

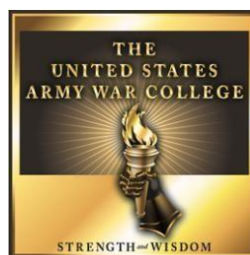
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Time to Reassess the United States / Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty

by

COL Shawn P. Creamer
U.S. Army

Under the Direction of:
Mr. John F. Troxell



United States Army War College
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Author: COL Shawn P. Creamer
U.S. Army

USAWC Mentor:: Mr. John F. Troxell

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Time to Reassess the United States / Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty

The original United States (U.S.) strategy for prosecuting the Cold War, NSC-68, envisioned the United States nurturing and defending the build-up of the political, economic and military strength of the free world.¹ This strategy succeeded, but allied military capabilities have largely atrophied since the Cold War ended.² U.S. allies rely disproportionately on the United States to shoulder the burden for maintaining the rules-based international order.³

The emergence of cross-domain transnational threats and rising, revisionist state powers are straining U.S. capabilities and resources to maintain the rules-based international order by itself. Furthermore, public opinion in the United States has visibly shifted, demonstrating a sizable portion of the public is tiring of cheap riding by allies and unequal treaty relationships.⁴ The U.S. electorate expects the rest of the world to contribute their fair share to the provisioning of global public goods.

One way in which the United States can begin to alter the status quo of being the guarantor of the rules-based international order is by reviewing and updating its Mutual Defense Treaties (MDT), which are predominantly outdated unilateral security guarantees. The growing disequilibrium in the Pacific necessitates that the United States begin by reviewing and updating its bilateral treaties in the Indo-Asia-Pacific. This essay examines the state of the current U.S./Republic of Korea (ROK) MDT, the historical barriers to the maturation of this security relationship, and offers recommendations for needed adjustments.

History and Current Status

The United States and the ROK concluded their MDT just sixty-six days after the conclusion of the Korean Armistice Agreement.⁵ The MDT is the capstone document for the U.S./ROK security relationship and serves as the alliance's legal foundation.⁶ The MDT links the two countries and guides their security relationship by providing the overall conceptual framework, purpose, and scope. Details of the working relationship are defined in lower-level,

supporting agreements, notably the Agreed Minutes to the MDT, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the Terms of Reference, and the Strategic Directive.⁷

The MDT was an aspirational document when it was drafted, reflecting an anticipated future security relationship envisioned by NSC-68: one where free world powers such as the ROK would contribute to regional and world security alongside the United States. Contrary to the security framework envisioned within the MDT, the maturation of the security relationship instead has been stunted in the trappings of the aforementioned supporting documents. The security relationship today remains fixed in a decades-old Northeast Asian paradigm of a unilateral security guarantee focused on the conventional defense of the Korean peninsula. The MDT is long overdue for a revision whereby the U.S. commitment more equitably matches ROK contributions to the relationship.

Since its inception, the U.S./ROK alliance has been focused singularly on deterring an invasion by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).⁸ In the beginning, the ROK was an aid recipient that was unable to defend itself, much less project power outside its national borders. For a time the United States was both willing and able to extend unilateral security guarantees.⁹ For six decades the ROK has "been able to preserve its core national security interests" through its alliance with the United States.¹⁰ Furthermore, the country has prospered under American protection, becoming the world's eleventh largest economy.¹¹ As the ROK industrialized, it increased the capacity of its armed forces. Alliance institutions evolved sporadically, not keeping pace with ROK development.¹²

Barriers to Revision

There are many reasons for the uneven evolution of the alliance.¹³ First, the "ROK Government has been unwilling to spend the money necessary to create a military force capable of self-reliant national defense."¹⁴ While it routinely spends more on defense than a majority of other U.S. allies, it has been able to outsource many prohibitive security costs (and risks) to the United States and to prioritize its economic development.¹⁵

Another factor is the ROK's underlying lack of self-confidence, a mindset that has been deeply influenced by its history, sense of geography, and cultural factors.¹⁶ Often throughout its history Korea has operated within the orbit of a regional hegemon that safeguards its security against its more powerful neighbors.¹⁷ The thought of being on their own generates a great deal of anxiety among Koreans who recognize that when Korea operates outside such an orbit, the result is often forcible subjugation.¹⁸

The United States itself has been a barrier to further evolution in the sixty-year status quo, with its behavior driven by the complex combination of meliorism and control.¹⁹ The United States has been slow to let go of its unique access, influence and control over Korean affairs, believing that this position has been indispensable to post-1953 Northeast Asian peace and stability.²⁰ Moreover, the DPRK has exploited these sensibilities by remaining provocative and dangerous enough to keep the United States engaged on the peninsula, but below the threshold for a regime-changing response to be pursued.²¹

By the end of the 1990s, both countries recognized the underlying environmental conditions had changed, and it was necessary to transform the relationship.²² Starting in late 2002, first under the Future of the Alliance (FOTA) and then later under the Security Policy Initiative (SPI) rubrics, the United States and ROK struggled to modify their future security relationship.²³ The FOTA and SPI efforts had mixed results due to fundamental disagreements over extending the security relationship beyond the DPRK threat.²⁴ Finally, by continuing to limit the alliance to a DPRK-focus creates an over-the-horizon risk to sustainability of the U.S./ROK security relationship in a post-DPRK, unified Korean peninsula environment.

Closing Considerations

While the dichotomy between the ideals of the MDT and the actual security relationship was acceptable for a time, it is clearly no longer so. The U.S. security umbrella has enabled dozens of countries to develop economically and politically since the end of World War II, and it

is time for these countries to shoulder more of the security burdens in their part of the world. The ROK is one of those countries.

Alliances are founded and sustained on shared interests. The ROK is an advanced, wealthy democratic republic and shares many long-term interests with the United States.²⁵ These interests justify maintaining a Pacific-focused, reciprocal security pact as envisioned in the MDT. However, the security pact still is not focused beyond the DPRK threat, nor is it reciprocal in practice.²⁶ After six decades of asymmetry, the relationship must evolve to reflect the ROK's rising middle power status.

Revising the relationship will not be easy. The two nations' visions and their expectations from the alliance relationship are highly divergent.²⁷ However, it should be done so that both nations' interests are properly represented. The U.S. has modified its security treaties with several other allies throughout the last 70 years as conditions changed.²⁸ Some allies, notably Japan, Australia, and Thailand, have expanded their regional roles within the context of their security relationships with the United States.

A renewed attempt to unify the United States and ROK alliance visions is warranted. The alliance relationship is far better, and less politically charged now than the period of time when FOTA and SPI occurred. While the ROK public is apprehensive about expanding the alliance framework off the peninsula, there is a burgeoning school of thought within ROK elites regarding a more regional role for the country in the future.²⁹ Furthermore, a window of opportunity exists in 2017 as both countries will be governed by new presidents unconstrained by past positions.

In 1953 ROK leaders chose to align their long-term prospects with the United States. Neutrality and attempting to play the middle between the Great Powers has never really worked out for Korea in the past. In the future the ROK Government may have to choose between the United States or China, but at present most ROK elites consider their long-term security interests to remain closely aligned with the United States.³⁰ However, should the ROK follow

the Philippines, concluding that the alliance represents a marriage of convenience, then the United States should focus its power elsewhere on like-minded nations that both desire a reciprocal security relationship, and are willing to demonstrate that they have a stake in the existing international system.³¹

This essay is not advocating the U.S./ROK alliance be cashiered should the ROK prove unable or unwilling to meet wider U.S. ambitions for the security relationship. Instead the United States should revisit its level of commitment and equitably match the costs and risks it bears to ROK contributions and commitments. If the resources dedicated to the U.S./ROK alliance are of limited utility to wider U.S. national security goals, then it is incumbent on the United States to realign its strength for the greater good of the U.S. national interest.

The United States is no longer in a position to unilaterally extend security guarantees. Nor can it continue to rely on agreements or past relationships that were forged for historic and not contemporary reasons. The time is past due for the United States to shore up its alliances so that it can better focus its massive, but finite resources in the growing multipolar, transnational world of the twenty-first century.

Endnotes

¹ President Harry S. Truman, *A Report to the National Security Council, NSC 68*, (Washington, DC: The White House, April 14, 1950), 54-56.

² For context, defense spending as a percent of Gross Domestic Product has markedly decreased since the late 1980s. While many of these countries have greatly expanded the strength of their economies over the intervening years, most U.S. allies have retained only a shell of an armed forces with very limited capabilities to defend themselves and virtually no force projection capability outside their national borders.

Country	1988	2015
Australia	2.3	2.0
Belgium	2.5	0.9
Canada	2.0	1.0
France	3.5	2.1
Germany	2.5	1.2
Italy	2.2	1.3
Japan	0.9	1.0
Korea, South	3.8	2.6
Norway	2.8	1.5
Philippines	2.5	1.3
United Kingdom	3.8	1.9
United States	5.6	3.3

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Yearbook: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security as reported by Military Expenditure (% of GDP), World Bank Homepage, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS> (accessed October 20, 2016). Australia and Japan are outliers to significant drops in defense spending since the late 1980s. Japan has consistently maintained its defense spending at or below 1% of GDP since it regained its sovereignty in 1951, while Australia's defense spending dropped only slightly. ROK defense spending will be addressed later in the essay.

³ Scott Snyder, "Strengthening the U.S. – ROK Alliance," *Center for U.S. – Korea Policy and the Asia Foundation Korea Office*, February 2009, <https://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/SnyderStrengtheningFeb09.pdf> (accessed October 19, 2016), 11.

⁴ Barry R. Posen, *Restraint: A New Foundation for U.S. Grand Strategy*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), xiii, 9, 35-44; Jakub Odehnal, "Military Expenditures and Free-Riding in NATO," *Peace Economics, Peace Science, & Public Policy* 21, no. 4: 486; Thomas Plumper and Eric Neumayer, "Free-riding in alliances: Testing an old theory with a new method," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 2015, Vol 32(3): 263-266.

⁵ The ROK National Assembly ratified the MDT on January 15, 1954, while the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty on January 26, 1954. An exchange of notes between the United States and ROK occurred between January 28 and February 1, 1954 to clarify Article III; the exchange of notes resulted in a July 1954 summit that set in motion the conclusion of the "Agreed Minutes Relating to Continued Cooperation in Economic and Military Matters" later on November 17, 1954. The "Agreed Minutes" clarified the MDT's Article I and II, and once signed, resulted in the MDT entering into force. The Agreed Minutes most significant outcomes were the retention of the ROK armed forces under the operational control of the United Nations Command (UNC), the

setting of the size of the ROK armed forces, and to outline the financial aid package the United States would provide to the ROK Government.

⁶ “In 1953, at the conclusion of the Korean War, the United States and the Republic of Korea signed a Mutual Defense Treaty, the foundation of a comprehensive alliance that endures today.” U.S. Department of State Bureau of East Asian Affairs, “U.S. Relations with South Korea Fact Sheet,” October 17, 2016, *U.S. Department of State Homepage*, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm> (accessed November 4, 2016). Furthermore, the MDT is a ratified treaty by both parties, and therefore serves as the legal foundation for the U.S./ROK security relationship. In particular, the MDT provides the ROK Government legal justification for continued stationing of U.S. forces in Korea.

⁷ The MDT remains unchanged since it was concluded in 1953. The aforementioned supporting agreements have been updated at several points over the preceding six decades. Supporting documents codify the working relationship in practice, addressing everything from agreed-upon decision making practices, command and control relationships, privileges and immunities, cost-sharing, information sharing, combined planning, etc, to allow for the two nation’s interests to be adequately represented in the working relationship. The four most important supporting agreements to the MDT are:

- Agreed Minutes – Concluded in 1954 and modified in 1960. The 1966, 1991, and 2001 SOFA agreements materially modified provisions of the MDT’s Agreed Minutes.

- SOFA – Concluded in 1966, and revised in 1991 and 2001. The 1966 SOFA superseded the Korean War era privileges and immunities granted by the ROK Government to the United States through the 1950 “Agreement Concerning Jurisdiction Over Offenses by the United States Forces in Korea,” more commonly known as the Taejon Agreement. “SOFA Documents,” US Forces Korea Home Page, <http://www.usfk.mil/About/SOFA/> (accessed April 17, 2017). The SOFA does not apply to non-U.S. friendly forces operating under the Unified Command (UNC); the privileges and immunities of those personnel are purported to remain addressed under the 1952 “Agreement on Economic Coordination Between the Republic of Korea and the Unified Command,” more commonly known as the Meyer Agreement, although the ROK Government hasn’t explicitly reaffirmed this in many years.

- Combined Forces Command (CFC) Terms of Reference - CFC superseded the UNC as the command responsible for the defense of the ROK in 1978. The establishment of CFC resulted in the security relationship transitioning from unilateral U.S. strategic direction and control of forces, to bilateral strategic direction and control of forces (albeit under a U.S. appointed general officer commander). CFC was established pursuant to the “Terms of Reference for the Military Committee and Combined Forces Command.” The Terms of Reference has been updated twice, in 1994 and 1999. The 1994 modification reflected the paradigm shift in the Alliance security relationship when the ROK Government withdrew the operational control of its forces from CFC during peacetime and assumed responsibility for the daily security of their country. The 1999 modification was more cosmetic, codifying small changes made by the U.S. and ROK leadership in Korea.

- Strategic Directive – The U.S./ROK Military Committee issued the “Strategic Directive” to CFC in 1978. The Strategic Directive is akin to standing orders to the combined command. The Military Committee updated these standing orders twice, in 1984 and 1994. The 1984 modification was a minor adjustment to the existing standing orders from 1978, while the 1994 modification involved significant changes to the Alliance operating construct resulting from the change in operational control over ROK forces during peacetime.

⁸ Although there is widespread reporting that recent bilateral U.S./ROK planning has also addressed contingencies for third party involvement / intervention by other regional powers and the international community in a renewed conflict against the DPRK. There is no reporting of separate bilateral contingency plans to address security scenarios outside those posed by the DPRK for any emergent wider Indo-Asia-Pacific security challenges, to include humanitarian challenges that may arise.

⁹ Shortly after the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, the U.S. Government negotiated and concluded numerous security pacts across the world over the next several years. Some were bilateral as in the case of Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Republic of China (Taiwan). Some were geographic-specific to secure key terrain as in the case of the Defense of Greenland agreement between the United States and Denmark. Others were multilateral as in the case of the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Australia, New Zealand and the United States (ANZUS). In other cases the United States concluded individual agreements (in lieu of directly joining) with the members of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a multilateral security pact in the Middle East (plus the United Kingdom). The Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, also known as the Rio Pact, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are the two exceptions to the aforementioned security treaties, in that they were concluded before the Korean War (1947 and 1949 respectively). Despite the language within the above mentioned security pacts, in practice the U.S. Government extended unilateral security guarantees. Several of the 1950-era security pacts quietly dissolved in the late 1970s (U.S. – Taiwan, SEATO, CENTO), following several years of irrelevance or fundamental changes in the geopolitical landscape. Other than NATO, and perhaps to a degree the MDT with Japan, no other security pact concluded by the United States has had the depth, resilience or the enduring nature as the one it concluded with the ROK. In addition, outside of NATO, the MDT with the ROK is the only security pact concluded by the United States to retain an integrated defense architecture.

¹⁰ Chung Min Lee, “Reassessing the ROK-US alliance: transformation challenges and the consequences of South Korea’s choices,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol 57, No 2, July 2003, 302.

¹¹ 2015 GDP Rankings. “World Development Indicators,” *The World Bank Home Page*, <http://databank.worldbank.org/data/download/GDP.pdf> (accessed August 23, 2016). The Centre for Economic and Business Research estimates that the ROK will continue its economic rise, climbing to the world’s #7 economy by 2030. Mathew Burrows, “Global Risks 2035: The Search for a New Normal,” Atlantic Council Strategy Paper, September 2016, 65. The DPRK is not listed on the World Bank’s rankings, however Trading Economics’ website stated the DPRK’s GDP in 2015 was \$16.12 Billion (USD), which would place it 113th on the World Bank’s rankings. The DPRK GDP, 1970-2017, *Trading Economics Home Page*, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/north-korea/gdp> (accessed February 8, 2017).

¹² Starting in 1950, and through 1978, the U.S. Government was responsible for the defense of the ROK. From 1978, and through 1994, the U.S. and ROK Governments have jointly maintained responsibility for the defense of the ROK through an integrated defense command and the maintenance of a Military Committee. After 1994, the ROK resumed control of its armed forces during peacetime conditions and resumed responsibility for the daily security of their country; the ROK and United States retained the standing integrated defense command and Military Committee should hostilities erupt again on the Korean peninsula.

¹³ These reasons were influenced by deliberate decisions, historical precedents and institutional inertia.

¹⁴ Bruce E. Bechtol Jr., “The ROK-US Alliance During the Bush and Roh Administrations: Differing Perspectives and Their Implications for a Changing Strategic Environment,” *International Journal of Korean Studies Vol IX, no 2 (Fall/Winter 2005)*, <https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/10783/uploads> (accessed August 29, 2016); 104.

¹⁵ In 2014 the ROK spent 2.38% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to its defense. As the ROK has developed economically, the quantity of funds allocated to defense has risen immeasurably, however as a percent of GDP it has decreased. ROK funding for defense over the preceding three decades: 1981-1990 (4.319%); 1991-2000 (2.694%); and 2001-2010 (2.295%). Min-Koo Han, *2014 Defense White Paper*, (Seoul, ROK: ROK Ministry of National Defense, December 31, 2014), 298 (Appendix 16: Annual Defense Budgets). Furthermore, the ROK has been more able in recent decades to dedicate more of its resources into domestic programs and developing its economic health by outsourcing many of the prohibitive defense costs to its U.S. ally analogous to what Japan has historically done through its Yoshida Doctrine. While the argument is valid that the ROK is capable of sustaining much more defense spending, the overwhelming majority of U.S. allies spend well below 2% of GDP on defense, so the ROK is by far not the biggest problem the United States faces with allies carrying their share of the bilateral (or multilateral) security burden. However, for the most part ROK defense spending is overwhelmingly devoted to its immediate national security concerns in lieu of being directed or made available to maintaining the existing regional or international order. One clear example of how the ROK Government has been able to outsource the risks of its security is the Korean Armistice Agreement. The U.S. Government, through the auspices of the UNC (via UNSCR 84’s Unified Command), still remains responsible for friendly side armistice responsibilities and observing the southern side of the military demarcation between the ROK and DPRK. The ROK Government is more than capable of assuming this responsibility from the U.S. Government, however it does not ask and the United States does not offer to relinquish it. The DPRK for its part also opposes handing over this Armistice responsibility to the ROK as it distances the United States from Korean peninsula affairs and also forces the DPRK regime to engage its far more prosperous and successful southern neighbor.

¹⁶ Korea’s attempt to identify “itself as a ‘mid-sized’ and ‘mid-ranked’ power” is an “attempt to reverse the country’s ‘weak-power’ mentality, sense of victimhood and diplomatic passiveness...” Sung-Mi Kim, “South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy: Changes and Challenges,” *Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs*, (London, UK, June 2016) 9; Kab-woo Koo, “The Reality Behind South Korea – US Alliance,” linked from *The Nautilus Institute’s Policy Forum Online*, March 12, 2004, <http://oldsite.nautilus.org/archives/fora/security/0409AKabwoo.html> (accessed August 29, 2016).

¹⁷ Additionally, many ROK elites fundamentally understand that by aligning with the United States, vice other regional powers such as China, ROK autonomy and sovereignty are maintained at the lowest cost.

¹⁸ Kang Choi; “The ROK-US Alliance: Past, Present and Future,” *ETH Zurich, Dept of Humanities, Social and Political Science, Center of Security Studies*, http://mercury.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/161917/ichaptersection_singledocument/da128493-f34d-4722-b0c1-cc0998549480/en/4.pdf (accessed August 17, 2016); Bechtol, “The ROK-US Alliance During the Bush and Roh Administrations,” 91-93, 100.

¹⁹ Arguably some may disagree with this particular assertion. However, to ignore or discount the meliorism exhibited by the United States in its interaction with allies like the ROK is to ignore that the U.S. nature itself is at times a barrier to allies assuming a greater role and responsibility in the common defense. Without addressing this element of the problem, and continuing to deflect responsibility toward our allies failure to contribute more, is a little disingenuous if the

United States really wants to have engaged international partners. Ronald Steel, *Pax Americana*, (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1967), 18, 47, 113; Walter A. McDougall, "Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World Since 1776," (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1997). The United States has exercised unparalleled levels of control over ROK domestic and foreign affairs since 1945. The continued U.S. position within ROK security affairs complements and reinforces friendly force behaviors are positively shaped to match U.S. national interests within the region. Victor Cha, *Powerplay: The Origins of the American Alliance System in Asia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 104-105, 111-113, 119-120.

²⁰ Contemporary calculations of risk are colored to a degree by the ability of past U.S. and ROK administrations, over the course of six decades, to keep the tense equilibrium on the Korean peninsula from erupting into active hostilities. This historical ability to deescalate heightened tensions may give current policy makers in both countries a false sense of security that they will be able to continue to positively shape the environment to satisfy their national interests.

²¹ The DPRK finds the U.S. presence on the Korean peninsula and its position within the U.S./ROK security relationship as useful. The United States presents an existential threat to the DPRK state, justifying their national narrative of armed struggle and self-denial with their domestic audience.

²² The changing environment included alterations within ROK domestic politics (including the ROK public's aspirational demands for a greater ROK role in the alliance), the continued expansion and economic stature of the ROK, the geo-political situation in East Asia, decreased economic and military strength of DPRK, and U.S. global force posture realignment.

²³ On December 5, 2002 the U.S. Secretary of Defense and ROK Minister of National Defense agreed to establish the Future of the Alliance (FOTA) policy initiative to "modernize, strengthen and transform" the Alliance. FOTA consisted of four distinct, mutually supporting initiatives: the Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP) and Land Partnership Plan (LPP) to relocate U.S. forces south of Seoul; a bilateral Comprehensive Security Assessment (CSA) to identify common long-term security threats; the development of a Joint Vision for the Alliance, known as the Joint Vision Study (JVS); and a Command Relations Study (CRS) to jointly assess the best command construct for the future. FOTA was superseded in late 2004 by the Security Policy Initiative (SPI). SPI consultations focused on "broader, long-term issues that alliances face" "including the future rationale for the alliance, strategic flexibility, and OPCON arrangements." *Joint Communique: Thirty-Sixth Annual US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting*, October 22, 2005, http://www.sungshin.ac.kr:8900/jsps/common/download.jsp?sSiteId=eastasia&file=eastasia_3_77_1234750284048.pdf&orifile=36thSCM.pdf&board_id=3&board_seq=77&file_seq=2 (accessed October 19, 2016); Snyder, "Strengthening the U.S. – ROK Alliance," 7-8; U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) Commander, GEN Leon LaPorte, quoted in T.D. Flack, "LaPorte: U.S., S. Korea to reaffirm military ties," February 24, 2003, Stars and Stripes <http://www.stripes.com/news/laporte-u-s-s-korea-to-reaffirm-military-ties-1.2312/comments-7.2621> (accessed August 11, 2016).

²⁴ Despite the fundamental overarching vision divergence, the two countries have embarked upon what is now a multi-decade transformation of their security relationship. The relationship is still focused on the DPRK threat and the two nations have decided to establish a new integrated defense command, replacing the current CFC. There is some debate within the Alliance manager community whether the ongoing transformation effort is properly nested with

the long-term future of the Alliance. In particular since the Alliance security relationship is not scheduled to transform until the latter half of the 2020s.

²⁵ The United States and ROK have many shared values and interests that bind them far beyond their historical linkages. First and foremost they are both developed nations which are heavily integrated into the international community and the world economy. Both nations have a vital national interest in the existing rules-based international order. Secondly, both nations are democratic republics with publics that have a strong national belief in their liberal democratic systems. Empirical evidence within accepted international relations studies suggests a strong correlation between liberal democratic states and positive relationships, and difficulty with liberal democratic states sustaining positive, long-term relationships with autocratic states. Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *The American Political Science Review*, vol 80, no. 4 (December 1986), 1151-1169. Thirdly, while the cultural foundations of the United States and the ROK are alien to each other, since 1945 the American cultural influence on the ROK has been substantial. The ROK maintains a large diaspora of greater than 2 million ethnic Koreans within the United States. Ever larger numbers of American citizens are living and working within the ROK, rising 30 percent in ten years (2005-2015), now numbering greater than 135,000. The influence of both diaspora on each party has been a powerful influence and one of the ties that have bound the two nations together. Chul-soo Kim, "Number of US citizens living in South Korea rises 30 percent in 10 years," *The Korea Times*, July 2, 2015, <http://www.koreatimesus.com/number-of-us-citizens-living-in-south-korea-rises-30-percent-in-10-years/> (accessed April 18, 2017).

²⁶ It is important to highlight that the ROK has supported non-Alliance expeditionary campaigns led by the United States throughout the years, including deployments to the Republic of Vietnam (1964-1973), Iraq (2004-2008), and the Red Sea anti-piracy operation under the U.S. led Combined Task Force 151. Furthermore, the ROK Government has supported a multitude of UN Peacekeeping Operations over the years since it became a UN member state in 1991. Jiul Kim, *U.S. and Korea in Vietnam and the Japan-Korea Treaty: Search for Security, Prosperity and Influence*, Regional Studies – East Asia Master of Arts Research Project (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, May 1, 1991); "International Peacekeeping Operations," *The ROK Ministry of National Defense Home Page*, http://www.mnd.go.kr/mbshome/mbs/mnd_eng/subview.jsp?id=mnd_eng_020300000000 (accessed August 31, 2016).

²⁷ In contrast to the current ROK-centered present, the U.S. national interest envisions a bilateral U.S./ROK Alliance proactively engaged regionally, separately and in concert within a network of Alliances led by the United States. In particular, the United States is seeking for the relationship to be more reciprocal and multilateral-friendly, for the ROK to assume greater leadership roles as a more engaged regional actor with a stake in the existing international system. Moreover, the United States has striven for the ROK Government to grant greater deployment freedom for U.S. forces based in the ROK and increase base access for U.S. forces operating in the Pacific. Barack H. Obama, *U.S. National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 24; Douglas J. Feith, *Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture, Report to Congress*, (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, September 2004); Donald Rumsfeld, *The National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, March 2005).

Conversely, the ROK national interest has been to marshal and build its strength on the peninsula so that it can one day safely move out from under the U.S.'s orbit without the fear of being forcibly subjugated by another regional power. The ROK near and mid-range goal is to continue to focus on their own country and its development, with few tangible ambitions to

become a regional player. Many ROK elites prefer to be a regional actor in name only, willing to accept the prestige that comes with the role, but disliking the economic and political costs that come with such a commitment. Therefore, the ROK vision is more aligned to the comfortable status quo: retention of the one-way, bilateral, DPRK-focused relationship, but with more ROK access to, and aspirations of control over U.S. resources. The “ability to protect its own sovereign interests” has been a ROK aspiration since the 1960s of both right and leftist leaders. Evan S. Medeiros, Keith Crane, Eric Heginbotham, Norman D. Levin, Julia F. Lowell, Angel Rabasa, and Somi Seong, *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China’s Rise* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2008), 82. This debate within Korea largely comes down to timing. More conservative leaders believe this aspiration is far too dangerous to pursue at this time, while more progressive elites, like former ROK President Roh Moo-Hyun (2003-2008), believe the time is right for this aspiration to be aggressively pursued. Long time Korea analyst Michael Keefe has commented that some ROK Government officials tend to view the U.S./ROK Alliance through a temporal lens, in place of the rhetoric of it being a “blood alliance” or a perpetual condition. For the most part the United States likes to assert that the Alliance is based on our shared “values-based” relationship, which are implied to be never-ending, whereas the ROK will link the relationship to “conditions” which are by definition, temporary even if open-ended. Michael Keefe, International Relations Analyst, U.S. Forces Korea, email exchange with author, September 13, 2016. The current ROK National Security Strategy articulates three security objectives, 1) “safeguard the territory and sovereignty of the ROK,” 2) “sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula,” and 3) “cooperation in Northeast Asia.” Han, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 36.

²⁸ The U.S. / Japan MDT was concluded in 1951 and revised in 1960. The U.S. concluded Alliance-related defense agreements similar in scope to an MDT with Spain in 1953, and revised the agreement in 1963, 1970, and 1976. Tongfi Kim, “Why Alliances Entangle But Seldom Entrap States,” *Security Studies* 20, no. 3 (July 2011): 364-374. Furthermore, there is also historical precedent for the United States to withdraw from bilateral and multilateral security pacts once they were no longer militarily or politically in the U.S. national interest, as the United States did with the defense treaties to SEATO (1977) and Taiwan (1979).

²⁹ Clint Work, “Korea and the New Regional Paradigm,” *The Diplomat* Online, April 24, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/korea-and-the-new-regional-paradigm/> (accessed August 30, 2016); Sung-ham Kim, 2010, “From blood alliance to strategic alliance: Korea’s evolving strategic thought toward the United States,” *Korean Journal Of Defense Analysis* 22, no. 3: 227; Choi, “The ROK-US Alliance,” 48-54; Sung-Mi Kim, “South Korea’s Middle Power Diplomacy,” 8-12.

³⁰ While it is far too early to tell, ROK elites appear to have soured considerably as of late on the Chinese relationship. ROK elites are visibly disappointed in Chinese unreliability in altering aggressive DPRK behavior and the intimidation surrounding the ROK decision to accept the U.S. deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to the Korean peninsula. ROK elites are now challenging past optimistic assumptions of what life will be like alongside their more powerful neighbor. Sang-Hun Choe, “South Korea’s President Has No Easy Options in Dealing with an Aggressive North,” *New York Times*, September 23, 2016; Alyssa Ayres, Elizabeth C. Economy, Yangzhong Huang, Joshua Kurlantzick, Adam Segal, Sheila A. Smith, and Scott A. Snyder, “Japan-South Korea Relations in 2016: A Return to the Old Normal,” September 23, 2016, Council on Foreign Relations Online, <http://blogs.cfr.org/asia/2016/09/23/japan-south-korea-relations-in-2016-a-return-to-the-old-normal/> (accessed October 19, 2016); Jonathan D. Pollack, “Order at Risk: Japan, Korea and the Northeast Asian Paradox,” *The Brookings Institute Asia Working Group Paper* 5, September 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp->

[content/uploads/2016/09/fp_20160901_northeast_asian_paradox_v2.pdf](#) (accessed October 19, 2016), 25.

³¹ Associated Press, "Philippine President Duterte announces separation from U.S.," *Politico Online*, October 20, 2016, <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/philippine-president-duterte-announces-separation-from-us-230082> (accessed 20161020).