

# Pursuing a Comprehensive Vision for the U.S.-South Korea Alliance

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

CIP information available on request.

ISBN 978-0-89206-578-3

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## PREFACE

In 2008 and 2009, with support from the Korea Foundation, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) conducted a project to identify and develop a comprehensive framework for broadening the foundations of the U.S.–South Korea strategic partnership beyond traditional alliance cooperation.

This report, the chief product of that project, argues that the time is ripe to establish a considerably more comprehensive alliance and identifies in detail functional areas in which cooperation might be expanded to meet regional, global, and nontraditional challenges. The report is intended for use as a practical road map for broadening alliance cooperation for consideration and use by the administrations in Seoul and Washington as they consider the future of the alliance in 2009 and beyond.

The study was conducted by Scott Snyder, director of the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy at the Asia Foundation and senior associate at Pacific Forum CSIS. The project was overseen by Derek J. Mitchell, senior fellow and director for Asia in the CSIS International Security Program (ISP); Stephen J. Flanagan, senior vice president and Henry A. Kissinger Chair; Michael J. Green, senior adviser and Japan Chair; and Nicholas Szechenyi, Japan Chair deputy director and fellow. ISP research associate Alyson Slack provided research and other support.

In addition to document research, this study has drawn extensively on interviews with relevant U.S. and South Korean government officials and was supported by additional discussions with other informed specialists in Washington and Seoul based on issues for exploration identified by CSIS experts, including two roundtable discussions hosted at CSIS. A list of those consulted in the course of the report can be found in the appendix, and CSIS would like to thank them for providing valuable contributions and insights.

CSIS is grateful for the ongoing support of the Korea Foundation for underwriting this and other Korea-related studies at the Center. The Korea Foundation continues to serve as a critical lifeline for education and promotion of Korean affairs in Washington, D.C., and throughout the United States. This study could not have been conducted without the Korea Foundation's support.





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The scope of common interests represented by the alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) has expanded as a result of increasing South Korean capabilities to contribute to security and prosperity on and beyond the Korean peninsula. Presidents Barack Obama and Lee Myung Bak have the opportunity over the next few years to broaden the foundation for alliance cooperation well beyond its focus on deterring aggression on the peninsula by affirming a comprehensive vision for the alliance and by promoting new areas of policy coordination between Washington and Seoul.
- Lee Myung Bak's vision of a "global Korea" and the prospect of more active Korean participation in peacekeeping, overseas development assistance, disaster relief, and post-conflict stabilization efforts open new possibilities for alliance cooperation. The United States should support the realization of a "global Korea" vision through active cooperation to promote security and financial stability. Given that the ROK is the world's seventh largest economy and chair of the G-20 during 2010, the Obama administration has a unique opportunity to enhance bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation with South Korea.
- Established mechanisms for alliance cooperation can be adapted to deal with a wide range of emerging and nontraditional security challenges. For example, alliance-based cooperation could bolster the effectiveness of South Korean naval contributions to counterterrorism and anti-piracy efforts in Southeast Asia, as well as to the Proliferation Security Initiative and other maritime security cooperation activities. The alliance also provides a basis for combined efforts to address nontraditional security challenges, such as the spread of pandemic diseases, transnational criminal activities, and disruption of energy supplies.
- Lee Myung Bak's interest in "low carbon, green growth" initiatives and his pledge following the 2008 Hokkaido G-8 summit to play a bridging role between developing and industrialized countries on climate change issues provide a basis for enhanced U.S.-ROK cooperation to address climate change issues.
- South Korea's evolution as a nuclear energy producer and exporter has been enabled by the U.S.-ROK bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement, which must be renegotiated by 2014. It will be important for the two countries to negotiate a new agreement that takes into account South Korea's status as a highly developed nuclear energy producer while also ensuring South Korea's cooperation to support a strong nonproliferation regime.
- These and other types of alliance-based cooperation bolster enduring strategic interests of both the United States and South Korea in regional stability and deterrence of aggression. For the United States, the alliance supports continuing engagement in Northeast Asia and provides a hedge against the possibility that a rising China might one day threaten regional stability. For South Korea, the alliance enhances peninsular security vis-à-vis larger neighbors and is a platform for South Korea to project its international image more effectively.



- Expanded alliance cooperation should be rationalized on the basis of common strategic interests and shared democratic values rather than common threats. The alliance can evolve into a fuller partnership in which needs and responsibilities are shared more equitably. A comprehensive alliance should be open to cooperation with like-minded countries to promote regional and/or global stability and can help spread the risk and cost of provision of international public goods.
- To gain broad support for comprehensive alliance cooperation, the United States and South Korea must confirm the scope of their common interests and capacity to work together in the service of those interests, develop public support for closer cooperation, gain understanding from Korea's neighbors, and meet the challenge of securing financial resources necessary to support such cooperation.
- Effective management of core alliance functions and structures—including the adoption of revised operational control arrangements and a new structure to support coordinated military action if threatened by hostile forces, operational planning to respond to North Korean contingencies, and completion of the reconfiguration of U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula—is a prerequisite to efficient expansion of alliance cooperation to new areas.

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

The security alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) has demonstrated success by its longevity and ability to maintain peace on the Korean peninsula, but it has also been underappreciated and has been a target for occasional expressions of anti-Americanism.<sup>1</sup> Several alternative futures now seem possible. The alliance could be strengthened by generating support in both countries for a shared future vision, or it could enter into terminal decline as a result of continuing friction and neglect or inevitably be eclipsed by China's rise and pull on the peninsula.<sup>2</sup> Circumstances have changed remarkably since the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty was established in 1954 following the end of the Korean War. At that time, these two unequal partners had little in common aside from the strategic interest of deterring communist aggression from North Korea. The United States was South Korea's security guarantor and patron, and South Korea had a war-torn economic infrastructure and a shattered economy that offered little other than geostrategic location in return. Today, South Korea plays a leading role in securing its own defense and is a rising contributor of international public goods in the areas of peacekeeping, overseas development assistance, and post-conflict stabilization. As the thirteenth largest economy in the world, South Korea has the capacity to shape its own interests. Its contributions to and influence on the international community are also expanding, creating opportunities for expanded partnership, both functionally and geographically.<sup>3</sup>

The security alliance with the United States provided the stability and security necessary for South Korea to pursue rapid economic development and eventually to achieve a political transition from authoritarianism to democracy. These achievements have not obviated the alliance but rather have enabled prospects for a much more far-reaching relationship on the basis of a broader set of mutually shared interests than could have been envisaged even 20 years ago in the midst of Korea's democratic transition. South Korea's transformation as a leading economic power and its transition from authoritarianism to a vibrant democracy has created opportunities for practical cooperation in new areas that extend well beyond the peninsula.

However, the U.S.-ROK alliance continues to be conceptualized primarily in bilateral terms and criticized as an "unequal" relationship, especially during periods of bilateral tension.<sup>4</sup> Many of these criticisms are justified because the vision for the alliance and its contributions has not kept

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1. See David C. Kang and Paul Chamberlin, "A History of U.S.-ROK Relations to 2002," in *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, ed. Derek Mitchell (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2004), 11–23.

2. One scenario that suggests the plausibility of the decline of the alliance is laid out in S. Enders Wimbush, "A Parable: The U.S.-ROK Security Relationship Breaks Down," *Asia Policy*, no. 5 (January 2008), 7–24, [http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia\\_policy/AP5/AP5\\_USROK\\_RT.pdf](http://www.nbr.org/publications/asia_policy/AP5/AP5_USROK_RT.pdf) (accessed January 3, 2009).

3. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Republic of Korea, *2008 Diplomatic White Paper*, October 27, 2008, <http://www.mofat.go.kr/english/political/whitepaper/index.jsp>.

4. Kim Seung-Hwan, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002–2003): 109–122.

up with changes in and around the Korean peninsula. Although there have been useful political and military efforts in recent years to readjust alliance-based interactions from a patron-client framework to one that emphasizes mutual partnership based on shared interests and values, the basic spadework necessary to build broader support for and justify the expansion of the relationship both to respective publics in both countries and to third parties remains to be done. Whether it is possible to develop the relationship into a “twenty-first century strategic alliance,” as Lee Myung Bak referred to it in his April 19, 2008, joint press conference with George W. Bush,<sup>5</sup> depends on whether the U.S.-ROK alliance can move beyond its Cold War–origins and adjust itself to establish a common vision that fully takes advantage of the dramatically expanded potential deriving from a common set of values, norms, and interests. The establishment of such a vision will require both top-level political leadership and bureaucratic follow-through, enabled by broad support among publics in both the United States and South Korea.

This report argues that there is potential to establish a considerably more comprehensive relationship than has previously existed between the United States and South Korea, given that both countries are fellow democracies and advanced market economies. Following a historical overview of how the alliance has developed to date, the report recommends key principles that might undergird alliance cooperation and how such cooperation might serve the mutual interests of both countries. The issue of how to coordinate policy toward North Korea remains at the heart of the alliance. Many other studies have addressed the challenge of policy coordination toward North Korea in great detail, so the North Korean challenge will not be a major focus of this report.<sup>6</sup> Instead, this analysis moves beyond the history and structure of the current relationship to envision a mutually acceptable relationship that responds to current and future needs.

Then, the report analyzes a number of significant obstacles in the way of developing a new, more comprehensive alliance. The first challenge is the need to bridge the differences in perspectives that exist between the global security perspective of the United States and the peninsula-focused perspective of South Korea. But an exclusive focus on peninsular security is a luxury South Korea can no longer afford, while the United States must take into account the security situation on the Korean peninsula as an important consideration in promoting global stability. Second, it is critical to gain public support for broadening the alliance. This obstacle is particularly formidable in South Korea, where many alliance issues are politically contested and little room exists to imagine a new alliance concept unburdened by the legacy of past inequalities and the fear of U.S. abandonment. But if a vision for the alliance can be cast on the basis of shared interests in ways that enhance South Korea’s regional and global position, it should be possible to overcome such divisions. A third obstacle lies with the perceptions of South Korea’s neighbors. It will be important that the rationale for alliance cooperation derive primarily from common interests and values, not in the first instance on the basis of a perception of common threat. The development of more intensive cooperation on the basis of mutual interests should not be subject to challenge from South Korea’s neighboring states since the alliance would not be primarily directed at countering a specific threat from a third party. Fourth, the challenge of finding the resources necessary to invest in broader alliance cooperation—and the ability of the two governments to mobilize

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5. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea, Camp David,” April 19, 2008, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080419-1.html> (accessed April 21, 2008).

6. For instance, see Paul F. Chamberlin, “ROK-U.S. Interests and Alliance in a New Era.” *Korea and World Affairs* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 504–531.

those resources effectively to meet new challenges—will determine the robustness of an expanded relationship.

After analyzing these obstacles in greater detail, the report identifies practical areas where cooperation might be expanded. The report identifies and explores specific opportunities to pool respective capacities to meet global, regional, and nontraditional security challenges. A policy agenda designed to achieve these objectives will promote the expansion of U.S.-ROK bilateral cooperation in global areas such as peacekeeping, disaster relief, and post-conflict stabilization in the world's zones of conflict; encourage promotion of multilateral cooperation to ensure that bilateral and regional approaches to security cooperation are complementary; enhance the prospects for cooperation in nontraditional security areas such as preparation for pandemics, antiterrorism, monitoring sea-lanes of communication, nuclear nonproliferation, energy security, and environmental issues; and address changes in the traditional core areas of the bilateral relationship.

## 2

## ALLIANCE ADAPTATION FOLLOWING THE END OF THE COLD WAR

The U.S.-ROK security alliance was forged in direct response to pressing security needs on the Korean peninsula. South Korea's vulnerability to renewed attack from the North and its strategic importance as a bulwark against the spread of Communist aggression at the start of the Cold War knit American and South Korean security needs together. The alliance provided a security guarantee to a weak South Korea completely dependent on the United States for its defense.

Throughout the Cold War, the overarching South Korean concern was the possibility of U.S. abandonment. For this reason, Nixon's withdrawal of 20,000 troops from South Korea by 1971 despite a significant commitment of South Korean troops to support U.S.-led efforts in Vietnam in the late 1960s was a shock to Park Chunghee.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, President Carter's efforts in the late 1970s to fulfill a campaign promise to withdraw all U.S. forces from South Korea on the basis of human rights concerns under Park Chunghee's authoritarian rule posed another serious challenge to the alliance. A further complication came in the context of Chun Doo Hwan's coup d'état in May 1980, during which time U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) was widely perceived by South Koreans as complicit with if not supportive of Chun's suppression of South Korea's pro-democracy movement, sowing the seeds for Korean resentment of USFK, especially among pro-democracy activists who later became known as the "386" generation.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the end of the Cold War, South Korea's rapid economic development, and a political transition from authoritarianism to democracy, efforts to further reduce U.S. forces and transfer key roles and missions to South Korea under the 1990 "Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim," issued by the Pentagon and also known as the East Asian Strategic Initiative (EASI), faced strong opposition from the South Korean government, which was still pursuing an international competition for influence with the North and uncertain about their defense capabilities. Following a modest 7,000 person troop reduction, transfer of some operational tasks to the ROK military, and the appointment of an ROK general officer to lead the Military Armistice Commission, these efforts came to a halt by 1992 as a result of rising tensions over North Korea's nuclear development efforts.

While South Korea modernized and democratized, North Korea could no longer compete with the South for international legitimacy, but it remained an isolated conventional military threat and pursued development of nuclear and missile capabilities. Despite these revolutionary changes in the context surrounding the peninsula, most of the changes in the U.S.-ROK alliance were evolutionary. The United States remained primarily responsible for South Korea's defense. USFK maintained a level of operational flexibility befitting a wartime setting and did not undergo base consolidation similar to that which had occurred in Japan in the 1970s.

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7. In response to the reported withdrawal plan, Park Chunghee called the continued presence of American troops "absolutely necessary until we have developed our own capability to cope successfully with North Korea." "Seoul Chief Terms US Troops Vital," *New York Times*, June 24, 1970, p. 1.

8. Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History* (New York: Addison-Wesley Press, 1997).

A missed opportunity to put the U.S.-ROK alliance on a firmer footing occurred in the mid-1990s at the time of the Nye Initiative and the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance.<sup>9</sup> This review came about in part as a result of perceptions that the United States might consider further force reductions in Asia, inciting concerns in Japan and a desire to ensure a continued U.S. presence in the region.<sup>10</sup> That effort had apparently been intended to encompass the U.S.-ROK alliance, but the process with South Korea never got off the ground.

There were some attempts by USFK to adjust to the new situation in Korea. In the late 1990s, the Clinton administration negotiated the Land Partnership Plan (LPP), whereby USFK prepared to vacate and return bases and land to South Korea. Negotiations were started to revise the terms of the Status of Forces Agreement in order to provide greater Korean autonomy and responsibility in handling offenses by U.S. military personnel in the case of off-duty offenses. But these changes did not correspond to the scope of change in the strategic environment or the structure of South Korean domestic politics.

Another major development was South Korea's change in approach toward North Korea under Kim Dae Jung's Sunshine Policy,<sup>11</sup> most dramatically represented by the June 2000 inter-Korean summit. Kim Dae Jung's trip to Pyongyang and the first-ever meeting between North and South Korean leaders was a historic event that had powerful reverberations for South Korean perceptions of security on the Korean peninsula. Upon Kim Dae Jung's return from the North, he declared that his visit had forestalled the possibility of war on the Korean peninsula.<sup>12</sup> Although this statement was regarded as over-optimistic in some quarters, it served to facilitate a transformation of South Korean public perceptions of the North from enemy to brother-in-need. Such a transformation carried with it a subtle implication for the U.S. force presence in Korea among Korean public perceptions from necessity to luxury or even as a legacy of the past era of inter-Korean conflict.<sup>13</sup> Coinciding with the inter-Korean summit was an uptick in public incidents involving USFK personnel. These incidents were symptoms of a much deeper problem: the U.S.-ROK alliance remained on auto-pilot, based on Cold War premises, structures, and patterns of interaction; no serious effort had been made to update the strategic framework underlying the alliance in a manner similar to the process that led to the reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The South Korean public response to a 2002 traffic accident in which an army vehicle returning from exercises on a South Korean highway hit and killed two middle-school girls walking on

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9. The Nye Initiative, a U.S. Department of Defense publication formally known as the 1995 United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region and directed by then Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye, underscored the U.S.-Japan alliance as the lynchpin of U.S. security policy in the region and served as the foundation for this reaffirmation.

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

11. The policy of engagement and unconditional aid toward North Korea implemented by Kim Dae Jung from his 1998 inauguration marked a dramatic change in South Korea's approach to the North. Kim Dae Jung's approach has been popularly known as the Sunshine Policy. The policy continued in substance under his successor Roh Moo-hyun and conflicted dramatically with the harder-line approach preferred by the Bush administration.

12. "President predicts a new age of harmony for Korea," *The Independent*, June 16, 2000, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/president-predicts-a-new-age-of-harmony-for-korea-712557.html>.

13. Scott Snyder, "North Korean Nuclear Factor and Changing Asia-Pacific Alliances," in *Asia-Pacific Alliances In the 21st Century: Waxing or Waning?* ed. In-Taek Hyun, Kyudok Hong, and Sung-han Kim (Seoul, Korea: Oreum Publishing Company, 2007), 221–239.

the side of a narrow road revealed the extent to which the standard operating procedures that had governed the alliance were out of synch with new realities on the Korean peninsula. The response to the incident, which included violent protests and extended street demonstrations, revealed an underlying perception by South Koreans that USFK had not updated its treatment of South Korea as a partner in line with economic and political accomplishments of recent decades. The incident also revealed complex contradictions in South Korean perceptions of the security alliance, which included anxieties about both abandonment and entrapment and desires for both greater autonomy and continued dependency on the United States to guarantee South Korea's security.

Fresh from a new national confidence deriving from South Korean national team's performance in the 2002 World Cup, South Koreans grappled with the implications of an improved international standing and implications of apparent progress in inter-Korean relations for South Korea's security posture, stirring for the first time a debate over whether the future direction of South Korean foreign policy should be tied so closely to the direction of the United States. This debate was fed by skepticism within South Korea's emerging elites over the U.S. motivations for invading Iraq as well as the rise of China as South Korea's number one economic partner.

Comments by President Bush in the 2002 State of the Union address characterizing North Korea as part of the "axis of evil" further inflamed South Korean opinion and raised doubts about whether the alliance would contribute in practical terms to enhancing or reducing South Korea's security. All of these concerns served to underscore the lack of an updated rationale, shared vision, or articulation of mutual interest necessary to provide the alliance relationship with political ballast to survive what should have otherwise been manageable incidents in the relationship.<sup>14</sup>

The 2002 candlelight demonstrations were an important catalyst for a broader reevaluation of the security relationship. The incident coincided with U.S. efforts under defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld to review and update its global force posture as well as increasing demand for troops to serve in Iraq. In South Korea, the Roh Moo-hyun administration came into office seeking greater independence and greater equality in its relations with the United States, simultaneously seeking "cooperative, self-reliant defense" while also maintaining the alliance.

Despite rhetoric that regularly suggested that the Roh and Bush administrations were philosophically out of synch with each other, both sides cooperated well to agree on plans to realign U.S. forces on the peninsula to two hubs south of the Han River in the Osan-Pyeongtaek areas and transfer primary responsibility for security along the DMZ and initial defense to the ROK. Talks on the Future of the Alliance (FOTA, 2002–2004) and the Security Policy Initiative (SPI, 2004–2008) managed specific institutional and structural adjustments, including setting a timetable for replacing the Combined Forces Command, or CFC, with separate command arrangements in which the United States would play a supporting role. These efforts represented a significant evolution in the structure of alliance cooperation mechanisms, but were conducted in the absence of a jointly identified shared vision for the future of the alliance.

In the U.S.-ROK Joint Statement adopted by Presidents Bush and Roh at Gyongju in November of 2005, "The two leaders agreed that the alliance not only stands against threats but also for the promotion of the common values of democracy, market economy, freedom, and human rights in Asia and around the world," in addition to affirming alliance cooperation through the establish-

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14. David I. Steinberg, ed., *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2005). Derek Mitchell, ed., *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2004).

ment of the Security Consultation for Alliance Partnership and affirming a range of security and political cooperation measures, including cooperation to address the North Korean nuclear issue.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Roh and Bush administrations, it sometimes appeared that the United States and South Korea had divergent interests that would result in the dissolution of the alliance. Some analysts in the United States and South Korea saw structural, political, ideological, and cultural reasons to write off the alliance as having little, if any, remaining strategic value. Although Roh's style of managing relations with the United States was politically contested within South Korea and distanced South Korea from the traditional protection it had enjoyed through close security relations with the United States, the Roh administration was able to work together with the Bush administration on many sensitive alliance issues, including configuration of U.S. forces, troop dispatch to Iraq, and negotiation (but not ratification) of a potentially strategically significant free trade agreement with the United States.

By declaring that restoration of the U.S.-ROK alliance is his top priority, Lee Myung-bak articulated South Korea's traditional policy approach. The day after his election in December 2007, Lee Myung-bak affirmed his intent to "restore the U.S.-ROK alliance based on the established friendship"<sup>16</sup> as a primary anchor of South Korea's foreign policy, suggesting that a decade of progressive rule had aimed at making Korea more independent at the expense of its ties with the United States. During his first stop in the United States in April of 2008, Lee declared that the "politicization of alliance relations will be behind us" and pledged that the alliance going forward should be based on the principles of "common values, trust, and peace."<sup>17</sup> At Camp David, Lee got a warm personal reception, and the two presidents announced the establishment of a "strategic alliance for the twenty-first century." Lee likely went home confident that he had laid a strong foundation for renewed relations with the United States.<sup>18</sup>

However, the task of defining in concrete terms how a "strategic alliance for the twenty-first century" should be built in practical terms has been more difficult. Aside from the concepts of "common values, trust, and peace," there was little practical guidance on how the two countries should coordinate. Korean scholars have described (1) "a value-oriented partnership based on the principles of democracy and the free market; (2) an alliance that cultivates deeper trust through political, social, and economic interchanges; and (3) teamwork that cooperates to promote both regional and global peace," including on humanitarian relief, peacekeeping operations, and counterproliferation and counterterrorism operations.<sup>19</sup> A long-expected Joint Vision Statement was delayed to the summer and then set aside in the context of the major protests over beef that had engulfed Seoul in May and June of 2008. By the time President Bush finally visited Seoul prior to attending the Beijing Olympics in early August of 2008, it was too late for the two sides to issue a meaningful statement presenting a joint vision for the alliance. The task of determining what the

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15. "Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula," November 17, 2005.

16. "President Elect Vows Creative Diplomacy," *Korea Times*, December 19, 2007.

17. "Lee Myung-bak address to The Korea Society 2008 Annual Dinner," April 15, 2008. Text found at <http://www.koreasociety.org/dmdocuments/20080415-LeeMyungBak-English.pdf> (accessed April 18, 2008).

18. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea, Camp David," April 19, 2008, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/04/20080419-1.html> (accessed April 21, 2008).

19. Sang-hyun Lee, "ROK-U.S. Relations in the Lee Myung-bak Government: Toward a Vision of a '21st Century Strategic Alliance,'" *The Journal of East Asian Affairs* 22, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2008): 1-32.



“strategic alliance for the twenty-first century” will mean in practical terms now remains to be worked out between the Lee and Obama administrations.

Lee Myung Bak’s diminished political support and the fallout from widespread Korean street demonstrations over beef and the growing tensions with the North suggest to some that he will lack the political capital to deliver on his verbal commitments to strengthen the alliance, an effort that will require clear support from the South Korean public. Nonetheless, the U.S. political transition may also mark an opportunity for the newly elected Obama administration to invest in the relationship by working with the Lee Myung Bak administration to redefine a strategic vision for the alliance.

# 3

## THE ALLIANCE'S ENDURING STRATEGIC VALUE

In recent years, deep disagreements over how to approach North Korea threatened to unravel the foundations of alliance cooperation, obscuring a broad range of mutual interests that underscore the relevance and mutual strategic benefits that alliance cooperation continues to bring to both countries. The respective United States and South Korean strategic interests in continuing the alliance are overlapping but not identical.

Both countries benefit from the stabilizing role of the alliance, and the U.S. presence on the peninsula that it codified, in ensuring economic prosperity, including safeguarding sea-lanes critical to energy security. The mutual defense commitments of the alliance deter aggression against both countries. For the United States, the alliance also supports continuing U.S. engagement in Northeast Asia, provides a hedge against the possibility that a rising China might one day threaten regional and global stability, and is a means through which the United States can pursue and protect its regional and global interests. For South Korea, the alliance is likely to have enduring strategic value as a means by which to enhance its own security without tilting toward one or the other of South Korea's larger next-door neighbors, and the alliance is a platform for South Korea to project its international image more effectively. The respective objectives outlined as follows constitute enduring strategic interests and mutual needs that the alliance will be able to serve if it is properly structured and maintained.

### **1. Safeguard regional stability, economic prosperity, and energy security**

An early and enduring goal of the alliance is the objective of safeguarding stability in Northeast Asia by mitigating regional rivalries that could lead to conflict. The alliance is an investment in stability that has enabled decades of economic growth and prosperity in the region, and it also safeguards that growth by reducing costs that would otherwise accrue from higher costs that would have to be covered by other means. In particular, the U.S.-led alliance framework has reinforced maritime security necessary to enable safe and secure trade including supplies of oil and other energy resources to Asia and South Korea from other regions of the world.

### **2. Deter regional aggression through mutual defense commitment**

U.S. led alliance arrangements in Northeast Asia continue to prevent the likelihood of aggression or conflict in Northeast Asia by providing deterrence against any possible hostile force that might seek to take advantage of perceived weakness on the part of American alliance partners. The defense commitment provides for common security and mitigates the likelihood that costly interstate conflict will break out in Northeast Asia.

### **3. Provide a basis for U.S. engagement in Northeast Asian affairs, which reinforces this stability and provides political balance among the states of Northeast Asia**

The U.S.-ROK alliance continues to be an instrument through which the United States is able to demonstrate its commitment to Northeast Asia, reassuring allies that the United States will continue to play a constructive role in the region. Without the alliance framework, the United States might be likely to pursue a more inward-looking policy, and its constructive and stabilizing influence in the region would be reduced. Other states with ambitions for leadership in the region would be more likely to extract higher or more onerous political costs than the United States as it pursues and attempts to maintain regional dominance. The alliance serves to reinforce a balance of power among states in Northeast Asia, preventing any single Northeast Asian state from playing the role of regional hegemon.

### **4. Hedge against the possibility that China's rise is not benign**

For U.S. security planners, the U.S.-ROK alliance, as an important part of the U.S.-led alliance network in Asia, represents an important instrument by which it is possible to hedge against any potential destabilizing aspects of China's rise. The alliance serves as a visible constraint against Chinese military expansion and as an instrument by which to channel Chinese strategic choices and deter China from consideration of expansionist aims that might threaten security of American allies. The alliance is a tangible means by which to discourage China from attempting to become a rule-breaker rather than abiding by currently established international norms of state behavior.

### **5. Provide means by which to pursue U.S. regional and global interests**

The U.S.-ROK alliance, as part of a U.S.-led network of global security relationships designed to secure stability and prosperity, is an important instrument by which the United States is able to pursue the objective of promoting global stability. The alliance, especially if considered as part of a broader global network, provides the means by which to mobilize support for efforts to promote stability and security on terms beneficial to the United States and its allies around the world.

### **6. Enhance U.S. ability to protect regional and global interests**

The U.S.-ROK alliance, in combination with the U.S.-Japan alliance, allows the U.S. military to maintain a forward-deployed presence in Northeast Asia. The existence of parallel presence in both Japan and South Korea reduces political pressure on Japan that might develop if Japan were the only host of U.S. forces in Northeast Asia. The existence of parallel alliances also provides a justification for better political relations between Japan and South Korea, both by reassuring South Korea regarding Japan's intentions and by providing a framework through which to promote ROK-Japan security cooperation. Moreover, political cooperation between the United States and South Korea gives the United States a valuable point of entry for promoting regional stability in East Asia. Resting on common values, the U.S.-led alliance framework may provide a valuable benchmark for broadened multilateral approaches to collective security.

### **7. Enhance security while preserving Korea's independence and regional balance**

The core mission of the U.S.-ROK alliance will remain to deter aggression against South Korea, but the architects of the alliance also had in mind that the alliance would be embedded in a regional

context, with the capacity to enhance collective security. For South Korea, the regional component of the alliance—beyond North Korea—is reemerging as an important consideration, particularly when one considers Korean options for dealing with China and Japan respectively. South Korea's traditional policy choices remain (1) alignment with a larger power, (2) neutrality, if it is possible, and (3) alliance with a distant power that can bolster Korean defenses against attacks or domination by South Korea's next door neighbors. South Korea's traditional foreign policy thinking has been that the third option is most desirable to enhance both South Korea's security and its regional standing and independence vis-à-vis larger neighbors.

## **8. Enhance South Korea's position internationally**

The alliance provides a platform upon which South Korea can more effectively project its influence and contributions to international peace and stability. Alliance cooperation is a means by which South Korea can enhance the strategic value of its contributions to the international community and enhance its value-added by concentrating on becoming known as a niche provider of specialized experience with economic development and political liberalization.

# 4

## ESTABLISHING A RATIONALE FOR A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ALLIANCE

Despite enormous changes in both the international environment and in South Korea's domestic political system, it has not been possible for the two governments to refashion a strategic vision for cooperation or to determine what sorts of shared objectives are likely to sustain such cooperation in the future.

The existing institutional structures, vested interests, and deeply ingrained routines of cooperation tend to inhibit a ground-up assessment of the respective interests, trends, and emerging challenges that are likely to demand future attention and cooperation if they are to be effectively addressed. A 2007 conference sponsored by the National Bureau of Asian Research explored what the U.S.-ROK relationship might look like if there were no security alliance. In an address to conference participants, U.S. ambassador Alexander Vershbow asserted that if the alliance did not exist, it would have to be recreated to meet the mutual interests of the two countries.<sup>20</sup> The first step toward identifying those interests is to identify the main factors shaping the international security posture and needs of the two countries. This report makes the following assumptions regarding the respective security interests of the United States, and South Korea, respectively.

The United States will remain a global leader, but is no longer in a position to be the sole provider of international public goods in the area of security. Moreover, global leadership in the twenty-first century will require a mix of specialized economic, political, security, and technical requirements that no single country will be able to provide on its own. Thus, U.S. leadership will be constrained by a need for cooperation with other states, but no other state except the United States is likely to be willing to bear the lion's share of the burdens of leadership. The United States will continue to play a leading role in responding to international crises, but it will increasingly seek partnerships with other like-minded countries to meet the political, security, and technical requirements necessary to supply public goods necessary to ensure global stability, security, and prosperity.

South Korea, as the world's thirteenth largest economy, has expanded its capacity to the brink of the first rung of global leadership, but has not yet broken into the most exclusive international leadership clubs. South Korea's military capacities have grown in selected areas, but given the size and advanced level of neighboring military forces in the region, South Korea will still not feel completely comfortable on its own as an independent player in East Asia. Although South Korea has grown as an increasingly capable actor in a regional context, the fundamental choices of independence, alignment within the regional context of Northeast Asia, or alliance with a distant offshore balancer remain essentially the same. South Korea's diplomatic profile has become more multidimensional at the same time that its political dependency on the United States has dimin-

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20. Alexander Vershbow, Dinner remarks at National Bureau of Asian Research Conference on "U.S.-ROK Alliance: Implications of an Alternative Future," September 10–11, 2007.

ished, enhancing both South Korea's desire for diplomatic independence and its potential attractiveness as a partner with its own distinctive history and development experience. South Korea's enhanced capacity and global reach mean both that South Korea has more capacity to contribute to international challenges and more reasons for doing so, given both South Korean desires for prestige and an expanded set of interests in global stability.

On the basis of these trends, the following are potentially important characteristics of a broader and more equitable partnership between the United States and South Korea: (1) a comprehensive alliance should be formed on the basis of a broad convergence of political interests and include security components as one among many areas of cooperation rather than as the primary focus of cooperation, (2) a comprehensive alliance should reflect a mutual commitment in which needs and responsibilities are shared, rather than being a one-way commitment in which there is an obligation by the United States to provide security without a reciprocal commitment to the alliance, (3) a comprehensive alliance should neither be primarily directed at a third party nor constrain nonsecurity cooperation with third parties in a relationship (although it is entirely possible that provocative actions by third parties could become the focal point for alliance-based cooperation to defend against emerging threats); however, alliance relations will continue to require exclusivity in sensitive spheres of security cooperation, (4) comprehensive alliance cooperation, in principle, might be expanded or regionalized to include other partners with shared mutual interests in such a way as to expand the capacity for security cooperation and for production of public goods that enhance regional and/or global stability, (5) comprehensive alliances spread the risk and cost of provision of public goods and will be most effective when partners bring unique skills to bear in meeting common traditional or nontraditional security challenges. These five principles of an ideal comprehensive security relationship between the United States and South Korea have the following implications for considering how to revamp the existing alliance relationship to more effectively meet shared needs of the two countries:

The U.S.-ROK alliance should be based on a broader foundation of political cooperation than currently exists. The existing structure of security cooperation has been critical to sustaining the alliance, but is not sufficient to meet the needs of the expanded political and security partnership. The security alliance has important implications for South Korean security in the event of military conflict, but the true benefits of a comprehensive alliance for South Korea are political—not military. A primary benefit South Korea seeks to derive from the alliance relationship in its modern diplomacy is to utilize the alliance as a platform for enhancing its political leverage in dealing with neighboring countries and for strengthening Korea's position and status in the international community. These needs are not fully served by a relationship that is inordinately focused on military cooperation. As a country outside the core power groupings but nonetheless an important secondary actor in international affairs, South Korea faces the challenge of how to improve its influence and standing to make a difference on global issues. Cooperation with the United States can be a politically effective and cost-effective way of enhancing South Korean influence without necessarily sacrificing South Korea's status as an independent actor. Instead, a much broader structure of political coordination must be established to derive full advantage from the political aspects of alliance cooperation.

In line with its economic and political transformation, South Korea has already taken a leading role in providing for its own defense, relieving the United States of the full burden that was originally assumed when the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty was originally established in 1954. Given these changes, the terms of the military alliance need to be rewritten—and accompanied by

a revolution in the way both countries think of the military alliance. Military commitments to mutual defense should be reciprocal, involving responsibilities and obligations to work together in response to peninsular, regional, and global threats. South Korea has already taken on such burdens in practice in Vietnam and Iraq, reflecting a step toward mutuality in security relations, but the fundamental terms of the relationship should be revised to reflect mutuality in the relationship.

A U.S.-South Korea comprehensive alliance need not be focused on countering a single potential military threat such as North Korea or China. Instead, military cooperation should be organized in such a way as to maximize respective capacities and contributions to preserve regional stability. If military coordination is organized in such a way as to maximize capacity to respond to multiple threats and is embedded in a broader politically based partnership designed to respond to regional, global, and functional security needs, it will be harder for neighbors to object to such cooperation. Although there is no immediate reason for alliance coordination to be targeted against a single country, such coordination would retain a level of readiness sufficient to respond to the emergence of threats regardless of their origin. But if a single country was to emerge as a threat to regional security, the alliance would be a ready instrument through which to respond.

A comprehensive alliance might lay the foundation for cooperation with like-minded countries on missions that serve common interests, both within and beyond Northeast Asia. Such an approach would allow for flexibility to develop a bilateral and regional response capacity in the event of natural disasters and humanitarian missions such as tsunami relief, environmental accident response, and search and rescue missions. Such cooperation might form the core of an eventual mechanism for multilateral security cooperation that would respond to common regional and global threats.

A comprehensive alliance already provides a means by which to reduce security costs through burden sharing. Determining a more equitable and sustainable method for spreading those costs, while also developing planning capabilities through which it might be possible for South Korea to develop specialized capacities that might be utilized as a means by which to contribute to public goods, would in principle yield cost efficiencies that would free up budgets in both countries for investment in nonmilitary areas. Clear delineation of benefits from cost-sharing and recognition of the alliance as a means by which both countries can yield “cooperation dividends” in the area of security would be an important step toward laying a sustainable foundation for such cooperation.

# 5

## POTENTIAL OBSTACLES TO A NEW VISION FOR THE ALLIANCE

The parameters suggested above are quite different from the core institutional and structural components of the U.S.-ROK security alliance in their current form. A major challenge is how to understand differences in perception that influence respective interests of the two sides. As a starting point, it is necessary to harmonize U.S. global security objectives with South Korean views of regional security. Second, one characteristic of the current structure is that vested institutional and political actors are focused on talking about bureaucratic issues and have been unable to develop a broader vision for the relationship. Third, the existing vision for the alliance has its origins in a threat-based approach to security that has focused on North Korea, but this rationale is unsustainable in the long term and no longer politically useful. Fourth, special interests have arrayed themselves in support of or opposition to the existing operational structures, making it difficult to imagine a relationship established on the basis of a completely new framework for the alliance. These special interests have come to infuse almost all South Korean domestic political discussions of the alliance, with the effect that efforts to reform the alliance are often locked into a conceptual framework that itself is out-dated and seemingly impervious to change. The existing terms of discussion regarding the alliance need to be set aside in order to be able to fashion the type of alliance-based cooperation that truly responds to the mutual needs and interests of the two countries in the twenty-first century.

### **1. Reconcile “inside-out” and “outside-in” perspectives on a comprehensive alliance**

The first challenge to establishing a comprehensive alliance is the need to confirm that the United States and South Korea have many common perceptions, priorities, and interests. On the basis of this foundation, the two countries should be able to establish broadened political and security cooperation to meet new circumstances.

As security analysts in Washington look toward Korea from the “outside-in,” they are likely to see an increasingly capable international actor that has great potential to make middle-power level contributions to international security. American policymakers might think about existing political and security partnerships with Australia and Canada and ask themselves if South Korea is also capable of performing at the same level. They may see South Korea developing certain specialized types of military capabilities that go beyond what other middle powers may have and wonder whether South Korea might be willing to utilize those capabilities in response to international threats to stability and security. Although South Korea’s capacities are in many cases newer than those of other middle-power contributors, South Korea’s international contributions are likely to be benchmarked against the contributions of those countries.



But despite having risen to the status of a leading industrialized economy, South Korea has not yet fully embraced the idea that it is a middle power and potential leader in provision of international public goods. The Lee Myung Bak administration has championed the idea of “global Korea,” a phrase that would appear to augur well for enhanced Korean involvement in international peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilization missions away from the peninsula, but has yet to fully win South Korean public support, given that South Korea remains surrounded by larger neighbors and faced with real and present security dangers, including the legacies of conflict and division on the Korean peninsula. According to this “inside-out” view of its potential status and influence, it is difficult for South Korea to “see over the shoulders” of its neighbors to get a clear view of South Korea’s standing, responsibilities, or obligations in an international context. South Korea’s national history of security vulnerability induces a natural caution when it comes to utilizing resources abroad that might best be husbanded in the case of insecurity closer to home.

One task of a comprehensive alliance will be to harmonize the gap between “inside-out” and “outside-in” views of what Korea can and should responsibly contribute to off-peninsula security needs and what sorts of resources are necessary to ensure continued stability on the Korean peninsula. The reconciling of these views will require a careful mutual understanding of both the broader international security environment and South Korea’s potential role and contributions as well as a deeper U.S. understanding of the unique political constraints South Korea faces in justifying to its own people how the alliance is contributing to peninsula and regional security as well as South Korea’s regional political-security interests.

On the basis of shared interests, the alliance can serve as a platform that makes it possible for South Korea to project its influence and contributions more effectively in the international community, enhancing the value of South Korea’s international contributions and raising its profile as a contributor to peace and stability. With the alliance as a platform, South Korea should be able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in the region with its neighbors China and Japan while also seeing its way clear to projecting regional and global influence that might not otherwise be possible if acting on its own.

In addition to bridging the “outside-in” and “inside-out” perspectives on the alliance, there is a related need for intensive consultation to more carefully define the purposes of the alliance in a regional context. Thus far, the task of identifying ways in which the United States and South Korea can work together out-of-area has been easier than harmonizing regional threat perceptions or operationalizing cooperation in support of regional objectives for the alliance.

## **2. Develop public support in the United States and South Korea**

A comprehensive vision for the U.S.-ROK alliance will need to gain public understanding and support in both South Korea and the United States. Political polarization over alliance issues in South Korea—accompanied by increased doubts among average and even some elite Americans, including in the U.S. Congress, regarding the necessity of a continued U.S. force presence in Korea—is a bellwether for the extent to which the current alliance structure is outdated and perhaps politically unsustainable.

South Korea’s ruling and opposition parties became divided over alliance issues as the relationship with the United States has become politically contested during the Roh administration. The progressive Roh Moo Hyun administration took a posture of seeking greater independence from the United States while the conservative Lee Myung Bak administration has prioritized

restoration of the alliance relationship with the United States as part of Lee's effort to correct the "mistakes" of his more liberal predecessors. Despite Lee's pledges that the alliance would not be polarized, the Lee administration's mishandling of the beef issue in the spring of 2008 has spurred criticisms that Lee is so eager to improve relations with the United States that he would sacrifice South Korean interests to do so. As a result, the possibility has increased that issues involving U.S.-ROK relations will continue to be publicly contested as part of South Korean domestic politics.

Given the demands that the U.S. Armed Forces are likely to face in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other potential trouble spots, there is pressure in the United States to utilize forces based in South Korea to meet commitments around the world, particularly in cases where troops based in South Korea might have skills to address special situations in other regions. The principle of strategic flexibility for U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula enables U.S. forces based in Korea to pursue missions off the peninsula, but there are growing questions in the United States about why U.S. forces are based in South Korea in light of the demands of other U.S. military operations around the world. Given these questions, it will be easier for U.S. policymakers to defend a continued U.S. troop presence in South Korea if it is possible to make the argument that South Korea has made valuable commitments as a global partner to work with the United States in other parts of the world.

It will be essential for a revamped U.S.-ROK comprehensive alliance to be structured and publicly perceived as a partnership that serves mutual interests rather than as a one-sided agreement in which the weaker party is pressured or accedes to cooperation under duress. For this reason, South Korea's political leaders will need to win public support for a comprehensive alliance as an opportunity that serves South Korea's national interests without sacrificing flexibility to extend cooperation with other partners. At the same time, South Korea's political leadership must also continue to explain that the undertaking of international obligations contributes to South Korea's international standing and that it is possible to derive prestige, respect, and influence by making effective contributions to international peace, stability, and prosperity. These two factors represent prior political conditions that must be met as a prerequisite for developing a comprehensive U.S.-ROK alliance.

### **3. Gain understanding of the alliance from Korea's neighbors**

A task as challenging as gaining a broad base of domestic public support for the alliance is that of gaining the understanding, or at least acceptance, of third parties for a U.S.-ROK comprehensive alliance. Based on historical experience, a natural presumption among many countries is that alliances are motivated and organized in opposition to concrete threats, but the rationale for expanded U.S.-ROK cooperation is based on shared interests internal to the alliance that result from common international norms and shared societal values.

Chinese scholars are attentive to the renewed importance of the U.S.-ROK alliance as a centerpiece of the Lee Myung Bak administration's foreign policy. On the occasion of Lee Myung Bak's first visit to Beijing as president in May of 2008, the PRC spokesperson said that "the times have changed and Northeast Asian countries are going through many changes and transformations. We should not approach current security issues with military alliances left over from the past Cold War era."<sup>21</sup> This characterization of the U.S.-ROK alliance during Lee Myung Bak's first visit to

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21. Michael Ha, "Chinese Official Calls Korea-U.S. Alliance 'Historical Relic,'" *Korea Times*, May 28, 2008.

Beijing as evidence of Cold War thinking was not completely accidental, and that view is consistent with the perceptions of leading Chinese scholars. Chinese scholars often express the opinion that bilateral security alliances will gradually be replaced by collective security arrangements during discussions about future regional security architecture, underscoring the assumption that alliances are based on exclusion and are a symptom of and contributor to regional tensions. The best way to refute this assertion is for the U.S. and ROK allies to demonstrate openness to cooperation with China and other regional governments to address security challenges of mutual concern.

Both the United States and South Korea must base stronger alliance cooperation on coexistence with and contributions to security alongside new forms of multilateral cooperation (including by promoting multilateral security cooperation through military exercises to promote effective capacity-building in areas such as disaster relief and search and rescue with other U.S. allies). They must also promote sufficient understanding through political and security dialogues with countries like China and Russia to explain how alliance cooperation provides regional security benefits through its pursuit of common purposes.

#### **4. Secure Resources to Meet New Operational Requirements**

Another challenge to an expanded vision for a comprehensive alliance will be the task of determining how to share costs and provide equitable financial support for alliance-based cooperation efforts. The global financial crisis is likely to raise pressure on military budgets, making it more difficult to meet existing obligations at the same time that prospects for global instability and the need for a stronger international response to maintain stability are likely to grow.

Moreover, the task of meeting the financial burdens accompanying realignment of U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula, restructuring of the command relationship, and the transfer of USFK headquarters from Yongsan to Pyeongtaek have already challenged the capabilities of both governments to budget the necessary funds and to determine the appropriate share of funds to be paid by each side. As long as these issues internal to the alliance are a source of political friction, it will be even harder to expect that either government will be eager to volunteer for additional duties, which will be accompanied additional financial costs as well as the political burden of seeking approval for such outlays from the U.S. Congress and ROK National Assembly, respectively. Comprehensive alliance cooperation provides some opportunity to share costs and risks, thereby lowering the overall investment necessary to provide public goods and promote forms of cooperation driven by mutual interests. But the task of determining appropriate shares for each partner has been a persistent source of internal friction inherent in alliance-based cooperation.

# 6

## COMPONENTS OF A NEW VISION AND RATIONALE FOR ALLIANCE COOPERATION

As one imagines concrete forms of cooperation that might usefully be added as components of the institutional infrastructure of the alliance that would strengthen its capacity to respond to existing and emerging threats, the first task is to identify shared interests and specific tasks that require cooperation to effectively address global, regional, functional, and peninsular challenges in the twenty-first century. (Another major challenge consistent with the objective of developing a comprehensive alliance is the fashioning of deeper bilateral economic integration, currently being addressed through the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement [KORUS FTA]. The economic aspects of such cooperation and how they might strengthen the alliance are important, but are beyond the scope of this report.<sup>22</sup> The fate of the KORUS FTA has political implications that will influence prospects for the development of a comprehensive security alliance.) Many of these items have already been presented in various forms as general issue areas to be developed as focal points for alliance cooperation. But efforts to strengthen the capacity of the alliance to meet new and emerging threats will require new forms of cooperation in these areas. It is important to consider the institutional structures that will be required to support such an expanded vision for cooperation in practical terms. The next section attempts to sketch out some of concrete forms of cooperation that might be required to address new challenges in an alliance context.

### Global Alliance

South Korean president Lee Myung Bak has spoken about the concept of a “global Korea” on multiple occasions since he came into office in February 2008, implying that under his leadership South Korea will be prepared to take on greater levels of responsibility to meet international obligations and to promote peace and stability in the international community.<sup>23</sup> In return, commitments to undertake these obligations will raise South Korea’s profile and prestige as a global leader. South Korea is taking leadership as a member of the troika that is guiding the agenda of the G-20 discussions to address the global financial crisis, and South Koreans are in leadership positions in many international organizations, including at the United Nations.<sup>24</sup> Thus, it would be natural for the U.S. president and his South Korean counterpart to seriously discuss how to expand the principles of transparency, accountability, and respect for the rule of law as core principles underlying the international order. In terms of global challenges, there are three types of involvement

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22. For more information on the KORUS FTA, see Steven Schrage, *U.S.-Korea through the Storm* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS, forthcoming 2009).

23. See for instance Lee Myung Bank’s speech at the Korea Investment Forum 2008, “Global Korea: A Gateway to Asia,” New York, April 16, 2008, [http://www.korea.net/news/issues/issueDetailView.asp?board\\_no=19181](http://www.korea.net/news/issues/issueDetailView.asp?board_no=19181).

24. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Republic of Korea, *2008 Diplomatic White Paper*, 108–110.

that South Korea may consider, some of which have been referred to in Lee Myung Bak's inaugural address, that can also be supported through cooperation within the alliance: (1) peacekeeping operations, (2) disaster relief/humanitarian missions, and (3) post-conflict stabilization missions.

## Peacekeeping

In his inaugural address, Lee Myung Bak specifically mentioned peacekeeping and overseas development assistance as areas in which South Korea might make additional contributions to international peace and stability. South Korea has already stepped up its involvement in international peacekeeping operations by dispatching forces to Lebanon and Iraq. These efforts have built on prior South Korean military involvement in UN peacekeeping and reconstruction mission in Somalia in the early 1990s and in East Timor in the late 1990s. Strictly speaking, since the United States has had minimal on-the-ground involvement in UN-led peacekeeping operations, opportunities for direct cooperation within the alliance may be limited. However, the United States may want to consider how to more actively facilitate South Korean involvement in peacekeeping operations in high-priority areas.

In the case of Operation Zaytun in Iraq, it is important to note that a political prerequisite for South Korean military involvement in Iraq's reconstruction was a UN mandate for such an effort. Political controversies surrounding U.S. requests to South Korea to join as an ally in shouldering the burden of reconstruction in Iraq were mitigated by the passage of a UN resolution mandating cooperation in Iraq as a UN Mission.<sup>25</sup> This precedent also underscores the fact that broader political cooperation within the alliance will almost always be an essential prerequisite that provides the necessary context for South Korean military involvement in off-peninsula peacekeeping missions.

Effective South Korean military involvement in international peacekeeping has been facilitated by the existence of the security alliance, but it has also pointed to new forms of cooperation that might be institutionalized further in support of South Korea's continuing involvement in international peacekeeping. For instance, South Korean deployments in Northern Iraq have been facilitated by U.S. logistical support, including air and land transportation of South Korean forces to the local theater. This support provides a practical example of how cooperation in the context of the U.S.-ROK alliance has allowed South Korea to boost its profile and image by providing logistical assistance necessary to achieve the mission at hand. USFK and South Korea's Ministry of National Defense (MND) should consider whether there are ways that might further institutionalize logistical and support operations that might facilitate ROK involvement in international peacekeeping operations. South Korea also has the capacity to provide training in civil affairs or local officials and policemen from regions where local institutions must be rebuilt in the aftermath of conflict.

Another area of cooperation made possible through the alliance has been the provision to South Korean commanders of sensitive intelligence information regarding off-peninsula operations. Currently, the South Korean military does not have the global surveillance capabilities or command-and-control infrastructure to provide intelligence and maintain secure communications on sensitive matters between headquarters and troops deployed abroad. This type intelligence sharing and communications support is important because it enhances South Korean force-protection capabilities and ensures greater effectiveness in carrying out peacekeeping missions. This is

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25. See UN Security Council Resolution 1511, adopted October 16, 2003, and UN Security Council Resolution 1546, adopted June 8, 2004.

another example of how the alliance provides a context and platform that enable the South Korean military to have greater effectiveness and enhance South Korea's profile as a constructive actor in the international community.

## Disaster Relief and Humanitarian Missions

Disaster relief is a second area in which cooperation in the context of the alliance might serve to enhance South Korea's profile and effectiveness in the international community. In this case, the U.S.-led response to the 2004 tsunami in Southeast Asia serves as an example of a missed opportunity for South Korea, which was notable by its absence from U.S.-led coordination with major regional allies Japan, Australia, and India. South Korea might have participated more visibly and effectively in the multilateral response if its engagement had been activated through greater coordination efforts in the context of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Another factor that should enable greater South Korean participation in international humanitarian missions in the future is efforts by the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) to develop a humanitarian response budget and capacity to deliver humanitarian assistance to areas afflicted by natural or man-made disasters. This is an area in which USAID, as well as selected local and state agencies, might be encouraged to share their experiences and expertise with South Korea so as to enhance South Korean capacities to respond to international disasters. As the South Korean government develops greater capacity and resources to contribute to disaster relief or to provide humanitarian goods in response to complex humanitarian emergencies, especially in Asia, U.S.-ROK institutional coordination should be strengthened so as to enhance overall capacity to deliver specialized assistance in the forms that can be most useful to victims and most effective in longer-term reconstruction and human development efforts.

## Post-Conflict Stabilization

Given its positive record of contribution to post-conflict stabilization in Iraq, South Korea may find a natural niche in post-conflict stabilization missions involving community reconstruction or technical development components. Such an approach might link South Korean efforts to expand peacekeeping with its efforts to bolster overseas development assistance. South Korea's successful involvement with post-conflict stabilization missions in Iraq suggests that South Korean overseas development assistance and stabilization capabilities might be successfully deployed in tandem to play a special role in bringing countries that have suffered division and war onto the road of reconstruction and political stabilization. South Korea's own development path from the 1960s onward positions it well as a credible model. For instance, South Korean peacekeeping and overseas development assistance have been deployed in tandem in Iraq, with \$48.6 million in MND contributions to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in Iraq and \$260 million on development projects in Iraq through KOICA through 2007.<sup>26</sup>

South Korea's diplomatic white paper outlines its goals of "enhancing the national image" in a range of functional areas of international cooperation such as terrorism, multilateral system reform, and cultural diplomacy.<sup>27</sup> South Korea's use of overseas development assistance (ODA) can

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26. Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) Web site, <http://www.koica.go.kr> (accessed February 23, 2009).

27. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Republic of Korea, *2008 Diplomatic White Paper*.

be a significant means by which South Korea can share its own post-war development experiences with other states that have experienced damaging conflicts. South Korea has set for itself the goal of raising its ODA contributions from 0.07 percent of gross national income in 2007, representing \$670 million, to more than \$3 billion by 2015.<sup>28</sup> This would represent a tripling of current South Korean foreign assistance. The South Korean government has undertaken a range of administrative steps to strengthen its ODA system since 2007, establishing a new office within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) entirely responsible for implementing grant aids (Bureau for Development Cooperation within the Office of Multilateral, Global and Legal Affairs), strengthening the legal framework for ODA, and seeking to join the OECD–Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of advanced donors by 2010, and the Lee administration faces the task of continuing such initiatives.

Although South Korea has had a negative experience in Afghanistan as a result of a kidnapping case involving private citizens held by Taliban-related insurgents in 2007, South Korea’s overall image and potential contributions to the rebuilding of Afghan society appear to remain positive. In fact, since the Obama administration took office, South Korea has shown a willingness to expand nonmilitary assistance in Afghanistan. Moreover, South Korea has a range of capacities—from human resource and infrastructure investment to specialized training in policing, governance, and economic development—that would make South Korean–origin assistance particularly attractive to Afghan recipients. In addition, as Afghanistan is the primary focal point for international post-conflict stabilization efforts under a UN framework and is a major theater of operations for U.S. allies in NATO, South Korean contributions in Afghanistan would be well-regarded and would enhance South Korea’s standing in the international community. Post-conflict stabilization is an area that has lent itself well to middle powers with niche capabilities that seek to demonstrate concrete accomplishments. For instance, Canada has become known as a country with effective peacekeeping and stabilization contributions, as has Australia.

## The U.S.-ROK Security Alliance and Regional Stability

The U.S.-ROK alliance has always had a role to play in contributing to regional stability in addition to deterrence of North Korean aggression.<sup>29</sup> However, that role was not emphasized during the Cold War, given the overarching focus on deterrence of North Korean aggression. The waning of the North Korean threat has brought discussions during the past decade about how to effectively reintroduce the objective of regional stability as a major purpose of alliance cooperation. A prerequisite for effective cooperation is the existence of a shared view between the United States and South Korea for how to achieve regional stability and mitigate the sources of potential threat to regional stability. A major challenge has been to overcome differences in understanding between the United States and South Korea on how to view Japan and China. In addition, newly emerging threats to regional stability may require new forms of cooperation and may not emanate solely

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28. Special Address by Dr. Han Seung-Soo, prime minister of the ROK, “Charting a New Frontier: ‘Global Korea’ in the 21st Century,” IISS Korea Forum, September 26, 2008, <http://www.iiss.org/conferences/korea-forum/korea-forum-speeches/special-address-dr-han-seung-soo/>.

29. Yasuyo Sakata, “Origins of the U.S.-ROK Alliance as a ‘Regional Alliance’: U.S. Policy on Asia-Pacific Collective Security and the Formation of the U.S.-ROK Alliance, 1953–54,” *Gunsa* (Military History) 57 (December 2005), Institute for Military History Compilation, Ministry of National Defense, Seoul.

from threat perceptions focused on the potential for state-to-state conflict within the region. It is necessary to establish political and military coordination efforts consistent with shared values, interests, and perceptions of threat, both in the context of responding to state-to-state and functional tensions, and to find ways of managing both tensions between states and nontraditional security threats simultaneously.

There is a need to ensure in practical terms that the alliance is making a direct contribution to regional stability. This can be done by ensuring that the bilateral security alliance is complementary with two emerging forms of broader security cooperation. On the one hand, the U.S.-ROK security alliance should be actively integrated with U.S. security arrangements in the region, including the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S.-Australia alliance. These alliances have also begun to play broader roles in promoting global stability, and this common mission provides, to the extent possible, a basis for expanded cooperation and integration on a regional basis as well.

On the other hand, it is important that the U.S.-ROK alliance be perceived as complementary with and supportive of the various regional security dialogues and potential practical cooperation efforts in the region. This is important because the U.S.-led alliance framework is likely to coexist with regional security cooperation in Northeast Asia rather than to be supplanted by them, as some Asian commentators have suggested. The United States and South Korea should make clear that existing alliance frameworks are not contradictory with the security dialogue and cooperation efforts that are developing in the region and will not be used to perpetuate conflicts or divisions either on the peninsula or in the region.

The United States-ROK security alliance exists alongside parallel bilateral security relationships with Japan and Australia that are also seeking ways to develop global capabilities and reach along similar lines to the U.S.-ROK security alliance. Thus, one way for alliance coordination to contribute to region-based security is for the United States, Japan, and South Korea to promote inter-alliance coordination that reinforces and integrates security cooperation on a trilateral basis. Such coordination among the United States, South Korea, and Japan on the basis of the existing U.S.-led alliance framework is not new, but its development has suffered in recent years as a result of the emergence of political differences over history and territorial issues between South Korea and Japan.

It appears that such differences are now being overcome and that there is a stronger basis for renewing trilateral policy coordination on a broader range of issues. Building on the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) efforts among the three countries to coordinate their respective policies toward North Korea in the late 1990s, the United States, Japan, and South Korea conducted high-level trilateral dialogue on strategic issues (not limited to North Korea) in October 2008 in Washington, D.C.<sup>30</sup> There is considerable potential to more actively coordinate planning between the alliances, if not to integrate them into a broader context of policy coordination based on shared values and interests among the three countries. Michael Auslin and Christopher Griffin of the American Enterprise Institute have recommended the establishment of a “Trilateral Security Committee” that would “develop a common strategic vision among the three countries and coordinate the roles, missions, and capabilities that will carry the alliances into the future.”<sup>31</sup>

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30. Held on October 14, 2008, the meeting was attended by ROK deputy foreign minister Lee Yong-joon, U.S. under secretary of state for political affairs William Burns, and Japan’s deputy foreign minister Sasae Kenichiro.

31. Michael Auslin and Christopher Griffen, “Time for Trilateralism?” *AEI Online*, March 6, 2008, [http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.27611/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/filter.all,pubID.27611/pub_detail.asp).



South Korea might also consider the potential benefits of participation in the ministerial-level Trilateral Strategic Dialogue among the United States, Japan, and Australia launched in 2005 to promote cooperation on international peacekeeping, counterterrorism, protection of sea-lanes, and the North Korean nuclear issue. South Korea would be considered as a natural partner for this effort, or it might make sense for South Korea, Australia, and the United States to establish a similar dialogue as a means by which to strengthen mutual understanding of the regional security environment and to enhance coordination on ways to more effectively meet future regional security challenges.

South Korea has traditionally been at the forefront in promoting the establishment of a multilateral security dialogue in East Asia, but most of the South Korean proponents of such a dialogue have not envisioned such regional security arrangements as a replacement for the U.S.-ROK security alliance. Despite the development of an active debate in South Korea under the Roh Moo-hyun administration about the possibility of a power transition in Asia from the United States to China, most South Koreans do not have in mind to abandon the U.S.-ROK alliance, especially given that a level of trust among China, South Korea, and Japan has not yet developed sufficiently to ensure that the U.S.-ROK alliance can be replaced by an alternative regional security structure. The development of multilateral security dialogues alongside the alliance should also provide reassurance to Korea's neighbors, including China, that U.S.-ROK alliance cooperation is not directed at China as an external threat. It will be important for South Koreans to continue to promote the establishment of regional security dialogue efforts, but those efforts to build a new regional security architecture are likely to exist parallel to the existing alliance structure, not to supplant the U.S.-ROK alliance. For this reason, it will be important to ensure that any regional security architecture develop principles consistent with the purposes of the U.S.-ROK security alliance. At the same time, it will be important for the U.S.-ROK security alliance to continue to build an effective track record of coordination both to continue to ensure regional stability and to respond effectively to the emergence of regional nontraditional security threats. To the extent that the alliance can be strengthened so as to proactively deal with such threats, it will be easier to make the case for a values- and interests-based alliance relationship that is not solely driven by a shared perception of threat.

## Functional Cooperation

The security alliance provides an existing structure through which it might be possible to extend U.S.-ROK cooperation with each other and with other countries in East Asia a wide range of non-traditional threats to human security such as fighting against the spread of infectious diseases, antiterrorism efforts, monitoring of sea-lanes of communication, nonproliferation, energy security, environment, and transnational crime. Although some of these spheres have not traditionally been included as a focus of the alliance, the existing foundation of the security alliance and the common interests and values that exist within the two societies provide a basis for expanding political and institutional cooperation to address these emerging challenges, both building on the existing infrastructure of security cooperation and through the development of new institutional channels for political and technical cooperation.

## Pandemic Preparedness

An emerging challenge illustrated by the spread of SARS in 2004 is the need to coordinate in response to the spread of pandemic diseases. In many ways, the SARS epidemic was a wake-up call that served to raise awareness among publics and governments of the need to promote functional cooperation in this area. The promotion of a coordinated political response that explicitly includes coordination on threats to nontraditional security issues such as the spread of pandemic diseases not only provides an opportunity to encourage new forms of coordinated early warning and response capacity—for instance, through the promotion of new and closer relationships between the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and South Korean counterpart agencies—but also can serve to promote technical exchange and capacity building to enhance the capability of both nations to respond. Some of this work has already been initiated through global and regional coordination efforts under the auspices of the United Nations, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC), and respective national emergency management and health administration authorities including the KCDC (Korean Centers for Disease Control and Prevention).

As an industrialized nation with an advanced health research sector, South Korean scientists are well-placed to take leading roles in coordination, detection, and prevention efforts in connection with the H5N1 virus and mutated strains of bird flu. Many of these strains are originating in Southeast Asia, but the migratory path of some species of these birds puts South Korea on the front line as a population that could be affected by such mutations.<sup>32</sup> In addition, given KOICA's level of commitment and activity in Southeast Asia, the agency might consider focusing some of its ODA and technical cooperation toward the building of capacity to respond to such pandemics—for instance, by providing anti-virals and test kits, supporting distribution planning, developing relevant human resources, and enhancing surveillance systems.

The alliance provides an existing infrastructure and opportunity to promote technical cooperation among military specialists on the broader security implications of fighting against pandemic diseases and opportunities for coordinated action in response to such a threat. For instance, promotion of best practices in response to any outbreak of infectious disease and capacity to respond to such a threat, information sharing, and joint research on causes of and responses to pandemic diseases may provide both governments with early warning regarding new types of threats and a resulting enhanced capacity to protect publics in both countries from harm.<sup>33</sup>

## Counterterrorism

The need to develop capacity to develop effective counterterrorism measures has been a major focus of the United States ever since 9/11. Enhanced counterterrorism efforts have had relatively little direct impact on the U.S.-ROK security alliance, but it has opened up new areas of technical cooperation that have been relatively easily adapted into the existing alliance framework. For

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32. A. Marm Kilpatrick, Aleksei A. Chmura, David W. Gibbons, Robert C. Fleischer, Peter P. Marra, and Peter Daszak, "Predicting the Global Spread of H5N1 Avian Influenza," in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States* 103, no. 51 (2006), <http://www.pathobiologics.org/ivphc/ref/ArtAIs-preadKillpatrick06.pdf>.

33. See James L. Schoff and Marina Travaryakis, *The Pandemic Influenza Challenge: Multilateral Perspectives on Preparedness, Response Planning, and Areas for Cooperation, A Research Report and Workshop Summary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute of Foreign Policy Analysis, January 2007), [http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/pandemicDTRA\\_s.pdf](http://www.ifpa.org/pdf/pandemicDTRA_s.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2009).

instance, the existing institutional structure of the alliance has facilitated cooperation with South Korea on efforts such as the Container Security Initiative, international efforts to combat counterfeiting and money laundering, and the development of early warning and intelligence activities designed to detect terrorist operations before they are able to take root. Building on existing cooperation, it might be possible to promote more effective monitoring of commercial traffic and stricter adherence to controls on the export of sensitive dual-use technology by the South Korean private sector.

South Korean acceptance of the principle of strategic flexibility enabled USFK personnel to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom–Philippines, the focal point for antiterrorism operations in the Southeast Asian theater. In addition, the United States has established a set of military exercises involving Southeast Asian countries called “Southeast Asia Cooperation against Terrorism” (SEACAT) that are “designed to highlight the value of information sharing and multinational coordination within a practical maritime interception scenario.” South Korea might be able to make contributions to counterterrorism by participating in these exercises—possibly as a way of pursuing both counterterrorism and South Korea’s interest in promotion of security of international sea-lanes (see below), which could be affected by some types of terrorism operations in Southeast Asia.

Another effort that grew out of 9/11 counterterrorism efforts specifically relates to the need for enforcement to prevent states from trafficking in fissile material or weapons technologies. Efforts to strengthen counterproliferation capabilities have proceeded along two separate tracks. The first track is the Bush administration’s establishment of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in May of 2002 as an ad hoc coalition of states committed to strengthening export controls, surveillance, and interdiction capabilities to prevent proliferation or the international transfer of nuclear materials. This initiative was somewhat controversial, especially in South Korea, because it was perceived to challenge established international law and because North Korea appeared to be a primary target of the initiative. As a result, the Roh administration refused to join PSI even following North Korea’s test of a nuclear device in October of 2006.<sup>34</sup> The Lee Myung Bak administration may eventually be more amenable to participation in PSI, but it remains to be seen whether PSI will be a priority for the Obama administration.

A second effort is represented by UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which attempts to establish an international norm against proliferation or trafficking of nuclear materials.<sup>35</sup> Subsequent to the passage of the resolution, there has been an international effort to educate states about their obligations and to build state capacity to comply with and enforce the resolution. Although they are on separate tracks, the two initiatives complement each other. Both initiatives provide a framework for strengthened U.S.-ROK cooperation on counterterrorism and counterproliferation.

The alliance offers a basis upon which the United States and South Korea should be able to share lessons learned from operations in Afghanistan and Iraq both to prevent the spread of terrorism to East Asia and to consider the most effective ways of preventing such activities from taking root in the region. There remains a danger that gangs and other criminal organizations in the region might link up with terror organizations for financial or other reasons in ways that could challenge U.S.-ROK mutual interests.

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34. Terence Hunt, “S. Korea Won’t Back Bush on Inspections,” *Washington Post*, November 17, 2006.

35. See text of the resolution, adopted April 28, 2004, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/328/43/PDF/N0432843.pdf?OpenElement>.

## Monitoring Sea-Lanes of Communication

Given the level of South Korean dependence on international trade and on the safety of shipping as a means by which to sustain the majority of that trade, it is natural that South Korea would have an interest in contributing to maintaining maritime stability so that commercial maritime shipments can remain safe, reliable, and cost-effective. Although monitoring of sea-lanes of communication is an international public good, it is increasingly clear that there is no single authority capable of managing the task of safeguarding the sea-lanes on its own. Maritime states have a special interest in maintaining safe passage in their own areas, but some states are ill-equipped to effectively ensure safety of sea-lanes passing near their territories. A recent example of the importance of sea-lane safety and the lack of effective international capacity to ensure safety of sea-lanes has been the rash of piracy in the waters of the Gulf of Aden near Somalia. Nearly 26 percent of Korea's national maritime cargo passes through the area, and Korean sailors and ships have been victims of piracy operations in which captors extort large sums for the release of personnel and cargo.<sup>36</sup>

In March 2009, South Korea dispatched a navy destroyer (KDX-II class *Munmu the Great*) to participate in the Combined Task Force-150 multinational maritime security operations off the coast of Somalia, a welcome step for South Korea to join with the United States and others to promote maritime stability. Because South Korean sailors and South Korean-flagged vessels have been among the victims of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, South Korean interests are directly threatened, and the rationale for South Korea's participation in these operations should easily gain understanding among the South Korean public.

Likewise, there have been growing efforts to assist the littoral states of Southeast Asia in expanding their capacity to secure the Malacca Straits from piracy. Contributions by South Korea to this effort, either in the context of the U.S.-ROK alliance or independently, would be welcomed. Given its expanded naval capacity, South Korea now has the capability and the incentive to contribute to international sea-lane monitoring operations; this can be done most effectively through naval cooperation with the security alliance as an important context for working with South Korea on these issues. In addition, South Korea's reliance on the Straits of Malacca as a primary sea route for trade and for energy supplies heightens the importance of maritime stability in Southeast Asia to South Korea's national security interests. South Korean contributions to protection of sea-lanes might be actively welcomed in Southeast Asia with less wariness than the contributions of larger powers.

## Nuclear Nonproliferation and Nuclear Energy Cooperation

South Korea and the United States have coordinated closely on diplomatic strategies for addressing the issue of nonproliferation as it relates to North Korea; it will be important for bilateral cooperation on nuclear nonproliferation issues to expand beyond the peninsula, especially given South Korea's leading role in the utilization of nuclear power for peaceful purposes and the development of South Korea's own nuclear energy sector, with continuing technical cooperation from the United States.

South Korean advances in nuclear energy technology are bumping up against international efforts to limit the spread of enrichment and reprocessing capabilities since these technologies

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36. Sue-young Kim, "Five Korean Sailors Kidnapped in Somalia," *Korea Times*, November 16, 2008.

can also be used to make the necessary ingredients for a nuclear weapon. President Bush in 2006 initiated the Global Nuclear Energy Program (GNEP), a program that calls for the establishment of regional reprocessing centers to prevent further spread of enrichment and reprocessing capabilities while also meeting legitimate civilian needs for reprocessing as a means to handle waste.<sup>37</sup> The Obama administration may take an even tougher position on the issue of enrichment and reprocessing. Obama campaign statements suggest that he may suspend GNEP while ordering the Department of Energy to conduct research to perfect more proliferation-resistant methods.<sup>38</sup> As the country with the most advanced nuclear energy production capability not to also have a reprocessing capability, South Korean decisions may have a disproportionate influence on efforts to contain reprocessing by promoting regional reprocessing centers as proposed under GNEP. South Korea's membership in GNEP in December 2007 was accompanied by renewed concerns about its decade-long R&D efforts to develop a technology called pyro-processing as a potentially viable technological and commercial solution to nuclear waste storage, a problem that has become increasingly urgent given that the accumulation of spent fuel at South Korea's nuclear power plants is projected to saturate its existing storage capacity by 2016.<sup>39</sup> The technology seeks to reprocess nuclear spent fuel waste to be used as plutonium fuel for fast breeder reactors, but it is not yet clear if such a process can be developed in a way that can assure that the spent fuel could be safeguarded effectively to limit the option that it might be used to produce nuclear weapons. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has been funding joint pyroprocessing projects with the Korean Atomic Energy Research Institute since 2005.<sup>40</sup> To promote the ROK's desire to gain U.S. consent of hot pyroprocessing in South Korea, Korean researchers have been working on pyroprocessing safeguards at Los Alamos National Laboratory, with the goal of demonstrating that pyroprocessing can be effectively safeguarded.

As an alternative to spent fuel storage, pyroprocessing would give South Korea the ability to manage every component of the fuel cycle. The key question that has stirred debate is whether or not pyroprocessing should be considered to be reprocessing, and thus a violation of state commitments under GNEP to forgo independent reprocessing capabilities. Although South Korea has built a laboratory-scale facility for conducting additional pyroprocessing experiments, South Korea is bound under its bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement with the United States, the U.S.-ROK 123 Agreement, to obtain consent from the United States before conducting independent pyroprocessing experiments using U.S.-origin fuel. As of December of 2008, the United States had not yet provided such consent. The issue is likely to be an important focus of debate in the context of U.S.-ROK negotiations over a new bilateral cooperation agreement to replace the current agree-

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37. Edwin Lyman and Frank N. von Hippel, "Reprocessing Revisited: The International Dimensions of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership," *Arms Control Today* (April 2008), [http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008\\_04/LymanVonHippel](http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_04/LymanVonHippel).

38. See Miles Pomper, "GNEP Watch: Developments in the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership," no. 11 (November/December 2008), The Centre for International Governance Innovation Nuclear Energy Futures Research Project, [http://www.igloo.org/cigi/download-nocache/Research/nuclear/publicat/gnep\\_watch~3](http://www.igloo.org/cigi/download-nocache/Research/nuclear/publicat/gnep_watch~3) (accessed February 23, 2009).

39. Joo-ho Hwang, "Korean Perspective on Nuclear Energy," presentation at CEIP-IPC Joint Seminar on the Trends and Challenges of Nuclear Nonproliferation in the 21st Century, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., July 14, 2008.

40. KAERI, "KAERI Pursues an [sic] [Sodium-cooled Reactor] Fuel Cycle with Pyroprocessing," *Advanced Nuclear Fuel Cycle System in Korea Newsletter* 1 (Winter 2008): 7, cited in Lyman and von Hippel, "Reprocessing Revisited."

ment, which expires in 2014.<sup>41</sup> These negotiations are likely to be a major focus for the two governments under the Obama administration. To the extent possible, negotiations on the renewal of the U.S.-ROK bilateral nuclear cooperation agreement may also be an opportunity to address global non-proliferation issues, development of improved reactor designs to more efficiently harness nuclear technology, and the issue of improved export controls and safeguards technologies.

## Climate Change and the Environment

An emerging area of cooperation in the U.S.-ROK relationship is climate change. South Korea imports 97 percent of its energy needs<sup>42</sup> and is one of the globe's top ten emitters of carbon dioxide, and therefore shares similar interests with the United States on clean development. South Korea is a member of the Bush administration initiative on climate change, the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate (APP), co-founded by Australia and the United States in January of 2006, and including China, India, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, to promote technology cooperation on climate and environment-related issues, including in the areas of clean fossil energy, aluminum, coal mining, renewable energy, power generation, cement, buildings and appliances, and steel.<sup>43</sup> The APP has dozens of projects located across the region, including several in Korea devoted to such research areas as the expansion of biodiesel use, cleaner fossil energies, development of indices for renewable energies and distribution, and solar technologies.<sup>44</sup> There is potential for this initiative to gain in profile under the Obama administration.

The initiative's nonbinding framework for cooperation, however, is seen in some quarters as a weak alternative to global legal agreements to limit greenhouse gas emissions. Under the Obama administration, it is likely that the United States will once again seek to play an active role in promoting a global understanding of how to respond to the global challenges posed by climate change issues.

At the G-8 Summit in Hokkaido in July 2008, Lee Myung Bak pledged to serve as a bridge between the United States and developing countries on future climate change discussions. To the extent that South Korea can define a bridging role and take concrete actions to promote cooperation on climate change issues, such an initiative would likely be appreciated by the new administration.

Seoul has recently taken promising steps domestically toward putting the country on a path toward cleaner development: In August 2008, Lee Myung Bak put the issue high on the agenda by declaring a national vision of "low carbon, green growth," and in early 2009, he sought to include a substantial "green" component in the country's economic stimulus efforts, which if implemented would likely fund renewable energy research and subsidize eco-friendly businesses. Further, the

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41. Lyman and von Hippel, "Reprocessing Revisited"; Jon Wolfsthal and Toby Dalton, "Harmonic Convergence? The Maturing U.S.-ROK Relationship," in *Understanding the New Political Realities in Seoul: Working toward a Common Approach to Strengthen U.S.-Korean Relations*, ed. L. Gordon Flake and Park Ro-byug (Washington, D.C.: Mansfield Foundation, 2008), accessed at <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/pubs/rokbook.htm>.

42. United Press International, "Rising import costs cloud S. Korean economy," March 14, 2008, [http://www.upiasia.com/Economics/2008/03/14/rising\\_import\\_costs\\_cloud\\_skorean\\_economy/6411/](http://www.upiasia.com/Economics/2008/03/14/rising_import_costs_cloud_skorean_economy/6411/).

43. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Statement on Climate Change and Energy by President Bush and Australian Prime Minister John Howard," September 4, 2007, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/09/20070904-8.html> (accessed January 1, 2009).

44. Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, <http://www.asiapacificpartnership.org>.

current popularity of the concept of green growth in Korea, combined with Korea's appeal as a developmental model for several countries in greater Asia, make Korea an attractive partner for the United States in seeking to promote bilateral or multilateral efforts to combat global warming. To build the foundation for such cooperation, the two governments should use the APP framework to provide strong support to existing and nascent initiatives at the local level, such as the cross-border consortium of eco-cities envisioned by Daejeon Green Growth Forum chairman Yang Ji-won and his collaborators in Palo Alto, California, and elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Such efforts should complement the leadership-level pursuit of a global climate treaty in the lead-up to the UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen in December 2009.

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45. Ji-won Yang, "Korea's Green Growth Gambit: The Emerging Consensus on Environmental Policy and Its Implications for East Asia," presentation at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., February 17, 2009), [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_events/task,view/id,1921/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_events/task,view/id,1921/).

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## MAINTAINING CORE ALLIANCE FUNCTIONS IN A NEW CONTEXT

The foregoing sections outline a broad agenda of expanded political cooperation, much of which has as its core the security functions of the alliance. However, it must be recognized that development of a broader and deeper basis for political cooperation that will provide a stronger context for existing U.S.-ROK security cooperation does not mitigate the importance of the need to address existing issues in the alliance. In recent years, some major changes were initiated in the structure of the alliance, including the decision to disband the Combined Forces Command, or CFC, so that South Korea would exercise sole operational control over its forces in times of peace and war, with the USFK providing some critical functions necessary to support the ROK military in executing its mission to defend the Republic of Korea; questions regarding how to revise operational plans to manage potential instability on the Korean peninsula in the context of a new command and coordination structure between the United States and South Korea and how to coordinate regionally on contingency planning for instability in North Korea; resolution of remaining issues related to the reconfiguration of USFK and the transfer of command headquarters from Yongsan to Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek; and the resolution of budgetary issues related to co-funding of basing arrangements for the move and for the longer term.

### OPCON Transfer

With the decision to transition from joint to sole operational control (OPCON) of South Korean forces during wartime and to replace the CFC with separate command and control arrangements for South Korean forces and USFK, respectively, the Roh and Bush administrations negotiated a major change in the operational structure of the alliance relationship. At the 38th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting, a roadmap was agreed to by which OPCON would revert to sole South Korean control after October 15, 2009, but not later than March 15, 2012.<sup>46</sup> In early 2007, the ROK minister of national defense and the U.S. secretary of defense set April 17, 2012 as the date for South Korea to retain sole control of OPCON.<sup>47</sup> The Strategic Transfer Plan (STP) was put into place to give time to ensure that the new structure will meet all of the same functional objectives of deterrence and coordination of a combined response to instability in North Korea that the old structure had achieved. U.S. commanders have committed to providing significant “bridging capabilities,” including in the areas of command and control, intelligence, and air support, until South Korea is able to fully carry out these functions.<sup>48</sup>

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46. U.S. Department of Defense, “The 38 Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué,” Washington, D.C., October 20, 2006, available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2006/d20061020uskorea.pdf>.

47. “South Korea to Reclaim Wartime OPCON in April 2012,” *The Hankyoreh*, February 23, 2007, [http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/192605.html](http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/192605.html).

48. Stephen J. Flanagan et al., “Adapting U.S. Alliances and Partnerships,” in *Strategic Challenges: America’s Global Security Agenda*, ed. Stephen J. Flanagan and James A. Schear (Dulles, Va.: Potomac



The decision to replace the CFC with separate commands linked by liaison groups has proven to be politically controversial in South Korea, particularly among retired generals who view the progressive Roh administration as having moved prematurely to regain security sovereignty before South Korean capabilities are fully in place to effectively exercise defense self-reliance. Expected delays and budget shortfalls in South Korea's own Defense Reform 2020 plan give some support to the view that development of some of the capabilities required to achieve a more "self-reliant defense" will take somewhat longer than expected. Ruling Grand National Party politicians continue informally to raise the possibility that this issue be reconsidered between the two governments, but thus far the Lee Myung Bak administration has not formally pursued this issue with the United States. If it becomes clear that there are problems requiring more time to effectively resolve, it might be advisable to adjust the target date for the transfer, but such decisions should be made on the basis of technical evaluations rather than political judgments as both governments have already agreed to implement this structural change in the alliance.

Risks are associated with continued political efforts to reverse the decision to take up revised operational control arrangements, particularly at a time when the United States is tied down by many other challenges. If South Korean conservatives are perceived as an obstacle to U.S. pursuit of global missions, especially in a context in which South Korea is unable for whatever reason to make its own independent contributions to those missions, such a combination of factors might invite a backlash in the United States that might severely damage the potential and capabilities of the alliance to meet mutual political and security interests.

## Operational Planning for North Korean Contingencies

The change in the command structure on the peninsula will call for adjustments in the operational planning by the United States and South Korea, changes that will be tested through binational military simulations and exercises as early as August 2009 so that both sides can be sure that the new arrangements that will be put in place—the new ROK Joint Forces Command supported by the U.S. Korea Command (KORCOM)—will operate properly.

At the same time, the range of contingencies to which the two militaries might be called upon to respond has continued to grow, given uncertainties about long-term political stability in North Korea. During the Roh administration, efforts to quietly address the challenges posed by potential instability in North Korea ended in controversy, as the Blue House balked at having detailed plans on the books that might be perceived as limiting South Korea's own options for dealing with the situation in the North. For some, the primary source of concern may have been that U.S. involvement in North Korea-related contingencies would carry with it political liabilities for efforts to promote inter-Korean reconciliation.

The Lee Myung Bak administration appears to have a different view on the need for contingency planning, while seeking to promote a more conditional and reciprocal approach to inter-Korean dialogue. Rumors that Kim Jong Il may have suffered a stroke or some other medical event in August of 2008 has further heightened concern and speculation about potential North Korean instability and has reminded concerned parties of the necessity to be prepared for a wide range of potential scenarios. Presumably, quiet U.S.-ROK coordination on planning for North Korean

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Books, 2008), 245–256.

political contingencies will resume under the Lee and Obama administrations. One result of the prior conflict over planning between the two militaries has been to flag the reality that any scenarios involving political instability in North Korea cannot be handled solely by militaries in the absence of a political context. This suggests the need for politically led coordination regarding potential contingency planning scenarios that would involve multiple branches of government and would most effectively be led by the Blue House and the National Security Council rather than by the MND and USFK. In addition, there is a need to coordinate with Chinese counterparts on possible responses to a contingency in North Korea, but no official channel appears to be available, given China's continued sensitivity to how Pyongyang would react to such a consultation.<sup>49</sup>

## Basing Issues and Challenges

Another major alliance issue that is in the process of implementation is related to realignment of USFK and the move of USFK Headquarters from Yongsan to Pyeongtaek. The envisioned schedule, originally planned to be completed by 2008, has already faced construction and financing delays, was revised to 2012, and may be revised again to as late as 2019. The delays are both a result of and a contributor to rising estimates for the cost of the relocation process. The failure of the U.S. Congress to appropriate the money requested to support the relocation—ironically, based at least partially on doubts about the long-term viability of the alliance—is reportedly one cause for delay, making the question of how to fund the relocation a major issue in Special Measures Agreement (SMA) negotiations held in the last half of 2008.<sup>50</sup>

It is in the mutual interest of both sides to move as expeditiously as possible to consolidate the new arrangements. At this stage, the failure of both sides to provide the necessary political and financial support to complete the realignment as envisioned is a stumbling block that may also affect the political will to implement the ambitious vision for broadened and deepened political cooperation presented above. Whether unnecessary delays on these issues can be overcome may be regarded an indicator that such a vision of comprehensive cooperation is not feasible.

## SMA and Future Burden-Sharing Arrangements

Another ongoing challenge for the alliance has been the management of negotiations on how to share in financing the U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula. SMAs have been periodically negotiated to determine the level of burden sharing the South Korean government is willing to spend to support the cost of a U.S. force presence on the Korean peninsula. The latest agreement reached in December 2008 specifies that host-nation funds would cover the salaries of Korean employees at U.S. bases, logistics procurements and maintenance, and military construction. South Korea has also pledged to utilize host-nation funds to finance construction of buildings at the future USFK headquarters at Camp Humphreys (Pyeongtaek-Osan area), meaning that a greater proportion of South Korea's future contributions under SMA will be supplied in-kind rather than in cash. South Korea's total contribution is valued at 760 billion won (\$578 million), which repre-

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49. Bonnie Glaser, Scott Snyder, and John Park, "Keeping an Eye on an Unruly Neighbor: Chinese Views of Economic Reform and Stability in North Korea," U.S. Institute of Peace Working Paper, January 3, 2008, [http://www.usip.org/pubs/working\\_papers/wp6\\_china\\_northkorea.pdf](http://www.usip.org/pubs/working_papers/wp6_china_northkorea.pdf); Michael J. Finnegan, "What Now? The Case for U.S.-ROK-PRC Coordination on North Korea," *Pacnet*, no. 48 (September 11, 2008).

50. "Delayed Base Relocation," *Korea Times*, October 23, 2008.

sents about 42 percent of costs for the presence of 28,000 U.S. troops deployed to the peninsula, which is short of the 50-50 split that the United States had sought.<sup>51</sup>

The issue of cost-sharing remains sensitive and potentially controversial, particularly at a time when there is likely to be greater domestic scrutiny regarding overseas force deployments and a continuing demand for forces available to be deployed to hotspots such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Although South Korea's level of contribution in support of the U.S. troop presence in South Korea has steadily risen over the course of the past decade, it still falls short of Japan's contribution of more than 70 percent of U.S. stationing costs in Japan.<sup>52</sup> By the same token, if the United States and South Korea develop the global alliance encouraged in this report, South Korea's defense contribution in support of off-peninsula missions in the context of the alliance is only likely to grow. At the same time, the resourcing issues related to the implementation of Defense Reform 2020 represent a competing priority for South Korean defense dollars. South Korean top-level political leadership will be required to ensure both that existing on-peninsula alliance contributions and South Korea's own defense development are properly funded, in addition to ensuring that South Korean contributions to international peace and stability are properly recognized and funded in ways that tangibly contribute to South Korea's own international profile and strategic interests.

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51. Jung Sung-ki, "Seoul to Reduce Cash Provision to U.S. Military," *Korea Times*, December 25, 2008.

52. Reiji Yoshida, "FYI U.S. Forces, Basics of the U.S. Military Presence," *Japan Times*, March 25, 2008, <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080325i1.html>.

## 8

## CONCLUSION: NEXT STEPS IN ESTABLISHING A COMPREHENSIVE VISION

As the U.S.-ROK security alliance shifts its focus from security-focused cooperation on the peninsula in the service of a single mission to a broad-based, multifaceted, global political foundation based on broader normative foundations and designed to serve a wide range of mutual interests, aspects of the structure and rationale for the alliance must also undergo transformation. This report has reviewed a wide range of possible areas in which the United States and South Korea might strengthen cooperation with each other as part of a comprehensive alliance. Some of the areas covered are more amenable to cooperation than others. Table 1 indicates which areas are supported by the greatest convergence of South Korean interest and capabilities, as assessed by the author, and which areas might require further development before their full potential can be exploited.

As South Korea's capacity and desire to play a leadership role among the first tier within the international community increase, new forms of political and technical coordination with the United States will be useful in supporting more active South Korean participation in off-peninsula missions. In many instances, the alliance can be an effective platform for promoting an enhanced South Korean role in the international community. But such cooperation will also be subject both to South Korean domestic political support, and the ability to enhance the impact of such contributions will require careful planning and intensive dialogue among counterparts through a variety of channels. Also, South Korean contributions to global missions are likely to be more successful if it is possible to identify and explain to the public that there is a tangible South Korean interest at stake that is worthy of South Korean investment of treasure and lives.

Political leadership will be necessary if the comprehensive vision of alliance cooperation presented here is to achieve its full potential. With the establishment of new administrations in Washington and Seoul, Presidents Lee and Obama must take advantage of this moment of opportunity to expand the foundations for the alliance to address global, regional, and functional challenges by affirming the capacity of the alliance to address these new challenges on the basis of shared strategic interests. Such a reaffirmation and readjustment of the alliance (similar to the alliance reaffirmation between the United States and Japan in the mid-1990s) will also catalyze bureaucracies in Seoul and Washington to institutionalize new forms of cooperation to support such a shared vision. South Korean domestic planning might align internal defense reform objectives more closely with planning processes that support alliance cooperation, especially to ensure that revised command-and-control arrangements are accompanied by the types of coordination necessary to ensure that military coordination remains effective.

To support such a vision for enhanced alliance cooperation will require South Korean political leaders to do a better job of explaining why it is in South Korea's own interest to utilize the alliance as a primary vehicle for contributing international public goods as opposed to making international contributions independently of the alliance. Likewise, it will be necessary for the United States to provide more explicit understanding of the tangible benefits to be derived from a

**Table 1. Areas Amenable to Expanded U.S.-ROK Cooperation**

	<b>Emerging ROK Capability</b>	<b>High ROK Capability</b>
High Current ROK Interest	Humanitarian Assistance	Peacekeeping
	Overseas Development Assistance	Counterterrorism
	Nonproliferation (on peninsula)	Pandemic cooperation
Emerging Current ROK Interest	Nonproliferation (off peninsula)	Trilateral security dialogue with Japan & Australia
	Climate Change	
	Monitoring SLOCs	

deepened political and security relationship with South Korea. Revitalization of interparliamentary dialogues between the U.S. Congress and the South Korean National Assembly, which have diminished in recent years, would be an effective way to promote broader political understanding of the value of the alliance to legislators and citizens in both countries.<sup>53</sup> It will also be necessary for both sides to make financial investments to ensure that such broadened cooperation is robust and stands on firm foundations.

The vision for broadened cooperation outlined in this report is possible because the context surrounding the long-standing alliance relationship has changed. The interests of the United States and South Korea are converging as a result of the latter’s economic development, democratization, enhanced capacities, and stake in a stable and open international order, and there is a strong rationale for comprehensive cooperation between the two countries on the basis of these shared interests. These factors should enable the United States and South Korea to pursue a comprehensive vision of expanded alliance cooperation for the twenty-first century.

53. See Jason Forester, *Congressional Attitudes on the Future of the U.S.–South Korea Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2007), [http://www.csis.org/component/option,com\\_csis\\_pubs/task,view/id,3884/](http://www.csis.org/component/option,com_csis_pubs/task,view/id,3884/).



# APPENDIX: ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPANTS AND OTHER INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

*The following individuals either participated in one of two roundtables in Washington, D.C., or were consulted by the author or one of the senior project advisers, and they do not necessarily endorse the findings of the report.*

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Scott Snyder is director of the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and senior associate of Washington programs in the International Relations Program of the Asia Foundation. He joined the Asia Foundation as country representative of Korea in January 2000 and moved to the Washington office in April 2004. Mr. Snyder is also senior associate at Pacific Forum CSIS and was recently named adjunct senior fellow for Korea Studies by the Council on Foreign Relations.

Prior to joining the Asia Foundation, Mr. Snyder was an Asia specialist in the Research and Studies Program of the U.S. Institute of Peace and served as acting director of Asia Society's Contemporary Affairs Program. He was the recipient of a Pantech Visiting Fellowship at Stanford University's Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center during 2005–2006 and received an Abe Fellowship, administered by the Social Sciences Research Council, in 1998–1999.

Mr. Snyder has published numerous op-ed pieces and journal articles and is a frequent commentator on Asian security issues with a particular focus on the Korean peninsula. His latest book, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas: Politics, Economics, Security*, was published by Lynne Rienner in 2009. Other publications include *Paved with Good Intentions: The NGO Experience in North Korea* (2003), coedited with L. Gordon Flake, and *Negotiating on the Edge: North Korean Negotiating Behavior* (1999). Mr. Snyder, who received a B.A. from Rice University and an M.A. from the Regional Studies East Asia Program at Harvard University, was a Thomas G. Watson Fellow at Yonsei University in South Korea.