim Jong Il,” GlobalSecurity.org.

Edward Reed, (Sep. 2009), “From Charity to Partnership: South Korean NGO Engagement with North Korea,” in Sung Chull Kim and David C. Kang (eds.), *Engagement with North Korea: A Viable Alternative*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

**For a complete list of publications, please visit:
www.centerforuskoreapolicy.org**

VIEWS ON THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

“President Obama has paid particular attention to our relationship with South Korea and has established a shared vision with President Lee Myung-bak on the U.S.-South Korea alliance and our broader partnership. The notion of a rift between the U.S. and South Korea that was rampant a few years ago is gone.”

--**Jeffrey Bader**, Senior Director for East Asian Affairs, National Security Council, in a Keynote Address on “Obama Goes to Asia: Understanding the President’s Trip,” The Brookings Institution, Washington DC, November 6, 2009.

“Korea’s alliance with the U.S. is now a global strategic partnership, not one that is focused primarily on the geopolitics of the peninsula.”

--**Park Yong-ok**, Former ROK Vice Defense Minister, “A Re-defined Relationship,” *JoongAng Daily*, October 29, 2009.

“The United States will continue to provide extended deterrence using the full range of military capabilities including the nuclear umbrella to ensure the security of the Republic of Korea.”

--**Robert Gates**, U.S. Secretary of Defense, 41st U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting, Seoul, October 22, 2009.

“Upholding the Republic of Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command is most preferable. However, we should prepare ourselves for the planned transfer, as it is a promise between the two nations.”

--**Kim Tae-young**, ROK Minister of National Defense, on the transfer of operational control, Seoul, October.

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For more information on Center activities
please visit:
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The Center for U.S.-Korea Policy aims to deepen and broaden the foundations for institutionalized cooperation between the United States and South Korea by promoting a comprehensive U.S.-ROK alliance partnership on emerging global, regional, and non-traditional security challenges. A project of The Asia Foundation, the Center is based in the Foundation's Washington DC office.

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. Drawing on 50 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

The Center for U.S.-Korea Policy is based in the Washington DC office of The Asia Foundation with seed funding from the Smith Richardson Foundation. The Center accepts donations from the public and private sector for its programs and operations. Inquiries should be directed to Scott Snyder at ssnyder@centerforuskoreapolicy.org.

This newsletter is produced by the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy to provide updates and analysis on current policy issues related to the U.S.-ROK alliance partnership. All views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s).

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