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THESIS

**A STUDY ON THE DECISION FACTORS IN THE DELAY
OF THE ROK-U.S. WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER:
FOCUSING ON THE DOMESTIC DETERMINANTS**

by

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December 2015

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WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER: FOCUSING ON THE DOMESTIC
DETERMINANTS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis begins by asking why the wartime OPCON transfer period between the ROK and the United States has continuously been delayed. To answer this question, the author studies how domestic politics have affected the continuous delay. To investigate the influence of domestic politics, this thesis first applied Graham Allison's Rational Actor Model (security); second, it applied domestic politics from Allison's bureaucratic politics model; and third, to fill a gap between security (RAM) and domestic politics, this thesis used Robert Putnam's Two-Level Game theory to clarify interconnectivity of international and domestic levels.

The result of this study indicates that the security environment is critical and could affect the continuous delay of the wartime OPCON transfer; however, the key actors of those decisions are policy decision makers. Unless the security environment changes drastically, the ROK conservatives and progressives, and the U.S. neoconservatives and pragmatists, will remain key members. The ROK, with its strong ally—the United States—should meticulously prepare the process of the wartime OPCON transfer to maintain the peace of the Korean Peninsula under unexpected political and economic situations, mainly focusing on the future-oriented combined ROK-U.S. military structure.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A2/AD	Anti-Access/Area-Denial
ABR	Anything but Roh
ADIZ	Air Defense Identification Zone
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AKJCCS	Allied Korea Joint Command and Control System
AMCC	Alliance Military Cooperation Center
AMF	Asian Financial Crisis
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
AWACS	Airborne Warning and Control System
CBO	Congressional Budget Office
C4I	Command, Control, Communications, Computers and Intelligence
CDR	Commander
CFC	ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command
CINCCFC	Commander in Chief, Combined Forces Command
CODA	Combined Delegated Authority
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DJP	Kim Dae-joong & Kim Jong-pil
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DOA	(U.S.) Department of the Army
DOD	(U.S.) Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea)
EU	European Union
FOTA	Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative Talks
FY	Fiscal Year
G8	Group of 8
G20	Group of 20
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GNP	Grand National Party
	Gross National Product

GPR	Global Posture Review
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
IFV	Infantry Fighting Vehicle
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
KAMD	Korea Air and Missile Defense
K-FX	Korea-Fighter Experimental
KJFC	Korea Joint Forces Command
KRW	Korean Won
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
LPP	Land Partnership Plan
LST	Landing Ship Tank
MCM	Military Committee Meeting
MD	Missile Defense
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MDP	Millennium Democratic Party
MND	(ROK) Ministry of National Defense
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS	(ROK) National Intelligence Service
NLL	Northern Limited Line
NPT	Nonproliferation Treaty
NSS	National Security Strategy of the United States
	Nuclear Security Summit
OPCON	Operational Control
PAC	Patriot Advanced Capability
PKM	Patrol Killer Medium
POW	Prisoner of War
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
PSI	Proliferation Security Initiative
QDR	Quadrennial Defense Review Report
RAM	Rational Actor Model
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

ROE	Rule of Engagement
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea)
SAM	Surface to Air Missile
SBCT	Striker Brigade Combat Team
SCM	(ROK-U.S.) Security Consultative Meeting
SMA	Special Measures Agreement
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
START	Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
STP	Strategic Transformation Plan
THAAD	Terminal High Altitude Area Defense
TOR	Terms of Reference
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicle
UFG	Ulchi-Freedom Guardian
UNC	United Nations Command
U.S.	United States of America
USKORCOM	U.S. Korea Command
USFK	U.S. Forces in Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
YRP	Yongsan Relocation Plan

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

President Lee Seung-man, during the Korean War, handed over the whole operational control (OPCON) of the ROK army, navy, and air force to General Douglas MacArthur by his letter on July 14, 1950. With the end of the Cold War and the escalating autonomy of the ROK, peacetime OPCON was returned from the United States to South Korea in 1994. At the defense minister's conference on February 23, 2007, the ROK and U.S. governments agreed to a wartime OPCON transfer period to culminate on April 17, 2012.

However, the current wartime OPCON transfer process has been more tumultuous, with ROK-U.S. interactions influenced by domestic politics on each side. Significantly, South Korea's progressive and conservative political factions have been in conflict over U.S. involvement, which raises the issue of ROK sovereignty. As a result, the ROK and the United States delayed the transfer period twice in 2010 and 2014.

There have been few studies on the major variables driving the delay. This thesis will research the factors that determined the delay of the ROK-U.S. wartime OPCON transfer period twice in 2010 and 2014, focusing on the role of the ROK and U.S. domestic factors. In addition, this study will examine what conditions will allow the ROK and the United States to execute the hand-over process smoothly, while ironing out difficulties.

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The wartime OPCON transfer could negatively impact relations between South and North Korea because the status quo could waver unless the ROK increases its military power (for internal balance). The Park Geun-hye Korean administration seems to have this concern in mind. The ROK Minister of National Defense Han Min-goo and U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel agreed on the delay of the transfer period (from December 1, 2015, to some future day that satisfies the transfer conditions) at the 46th SCM on October 23, 2014, in Washington, D.C., Han said that the OPCON transfer is not

the problem of the military sovereignty at the general inspection of the national defense committee on October 27, 2014, in Seoul; in addition, the ROK Defense Policy Director Ryu Jae-seung also mentioned that the future transfer period might be in the mid-2020s when the installment of Kill-Chain and Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) would be completed.¹

However, this agreement raised considerable disputes in the ROK and U.S. domestic politics. In Korea, the issue has raised many questions. The progressive party has insisted that the delay of the OPCON transfer is a national humiliation. Furthermore, how could the current government (or the former Lee Myung-bak administration) explain the agreement on the transfer decision in the Roh Moo-hyun period (2003-08)? Does the current government admit the incapability of the ROK military? What about the United States' position (domestic politics) on this issue? The conditions that the ROK government set up are also the questions under debate. What is certain in this issue is that internal elements in both countries are acting vigorously. In addition, both governments recognize that the OPCON transfer should be completed sooner or later. Therefore, the ROK-U.S. alliance watchers need to investigate in depth the causal variables of the delay and the essential conditions for the transfer process, rather than just accepting the postponements without questions. In particular, alliance watchers need a better understanding of how domestic politics on each side drives decisions that may not be strategically optimal.

A balanced analysis (departing from previous research based on specific theories or models) could grasp the essence of the question and identify the desirable OPCON transfer conditions through the study on the determinant variables of the delay, which previous studies have not adequately explained. Building on previous studies, this thesis

¹ ROK Ministry of National Defense, "The OPCON transfer agreement is a medium-and long-term future plans," last updated October 27, 2014, http://www.mnd.go.kr/cop/kookbang/kookbanglboView.do?categoryCode=dema0138&boardSeq=5859&id=mnd_020106000000.

The ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Gwan-jin and U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta agreed on the plan of the ROK's military strength of Kill-Chain at the 44th SCM on October 24, 2012 in Washington, D.C., which can detect and launch a preemptive-strike to North Korea's nukes and missiles. Furthermore, the ROK Defense Acquisition Program Administration requested a 2014 budget of about ten trillion dollars mainly for the defense improvement of the Kill Chain and the KAMD on July 20, 2013. However, the feasibility of these military strengths without the U.S. support is still in a question.

investigates new possibilities with different viewpoints, in particular focusing on the role of the ROK and U.S. domestic factors, which has received insufficient attention in prior studies.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many inquiries have been done on the background of the OPCON transfer history (from South Korea to the United States or in reverse) since 1950s. These studies were mainly about the drivers of these decisions—based on (1) James D. Morrow’s asymmetric alliance theory; (2) Stephen M. Walt’s balance of threat theory; (3) and U.S. strategic flexibility. Research is also being conducted on the future direction of the wartime OPCON transfer, the ROK-U.S. alliance, the desirable military command structure, and other purposes.

Studies on the decision factors in the delay of the ROK-U.S. OPCON transfer are rare. Nonetheless, several Korean researchers tried to unravel a debate on the postponements. These inquiries primarily illustrate (1) the pro and con debates, (2) future tasks for the OPCON transfer, (3) and studies on the determinants of the delay.

- 1. The Three Major Prior Inquiries on the OPCON Transfer: Asymmetry Alliance Theory, Balance of Threat Theory, and U.S. Strategic Flexibility**
 - a. *The OPCON Transfer under the ROK-U.S. Alliance System: A Typical Asymmetric Alliance between Security and Autonomy?***

Some studies of the ROK-U.S. alliance are informed by James D. Morrow’s Asymmetry Alliance theory. According to James D. Morrow, “Alliance can be considered in terms of their effects on the allies’ autonomy and security.”² He considers an asymmetry alliance as an autonomy trade-off model that can form and maintain the relationship much easier than a symmetric alliance.³ Furthermore, these types of alliances

² James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 910, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111499>.

³ *Ibid.*, 930.

would be more likely to be in conflict between the object of security and autonomy, and the weak state might break the alliance on their own as their competences increase.⁴

The OPCON transfer in the ROK-U.S. alliance system could be a typical model of asymmetric alliance. According to Article 4 in the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, “The Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air, and sea forces in and about territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement.”⁵ This article gave the USFK (United States Forces in Korea) legitimacy to be stationed in South Korea. The ROK could rapidly develop its economy under the U.S. security umbrella, whereas forgiving their autonomy. The OPCON had been under the UNC before establishing the CFC (Combined Forces Command) in 1978, and this structure has deterred threats from the North Korean military forces. However, as the economic and defensive capability of the ROK has increased, the structure of the ROK-US alliance and the initiative of the OPCON have also been changed.

Numerous Koreans and the ROK-U.S. alliance watchers have been studying the transformation of the alliance structure (the OPCON) based on the Asymmetric Alliance theory. Bruce Klingner argues that the development of South Korea is driving the alliance to change; according to him, “these [causal] factors include a changing threat environment, evolving U.S. military strategy, and South Korea’s desire for greater autonomy as a result of its improving military and economic capabilities.”⁶ Kim Tae-woo also interpreted the Defense Reform 2020 (along with the wartime OPCON transfer) during the idealist Roh Moo-hyun administration was a pursuit of autonomy.⁷ In addition, James M. Minnich claims that the OPCON transfer should have been implemented in

⁴ Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry,” 930.

⁵ ROK Ministry of National Defense, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK* (Seoul: Oh Sung Planning & Printing, 2002), 39.

⁶ Bruce Klingner, “Evolving Military Responsibilities in the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 12, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2008): 26, <http://www.icks.org/publication/pdf/2008-FALL-WINTER/chapter2.pdf>.

⁷ Tae-woo Kim, “ROK Military Transformation and ROK-U.S. Security and Maritime Cooperation: MD, PSI, and Dokdo Island,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 12, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2008): 47, <http://www.icks.org/publication/pdf/2008-FALL-WINTER/chapter3.pdf>.

2012, and the ROK-U.S. alliance should be recast to a pragmatic, comprehensive, and strategic alliance that is as robust as it has been since the Korean War—those days in which Korea was a dependent of the United States are gone when considering Korea’s economy and international environment: the end of Cold War.⁸

Despite the increased autonomy of South Korea, why was the wartime OPCON transfer period delayed in 2010 and 2014—twice? In terms of the Asymmetric Alliance model, these developments in the ROK-U.S. alliance appear to be enigmatic and anachronistic.

b. *The OPCON Transfer and the Threat of North Korea: A Response of Major Threat?*

Another major explanation for the OPCON transfer (or the ROK-U.S. alliance) is based on the North Korea threat, informed by approaches such as Stephen M. Walt’s “balance of threat” theory. According to Walt, the components of threat are (1) aggregate power (size, demographic, and economy) (2) geographic proximity (3) offensive capability, (4) and offensive intentions.⁹ Walt also describes that “rather than allying in response to power alone, it is more accurate to say that states will ally with or against the most threatening power.”¹⁰ Walt concludes that states are prone to balance (a formation of alliance against a major threat) rather than bandwagon (a formation of alliance with a major threat).¹¹ In addition, “the more aggressive or expansionist a state appears, the more likely it is to trigger an opposing coalition,” Walt explains.¹² Numerous alliance watchers use or develop the balance of threat theory to analyze, explain, and predict their questions. Based on this model, various researchers have also tried to unravel the

⁸ James M. Minnich, “The Year 2012: South Korea’s Resumption of Wartime Operational Control,” *Military Review* (May-June 2011): 5–7, <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA543055>.

⁹ Stephen M. Walt, “Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power,” *International Security* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1985): 33, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2538540>.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4, 33.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

OPCON transfer (or the ROK-U.S. alliance) puzzle with the North Korean threat as the key factor.

Victor D. Cha mentions that some ROK-U.S. alliance researchers argued that the Post-Cold War era illustrated the absence of a major threat—the Soviet Union—which was a major ally of North Korea.¹³ Thus, this absence pointed out that both the ROK and the United States could and should share “the post-threat era,” to make a new alliance identity.¹⁴ However, minimizing the North Korean threat right after the end of Cold War was a hasty-decision—the DPRK has still been a threat to South Korea. As North Korea got into the arduous march period in the 1990s, the threat of conventional weapons was decreasing; in contrast, the threat of WMDs and nukes has steadily increased. Worse, North Korea carried out the first nuclear test on October 9, 2006 during the Roh government. Despite of the DPRK nuclear threat, Roh clinched the OPCON transfer agreement with the George W. Bush administration at the defense minister’s conference on February 23, 2007.

Lee Chug-min, as a result, states that the alliance between the ROK and the United States had a radical change when communism collapsed in the late 1980s and the mid-1990s; however, there are numerous new threats that both governments should cope with such as North Korea’s WMD, sudden collapse, and other threats.¹⁵ Bruce E. Bechtol Jr. also claims that North Korea’s threat to South Korea is steady despite of their economic difficulty since the early 1990s; therefore, the firm security alliance is critical to deter the North Korea threat even after the wartime OPCON transfer to the ROK.¹⁶

¹³ See Victor D. Cha, “America’s Alliances in Asia: the Coming ‘Identity Crisis’ With the Republic of Korea?,” in *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance*, ed. Donald W. Boose, Jr. et al. (Darby, PA: Diane, 2003), 15–34.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Chung-min Lee, “Reassessing the ROK-U.S. alliance: Transformation challenges and the consequences of South Korea’s Choices,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 57, no.2 (July 2003): 289–290, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10357710301745>.

¹⁶ See Bruce E. Bechtol Jr., “Force Restructuring in the ROK-U.S. Military Alliance Challenges and Implications,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 10, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 19–41, http://www.icks.org/publication/pdf_2006_f/2_Bechtol.pdf.

Seo Jun-seok insists that the ROK should prepare for decreasing the threat and vulnerability against North Korea, providing for the future OPCON transfer.¹⁷

Overall, studies show that the OPCON transfer does not directly mean the collapse of the ROK-U.S. alliance but underline the importance of well-organized preparation—the strong and constant ROK-U.S. alliance system against the continuous North Korea threat—even after the wartime OPCON transfer. Thus, the Lee Myung-bak and Park Guen-hye government delayed the transfer period by emphasizing U.S. strategic assets against the North Korea nuclear-threat, and the Obama administration also agreed to these requirements. The key point of the wartime OPCON transfer and the ROK-U.S. alliance is not only the threat itself, but also the recognition of threat.

Did President Roh Moo-hyun demand the wartime OPCON transfer because he made himself easy about the North Korea threat? What makes the perception of a threat different? Kim Choong-nam argues that the modification of the ROK-U.S. alliance stems from “South Koreans’ perception of a reduced North Korean threat,” mentioning the Kim Dae-Jung government’s sunshine policy.¹⁸ Walt, however, notes that an identity is not a critical element to form an alliance based on realism.¹⁹ In this regard, balance of threat theory is useful to explain the alliance acts of states but limited to evaluate the internal factors of states. Therefore, we should examine the wartime OPCON transfer issue in a little different angle to unravel the current domestic debates—threat perceptions or ideologies. This study of domestic politics in the ROK and the United States aims to fill a gap of understanding of this question.

c. U.S. Strategic Flexibility over the Wartime OPCON Transfer

Besides the preceding two theories (asymmetric alliance and balance of threat), some analyses have focused on how the U.S. strategic flexibility (of the Bush

¹⁷ See Jun-seok Seo, “The ROK Security Alternatives of the OPCON Transfer: Focusing on the decreasing the threat and vulnerability,” *Military Forum* 65 (2011): 285–305, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/SearchDetailView.do?cn=KINX2011033164&sysid=nhn>.

¹⁸ Choong-nam Kim, “Changing Korean Perceptions of the Post-Cold War Era and the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *Asia Pacific issues* no. 67 (2003): 2, <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/3774>.

¹⁹ Walt, “Alliance Formation,” 9, 33.

administration) that affected the realignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance influenced the ROK-U.S. wartime OPCON transfer. Empirically, specific U.S. strategic foreign policies have had tremendous impacts on the ROK-U.S. alliance system. For example, the Truman Doctrine (from an expansion of Soviet Union), the Nixon Doctrine (from a failure in the Vietnam War), and the New Cold War era (from a Soviet-invasion of Afghanistan) influenced the ROK-U.S. alliance vicissitudes (that could affect to the ROK-U.S. combined military structures) before the 2000s.

After the inauguration of G.W. Bush in January 2001 (even before the September 11 attacks), the administration propelled the relocation of the U.S. overseas forces in order to respond more rapidly against all global threats. This plan was strongly promoted after the 9/11 attacks. U.S. government documents expressing these intentions include: *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) 2001*, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) 2002*, *Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture September 2004 Report to Congress (GPR) 2004*.

The government documents did not use the exact term of strategic flexibility; however, these governmental papers showed this concept clearly. *The QDR 2001* explained the environment of the world in 2001, “While contending with such uncertainty is a key challenge for U.S. defense planning, certain features and trends of the security environment define not only today’s geopolitical and military-technical challenges but also highlight critical operational challenges that the Nation’s armed forces will need to master in the future.”²⁰

With this perception, G.W. Bush conceptualized the U.S. relocation of overseas forces by explaining (in *the NSS 2002*), “to contend with uncertainty and to meet the many security challenges we face, the United States will require bases and stations within and beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia, as well as temporary access arrangements for the long-distance deployment of U.S. forces.”²¹ Finally, *the GPR report*

²⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) 2001* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2001), 3.

²¹ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) 2002* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2002), 29.

in 2004 materialized the concept of strategic flexibility—(1) Main Operating Base (MOB): Ramstein Air Base (Germany), Kadena Air Base (Okinawa, Japan), and Camp Humphreys (*Pyongteak*, South Korea); (2) Forward Operating Site (FOS): the Sembawang port facility in Singapore and Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras; (3) and Cooperative Security Location (CSL): Dakar, Senegal.²²

Many ROK-U.S. alliance watchers, concerned with the impact of the strategic flexibility of the George W. Bush administration on the ROK-U.S. alliance, judged that strategic flexibility was related to the wartime OPCON transfer issue. For example, Oh Soon-kun claimed that “the transition of wartime OPCON from USFK to ROK forces is also critically related to the strategic flexibility and the transforming of USFK.”²³ When both the ROK and U.S. governments agreed on the wartime ONCON transfer period at the 38th SCM on October 20, 2006 (after October 15, 2009 but no later than March 15, 2012), the strategic flexibility was well interlocked with increased Korean autonomy and decreased threat perception of liberalists in the ROK.

Where does the U.S. foreign policy stem from and why did President Barack Obama administration accept the delay of OPCON transfer? If the strategic flexibility in G.W. Bush administration catalyzed the wartime OPCON transfer, it may have been influenced by a major U.S. domestic group that pursues a particular intention in their foreign policy. Also, another domestic group, in the Obama administration, may be lobbying for different interests because the transfer period was already delayed in Obama government. For these reasons, we should examine both the ROK and U.S. domestic politics to grasp the core problem of the wartime OPCON transfer issue.

²² U.S. Department of Defense, *Strengthening U.S. Global Defense Posture September 2004 Report to Congress (GPR) 2004* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2004), 10–11.

²³ Soon-kun Oh, “The U.S. Strategic Flexibility Policy: Prospects for the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 31, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/2483>.

2. Existing Research Review on the Postponements of the Wartime OPCON Transfer

a. *The Pro and Con Debates*

After the Lee Myung-bak government delayed the OPCON transfer in 2010, it sparked the debates between conservatives and progressives. The key debates include the ROK sovereignty, the perception of North Korean threat, the capability of the ROK military, and U.S. security support.

Park Hui-rak, one of the proponents of the delay, focuses on the practical operation of the U.S. general command system, rather than the legal interpretation.²⁴ According to Park, the OPCON under the CFC does not damage the ROK sovereignty. Park insists the CFC commander should report to and get an approval from both the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff and U.S. JCS, including both governments such as MND and DOD, with regard to major operations and its plans.²⁵ In addition, Park argues practical U.S. military support will be strongly guaranteed under the current CFC system with the logic of entrapment and involvement.²⁶ Nam Sung-wook suggests that the OPCON transfer should be postponed until the settlement of the DPRK nuclear problem.²⁷ Nam seriously doubts the ability of the ROK military capability to combat DPRK asymmetric military power after the wartime OPCON transfer and CFC disband.²⁸

On the other hand, Ko Young-dae, one of the opponents of the delay of the OPCON transfer, refutes the proponents' perceptions. Ko concentrates on the legal implication on the current U.S. general command system; the wartime OPCON is the

²⁴ Hui-rak Park, "The Understanding of the Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer and the Disband of the CFC," *Han Sun Policy Brief* (2013): 4, http://www.hansun.org/magazine/webzine_view.php?b_idx=7824&page=1.

²⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁶ Ibid., 5.

²⁷ Sung-wook Nam, "We Should Delay the Wartime OPCON Transfer until the Settlement of the DPRK Nuclear Problem," *KIFS* (2010): 1, <http://www.kifs.org/contents/sub3/life.php?method=info&searchKey=&searchWord=&offset=&sId=2405>.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

symbol of the command-in-chief of the nation's forces.²⁹ Ko points out that the CFC commander legally does not have any responsibilities to report to the ROK president.³⁰ Ko also asserts that the capability of the ROK military is enough to cope with the DPRK's asymmetric military threat, considering the quality of military forces such as the C4I system and the accuracy of the ballistic or cruise missiles, rather than the quantity of them.³¹

The major weakness of the pro and con debates is that they left out a conservative and progressive aspect of the ROK and U.S. domestic politics as key drivers of the delay. The debates are not just the result of the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer. This debate has been a major topic (or driver) of the ROK politics affecting the foreign policies including the OPCON transfer issue. In addition, the pro and con debates only focus on the ROK domestic politics. Then, how about the U.S. domestic opinions on the ROK's wartime OPCON issue or the U.S. security support to the ROK? Strategically, the United States needs to maintain the alliance, but there might also be different positions toward the involvement. By comparing the domestic politics of both countries in depth, we could better explain the delay of wartime OPCON transfer.

b. Future Tasks for the Wartime OPCON Transfer

Some researchers propose future tasks for preparing the OPCON transfer. Basically, they support the delay and suggest some conditions for the transfer. Overall, it differs little from the proponents' argument of the delay; it is not a problem of time but of conditions.

Kwon Ki-yool argues the OPCON transfer has a problem in the efficient distribution of the ROK defense budget.³² According to Kwon, it will take some time and is difficult process for the ROK government to improve defense capability (the Kill-chain

²⁹ Young-Dae Ko, "The Problem of the Delay of the Wartime OPCON transfer," *Peace Nuri Unification Nuri* (2010): 1, http://www.spark946.org/bugsboard/index.php?BBS=pds_2&action=viewForm&uid=194&page=1.

³⁰ Ibid., 2.

³¹ Ibid., 4.

³² Ki-yool Kwon, "The Discussion of Defense Budget and the Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer," *National Assembly Paper* 562 (2013): 56, <http://dl.nanet.go.kr/SearchDetailList.do>.

and KAMD) due to the increased demands for social welfare.³³ Jung Cheol-ho insists the countermeasure of the CFC should be completed before the wartime OPCON transfer, whether the continued combined system or another new system.³⁴ The condition of minimizing threats of the DPRK (Kim Hong-rae and Han Ki-hong in 2014³⁵) is similar to the proponents' position on the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer: the ROK government should delay the wartime OPCON transfer until the DPRK has abandoned nuclear weapons.

In this context, we should study the ROK and U.S. domestic politics simultaneously to close a gap in understanding the drivers of the delay of the wartime OPCON issue. The study of only the ROK domestic politics is insufficient to explain the ROK-U.S. interactions of the delay. Interestingly, Jung gives us a pivotal insight by mentioning that the United States also has a hard time to maintain the USFK with the decrease of the defense budget, which costs more than 2 billion dollars.³⁶ The establishment of the ROK-U.S. combined division (the first example in the world at a division level) on June 3, 2015, in *Uiyeongbu*, South Korea could have reflected on both governmental interactions of the wartime OPCON issue.

c. Studies on the Determinants of the Delay

Few studies have tried to explain the determinants of the delay. Jang Soon-hui uses the holistic approach method of external and internal factors using Rosenau's level of analysis. Jang insists that the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer is the complex result of internal factors—(1) the capability of the ROK military; (2) the ROK defense reform; (3) the defense budget of the ROK (economy); (4) and the perception of the supreme leader—and external factors—(1) the DPRK's threat (2) and the whole

³³ Kwon, "Defense Budget and OPCON Transfer," 56.

³⁴ Cheol-ho, Jung, "The Second Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer and the Countermeasure of the CFC," *Situations and Policies* 210 (2013): 16, <http://dl.nanet.go.kr/SearchDetailList.do>.

³⁵ Hong-rae Kim and Ki-hong Han, "Issue Interview with the New Leader of The Korea Retired Generals and Admirals Association," *JM Magazine* 460 (2014): 122–26, <http://jmagazine.joins.com/monthly/view/300818>.

³⁶ Jung, "Second Delay of Wartime OPCON," 17.

situations of the Northeast Asia.³⁷ Jang concludes that a crucial national policy is the result of interactions of diverse factors, and the delay looks to be much more influenced by internal factors.³⁸ However, his research does not include U.S. domestic politics and its interactions with the ROK. Also, he just enumerates every possibility without distinguishing the degree of influence of the ROK domestic politics on the decisions.

Another researcher, Lee Soo-hun, tries to unravel the continuous delay caused by the ROK domestic politics. Lee sets up the different alliance policies established by the different perception of the ROK presidents as the key driver of the delay; it reflects (1) identity and security culture; (2) public opinion; (3) perception of threat; (4) and leadership of the ROK president.³⁹ He focuses on the tendency of the ROK government to follow presidential leadership.⁴⁰ Similarly to Jang, his work neglects a huge discourse between the ROK conservatives and progressives and U.S. factors on the delay.

3. Problems and New Approaches

Prior research (based on external factors: asymmetric alliance theory, balance of threat theory, and U.S. strategic flexibility) explain the OPCON transfer history adequately but are limited in explaining the continuous delay and its domestic discourses in implementing the transfer. Few studies of the ROK domestic politics chiefly explain the continuous delay. As reviewed above, most of them are about the ongoing pro and con debates, and they have significant limitations: (1) the absence of conditions of U.S. domestic politics (2) and no comparison of the relative influences on internal and external factors—which factor is the key driver of the delay? Or how much influence does the factor have? Thus, this study will fill a gap in the questions by largely looking into the ROK and U.S. domestic politics as well.

³⁷ See Soon-hui Jang, “Transfer of Wartime Operational Control over ROK Armed Forces: Postponement and Re-Postponement” (Dissertation, Kyung Nam University, 2014), <http://dcoll.kyungnam.ac.kr/jsp/common/DcLoOrgPer.jsp?sItemId=000000028033>.

³⁸ Ibid., 159.

³⁹ Soo-hun Lee, “A study on the Transfer of Wartime OPCON and the Readjustment of ROK-U.S. Alliance,” (Dissertation, Kyung Nam University, 2014), <http://dcoll.kyungnam.ac.kr/jsp/common/DcLoOrgPer.jsp?sItemId=000000027563>.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 161.

The wartime OPCON transfer period finally has been delayed twice although the autonomy of the ROK increased. The scale of continuing North Korean threat has also been constant in spite of up-and-down period. Substantially, the perception of North Korean threat is different between the conservatives and liberals in the ROK. Kim Tae-woo describes this phenomenon: “They [Liberals] play down the North Korean military threat and believe that a humanitarian response [Sunshine Policy] to North Korea will lead to inter-Korean reconciliation and eventual peaceful unification; in contrast, conservatives perceive North Korea as both a counterpart for coexistence and unification and the main enemy that still poses a threat.”⁴¹ U.S. strategies, such as “strategic flexibility” or “pivot to Asia,” also reflect U.S. domestic politics. To supply existing research or clear the cause of the delay, we should look into the domestic politics both in the ROK and the United States as well. Upon completion of the research, the author will model scenarios to illustrate the conditions of a transfer and successful transfer process that can improve the ROK-U.S. alliance system.

a. *Interconnectivity of International and Domestic Levels*

This thesis will be mainly based on the interconnectivity between internal factors and external factors. The wartime OPCON transfer issue is also the result of this interaction. The external factors, the Post-Cold-War era and changed-alliance structure from the ROK development, have made the conditions of the transition process. The tumultuous domestic determinants, however, simultaneously have been affecting the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer period. Therefore, we need to look into the linkage between domestic and international politics beforehand. Based on this typology, the author will estimate the degree of the domestic determinants on the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer.

In fact, the concept of the interconnectivity is not a new theory in the traditional study of international relations. However, neither realists (neo-realists) nor liberalists (neo-liberalists) have had the evidence or theory for the organic relation of domestic and

⁴¹ Tae-woo Kim, “Perceptions of North Korea and Polarization of ROK Society,” in *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance*, ed. Donald W. Boose, Jr. et al. (Darby, PA: Diane, 2003), 139.

international structures. Even though neo-liberalists or interdependence theory accept the both realists and liberalists assumptions, they eventually explain the relation of the states, rather than the connectivity of the diverse actors.⁴² When Wallerstein suggested the dependency theory in 1974, he discussed the formation of the international-economic hierarchy with the individual state's internal hierarchy.⁴³ Wallerstein, as a radical, broke up the existing concept—the state-centered analysis.

The major theoretical inspiration of this thesis is a Two-Level Game theory that Robert D. Putnam presented in 1988. Putnam carefully frames how his theory is applied to the linkage by pointing out the strict separation between world affairs and the problem of domestic politics—"At the national level, domestic groups pursue their interests by pressing the government to adopt favorable policies...at the international level, national governments seek to maximize their own ability to satisfy domestic pressures," Putnam argues.⁴⁴ According to Putnam's theory, the influence of domestic groups is immense at both the international and national level, and the decision makers cannot simply ignore them when making foreign policies.

This theory supports that we cannot simply explain the wartime OPLAN transfer issue only with the alliance theories or international factors. The ROK-U.S. decision makers should also consider the domestic situations because they influence the global political negotiations. Besides Putnam, Peter Gourevitch insists that "the international system is not only a consequence of domestic politics and structures but a cause of them," emphasizing the interdependence of international relations and domestic politics.⁴⁵ Also, James D. Fearon not only asserts that foreign policies have (at least) two possible

⁴² See Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr, "Power and Interdependence in the Information Age," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no.5 (1998): 81–94, JSTOR (10.2307/20049052).

⁴³ See Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System: Concepts for Comparative Analysis," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 4 (1974): 387–415, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/178015>.

⁴⁴ See Robert D. Putnam, "The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (1988): 434, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706785>.

⁴⁵ See Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Source of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no 4 (1978): 911, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706180>.

explanations: (1) a systemic or structural one (2) and a domestic-political one, but also recognizes that the interdependence of them.⁴⁶

b. Theoretical and Typological Background: Decision Making Model of Graham Allison

Graham Allison suggests that the three foreign policy decision-making models—(1) The Rational Actor Model (RAM), (2) The Organizational Behavior Model, (3) and The Bureaucratic Politics Model—explain the Cuban Missile Crisis with realistic and domestic politics viewpoints.⁴⁷ “A theory of foreign policy is thus an inherent and inescapable component of a theory international politics; likewise a theory of the international setting is an essential component of a theory of the behavior of states in such settings,” Allison concludes.⁴⁸ Similarly, the wartime OPCON transfer issue (foreign policy) is also interconnected with international politics and domestic politics. The wartime OPCON transfer issue is a problem of the interaction between the internal factors (domestic politics) and the external factors (international relations). This thesis will figure out how much the ROK and U.S. domestic politics affect the delay of the OPCON transfer.

This thesis will use Allison’s three decision-making models to compare the effect of international and domestic politics. The first model is the Rational Actor Model (RAM). According to RAM, the state is a unitary actor that maximizes its own national interests (in terms of power) with special objectives.⁴⁹ It includes not only the action of the state, but also the action of non-state actors under international system.⁵⁰ Like realists’ theory, power itself gives a persuasive ability and limits to RAM.⁵¹ When the

⁴⁶ James D. Fearon, “Domestic Politics, Foreign Policy, and Theories of International Relations,” *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 1, (1998): 306, doi: 10.1146/annurev.polisci.1.1.289.

⁴⁷ See Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1999).

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

state confronts problems, it would research alternatives; in the end, the state will choose the best option after comparing the costs and benefits.⁵²

The second model is the Organizational Behavior Model. The government action is the outcome of the organizational process—SOPs: Standard Operating Procedures.⁵³ The governmental (organizational) behavior does not follow “the logic of consequence (costs-maximization)” that RAM suggests but satisfies “the logic of appropriateness” that the organizations set up.⁵⁴ The governmental decision-making is the process of an input (a recognition of a problem) and an output (a foreign policy) according to the organizational SOPs, which can learn and change.⁵⁵

The final model is the Bureaucratic Politics Model. This model focuses on individuals among government; their interactions finally link to international politics.⁵⁶ Allison argues, “In contrast with Model I [RAM], this Bureaucratic Politics Model sees no unitary actor but rather many actors as players—players who focus not on a single strategic issue but on many diverse intra-national problems as well.”⁵⁷ Allison also suggests that the action of one nation’s behavior affects the other nation’s behavior through the interaction (foreign policy) between them.⁵⁸ Government behavior is the result of the bargaining of the individuals represented each organization.⁵⁹

D. MAIN FRAMEWORK OF THE THESIS

Allison’s three decision-making models are utilized to frame this thesis in the following manner.

⁵² Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 18.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 169.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 171.

⁵⁶ Graham Allison and Morton H. Halperin, “Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications,” *World Politics* 24 (1972): 43, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010559>.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁹ Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 260.

1. Assumptions for the Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer

First, according to the RAM, the ROK and the United States are unitary rational actors. The OPCON transfer is the action between both countries. In addition, both the ROK and the United States pursue maximizing their own benefits based on national interests: power or security, while minimizing their costs: threat or burden. The key question of this model includes: what are the pivotal opportunities and threats for the ROK and U.S. regarding the OPCON issue?

The ROK and the United States agreed on the delay of the OPCON based on their national interests. The best way that the ROK could maximize its opportunity (security) against the North Korea threat is the continuous security support from the United States. Furthermore, the ROK could develop its own defense and economy ability under the guarantee of the U.S. security umbrella. South Korea might consider that the system of the ROK wartime OPCON under the CFC is the optimal state. In addition, the United States might accept the demand of the postponement because the importance of the East Asia re-increased both on economic and security fields.

Second, according to the Organizational Behavior Model, the ROK and the United States have “constrained rationality,” which satisfy a certain criteria⁶⁰ Influential governmental organizations and their SOPs might affect the delay of the OPCON transfer. The critical question of this model includes: which organizations are influential on the wartime OPCON issue? What are the processes, capabilities, and constraints of those organizations?

The capabilities and limitations of those organizations (or their cultures: group thinking) are indispensable elements. The influential ROK organizations might include: the Ministry of National Defense, the Ministry of Unification, or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Also, U.S. organizations could include: the Department of Defense, the Department of State, or the CFC.

Third, according to the Bureaucratic Politics model, the ROK and the United States are not unitary actors. Individuals who represented specific organizations and their

⁶⁰ Ibid., 156.

bargaining positions are the key points on the wartime OPCON problem. The major questions of this model include: who are the major individuals on the wartime OPCON issue, and what are the organizational interests that they represent? This model includes specific coalitions that support the foreign policies of certain individuals. Presidents, interest groups, or congresses could play a critical role to form particular coalitions on the wartime OPCON issue.

The delay of the wartime OPCON transfer might be the result of the bargaining among different individuals representing various organizations. The identities or perceptions of each individual are critical to investigate the wartime OPCON transfer issue. The major actors of the ROK might include: the President, the Chairman of the National Assembly, the Minister of National Defense, the Minister of Unification, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, or the leader of dominant domestic interest group. Similarly, U.S. actors could include: the President, the President of Senate, the Speaker of the House, the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, or the CINCCFC (Commander in Chief, Combined Forces Command).

2. Main Framework

In Allison's approach, both the organizational behavior and the bureaucratic politics models explain why states deviate from the rational actor model expectations. In addition, the decision making of the wartime OPCON transfer is a different level, unlike the Cuba Missile Crisis. Thus, the author will modify and broaden Allison's original "bureaucratic politics" model into a "domestic politics" model including major coalitions of the ROK and the United States. In Korea, this model will assess how much debates between conservatives and progressives have been a significant driver of the delay of the OPCON transfer. In the United States, there might be also different positions on U.S. involvement with the ROK. Allison demonstrates that "the Bureaucratic Politics Model suggests an alternative answer to the question of how one nation's behavior affects the behavior of another."⁶¹ Like this, the interconnection or the influence of each country's domestic politics could also affect the delay of the OPCON transfer. The thesis will also

⁶¹ Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics," 57.

compare the impact of the security environment and domestic politics with this framework.

To wrap up, decision-making on the wartime OPCON transfer issue reflects international politics (security environment) and the ROK-U.S. domestic determinants, including economy. Especially, the ROK-U.S. internal factors might function as inputs on both government-policies, and it could have affected the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer. This paper will research the degree of the domestic politics influence on the wartime OPCON issue, thus establishing the following framework for analysis. Using this framework, the thesis will seek to determine, in each case of the wartime OPCON transfer delay, the degree of importance of each of the two main variables in driving decision-making (See Figure 1).

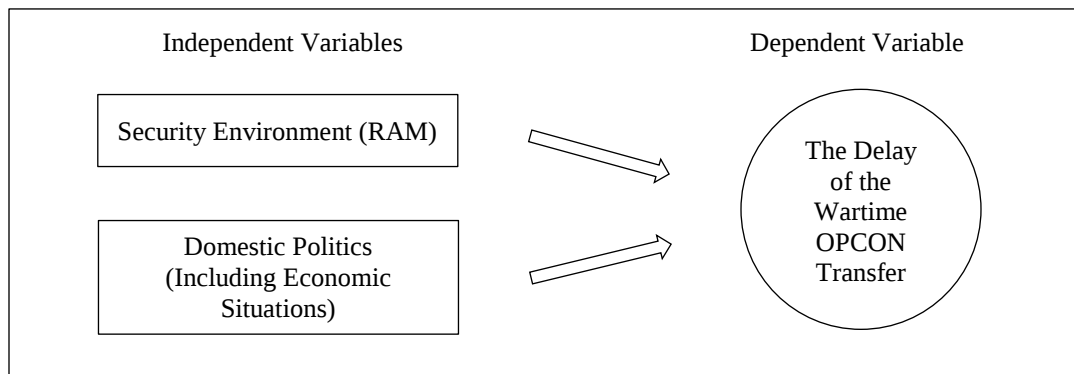


Figure 1. Framework of Analysis.

E. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis consists of the five chapters. The first chapter (the introduction) raises a thesis question and sets up a range of research. In addition, the introduction also studies the preliminary research and makes the framework for analysis based on assumptions and potential explanations. The second chapter will examine the wartime OPCON transfer decision in 2007 based on the U.S. strategic flexibility and the ROK autonomy. However, the author will also compensate for the defects of the earlier analyses (which focused external factors) with the domestic determinants of the ROK (progressive politics) and

the United States (neoconservative politics) with the then-current security and economic situations. The third chapter will weigh the role of each of the two main frameworks (security and domestic politics) defined above to explain the first delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2010. The ROK conservative and U.S. pragmatic politics, in reverse, were the key decision factors for the first delay under the security and economic environments. The fourth chapter will similarly access the second delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014. In 2014, the continuous and much stronger ROK conservative and U.S. pragmatic governments decided the second delay.

As described in the literature review, the focus on the domestic determinants in these analyses will help fill a gap in existing explanations of these delays. After the study, the author will be able to conclude how much the domestic factors affected the postponement of the wartime OPCON transfer. Through this analysis, this thesis will identify the optimum domestic conditions for the transfer. This analysis will provide guidance in creating an optimal future scenario of the wartime OPCON transfer that would most benefit the ROK-U.S. alliance. In addition, this study will have both academic and political implications: not only for the domestic politics study but also political insights for setting the meticulous future ROK-U.S. alliance (military) structure.

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II. DECISION OF THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER IN 2007

A. THE AGREEMENT ON THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER

The OPCON transfer and the ROK-U.S. alliance system has been interconnected since the Korean War in 1953. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the alliance. The alliance system has been based on the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty. Since the Korean War extended over a long period of time (1950-53), the UN and North Korea began negotiating for an armistice treaty in January 1951 (completed in 1953); however, President Lee strongly disapproved of an armistice. ROK Ministry of National Defense offers an intriguing interpretation: “President Rhee[Lee] knew that continuing the war would cause more suffering to the Korean people, but he also believed that an armistice, without a complete end of war would mean even greater suffering to prepare for another war.”⁶² The ROK and U.S. could not have a meeting of minds because the demand of President Lee seemed impracticable. Finally, he took risk and suddenly freed 27,388 anti-communist POWs on June 18, 1953.⁶³

This action shocked the United States, and the U.S. government concluded that the armistice would not be possible if there was no co-ordination from the ROK. President Lee ultimately required the United States to give South Korea a pledge of a mutual defense treaty with military support. ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs Byun Young-tae and U.S. Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Foster Dulles had initiated the talks from August 3, 1953, and officially signed the agreement on October 1. Ever since the ROK National Assembly and U.S. Congress ratified the treaty on November 18, 1954, it has been the symbol of the ROK-U.S. alliance system up to the present. This treaty, with the OPCON transfer, has been the main framework for the ROK-U.S. alliance.

Entering the 1960s, the UNC (United Nations Command) had handed over several parts of the OPCON to South Korea. The OPCONs over some reserve-divisions, the

⁶² ROK MND, *ROK-US Alliance and USFK*, 37.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 36.

Special Air Rescue Team, the Military Police, and the security group of Capital Defense Command were turned over to the ROK in May 16, 1961.⁶⁴ The control over a counterespionage operation was also transferred to the ROK after the Blue House attack by North Korean armed espionage agents on January 21, 1968.⁶⁵ On November 7, 1978, both the ROK and U.S. governments agreed to establish the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command with the reduction of USFK. This action was the result of the improved ROK defense capability and the U.S. strategies such as Nixon Doctrine to reduce the 7th infantry by 20,000-men in 1971.⁶⁶ As a result, the CINCCFC (Commander in Chief, Combined Forces Command) could also serve as the commander of UN forces, supervise the armistice treaty of Korean War, and also exercise the ROK OPCON.

As the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the Post-Cold War era began, and the ROK's national power increased. Consequently, the Kim Young-sam and George H.W. Bush governments agreed on the peacetime OPCON transfer in 1992. Finally, the peacetime OPCON was transferred to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff on December 1, 1994 in accordance with the second strategic directive.⁶⁷ However, the CFC has still been exercising the several peacetime OPCONs through the CODA (Combined Delegated Authority).⁶⁸ According to the CODA, the United States could still participate in combined crisis management, planning for major operations, development of doctrine, training programs, information management such as C4I interoperability, and other fields.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Chan-baik No, "A Study on the Transfer of Wartime Operational Control Authority to ROK Army: the Focus on the Construction Scheme of Their Military Coordination Through the Consolidating ROK-U.S. Alliance," *The Korean Association of National Asia Studies* 52 (2009): 209, http://www.nl.go.kr/nl/search/bookdetail/online.jsp?contents_id=CNTS-00030511738.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ See Kwang-sub Kwak, "The US-ROK Alliance, 1953–2004: Alliance Institutionalization," (Dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 2006), 94, ProQuest (304974763).

This fact shows that the U.S. domestic foreign policy and strategy could be also pivotal to the ROK-U.S. alliance and the wartime OPCON transfer.

⁶⁷ No, "Transfer of Wartime Operational Control," 209.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Going into the Roh Moo-hyun administration, the ROK demanded the wartime OPCON transfer together with Roh's effort of self-defense. This demand was from Roh's clear vision that the identity of the ROK should have a leading position in Northeast Asia to build the Peace Regime in Korean Peninsula. In the end, at the defense minister's conference on February 23, 2007 (attended by Kim Jang-su and Robert Gates), the ROK and the U.S. governments established a transfer period to conclude April 17, 2012.⁷⁰ Based on the first effective agreement in 2007, most people think that President Roh Moo-hyun was the first person who suggested the wartime OPCON transfer issue; however, the first advocator was President Roh Tae-woo in 1987. The ROK MND writes that, "Discussions regarding the return of wartime OPCON began in August 1987, when the then Presidential candidate Roh Tae-woo proclaimed OPCON Transition and Relocation of *Yongsan* Base as his campaign pledge."⁷¹ The Nunn-Warner Amendment to the Brooks Act in 1989 and the East Asia Strategic Initiative in 1990–92 boosted a restructuring of the bilateral alliance.⁷² Besides the security environments, the ROK and U.S. domestic politics still affects the wartime OPCON issues. So the OPCON transfer had been under consideration for some two decades before an actual agreement was reached.

With the OPCON transfer, the ROK-U.S. alliance and military cooperation system will be changed from the integrated-type to the parallel-type⁷³ Many people compare the current ROK-U.S. command relations to that of NATO (integrated-type) and the future system to the current U.S.-Japanese structure (parallel-type). But overall, the current ROK-U.S. bilateral system is much stronger than the NATO multilateral form, which includes 13 countries. The future system will be more robust than the current U.S.-

⁷⁰ No, "Transfer of Wartime Operational Control," 210.

⁷¹ ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2008 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: MND, 2008), 87.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 88.

⁷³ Young-ho Kim, "The Impact of Wartime Operational Control Transfer and The Future Direction of South Korean Security Policy," *NARI* 14:4 (2007): 26, <http://scholar.dkyobobook.co.kr/searchDetail.laf?barcode=4010021624372>.

Japanese system which is a strictly parallel-type that includes foreign ministers (2+2 system).⁷⁴ See Figures 2 and 3.

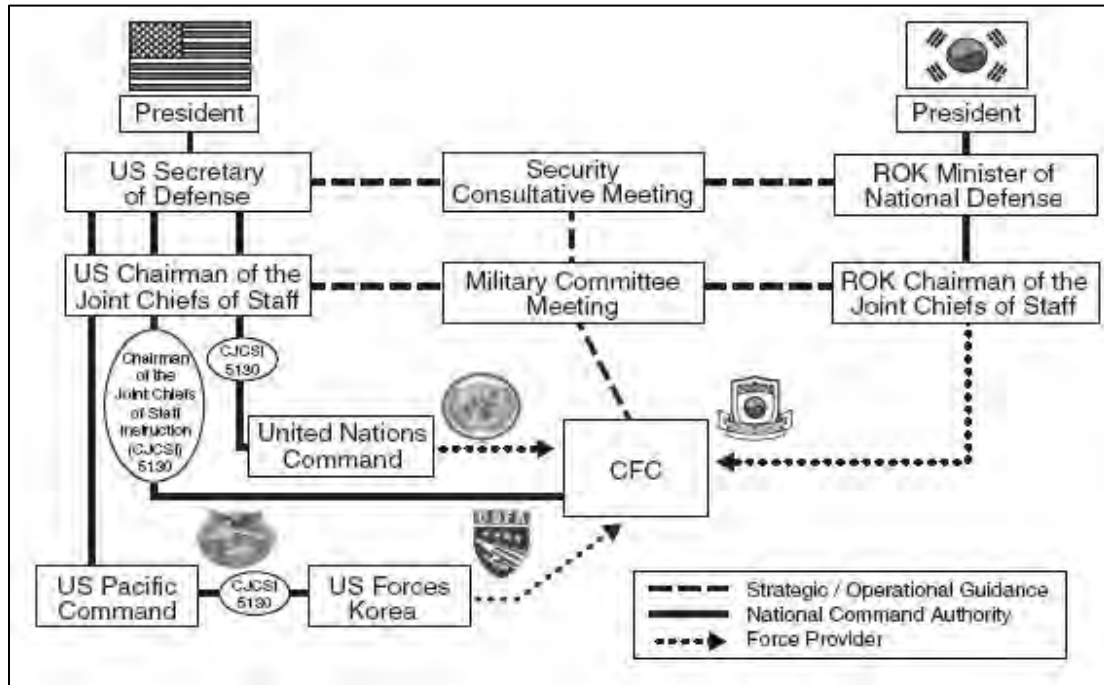


Figure 2. Current Command Relationships.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ibid., 28.

⁷⁵ Stephen G. Wood and Christopher A. Johnson, "The Transformation of Air Forces on the Korean Peninsula," *Air & Space Power Journal* (2008): 6, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/DigitalLibrary/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=121017>.

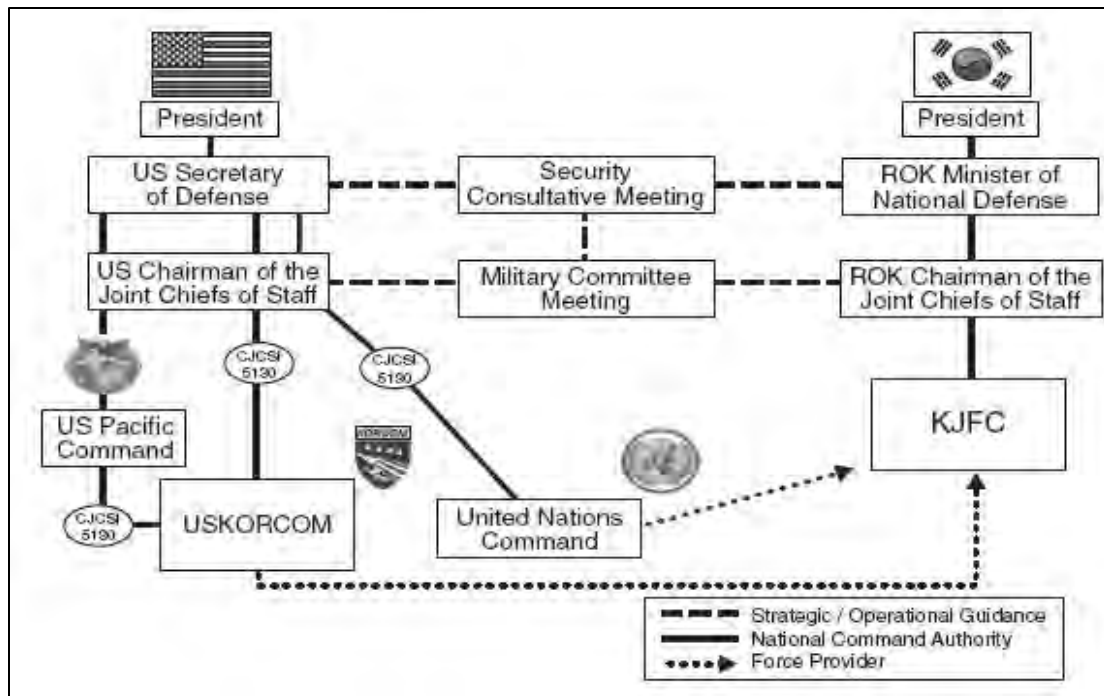


Figure 3. Future Command Relationships.⁷⁶

If the ROK had the wartime OPCON, it would have an advantage of autonomy that could increase the initiative of negotiation with the DPRK in order to stabilize and integrate North Korea, but it would be an adventure unless the ROK has the confidence and military capability to deter and defend against a DPRK (surprise) attack. In this context, doubts have been expressed about the efficiency of new ROK-U.S. command structure, after the CFC system. The ROK independent military capability and the new command system are critical elements of the OPCON transfer. The progressives and conservatives have different perspectives on these issues. Here is the reason that the research on the future ROK-U.S alliance and command relations is pivotal to maintain the future oriented alliance that still cooperates in the field of security, economy, and other fields.

⁷⁶ Wood and Johnson, "Transformation on Korean Peninsula," 7.

B. DETERMINANTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

1. Security Environment of the ROK

Since September 11, 2001, most countries have recognized the threat of the spread of terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Furthermore, most U.S. allies have joined in U.S. security actions such as a preemptive attack to prevent terrorism and eliminate WMD. The ROK MND explains, “Accordingly, [the] U.S. is pressing ahead with the PSI (Proliferation Security Initiative) which blocks transactions of WMD through the sea, air, and ground as part of the efforts to build an international cooperative system to control the transfer of WMD and their transport vehicles.”⁷⁷ When the PSI launched in July 2003 with 11 countries including United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, and other countries, the ROK maintained a position of observer, out of concern over the deterioration of relations between South and North Korea. It was not until May 2009 when the DPRK committed the second nuclear test that the ROK became a member of PSI and participated in exercises, exactly since 2010.

The Korean War has not ended but is still under an armistice. Therefore, we cannot discuss the security environment of the ROK without North Korea. In the early 2000s, the breakdown of the Geneva Agreed Framework of 1994 caused the second round of the tug-of-war on the DPRK nuclear problem between North Korea and the United States including the peripheral countries: China, Russia, Japan, and South Korea. In addition, Kim Jong-il, after the arduous march period in the 1990s, still intensified so called “*Songun* Politics” (Military-First Policy) to control and consolidate the DPRK regime. The strong policy of G.W. Bush toward North Korea and the Afghanistan War in 2001 corresponded to North Korean brinkmanship tactics. Finally, the DPRK stopped the freezing process of its nuclear facilities in December 2002 and withdrew from the NPT in January 2003.

When President Kim Dae-jung and Kim Jong-il officially met on the inter-Korean Summit on June 15, 2000 (and reached the North-South Joint Declaration of June 15), numerous Koreans anticipated a Korean Peninsula peace treaty would end the Korean

⁷⁷ ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2004 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: MND, 2004), 22.

War, or even unify Korea. However, it was a snap judgment. Except the *Gaeseong* Industrial Complex (with the first production in December 2004) and the continuous requirement of withdrawal of USFK from the Korean Peninsula, nothing was carried out flawlessly. The DPRK contradictory attitude has not been changing; they still use the *Gaeseong* Industrial Complex for coercion by threatening South Korea to close it. Rather than consolidating peace in the Korean Peninsula, the security situation is still deteriorating with the DPRK nuclear issue. Most Koreans remember the provocation of North Korea on June 29, 2002: the second battle of *Yeonpyeong*.⁷⁸

The *Defense White Paper* of 2004 acknowledges that the DPRK quantitative military capability was superior to that of the ROK.⁷⁹ The *Defense White Paper* of 2006 writes, “In the military aspect, North Korea’s quantitatively favorable conventional military power and continued development of weapons of mass destruction including nuclear and missiles still pose the greatest threat to the security of the Korean Peninsula and the Northeast Asian region.”⁸⁰ Consequently, the Six Party Talks (which was held six times during 2003–2007) over the North Korean nuclear policy were useless, or totally failed. During the 2003–2005, it is estimated that North Korea could additionally re-process and extract more than 30kg of plutonium besides 10–14kg which was extracted before the 1994 Geneva Agreed Framework.⁸¹ In July, 2006, North Korea launched a long-range *Taepodong* II missile which can go more than 6,700km. Finally, on October 9, 2006, North Korea committed the first nuclear test and officially proclaimed nuclear power state itself. In addition, many *Pyongyang* watchers have been suggesting the possibility of an HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium) program which can conceal its existence more easily than that of the plutonium nuclear program.

⁷⁸ The film: *the Second Battle of Yeonpyeong* was produced in 2015 to honor the battle victims—North Korean patrol boat infiltrated the NLL (Northern Limit Line) and fired to the ROK navy PKM (Patrol Killer Medium) so that the ROK PKM boat sank, and six soldiers fell and nineteen men wounded in the battle, unknowing the damage of DPRK.

⁷⁹ ROK MND, *2004 Defense White Paper*, 36.

⁸⁰ ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2006 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: MND, 2006), 15.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

The ROK security environments of the wartime OPCON transfer agreement in 2007, focusing on the U.S. and the DPRK situations seem to not be the key drivers of wartime OPCON transfer. The post-Cold War era could not ease conflict in the Korean Peninsula. Although, the North-South Joint Declaration of June 15, 2000, gave Koreans a dream of peace and unification, the provocations of DPRK were continuous with the nuclear test. The post-Cold War logic of easing of conflict between the two groups was too limited to apply in the Korean Peninsula and explain the background of ROK-U.S. the wartime OPCON transfer.

2. Domestic Politics of the ROK: The Progressive Politics

a. From the Conservatives to Progressives

Many people have mentioned that the progressive administration of the ROK is related to the wartime OPCON transfer issue—the progressive belief system was the key driver of the wartime OPCON transfer decision, and the former President Roh Moo-hyun was the center of it. Roh Moo-hyun was an attorney of human rights who fought against the ROK military regime before going into political circles. It is not an exaggeration that the conflict between Pro-Roh faction and the conservative still strongly exists in every ROK politics after the 2000s.

The 1997 IMF crisis made an unexpected political economic maelstrom of sudden changes in the ROK. President Kim Young-Sam announced a foreign exchange crisis and apologized to Korean people on TV, and the ROK government requested a bailout from the IMF. Numerous workers lost their jobs not just because of IMF policies but also from major companies' own bankruptcies such as Daewoo *chaebol* and Han-Bo Steel Corporation. The AFC (Asian Financial Crisis) made not only economic reforms but also a change of government in the ROK: from the Conservatives to Progressives. The former president Roh, in his autobiography, definitely clarifies that the conservative governing power's loss of trust resulting from the 1997 AFC and the coalition of DJP (Kim Dae-jong & Kim Jong-pil, who was always second-in-command of the ROK politics) were

the key factors of the triumph of the 1997 presidential election.⁸² It was the first progressive regime of the ROK—which Kim Dae-joong inaugurated on February 25, 1998.

Again, in the 2002 presidential election, Roh Moo-hyun was elected to the 16th ROK president against conservative Lee Hoi-chang of the GNP (Grand National Party). Roh also writes that his election reflected the glory of the former president Kim Dae-joong, as a candidate of MDP (Millennium Democratic Party), and the coalition with Jung Mong-jun, which was the conservative division.⁸³ During his presidential term (Feb, 2003–2008), he followed so-called progressive politics and succeeded the Sunshine Policy of Kim Dae-joong with the 2007 agreement of wartime OPCON transfer.

Typically in the ROK, the conservatives seek to maintain the status quo, and the progressives try to change a situation. To be more specific, the key subject of debate is the role of state: the conservatives emphasize development (*laissez-faire*), and the progressives stress a distribution (intervention).⁸⁴ Therefore, this was an ideological debate in the past: State (Socialism) versus Market (Capitalism).⁸⁵ However, the nature of debate in the modern era is in the principle of free markets, and this is a struggle of politics that includes economic logic.⁸⁶ Furthermore, the conservatives and the progressives in some countries do not have big differences on practical policies, e.g., conservative Swedish party also underlines welfare policies, and progressive Kim Dae-joong and Roh Moo-hyun also adopted neoliberalism (conservative) policies such as privatizations and deregulations after the AFC in 1997.⁸⁷

Then, what are the conservative and the progressive ROK politics? The economic perspective, in terms of neoliberalism, blurs a boundary of the conservatives and

⁸² Si-min Yoo, ed., *A Fate: An Autobiography by Roh Moo-hyun* (Paju, the ROK: Knowhow, 2010), 202.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁸⁴ Moo-hyun Roh, *The Future of the Progress* (Paju, the ROK: Dongnyok, 2009), 41.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁸⁶ Roh, *Future of Progress*, 73, 181.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 218.

progressives.⁸⁸ Again, according to Roh, it is a struggle of politics—the Kim Dae-joong line versus GNP line; then, the Roh Moo-hyun line versus *Saenuri* party line.⁸⁹ Although there are numerous controversies, Choi Jang-jip insists that a strong ideology of anti-communism and state division, the willingness of Koreans to be wealthy, and the incompetence of the progressives created Korean center-left groups and gave no room for the real leftists.⁹⁰ Nonetheless, when it comes to the ROK-U.S. alliance and the OPCON issue, the progressives put more emphasis on Korean nationalism (autonomy) while the conservatives criticize them as anti-American and pro-North Korean. Hahm Chaibong also writes the progressives' character, "An even more important factor in the progressives' ability to maintain their appeal has been nationalism."⁹¹

The study of Ruddell J. Dalton and Aiji Tanaka shows a left-turn tendency of the ROK between 2000 and 2004. The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) asks the following question:⁹²

In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
<i>Left</i>											<i>Right</i>

Whatever the meaning of left and right is, and although general citizens do not have a theoretical concept of left and right, "the Korean public falls [sic] outside of this

⁸⁸ Ibid., 191.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See Jang-jip Choi, *Democracy After Democratization* (Stanford: Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center, 2013).

⁹¹ Hahm Chaibong, "The Two South Korea: A House Divided," *The Washington Quarterly* 28:3 (Summer 2005): 67, <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/wq/summary/v028/28.3ham.html>.

⁹² Russell J. Dalton and Aiji Tanaka, "The Patterns of Party Polarization in East Asia," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7 (2007): 207, <http://journals.riennner.com/doi/abs/10.5555/jeas.2007.7.2.203?journalCode=jeas>.

range to the left (mean=4.89) and becomes [sic] more leftist between 2000 and 2004.”⁹³ See Figure 4.

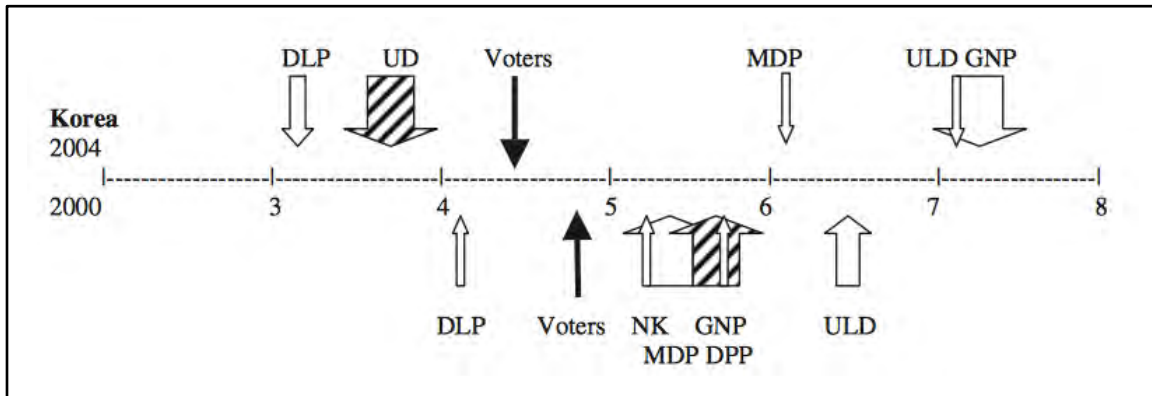


Figure 4. The ROK Left-Right Scale between 2000 and 2004.⁹⁴

b. The Progressive Politics and the Wartime OPCON Transfer

The Department of Foreign Affairs, Unification, and Security of Roh’s Commission on Presidential Transition suggested “the Korean Peninsula Peace and Development Concept,” also known as “the Roh Moo-hyun doctrine,” on February 21, 2003.⁹⁵ The promotion strategy of the doctrine includes (1) the settlement of DPRK nuclear problem (short-term), (2) the establishment of the Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula (mid-term), (3) and the construction of Northeast Asian Economic Hub (long-term).⁹⁶ These were the extension of Kim Dae-joong’s Sunshine Policy, and most of the progressives of the ROK shared this value especially with regard to policy toward North Korea.

Lim Soo-ho argues that the cognitive decline of the North Korean threat for Kim Dae-joong and Roh Moo-hyun is the result of their progressive belief system, whereas the

⁹³ Dalton and Tanaka, “Polarization in East Asia,” 208.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 210.

⁹⁵ Sun-won Park, “The ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict during the Presidents Roh-Bush Administrations, 2003–2007,” *Yukbi* 86 (2009): 175, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/985739>.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 176.

conservatives have the opposite belief system.⁹⁷ Right after the first battle of *Yeonpyeong* in 1999, Kim Dae-jong declared that there would be no more wars in the Korea peninsula at the first inter-Korean summit in 2000. In addition, Roh Moo-hyun, in his 2004 speech in Los Angeles, shocked the United States, claiming that the nuclear development of North Korea, as a measure of self-defense, has an undeniable rationality to defend against external attack.

Both the progressives and the conservatives emphasize the importance of building trust in South and North relations. However, the practical means to achieve this trust is different. The progressives tend to consider that the North Korean nuclear issue is the result of relationship between North Korea and the United States. To solve this problem, the international society and the United States could play critical roles. President Roh also writes this opinion in his autobiography and mentions that he was annoyed by North Korea and the United States because he could not exercise the *de facto* leadership of Korean Peninsula.

According to the Roh memoir, President G.W. Bush officially criticized Kim Jong-il and insisted on strong sanctions, but Roh persuaded the United States that a conversation is more efficient than pressure and sanctions. Roh stated that the public opinion of the ROK was a stronger opponent to North Korean policy than the U.S. attitude toward North Korea. Furthermore, Roh also mentioned that the ROK conservative media outlets and GNP were more difficult to handle than the public opinion of the ROK. Despite the first DPRK nuclear test in October 2006, the second inter-Korean summit materialized. The ROK NIS (National Intelligence Service) Chief Kim Man-bok suggested that the nuclear issue could be a topic of the summit on November 23, 2006.⁹⁸

Roh Moo-hyun's doctrine pursued the future-oriented ROK-U.S. alliance with the construction of the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and the direction was to strengthen the role of the ROK, ultimately minimizing the level of dependence on the

⁹⁷ Soo-ho Lim, "Transfer of Power and Change of North Korea Policy: Focusing on Lee Myung-bak Administration," *IKPS* 19:2 (2010): 153, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/DlibViewer.do>.

⁹⁸ Yoo, *Autobiography by Roh Moo-hyun*, 259.

United States.⁹⁹ It did not mean the ROK-U.S. alliance was not critical for Roh Moo-hyun. Roh, in his autobiography, writes that the ROK-U.S. relation is a key factor for the ROK president and also sensitive for the ROK domestic politics. Roh pointed out that he visited the headquarters of USFK not to support the U.S. world strategy, but to support the ROK-U.S. alliance and the security of the Korean Peninsula.

Roh Moo-hyun dispatched the ROK military to Iraq from 2003 to 2008 (though he wrote in his memoir that this was a wrong decision). The position of the ROK president made Roh grievous and difficult as a progressive. For Roh, the future-oriented ROK-U.S. alliance with the change of U.S. security and military strategy was a gateway to build the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁰⁰ Roh, in this context, pushed forward a self-defense and the wartime OPCON transfer. Roh's pursuit of self-defense was a response to both the U.S. policy of the reduction of USFK and realignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance.¹⁰¹

FOTA (Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative Talks)¹⁰² in the first Bush administration was the key consultative group with regard to the relocation of U.S. 2nd division and *Yongsan* garrison, the troop deployment of Iraq, the reduction of USFK, the transfer of 10-USFK military missions, and other alliance changes.¹⁰³ The volition of Roh's wartime OPCON transfer was strong. In 2002, it was one of his election pledges. Moreover, entering the second Bush administration, Roh used the term "The Theory of Balancing Northeast Asia" at the National Assembly on the occasion of the second anniversary of his inauguration on February 25, 2005.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Park, "ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict," 190.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 191.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 190.

¹⁰² The Deputy Secretary of Defense Douglas Feith visited South Korea in November 2002 and suggested a common research for the future ROK-U.S. alliance after the September 11. As a result, the 34th SCM, in December 2002, agreed to establish the FOTA. Also, Secretary of Defense Donald Henry Rumsfeld agreed the alignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance, mentioning the Roh's "The Theory of Balancing Northeast Asia."

¹⁰³ Park, "ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict," 200.

¹⁰⁴ The ROK conservative media outlets and the White House responded negatively, interpreting it as a defection of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

To wrap up, Roh prioritized the initiative of the Peace Regime in the Korean Peninsula. The value of the Peace Regime in the Korean Peninsula was always in the mind of Roh Moo-hyun—for Roh, this regime was not a simple realignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance, but a vision of the leading position of the ROK in Northeast Asia. To proceed toward the peace regime, the wartime OPCON transfer was the last institutional adjustment.¹⁰⁵ After the ROK-U.S. summit in September 2006, ROK-U.S. defense ministerial talks set the date of transfer, on April 17, 2012. For G.W. Bush, it was possible that he might consider the Roh administration could offer a rare chance to clear away the asymmetric alliance, or legacy issues.

c. *The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy*

The wartime OPCON transfer meant self-reliant defense for the ROK, although the ROK and the United States keep a firm alliance based on the mutual defense treaty. According to the ROK MND 2004 *Defense White Paper*:

The fundamental concept of cooperative self-reliant defense is that ROK should retain the ability and mechanism to take responsibility for deterring any potential provocation by North Korea and repulsing any actual provocation, while further developing the ROK-U.S. alliance as well as pursuing external security cooperation including military cooperation with neighboring countries and the establishment of a collective security system.¹⁰⁶

In short, to get the wartime OPCON is to be equipped with an independent defense capability. This requires (1) first, an independent capability of deterrence against North Korea (2) second, an independent command and mission capability.¹⁰⁷ Again, the self-reliant defense and wartime OPCON requires sufficient defense budget.

¹⁰⁵ Park, “ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict,” 206.

¹⁰⁶ ROK MND, 2004 *Defense White Paper*, 94.

¹⁰⁷ Jae-chul Kim, “Analysis of Controversial Issue with Respect to the Withdrawal of Wartime Military Operation Control Right and the Task of Korean Security,” *Chosun University Northeast Asia Research* 21:2 (2006): 68, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2600133.

According to the *2006 Defense White Paper*, “the total 2006 defense budget, 22.5129 trillion won [about 20 billion dollars], has increased by 6.7% since 2005.”¹⁰⁸ This can be interpreted as the result of increasing autonomy of the ROK in relation to the alliance. The ROK MND of the Roh administration was confident that the ROK military could deter the North Korean threat as a result of successful defense reform: “Improvement projects of various defense capabilities will be conducted during the mid-term from 2007 to 2011, under the aim of reinforcing a self-reliant war deterrence capability and establishing a basis for defense-sufficient force capabilities.”¹⁰⁹ The steady increase rate of the defense budget during the Roh administration (2003-2008) seems related to the ROK’s defense reform and wartime OPCON transfer (see Figure 5).

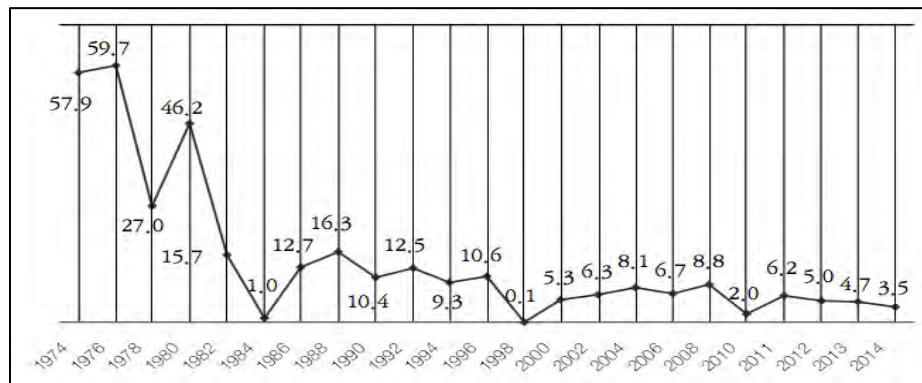


Figure 5. The Increase Rate of ROK Defense Budget over Last Year (%).¹¹⁰

C. DETERMINANTS OF THE UNITED STATES

1. Security Environment of the United States

During the Cold War era, most countries in the world were incorporated in the bipolar system. The United States and the Soviet Union were the peaks of that system. The security purposes of each side country were really simple: non-proliferation of communism or capitalism. According to structural realists’ arguments, the bipolar system

¹⁰⁸ ROK MND, *2006 Defense White Paper*, 87.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 89.

¹¹⁰ Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 21.

was the optimal state to maintain the balance of power and created a stability of world politics, although it caused some serious crises.

When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, the world security environment was transformed to be more varied and complex. Rather than ideology, complex agendas such as ethnicity, religion, and culture have made the world security environment unstable in the post-Cold War era. Nevertheless, through the Gulf War in 1991, the United States still showed its tremendous influence over world politics.

The September 11 terror attacks shocked and changed the world security environment and the strategy of United States. *The 2001 QDR* clearly states, “As the September 2001 events have horrifically demonstrated, the geographic position of the United States no longer guarantees immunity from direct attack on its population, territory, and infrastructure.”¹¹¹ President G.W. Bush in *NSS 2002* also notes the concept of enemy, “The enemy is not a single political regime or person or religion or ideology; the enemy is terrorism—premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against innocents.”¹¹²

According to the *2004 GPR*, the end of the Cold War changed or closed 60 percent of U.S. overseas forces, returning 300,000 military people to the United States.¹¹³ What was certain in the *2004 GPR* is that the uncertain global security environment after the September 11 event caused President G.W. Bush to review U.S. overseas forces to react against terrorism rapidly. This was a background of the so-called “Strategic Flexibility,” and it affected the posture of USFK and made the ROK-U.S. alliance future-oriented, which means the U.S. settled legacy issues (asymmetric alliance) according to the increase of ROK autonomy.

As a result, the rearrangement of USFK to the south of the Han River began: based on the Land Partnership Plan (LPP) in 2002, both governments agreed to move the 2nd infantry division from around *Dongducheon* and *Uijeongbu* to *Pyongteak*. In Future

¹¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2001*, 3.

¹¹² White House, *NSS 2002*, 5.

¹¹³ U.S. Department of Defense, *Global Defense Posture Report 2004*, 5.

ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiatives (FOTA) in 2004, they also agreed to move the CFC from *Yongsan* to *Pyongteak*. The United States also announced the reduction of 12,500 USFK in June 2004.¹¹⁴ As a result of this announcement, the ROK became concerned about its security.

The changed international system and threat of terrorism produced the concept of GPR, and it also affected the ROK-U.S. alliance change with the relocation and reduction of USFK. Thus, the international systemic variable (U.S. security environment) could have been a causal factor of the wartime OPCON transfer. However, it seems they have a correlation, but not causal relationship.

The strong will of G.W. Bush catalyzed “Strategic Flexibility.” The *2004 GPR* writes:

This change in our forces’ operating patterns—from static defenses to frequent expeditionary operations—combined with advances in military capabilities, an increasingly uncertain global strategic environment, and stresses on the force, led President George W. Bush to conclude that a comprehensive review of U.S. global defense posture was needed.¹¹⁵

ROK president Roh Moo-hyun’s self-defense policy and the wartime OPCON transfer expressed a characteristic reaction against G.W. Bush’s “Strategic Flexibility.” The relationships of key domestic factors are pivotal to state relations. The international system factor can affect state relations indirectly, but it is the domestic factor that influences and catalyzes directly. The role of decision-makers is critical with respect to the relation of state.

2. Domestic Politics of the United States

a. *Re-emergence of the Neoconservatives*

George W. Bush appointed predecessors who worked in the era of his father, the former president George H.W. Bush, when he became the president of the United States:

¹¹⁴ After the additional dispatch of the ROK troops to Iraq in 2004, both governments held talks about the size of the USFK reduction. Today, in 2015, the number of the USFK is about 28,500, which was around 37,500 in 2003.

¹¹⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Global Defense Posture Report 2004*, 5.

Table 1. The Bureaucrats of G.W. Bush Administration.¹¹⁶

Vice President, and former Defense Secretary, Dick Cheney Secretary of Defense, current and former, Donald Rumsfeld Secretary of State, and former JCS Chairman, Colin Powell National Security Council Advisor, and former foreign policy advisor to President Bush, Condoleezza Rice Defense Deputy Secretary, and former Defense and State Assistant Secretaries in the Reagan and Bush's Administrations, Paul Wolfowitz State Deputy Secretary, and former Defense Assistant Secretary, Armitage State Assistant Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific Affairs, and former National Security Council Adviser, James Kelly
--

C. Kenneth Quinones, in his article, named them, “the experienced team of Cold War warriors,” so called the neoconservatives. Generally the Republicans are designated as the neoconservatives, and they believe that power is justice and pursue the American hegemony. Then, what are the neoconservatives?

Some people argues that the origin of the neoconservatives traces to Leo Strauss (1899-1973), who insisted on “the continuous war,” or even goes back to Niccolo Machiavelli or the era of ancient Greece.¹¹⁷ Some of them have suggested conspiracy theories such as international financial powers and even 9/11 conspiracy theories. Except for the origin of the philosophy of Strauss, these opinions are not established academic theories because they lack evidence. This thesis utilizes the term neoconservatives, in a generally acceptable way, to refer to those G.W. Bush administration officials who advocated preemptive war toward rogue states and envisioned establishing a new international system by intervening actively based on power politics. Representatives include people in Table 1., who used to be taught by Strauss (G.W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and other people).

¹¹⁶ C. Kenneth Quinones, “Dualism in the Bush Administration’s North Korea Policy,” *Asian Perspective* 27:1 (2003): 201, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704402>.

¹¹⁷ These explanations are also highly debatable. Max Boot criticized the argument of the relation between Leo Strauss and the neoconservatives. Firmin DeBrabander wrote how the neoconservatives misread Machiavelli. See Max Boot, “Neocons,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 140 (2004): 20–28, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4147516>, and Firmin DeBrabander, How the Neocons Misread Machiavelli, Information Clearing House, last updated June 13, 2007, <http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17868.htm>.

Craig Unger, in his book, explains the birth of the neoconservatives:

Within that elite [Ivy League scholars], secular world, two of the founding fathers of neoconservatism, Irving Kristol, the managing editor of *Commentary* magazine from 1947 to 1952 and the father of *Weekly Standard* editor William Kristol, and Norman Podhoretz, the editor in chief of *Commentary*, carved out comfortable places as arbiters of taste and power.¹¹⁸

Most of them were the anti-communists in 1960–70s, acquired a political influence in the Reagan era of 1980s, were behind a power in the Clinton era, and re-emerged in the Republican G.W. Bush administration.¹¹⁹ Considering the neoconservatives were then strongest U.S. political group, we need to examine whether and how the neoconservatives influenced the wartime OPCON transfer (ROK-U.S. alliance).

b. *The Neoconservatives and the Wartime OPCON Transfer*

The foreign policy of G.W. Bush could be defined as power diplomacy, “Bush Doctrine.” The neoconservatives think that the security of the United States is threatened in the post-Cold War era by terrorism although the United States keeps its unitary hegemony. The September 11, 2001 event reinforced the unilateralism of Bush. Therefore, the increase of military power and its use were pivotal for a preventive war and a preemptive attack. For the neoconservatives, the proliferation of WMD and its combination with terrorists were the most urgent threat to the United States. In addition, Bush Doctrine clearly appeared in the annual message on January 29, 2001 addressing Iran, Iraq, and North Korea as “regimes that sponsor terror,” so-called, “Axis of Evil.”

Again, the neoconservatives in the Bush security team had a different tendency than the Clinton administration. Karen A. Feste, in his book, *America Responds to Terrorism*, states that Bill Clinton adopted a “Conflict Avoidance Strategy,” but George

¹¹⁸ Craig Unger, *The Fall of the House of Bush* (New York: Scribner, 2007), 35.

¹¹⁹ For more details of the Neoconservatives, refer to the book: *The Neocon Reader* (Irwin Stelzer, 2004) and *The Fall of the House of Bush* (Craig Unger, 2007).

W. Bush maintained a “Fight-to-Win Strategy.”¹²⁰ Feste also writes, “President Bush’s remarks are filled with strong, negative statements about conflict and the terrorists,” e.g., in the state of the Union Address on January 29, 2002, “Our Nation is at war,” and “Our war against terror is only beginning.”¹²¹ However, the Bush Doctrine also had a negative aspect, the worldwide spread of Anti-Americanism due to American severe unilateralism. South Korea was not an exception. The relationship of the progressive Roh government and the neoconservative Bush administration had deteriorated, and it catalyzed the transformation of the alliance and the wartime OPCON transfer.

In retrospect, the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars for the neoconservatives were a national core strategy. Condoleezza Rice explains, “In fighting global terror, we will work with coalition partners on every continent, using every tool in our arsenal—from diplomacy and better defenses to law enforcement, intelligence, cutting off terrorist financing, and if needed, military power.”¹²² Strategic Flexibility was a part of the war on terrorism, and those wars were problems of the core national interest of the United States. The Bush administration was even content to change the relation of allies for the war on terrorism under Strategic Flexibility.

For example, when the ROK progressive president Roh was hesitant about dispatching troops to Iraq in the early 2003, U.S. Deputy Undersecretary of Defense Richard P. Lawless notified the ROK Defense Aide Kim Hui-sang and Diplomacy Aide Ban Ki-moon of the plan for a 12,500 USFK-reduction by 2006 due to a manpower shortage in the Iraq War on June 5, 2003.¹²³ When the ROK decided to send more troops to Iraq in 2004, both governments extended the year of USFK reductions from 2006 to 2008.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ See Karen A. Feste, *America Responds to Terrorism: Conflict Resolution Strategies of Clinton, Bush, and Obama* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹²¹ Ibid., 185, 196–7.

¹²² Condoleezza Rice, “The President’s National Security Strategy,” in *The Neocon Reader*, ed. Irwin Stelzer (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 82.

¹²³ Park, “ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict,” 193.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Since its first term of 2003, the Bush administration had focused on the realignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance, including the relocation of the USFK under Strategic Flexibility. As stated above, the Bush government told the ROK that the U.S. government could reduce the USFK unless the ROK dispatched its troops to Iraq. According to Park, when both the ROK and U.S. agreed the LPP and YRP in the early 2000s, U.S. DOD members, including Donald Rumsfeld, were satisfied with the settlement of “legacy issues.”¹²⁵

Consequently, President Roh and President Bush agreed on the wartime OPCON transfer in the Washington summit of 2006. Both governments agreed that the wartime OPCON issue should not become a political problem, and military experts should cooperate. In 2007, both defense ministers set the date of transfer for April 17, 2012. Some Americans such as the former State Deputy Secretary Armitage were concerned about a drastic change of the ROK-U.S. alliance system in 2006, but the neoconservatives embraced the wartime OPCON transfer; Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld even advocated advancing the transfer time to 2009.

Park writes that the wartime OPCON might be one of the ROK’s critical alliance legacy issues.¹²⁶ Nobody officially mentions, however, that the wartime OPCON would be a pivotal U.S. legacy issue as well. In the respect to the wartime OPCON transfer agreement in 2007, the ROK progressives strongly pursued ROK autonomy, and the U.S. neoconservatives emphasized U.S. hegemony, especially in the Middle East region, even reducing the USFK. The ROK’s request for the OPCON transfer was strong; however, U.S. strategic flexibility with the reduction of the USFK also catalyzed U.S. acceptance of the ROK request for the wartime OPCON, which had been debated for decades.

c. The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy

The wartime OPCON transfer will accompany the relocation of USFK, to Camp Humphreys in *Pyong-teak*. In *2004 GPR*, there was a clear concept of Strategic

¹²⁵ Ibid., 196.

Park was one of security aides of the Roh government. He mentioned this statement from the interview with the U.S. former high DOD member.

¹²⁶ Park, “ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict,” 206.

Flexibility to relocate the USFK, but it would be too expensive. Based on the partial disclosure of the USFK Master Plan in 2007, the relocation cost would be more than about 9 billion dollars, now about 14 billion dollars in 2015. The critical issue of the relocation of USFK is not just cost, but how much the ROK and the United States share the burden of budget. Currently, the U.S. forces are stationed in 26 countries and share costs of station through the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement) or SMA (Special Measures Agreement).¹²⁷ From 1991, South Korea started defense burden sharing through SMA, and the amount in 2007–2008 was about 650 million dollars, which reached 42 percent of total costs—the United States requires the increase up to 50 percent.¹²⁸ Until now in 2015, the defense burden sharing has been a key issue in the LPP and defense cost-sharing talks.

Bush administration had increased the defense budget based on a strong militarism. Consequently, it was also a matter of money. By analyzing the defense budget of the Bush administration, we can easily understand the confidence of Bush's militarism: the then relatively sufficient defense budget made it easy for the United States to carry out Strategic Flexibility, including the relocations of the USFK, which is related to the wartime OPCON transfer. We can see the decrease of defense spending per GDP of the post-Cold War in 1990s; in reverse, it increased after 9/11, average 4.1% (see Figure 6). Bush also increased the defense budget more than 500 billion dollars during his term, which had dropped below 500 billion dollars in the 1990s, in the post-Cold War era (see Figure 7).

¹²⁷ Seong-uk Hwang, "The ROK-U.S. Defense Burden sharing & OPCON Transfer & Missile Defense," *IPA* 26:5 (2008): 14, http://www.nl.go.kr/nl/search/bookdetail/online.jsp?contents_id=CNTS-00056842620.

¹²⁸ Statistics Korea, The Current Status of ROK-U.S. Defense Burden Sharing, last modified July 28, 2015, http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=1712.

The ROK maintains 42 percent of contributions. The cost of 2014 was about 800 million dollars.

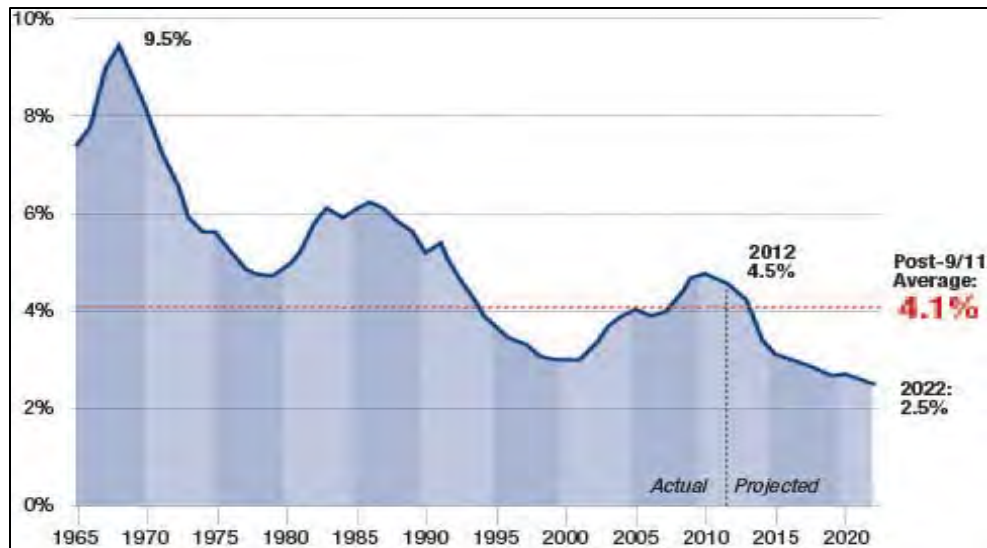


Figure 6. U.S. National Defense Historical Spending as a Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (%).¹²⁹

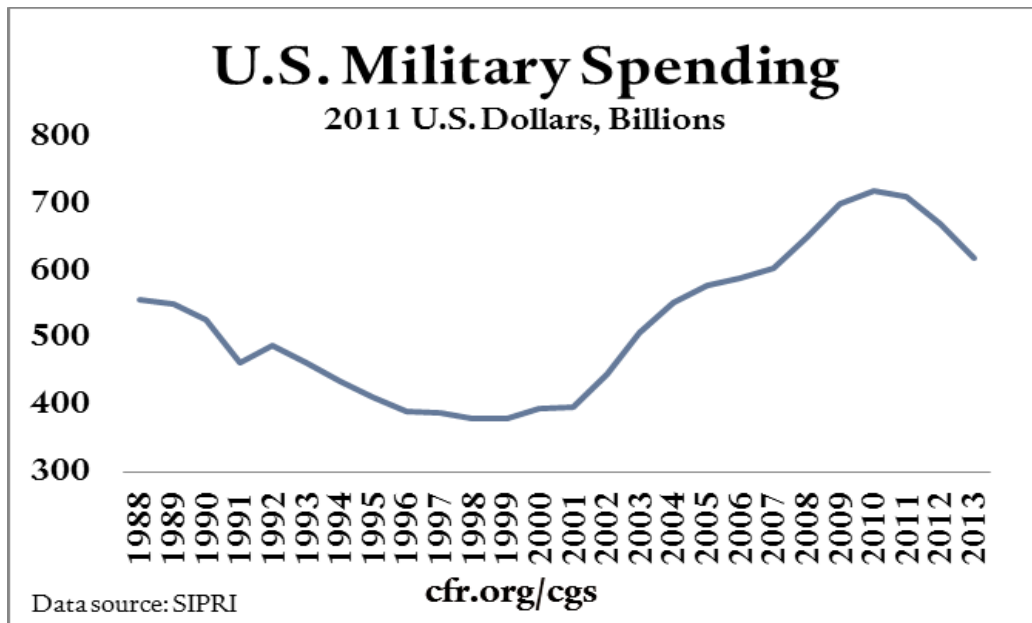


Figure 7. U.S. Military Spending (in Dollars, Billions).¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Peter W. Singer, "Separating Sequestration Facts from Fiction: Defense Sequestration and What It Would Do for American Military Power, Asia, and the Flashpoint of Korea," *Brookings*, September 23, 2012, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2012/09/defense-sequestration-american-military-power-asia-korea>.

¹³⁰ Dinah Walker, "Trends in U.S. Military Spending," *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 15, 2014, http://www.cfr.org/defense-budget/trends-us-military-spending/p28855?cid=otr-partner_site-zero_hedge.

D. CONCLUSION

International systemic factors strongly affected the relationship of the ROK-U.S. alliance in the Cold War era; however, both countries, in the post-Cold War era have a more national interest centric relation. The wartime OPCON transfer agreement was a result of future-oriented negotiation between Roh and Bush when it comes to the alliance. The international systemic variable indirectly affected the agreement. The value system of domestic groups clearly influenced the evolution of the current alliance system. In particular, the ROK progressives and U.S. neoconservatives influenced the wartime OPCON transfer decisions.

The progressive president Roh pushed the policy of wartime OPCON transfer despite the North Korea nuclear threat. The Roh's value system occasionally shocked the United States. In spite of that, the establishment of Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula was critical for Roh—it drove him to increase the ROK autonomy, which could change the alliance system, and the final stage was the wartime OPCON transfer. Against the United States' unilateralism and strategic flexibility, Roh continuously increased the defense budget, even more than the conservative governments, and sought self-defense. The wartime OPCON was the ROK's sovereignty and pride at least for Roh Moo-hyun.

The neoconservatives and President Bush proclaimed war on terrorism. For them, the Afghanistan and the Iraq Wars were critical for the United States' national interest and security—to keep U.S. unilateral hegemony. Strategic Flexibility was one of methods to wage war efficiently, even changing the relation of allies. In addition, some parts of the ROK-U.S. alliance system were changing with the post-Cold War security environment. When the ROK requested the wartime OPCON transfer again, it might have been a chance to clear legacy issues that the former ROK-U.S. governments could not deal with. The increase of U.S. defense budget supported the U.S. military transformation and the adjustment of U.S. overseas forces according to 2004 GPR. There were no reasons to reject the ROK request of the wartime OPCON transfer. As a result, we can conclude that the ROK progressives were a critical factor in solidifying the agreement of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2007.

In conclusion, the agreement of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2007 was a result of negotiations between the administrations of ROK progressive Roh (critical factor) and U.S. neoconservative Bush (catalyzer). Until now, the OPCON transfer has been maintaining the form of ROK requests and the approval of the United States. However, the process of transfer was not easy. Roh writes in his memoir that dealing with the conservatives of the ROK was more difficult than the United States. Roh explained the ROK conservatives have had major power and influence. The conservative party, news outlets, and some other civic groups continuously opposed the wartime OPCON transfer. Table 2 summarizes the major findings of this chapter.

Table 2. 2007 OPCON Transfer Decision Factors

	Specific nature of the factor	Direction of influence on alliance	Strength of influence on OPCON transfer	Outcome
ROK security conditions	• End of Cold War context in Korea • Rise of DPRK security/WMD threats	• Interest in ROK autonomy • Alliance adequate for DPRK threat	Moderate	Supports Alliance Realignment
ROK domestic politics	• Increased wealth • Progressive government	• Interest in ROK autonomy • Alliance should not obstruct DPRK engagement	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Supports OPCON transfer</u>
US security conditions	• End of Cold War • Regional focus • 9/11	• Reduced need for alliance in global context	Low	Supports Alliance Realignment
US domestic politics	• Global War on Terror • Neoconservative ideology	• Alliance must fit global strategy • Seeking ROK support for GWOT	Moderate	<u>Supports OPCON transfer</u>

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III. FIRST DELAY OF THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER IN 2010

A. THE FIRST AGREEMENT ON THE DELAY

The former ROK president Lee Myung-bak (2008-2013) declared that he would reconsider Roh's decision of wartime OPCON transfer in his presidential election pledges when he was a presidential candidate.¹³¹ President Lee had less than a year with U.S. President Bush. Despite that condition, Lee had four summit talks with Bush.¹³² The strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance was an urgent pending issue to the Lee administration. It was also pivotal for the United States. The Senate and House adopted an official celebration resolution for the election of Lee on February 7, 2008, and the then current Senator Barack Obama suggested the invitation of the ROK president Lee as soon as possible on February 11, 2008.¹³³

Lee, in his memoir, expresses how friendly he was with U.S. President Bush in the Camp David Summit on April 19, 2008. After the summit in Camp David, President Bush called Lee "my friend" in the G8 Summit of Doyako, Japan on July 9, 2008.¹³⁴ Moreover, the ROK conservatives including Lee Myung-bak describe the Kim Dae-joong and Roh Moo-hyun periods as "the lost 10 years." This term meant that the former progressive governments had problems in the field of politics, economy, and social problems; however, the security issue was critical, especially the deterioration of ROK-U.S. alliance. The conservatives' perception of the North Korean threat was also different from the Roh administration.

Although the Lee administration tried to improve the ROK-U.S. alliance (and the United States also recognized the importance of alliance), the United States had a

¹³¹ Jae-chul Kim, "Analysis of Changing Factors of Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Policy and Its Alternative: Focusing on National Interest of Korea and the U.S.," *Korea East Association* 69 (2013): 193, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3187508.

¹³² Lee and Bush had summit talks in 2008: (1) Camp David (4. 19), (2) G8 in Doyako, Japan (7. 9), (3) Seoul (8. 6), (4) APEC in Lima, Peru (11. 22).

¹³³ Myung-bak Lee, *Presidential Time* (Seoul: RHK, 2015), 300.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 315.

different viewpoint of the wartime OPCON transfer. First, there were no more negotiations between the Lee and Bush governments with regard to the OPCON transfer issue in 2008. Second, the Obama administration still had the same position of Bush in 2009. Although Obama, unlike the Bush's unilateralism, emphasizes "problem-solving strategy" and respects "partnership" based on multilateralism, the wartime OPCON transfer agreement of the Roh-Bush administrations and Bush's Strategic Flexibility of U.S. overseas forces were still valid in 2009.

The Lee government and the ROK MND had prepared the process of wartime OPCON transfer for the first two years (2008-10). However, president Lee requested the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer at the Nuclear Security Summit of Washington on April 13, 2010. The ROK also argued that the North Korean threat was different from before 2010, mentioning the North Korea nukes and the *Cheonan* incident. President Obama did not answer directly but replied that he had received a report from his security team and sympathized the request of president Lee. Finally, President Lee and Obama agreed to the delay of the transfer time from April 17, 2012 to December 1, 2015 at the G20 Summit in Toronto, Canada on June 26, 2010.

B. DETERMINANTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

1. Security Environment of the ROK

The global security environment had not changed or become more complex since the 9/11. Nonetheless, the 2008 *Defense White Paper* writes that, "The most notable change in the security environment today is the rise of complicated and multifarious transnational and non-military threats besides conventional military threats."¹³⁵ The 2010 *Defense White Paper* also mentions that threats of transnational and non-military are pivotal with traditional threats. For these reasons, many countries have been participating in international efforts for global peace and stability. The ROK military has been joining the Peace Keeping Operations as well since the East Timor dispatch in 1999.

The North Korean situation and its military threats are critical for the security environment of the ROK. After the inauguration of Lee Myung-bak in 2008, North Korea

¹³⁵ ROK MND, *2008 Defense White Paper*, 10.

turned its stance from a soft-line (collaborative) to a hard-line (conflictive) policy. It mainly resulted from the Lee Myung-bak's "Strict Reciprocal North Korean Policy," in contrast to Kim Dae-joong and Roh Moo-hyun's "Comprehensive Reciprocal (or Embracing) Policy." The 2010 *Defense White Paper* explains this situation, e.g.:

Since early 2008, North Korea has taken extreme measures: the North unilaterally deported the South Koreans in charge of the Office of Inter-Korean Economic Cooperation in the *Kaesong* Industrial Complex (March 27, 2008), cut off the Panmunjom hot line (November 12, 2008), and blocked crossing of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) (December 1, 2008).¹³⁶

The Lee administration recognized that the North Korea threats are different and more serious than the progressive government of Roh Moo-hyun. North Korea initiated the second nuclear test on May 25, 2009. Before the test, the DPRK launched a long-range missile, *Taepodong* II again (after in 2006) on April 5, 2009. Also, the DPRK stated that they could "turn Seoul into a sea of fire" on June 12, 2010.¹³⁷ Worse, the sinking of the ship *Cheonan* on March 26, 2010 and the shelling of *Yeonpyong* island on November 23, 2010 seriously changed the ROK's perception of North Korean threats.

The national security reason—escalating North Korea threats—made the Lee government reassess the wartime OPCON transfer, and the ROK requested the delay of the OPCON transfer until the year 2015. The Lee government also anticipated the year 2012 would be dangerous because it was the centenary year of Kim Il-sung's birth and "the year of strong and prosperous country (*Kang Seong dae guk*)." So, security concerns clearly played a critical role in the Lee government's request for delay of the wartime OPCON transfer.

However, during the Roh administration, the DPRK also tested a nuclear weapon and launched a long-range missile, but the Roh administration did not similarly worry about the OPCON transfer. This shows how perceptions of security issues by political decision groups function as intervening variables. Rapid change of security environments can create conditions, but the key drivers between two states are the policy-decision

¹³⁶ ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: MND, 2010), 25.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

makers and domestic politics. Here is the reason why we study the conservative politics of the ROK as the key driver of delay of wartime OPCON transfer.

2. Domestic Politics of the ROK: The Conservative Politics

a. From the Progressives to Conservatives

The former president Lee Myung-bak (GNP) did not write about his main reason for his success in the 17th presidential election in his memoir. However, he described his 27-working-years in the Hyundai Corporation and his position as mayor of Seoul. He was a well-informed businessman with the broad vision. Since the economic downturn of the 2000s, every state has been suffering from a sluggish economic growth. By mentioning this situation, some people explained that South Koreans selected Lee Myung-bak in hopes of a better economy. John Ross writes, “South Korea’s annual rate of GDP growth fell in parallel from 9.4% in 1991, and 7.3% in 1996, to 4.4% in 2007 (see Figure 8).”¹³⁸ Similarly, if the 1997 AFC created the progressive government, the economic situation in the 2000s also changed its regime from the Progressives to Conservatives.

¹³⁸ John Ross, “Investment, Savings and Growth-International Experience Relevant to Some Current Economic Issues Facing China,” *Typepad Blog*, May 8, 2009, <http://ablog.typepad.com/keytrendsinglobalisation/2009/05/investment-savings-and-growth-international-experience-in-relation-to-some-current-economic-issues-f.html>.



Figure 8. South Korea's GDP Growth Rate.¹³⁹

Another factor of Lee's election is the ideological issue. Lee Myung-bak achieved victory by a margin of 5.3 million votes. Roh Moo-hyun explained that Lee was a president of economy; Roh's incapability made Lee the ROK's 17th president. After the 2000s, the Progressive and Conservative relations or conflicts have been critical in ROK politics. The conservatives use the term "the lost decade" when they refer to the Kim Dae-jong and Roh Moo-hyun governments. In addition, the Lee government used "ABR (Anything but Roh)" policies especially toward North Korea and the United States. These are the so-called Progressive and Conservative conflicts (*Nam-Nam Galdeung*).

There had been numerous indigenous ROK analyses of the critical factors in the 17th presidential election. These factors include regionalism, candidate morality, economy, security, and other fields.¹⁴⁰ These factors have still been debatable according

¹³⁹ Ross, "Current Economic Issues Facing China."

¹⁴⁰ For instance, with regard to regionalism in the ROK presidential election, see Tae-wan Kim, "An Analysis on the 'Yeong Nam and Ho Nam' Regional Voting Pattern of the Korean Election-Focused on the National Election since 1990s," *Korean Studies Institute, Pusan National University* (2012): 57–104, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE01846854>. For the capability of economic policy, see Woo-jin Moon, "The Law of Inevitable Decline of Presidential Popularity: Who Changes Presidential Support and Why?," *Korean Political Science Review* 46 (2012): 175–201, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE01821337>.

to various researchers' perspectives; however, the ROK's sluggish economic situation and deteriorated ROK-U.S alliance under the extreme progressive Roh administration made the ROK people (especially the conservatives) re-consider the incapability of the progressive Roh government at the time.

b. *The Progressive and Conservative Conflicts (Nam-Nam Galdeung)*

The extreme conservatives criticize the progressives as “commies” while the liberals call them “reactionary dumb-head.”¹⁴¹ This dichotomous thinking has been escalating conflicts, and both sides accept those expressions humiliateingly.¹⁴² However, there are no big differences in their policies on the situation of state division. Like Roh described, both economy policies are similar—neo-liberalism in the globalized world. The distinct differences that they have are between the policies of North Korea and the United States.

The first difference is the policy toward North Korea. The front line is the Kim Dae-joong and Roh Moo-hyun line versus *Saenuri* line. It is a problem of methodology: how to change North Korea, create the Korean Peninsula Peace Regime, and accomplish the unification. Unlike the Roh administration, the Lee government considered the North Korean nuclear issue as both a global problem and an inter-Korean issue. In addition, the key point was North Korean intention for changing itself. Lee's “Strict Reciprocal North Korean Policy” was totally different from the Roh's “Comprehensive Reciprocal (or Embracing) Policy.” Without North Korean practical changes, such as abandonment of nukes, no more “ladle out policy” exist.¹⁴³

The other key issue was the American policy, chiefly the USFK. After the 2000 inter-Korean Summit and 2002 U.S. armored vehicle incident, which killed two middle

¹⁴¹ See Kwan-soo Han and Yoon-soo Jang, “A study on the Ideological Debates over North Korea with Progressive and Conservative in South Korea,” *KPSA* 46:1 (2012): 65, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/NODE01821333>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

Despite this research, the ROK people generally know that is just the dichotomous (black and white) thinking.

¹⁴³ Han and Jang, “Ideological Debates over North Korea,” 80.

school girls, the anti-American public opinion (mainly in the progressives) increased. However, Lee Nae-young and Jeong Han-wool clarify that anti-Americanism is not the major public opinion of the ROK.¹⁴⁴ The ROK's public opinion on the reduction of the USFK was only 16 percent in the 1990s; it increased gradually up to more than 50 percent right after the 2002 U.S. armored vehicle incident but has been below 50 percent since 2003.¹⁴⁵

The progressives considered the 2002 incident a humiliation because the ROK did not have a practical legal power due to the SOFA (Status of Forces Agreement).¹⁴⁶ When it comes to the progressive ideology of the ROK, Chaibong writes:

For the progressives, South Korea's *chaebols*, the infamous conglomerates that grew and prospered under preferential treatment meted out to them by authoritarian governments, represented the worst form of worker exploitations, led by a handful of capitalists and backed by the reactionary military and U.S. imperialists.¹⁴⁷

However, the majority of Koreans (mostly the conservatives) still recognized the importance of ROK-U.S. blood alliance since the Korean War in 1950. Unlike Chaibong, not all the progressives consider the U.S. as imperialists. Furthermore, the conservatives thought that the 2002 incident was a sad traffic incident—it was a problem of the SOFA not the whole alliance system. The conservatives also argue that some people who connect the 2002 incident to the ROK-U.S. alliance and the status of USFK have other intentions.

In this context, the alliance watchers should know that the progressives are different from the “followers of North Korea (*Jong Buk juui ja*)” who just deny the ROK-

¹⁴⁴ See Nae-young Lee and Han-wool Jeong, “Transformation of the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Korean Public Opinion,” *KAIS* 45:3 (2005), <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/831983>.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁴⁶ The ROK and the U.S. agreed the SOFA in 1966, and it took effect in 1967. It was revised in 1991 and 2001 twice, but the ROK was still limited to enforce a law to the USFK.

¹⁴⁷ Chaibong, “Two South Koreas,” 64.

U.S. alliance.¹⁴⁸ In short, we can organize the progressive and conservative conflicts of the ROK, including policies of North Korea and the United States (see Table 3).

Table 3. The Differences between the ROK Conservatives and Progressives toward the DPRK and the U.S.

Issue	Conservative	Progressive
North Korea	Strict Reciprocity	Comprehensive Reciprocity
United States	Priority on Security	Priority on Autonomy

c. The Conservative Politics and the Wartime OPCON Transfer

In fact, the debate of the wartime OPCON transfer has existed since 2006 when the discussion itself started. Former defense ministers and reserve generals opposed the decision of transfer. For example, the former Minister of National Defense Kim Seong-eun and his 24 reserve generals had a meeting on October 12, 2006 against the transfer. The former Seoul Mayor Lee Myung-bak also encouraged the breaking off of the wartime OPCON transfer discussion on October 9, 2006.¹⁴⁹ Before Lee became the ROK president, he showed his conservative perceptions. Lee thought that Roh's policy toward North Korea was totally failed so that the wartime OPCON transfer including the ROK-U.S. alliance should be reexamined. This is a basic context of Lee's ABR policy under the support of the ROK conservatives.

The public demonstrations against the wartime OPCON transfer also followed. For example, around conservative 200 civic groups—70,000 people—had a gathering in front of Seoul city hall on September 2, 2006. Also, the debate has been still going on

¹⁴⁸ The former president Roh moo-hyun also wrote that he was not an anti-American in his autobiography. As the president of the ROK, Roh recognized the importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance as well. However, Roh believed that the autonomy of ROK was critical. Furthermore, as the ROK president, just accepting the requirements of the U.S. does not make sense for Roh, including the dispatch of the ROK's troops to Iraq. He always thought that not every U.S. world strategy would be right.

¹⁴⁹ Yonhap News, "Reigniting the opposition of wartime OPCON transfer?," *Yonhap News*, October 10, 2006, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=001&aid=0001432649>.

between the conservative and the progressive media. We can see that representative ROK media interpret public opinion differently concerning the wartime OPCON issue. In 2006 opinion polls as to the wartime OPCON transfer, *Hani* showed that 52.5 percent consented to the transfer, but *Chosun* suggested that 66 percent opposed it (see Table 4).

Table 4. The Different Result of ROK Opinion Polls in 2006 as to Wartime OPCON Transfer.¹⁵⁰

Dates	Pros	Cons	Research Institutions
2006. 8	52.5%	40.3%	<i>Hani, Research Plus (Progressive)</i>
2006. 9	34%	66%	<i>Chosun, Korea Gallup (Conservative)</i>

The former president Lee wrote in his memoir that there was a signature collecting campaign targeting 10 million people for the opposition of the wartime OPCON transfer right after his inauguration. Some 227 conservative civil groups took the lead in this movement because they were concerned about a security vacuum. Moreover, after the sinking of the ship *Cheonan* and the shelling of *Yeonpyong* island in 2010, public opinion clearly turned to the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer.¹⁵¹

In July 2010, the ROK and the United States agreed in the document *Strategic Alliance 2015* to clarify the comprehensive alliance pending issues, including the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer. Although, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates had still opposed the delay, both the ROK (Kim Tae-yeong) and U.S. (Robert Gates) Ministers of

¹⁵⁰ Han and Jeong, "Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue," 17; *YOUS is the News*, "66 Percent Koreans opposes the wartime OPCON transfer," *YOUS is the News*, October 12, 2006, <http://www.dailian.co.kr/news/view/43838>.

¹⁵¹ See Han and Jeong, "Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue," 17.

The opinion for the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in institutions of the ROK such as *Korea Gallup*, *KIDA (Korea Institute for Defense Analyses)*, and *Donga* in 2010 was stronger than that of the year 2007.

Defense agreed to the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer on 42th SCM, on October 8, 2010 under the ROK conservatives' strong request.¹⁵²

d. The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy

Roh's increase of ROK autonomy in the ROK-U.S. alliance resulted in the increase of the national defense budget (see Figure 5). Roh's increased rates of defense budget over last year were more than 6 percent in average. In reverse, the Lee government's increased rate was only about 2–3 percent in 2010 when the ROK decided to delay the wartime OPCON transfer. According to the *2010 Defense White Paper*, “the entire defense budget for 2010 is [sic] increased by 3.6% to KRW 29.5627 trillion from 2009.”¹⁵³ Han and Jeong argue that the increased rate of 2010 was only 2 percent.¹⁵⁴ However, the wartime OPCON transfer and the ROK's self-defense need a sufficient defense budget. It is a practical matter in real politics and economy of state.

In his book *Diplomacy*, Henry Kissinger, offers an intriguing interpretation of real politics explaining that “by pursuing its own selfish interests, each state was presumed to contribute to progress ...”¹⁵⁵ Also, Kissinger wrote that Bismarck and other German politicians during the 1870s sought to secure German security “first by an arms race, and then by war.”¹⁵⁶ According to Kissinger's power politics perspective, each country needs sufficient defense budget to maintain state security on its own. As a result, war is actually a problem of money.

The 2008 Global Financial Crisis played a critical role in the wartime OPCON transfer issue.¹⁵⁷ Although, the ROK dealt with the 2008 GFC better than the 1997 AFC,

¹⁵² ROK Ministry of National Defense, “The 42nd SCM Joint Communique,” last updated October 10, 2010, http://www.mnd.go.kr/user/newsInUserRecord.action?newsId=I_669&newsSeq=N_65691&command=view&siteId=mnd&id=mnd_020400000000.

¹⁵³ ROK MND, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 145.

¹⁵⁴ Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 20.

¹⁵⁵ See Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York : Touchstone, 1995), 22.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹⁵⁷ This thesis will deal with the 2008 GFC impacts on the U.S. as well in the part of the U.S. defense budget for the first delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2010.

South Korea faced lower growth. Worse, the average real GDP growth of the Lee government was 3.2 percent (2008-12)—2008 was 2.8 percent; 2009 was 0.7 percent; only 2010 was 6.5 percent.¹⁵⁸ This was lower than the number from the Roh’s real GDP increase rate, 4.48 percent.¹⁵⁹

The low growth situation affected the ROK’s defense budget. In 2006, when the wartime OPCON transfer was agreed, the ROK MND set the increase rate of the defense budget 9.9 percent in 2008; however, the actual increase rate was 8.8 percent.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, the Lee government’s total actual increase rates were only 2–6 percent.¹⁶¹ In addition, we can empirically see the great gap in 2010 when the ROK requested the first delay of the wartime OPCON transfer (see Figure 9). These then-current defense budget statistics indirectly show the limitation of the ROK government on the wartime OPCON transfer. The difference between the planned and actual defense budget increases must have affected the defense plan including a costly wartime OPCON transfer. Without the sufficient defense budget nothing can be accomplished.

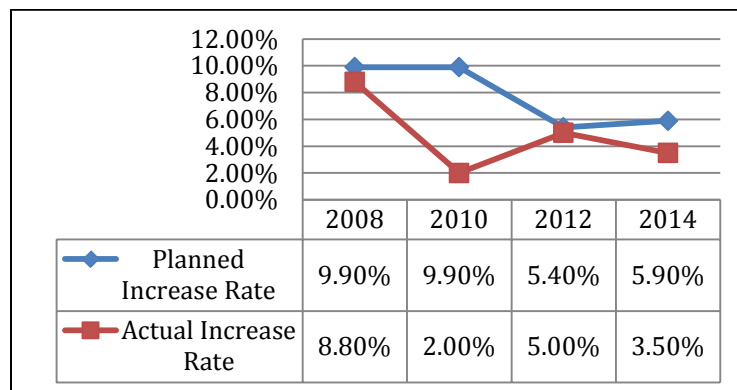


Figure 9. Planned and Practical Increase Rate of the ROK Defense Budget.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Statistics Korea, GNP and GDP, last modified February 12, 2015, http://www.index.go.kr/potal/main/EachDtlPageDetail.do?idx_cd=2736.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 22.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² The Reconstituted Chart from Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 22: Analyses from *the 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, and 2014 Defense White Paper*.

Indeed, a delicate defense budget strategy would also be more critical. The limit of the defense budget caused a setback in the then-current and still continuing defense plan to strengthen combat capabilities such as the IFV (Infantry Fighting Vehicles, K21 until 2022), the UAV (U.S. Global Hawk until 2018), the LST-2 (Landing Ship Tank-2), AWACS (E-737), Korean Utility Helicopter (*Surion*), K-FX (Fighter Experimental, F-15K / F-35A or other stealth aircrafts), and other combat capabilities. Today, the Kill-chain and the KAMD capabilities are the keys to search and attack the North Korean long-range missiles including nukes. It might be difficult for Lee's conservative government to push forward the wartime OPCON transfer without perfect preparations under the threatening North Korean asymmetric combat capabilities.

C. DETERMINANTS OF THE UNITED STATES

1. Security Environment of the United States

In the period between the original OPCON transfer decision and the first delay, the threat of terrorism and the proliferation of WMD remained critical issues for the United States. Obama's international efforts to build a global peace reflect these security situations.¹⁶³ *The 2010 NSS* states that the unpredictable security environments after the Cold-War era and the danger of WMD, especially nuclear weapons, are important current priorities. However, we should note that the Obama's negative recognition of the prolonged war in the Middle East: "The United States is now fighting two wars with many thousands of our men and women deployed in harm's way, and hundreds of billions of dollars dedicated to funding these conflicts."¹⁶⁴ Also, *the 2010 QDR* stipulates that more than eight years of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have endangered the U.S.

¹⁶³ Rather than the unilateralism of G.W. Bush, Obama showed multilateral tendencies toward global issues. As a result, the U.S. and Russia signed in the New START (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) in 2010. Moreover, the U.S. hosted the first Nuclear Security Summit in Washington in 2010; the ROK hosted the second NSS in Seoul in 2012, and the Netherlands hosted the third NSS in Hague in 2014.

¹⁶⁴ White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) 2010* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 8.

forces.¹⁶⁵ Finally, the United States declared the end of Iraq war on December 15, 2011, and the U.S. forces entirely withdrew from the Iraq on December 18.

Unlike the G.W. Bush administration, the Obama government seemed to consider that the Middle East was a lower priority in the American interest. *Los Angeles Times* reported that Obama excluded military intervention in Iraq since the time of his first inauguration in 2008.¹⁶⁶ This report highlights Obama's perspective on war: it should be the last solution. Also, according to *Defense One*, "In his famous Cairo speech in 2009, he said, *Iraq's sovereignty is its own*, driving the point that U.S. troops were leaving and the United States would not be Iraq's *patron*."¹⁶⁷ Also, *the NSS 2010* prioritizes American interests.

Table 5. The American Interests of the Obama Administration in 2010.¹⁶⁸

- The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners
- A strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity
- Respect for universal values at home and around the world; and
- An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges

We can see in the order of American interests that the security of the U.S. including its citizens was the top American interest; however, Obama seemed to think the war in the Middle East was not helpful to Americans. The next priorities were U.S. allies and partners including economic systems. That was the concept of "Pivot to Asia," or

¹⁶⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) 2010* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2010), 5.

¹⁶⁶ Christi Parsons and W.J. Hennigan, "Why Obama is sticking with his Islamic State strategy," *Los Angeles Time*, July 7, 2015, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-obama-islamic-state-20150707-story.html#page=1>.

¹⁶⁷ Kevin Baron, "Don't Expect Obama To Budge on His High Bar For Intervention," *Defense One*, July 7, 2015, <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/07/dont-expect-obama-budge-his-high-bar-intervention/117184/>.

¹⁶⁸ White House, *NSS 2010*, 7.

“Alliance Priority Policy.”¹⁶⁹ According to the concept of “Pivot to Asia,” the center of politics, economy, and the military are moving from the Middle East to Asia. The background of this concept was the rise of China. Although various research institutions suggest numerous explanations, China rose to be the fourth economic power in 2005 after the U.S., Japan, and Germany and the third in 2008 just ahead of Germany and finally the second in 2010 just after the United States. Some scholars say that China is already the first in terms of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity). The turning point year was 2009 when many countries including South Korea for the first time had higher amounts of trade with China than with the United States. These economic interconnections were not just a problem of economy but also could become a political issue including security and alliance relations.

Based on the multilateralism and alliance priority policy, Obama needed to reassess the foreign policies, under the context of the rise of China. One of *the 2010 NSS* chapters (*Ensure Strong Alliances*) allocates two third parts on the issue of Asian Allies (Japan, South Korea, and other Asia-Pacific region’s countries), China, and India. *The 2010 NSS* writes, “Japan and South Korea are increasingly important leaders in addressing regional and global issues, as well as in embodying and promoting our common democratic values.”¹⁷⁰ When it comes to China, *the 2010 NSS* document states both the negative impact of Chinese military modernization toward U.S. alliances and its possible contributions to global cooperation, considering Chinese economic power.¹⁷¹ *The 2010 QDR* also wrote that the rise of China was a key geopolitical trend. Moreover, *the 2010 QDR* announced the concept of A2/AD (Anti-Access/Area-Denial) environments and Joint Air-Sea Battle Concept at first, concerning the modernized Chinese military.¹⁷² These concepts aimed to guarantee the U.S. forces’ “Freedom of Action” everywhere.

¹⁶⁹ Secretary of State Hillary Clinton proclaimed the concept of “Pivot to Asia” through the *Foreign Policy* in 2011.

¹⁷⁰ White House, *NSS 2010*, 42.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁷² U.S. DOD, *QDR 2010*, 31–32.

In the post-Cold War era since the 1990s, the U.S. unipolar system has been strengthened. However, the Bush doctrine (based on unilateralism) after the 2000s caused the fear of deterioration of the U.S. leadership. Therefore, the Obama administration pursues multilateralism and prioritizes alliance relationships for reviving the American global leadership in part due to its lessons of the Bush government. The unilateral Strategic Flexibility might have deteriorated alliance relationships including South Korea and limited the U.S. forces' freedom of action in reverse. The Obama administration seems to end Bush's strategic flexibility in Asian regions by suggesting a "Pivot to Asia" with a self-reflection on the Middle East centered-policy.¹⁷³ Also, Obama establishes the concept of "Strategic Patience" as the keynote toward the North Korea issue. Unlike Bush's hawkish policy, Obama prioritizes international cooperation to make conditions for conversations.

Recognizing the DPRK's WMD threat, *the 2010 QDR* considered the USFK as "the forward-stationed" forces in the ROK.¹⁷⁴ *The 2004 QDR* also pledged the extended and regional deterrence toward South Korea and Japan. Nonetheless, *the 2010 QDR*, which was published in February 2010, stated that "[implementing] a more adaptive and flexible U.S. and combined force posture on the Korean Peninsula includes continuing to advance the ROK's lead role in the combined defense of its territory, together with the transition of wartime operational control to the ROK military in 2012."¹⁷⁵ However, Obama could not ignore Lee's request for the delay of the OPCON transfer in June 2010.

In the context of re-improvement of the ROK-U.S. alliance and China's attitude to cover North Korean issues such as nukes and humanitarian problems, Obama might have needed to show the strength of the U.S. alliances with the ROK and Japan. Although Obama maintained the same position as Bush toward the wartime OPCON transfer at

¹⁷³ See Mark E. Manyin et al., "Pivot to Pacific Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's Rebalancing Toward Asia," *Congressional Research Service* (Mar 2012), <http://oai.dtic.mil/oai/oai?verb=getRecord&metadataPrefix=html&identifier=ADA584466>.

This article suggests the United States is still maintaining the Bush-era initiative and emphasizes the gravity of the Middle East; however, the writer mainly elaborates the significance of Asia and how to deter the Chinese threat.

¹⁷⁴ U.S. DOD, *QDR 2010*, 51.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

first, the changed security and economic environments, especially the rise of China, made indirect conditions for the U.S. to reconsider the ROK-U.S. alliance adjustment including the wartime OPCON issue. North Korea's new provocations such as the *Cheonan* and *Yeonpyong* incidents in 2010 also reminded the Obama administration to review the security environment of the Korean Peninsula. The rise of China, the importance of Asia (Pivot to Asia), and the new threat of North Korea's asymmetric military forces indirectly affected the U.S. to review the wartime OPCON transfer until 2012, pressured by the persistent request of the ROK.

2. Domestic Politics of the United States

The international system factors and changed security environments have been indirectly (sometimes directly) affecting the ROK-U.S. alliance. The rise of China mainly changed the Obama administration's perception on its security environment, and it aroused the concept of "Pivot to Asia," emphasizing the relationship of alliances in Asia. In this context, Obama accepted the ROK's requirement on the delay of wartime OPCON transfer from 2012 to 2015, stressing the importance of alliance, showing the re-strengthening of alliance, and concerning the trilateral relations of China, Russia, and North Korea. Moreover, the complex process of the ROK's request and U.S. acceptance continues unless something extraordinary will happen in the global society (or between them). However, there is a possibility that a different president (especially if Republican) would take a different view of the rise of China or the increased North Korean threat, and so also a different attitude toward the ROK request for OPCON transfer delay. Therefore, we need to examine the domestic politics of the U.S. in detail as well, largely in fields of politics and economy.

a. From the Neoconservatives to Pragmatism: Obama Doctrine

The Obama administration shows the different foreign policy contrary to Bush. The Obama Doctrine could be defined as multilateralism in comparison to the Bush

Doctrine which was unilateralism. According to Carl Pedersen, the Obama Doctrine includes unique thoughts in issues of (1) wars, (2) world view, (3) and America itself.¹⁷⁶

First, many people know how Obama dislikes wars; however, “he spoke of the valiant cause of Civil War and of his grandfather’s service in World War II,” based on pragmatism and principle.¹⁷⁷ Pedersen writes, “He regarded the impending war in Iraq as a politically motivated war designed to distract the attention of the American people from pressing problems at home—social inequality and a looming economic depression.”¹⁷⁸ Second, Obama embraces differences and a one world concept.¹⁷⁹ Pedersen argues, “He spoke of the need to welcome immigrants and used the image of the U.S., where every language is spoken and every culture has left its imprint...as a uniting ideal for all mankind.”¹⁸⁰ Finally, the Obama administration pursues American universalism not American exceptionalism.¹⁸¹ According to Pedersen:

A vision for a new U.S. foreign policy for the twenty-first century might resemble the kind of liberal internationalism proposed by Roosevelt and Churchill in the Atlantic Charter in 1941 and consolidated at the end of the war with the Bretton Woods agreement, the establishment of the United Nations and NATO, and the Nuremberg trials—without, however, the pervasive American exceptionalist idea that the U.S. necessarily has to take on a leadership role.¹⁸²

There are some debates that the essence of the Obama Doctrine is not much different from the Bush Doctrine in practice. However, Obama’s pragmatism is clearly dissimilar to the American exceptionalism in the past when the U.S. maintained a super power position. President Obama, based on the Obama Doctrine, turns up a multilateral foreign policy from unilateral way of the strict reciprocity, emphasizing cooperation with allies. This does not mean that Obama only uses flexible and dovish foreign policies but

¹⁷⁶ Carl Pedersen, “The Obama Doctrine,” in *Obama’s America* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 152.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Pedersen, “Obama Doctrine,” 152.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 157.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 163.

¹⁸² Ibid., 169.

selects pragmatic policy. For example, the U.S. applied strong sanctions to North Korea after the second nuclear test in May 2009. On the other hand, Obama achieved the New START agreement with Russia in 2010 and hosted the first Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) in Washington in 2010.

Obama announced that the U.S. set the Asian-Pacific regions as the top priority in Australian Congress on November 17, 2011—this is another meaning of the Obama Doctrine (Priority of Asia). Now, the North Korean threat and its ties with China and Russia had become critical issues to the United States. In other words, there were no reasons for the U.S. to reject the ROK's request of the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer, which contrasted to the ROK's support for strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance.

The Obama administration appears to have reviewed the ROK's request for delay of wartime OPCON transfer based on pragmatism and a flexible foreign policy. For instance, there were arguments in 2010 against the wartime OPCON transfer in some U.S. domestic research institutions. The basic logic was as same as the ROK' opinion—South Korea had not been prepared yet. For example, Michael E. O'Hanlon of *The Brookings Institution*, a prominent Washington think tank, wrote, "As a longstanding student of military operations and a student of Korean matters as well, I would like to argue against the idea of the so-called OpCon Transfer, as now planned by Seoul and Washington for 2012."¹⁸³ He elaborated, with sympathetic "apologies" to the ROK allies:

I think the right approach is not just to delay, but to abolish the plan of OpCon transfer; ... though we use that term, in fact it's OpCon division, it's the creation of OpCon confusion. And with a lot of good people trying to minimize that, we're still going from unity of command to duality of command. That's what OpCon transfer is. ... I think it's a bad idea.¹⁸⁴

However, there was also opposition to the delay in U.S. domestic politics, in particular U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, a Republican carryover from the Bush administration who still opposed the delay of the transfer in 2010. Gates witnessed the deterioration of the ROK-U.S. alliance at the end of Roh Moo-hyun and Bush

¹⁸³ Michael E. O'Hanlon, "OpCon Transfer or OpCon Confusion: Making the Best of a Dubious Idea," *Brookings*, April 30, 2010, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2010/04/30-korea-ohanlon>.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

administrations, and in his memoir Gates drew a sharp contrast between Roh and his successor, Lee Myung-bak:

I really liked Lee [Myung-bak]; he was tough-minded, realistic, and very pro-American. All in contrast to his predecessor, President Roh Moo-hyun, whom I had met with in Seoul in November 2007 and decided was anti-American and probably a little crazy.¹⁸⁵

President Lee Myungbak had to persuade Gates and also approached President Obama directly in the Nuclear Security Summit of Washington in 2010 and the G20 Summit in Toronto, Canada with the line of diplomacy department—the so called 2+2 way (diplomatic and defense line). Obama finally accepted the request, and both governments agreed to the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer from 2012 to 2015. Robert Gates resigned his position in July 2011, and Leon Panetta, a Democrat, took over as Secretary of Defense.

b. *The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy*

As the author mentioned before, each country's economic situation is relevant to the ROK's wartime OPCON transfer. Like the ROK's sluggish growth rate since the 2008 GFC, the U.S. fiscal deficits were getting worse since the 2008 GFC as well. We can see a dramatic rise of the amount U.S. federal debt since 2008 (see Figure 10). The 2007 subprime mortgage incidents of the U.S. catalyzed the global financial crisis. Worse, the top 10 U.S. loan corporations were bankrupt. It is not an overstatement to say that the 2008 GFC was second only to the 1929 Great Depression.

¹⁸⁵ Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memories of a Secretary at War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 416.

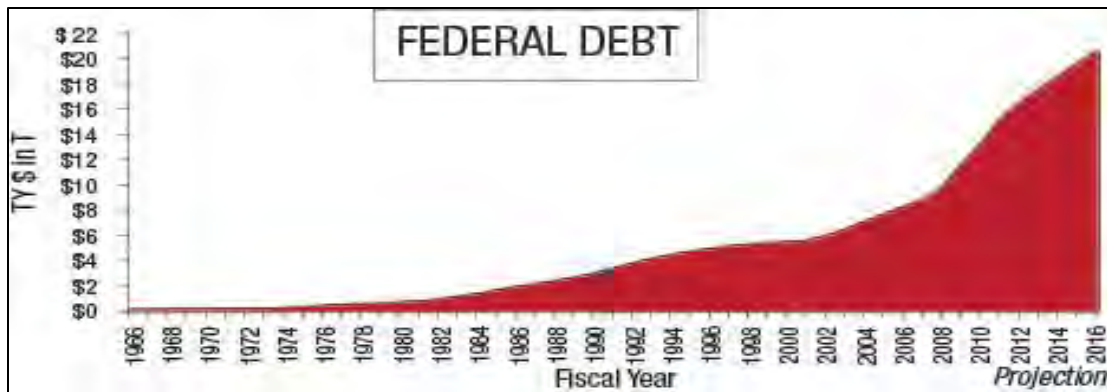


Figure 10. The Rise of the Amount of U.S. Federal Debt.¹⁸⁶

The White House and the Republicans had been grappling and disputing with this economic situation since 2008 with respect to the U.S. increase in the amount of government debt limit. Finally, the U.S. Congress passed the Budget Control Act in August 2011. This meant that the U.S. had to automatically curtail annual fiscal spending after January 2013. According to the White House, “In 2011, Congress passed a law saying that if they couldn’t agree on a plan to reduce our deficit by \$4 trillion—including the \$2.5 trillion in deficit reduction lawmakers in both parties have already accomplished over the last few years—about \$1 trillion in automatic, arbitrary and across the board budget cuts would start to take effect in 2013.”¹⁸⁷ This economic situation around the year of 2010 was one of the critical factors for U.S. foreign policy. In addition, the great important field in the Sequester was the defense budget because the amount of Defense budget dramatically increased since the 2001 Afghanistan War (See Figure 11). We can see the proportional relation between Figures 10 and 11—the more the U.S. defense budget dramatically increased, the more the U.S. federal debt grew since 2001. That means the U.S. defense-related interest also increased in proportion to the U.S. total amount of defense budget.

¹⁸⁶ Singer, “Defense Sequestration and American Military Power.”

¹⁸⁷ White House, What You Need to Know About: The Sequester, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/sequester>.

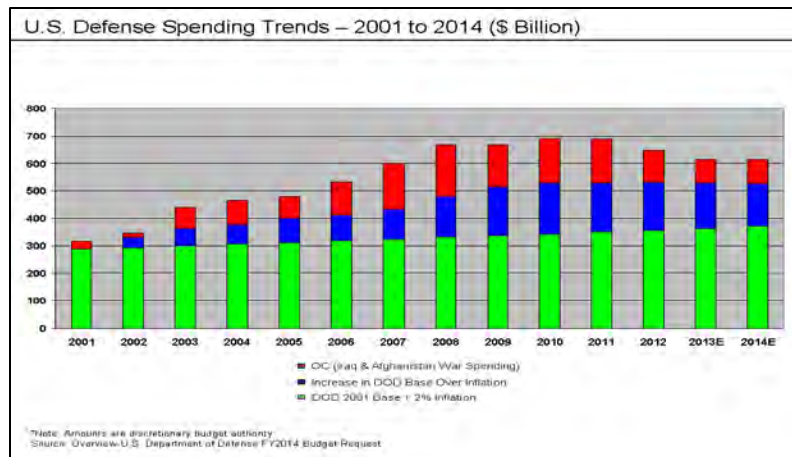


Figure 11. U.S. Defense Spending Trends—2001 to 2004.¹⁸⁸

The cuts to the defense budget meant the necessity of an adjustment of the U.S. security policy, especially U.S. overseas forces. This meant that U.S. foreign security support was likely to be reduced. Even though the cut would focus on the Middle East regions, the pre-conditions of the wartime OPCON transfer (such as the STP—Strategic Transformation Plan—including U.S. Strategic Flexibility that requires the move of USFK) would face greater scrutiny due to the defense budget. In 2007, both the ROK and U.S. Joint Chief of Staff agreed to the STP for the wartime OPCON transfer, e.g., the establishment of roadmap, military committee, and other military structures. However, one element of the STP, the plan of USFK relocation to *Pyongteak* under the GPR concept, was disrupted due to the shortfalls of the defense budget.

c. *What the United States Really Wants from the Agreement of the Delay*

The changed security and economic international environments—mainly the rise of China—affected the Obama administration’s “Pivot to Asia.” However, the U.S. foreign policy under the international situations does not have exact causal relation with the delay of wartime OPCON transfer, but might have the co-relation as an indirect factor. The Obama administration maintained the Bush government’s policies including the ROK wartime OPCON transfer at the beginning of its office (2009-10). Then, did the U.S.

¹⁸⁸ GeorgeWashington, “Obama’s National Defense Record,” *Liberal Forum*, December 5, 2014, <http://liberalforum.net/viewtopic.php?t=10883>.

accept the ROK's request for the delay just because of consideration for the alliance—e.g., pragmatism of Obama Doctrine? The relation of the two states especially in the post-Cold War era was not easy. Not to mention the ROK domestic politics, the U.S. domestic politics have also been dynamic. There are some hypothetical U.S. domestic explanations (except for the Obama Doctrine and the economic situations)—the reasons (backgrounds) why the U.S. accepted the request of the ROK.

Under an economic depression since 2008 GFC, the United States could take advantage of this OPCON issue as a bargaining chip as well. President Lee and Bush (and Obama), in their Summit talks since 2008 (e.g., the 2008 Camp David Summit), agreed the future strategic alliance should include every field: security, economy, military, and other fields. In the field of military, the ROK requested strong security co-operations including the delay of the OPCON transfer. In reverse, Bush (and Obama) continuously requested the ROK troops be sent Afghanistan again. The ROK already sent more than about 2,000 troops to Afghanistan for 5 years and 10 months during the time: 2002 -2007. Again, the ROK sent around 1,900 troops from 2010 to 2014. The United States also requested the ROK to join the PSI and the MD system officially. Finally, South Korea formally participated in the PSI in 2010. South Korea, however, has still been in a dilemma because of the MD problems between the United States and China, including the deployment the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) in the ROK.

The last critical issue is the status quo of Northeast Asia (Korean Peninsula). The crisis in this region might be tremendous turmoil or burden not just for the United States but also for the other states including China. The fact that the United States has the wartime OPCON is still not so bad. The rapid change of the ROK-U.S. alliance, which has existed more than 60 years, is not easy just for the short term, and it might alter the status quo in the Korean Peninsula and North East Asia unless both countries prepare meticulously (as O'Hanlon argued). Furthermore, most people already know that the ROK military capability is enough to deter or wage war against North Korean conventional weapons. The key problem is, however, the North Korean nuclear issue, including asymmetric military forces. In addition, the USFK is not just to deter North

Korea. In the concept of GPR, the mission of the USFK could be interpreted broadly. The relocation of the USFK to Camp Humphreys in *Pyongteak* was also in this background.

Therefore, the relocation of the USFK and its budget problems might be critical factors for the delay of the OPCON transfer as well. Under the changed situations (security and economy) from the initial wartime OPCON transfer agreement between Roh and Bush in 2007, CINCCFC Walter Sharp (2008-11), who was evaluated as an adroit negotiator by the ROK progressive scholars, required the ROK to spend more for defense burden sharing. Sharp had pressed the ROK that sharing of the defense burden should be about 50 percent up from the current 43 percent.¹⁸⁹ These problems include the cost of the YRP (Yongsan Relocation Plan) in 2002 and LPP in 2004. At the first agreement, both countries agreed that the ROK would pay the cost of YRP, and the U.S. would discharge the LPP.¹⁹⁰ However, both the U.S. and the ROK agreed in 2004 that the USFK could factor the ROK's cost of defense burden sharing into the relocation of USFK (LPP) during 2004–2013. The relocation of the USFK has still been having a financial setback until now (2015). Sharp, after the delay of wartime OPCON transfer in 2010, continuously insisted that the USFK should factor the cost of defense burden sharing into the LPP until 2015 or more. This aroused other issues. The U.S. domestic part in Chapter IV will deal with these problems in detail.

D. CONCLUSION

The security environment in the late 2000s was different. The Rise of China became the key issue. For the ROK, North Korea was still a critical threat. North Korea committed the second nuclear test in 2009 and also provoked the ROK with the sinking of *Cheonan* and shelling of *Yeonpyong* in 2010. For the United States, the rise of China and the 2008 GFC was a shock and threatened the U.S. global leadership. In this security and economic environment, the conservative Lee Myung-bak administration tried to re-intensify the ROK-U.S. alliance, and the Obama government took a position of

¹⁸⁹ Byong-chul Park, "Government Lee's Foreign Policies toward the United States," *KAUS21* 8:2 (2008): 83, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/888304>.

¹⁹⁰ The ROK MND explained why the ROK should pay the cost of the YRP. The main reason was that the YRP was not from the USFK necessity, but the U.S. accepted the ROK people's demand.

pragmatism, stressing the relation of alliance, especially in the Asia with its “Pivot to Asia.” In the wartime OPCON issue, the typical system of the ROK request and the U.S. acceptance was not changed from past practices under the asymmetric alliance structure, and both governments agreed to delay the transfer from 2010 to 2015. However, the Lee and Obama governments interacted differently from the previous relations of the Roh and Bush governments in 2007.

The main reason that the ROK requested the delay was the conservative politics of the Lee administration. Their perception of the North Korean threat was different from that of Roh’s progressive government. In addition, the Lee administration set the re-strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance as the key foreign policy, criticizing the Roh period. Even though this delay aroused conflicts between the progressives and conservatives, the ROK economy after the 2008 GFC was not strong enough to satisfy the conditions for ROK’s self-defense. The planned increase rate of ROK’s defense budget for self-defense and the wartime OPCON transfer was disrupted by the ROK’s sluggish economy. The Lee administration recognized that the ROK’s independent military capability was not enough to deter the North Korean asymmetric capabilities alone. Finally, the ROK requested the delay of the wartime OPCON from 2010 to 2015.

The Obama administration’s foreign policy was different from that of Bush. The Obama Doctrine, based on pragmatism, pursued multilateral ways, not unilateral or American exceptionalism. The Obama government stressed the value of alliances especially in the Asian region, through the “Pivot to Asia.” In addition, Obama wanted to finish the wars in the Middle East, which have been harmful for the U.S. people and economy, and finished the Iraq war in 2011. The 2008 GFC catalyzed critical debates in the U.S. domestic politics with regard to the cut of defense budget. This led the United States to reconsider overseas U.S. bases, and their role in U.S. military strategy. When the ROK requested the delay of OPCON transfer in 2010, some U.S. institutions already warned the government of the dangerousness of the hasty transfer as well. When the United States accepted the delay request, it also tried to maximize the interest of the U.S., including the ROK’s re-dispatch to Afghanistan, participation in the PSI and MD system, and the defense burden sharing which include the relocation of the UFSK.

Here are the reasons why we should focus on both governments' fierce tug-of-war. Even though the Cold-war era ended, the Korean Peninsula, including Northeast Asia, still carries the legacy of the Cold War unless the two Koreas unify. The ROK-U.S. alliance is still strong under the value of liberal democracy. The ROK-U.S. alliance is the key to maintain the peace and status quo not only in the Korean Peninsula but also in Northeast Asia. Moreover, South Korea was one of the successful model countries that the United States has been supporting, and the people of the ROK appreciate that support. However, both countries in the globalized world especially since the 2000s pursue their own national interest as well. We can also see this kind of tug-of-war in the issue of the ROK OPCON. That is the basic nature of states as realists argue—the maximization of power (the national interest). However, tumultuous domestic politics exist in each state, and those political conflicts affect the relation of states (Allison argued) and international politics (Putnam claimed).

Table 6 summarizes the major findings of this chapter.

Table 6. First OPCON Transfer Delay Decision Factors

	Specific nature of the factor	Direction of influence on alliance	Strength of influence on OPCON transfer delay	Outcome
ROK security conditions	Continuing DPRK security/WMD threats	ROK conventional strength adequate for DPRK threat	Weak / Moderate	Re-strengthening ROK-U.S. Alliance
ROK domestic politics	- Conservative government - Perceived increase in DPRK threat	- Concern transfer would weaken alliance - Hardline DPRK policies	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Delay OPCON transfer</u>
US security conditions	- Pivot to Asia - Rise of China - Reduce overseas forces	- Improve U.S.-ROK relationship - Increase strength of ROK alliance - Unified command considerations	Medium	Re-strengthening of Alliances in Asia
US domestic politics	- Multilateralism - Reduce defense spending	- Alliance must fit global strategy - Seeking ROK support for PSI, MD	Medium	<u>Delay OPCON transfer</u>

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IV. SECOND DELAY OF THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER IN 2014

A. THE SECOND AGREEMENT ON THE DELAY

The year 2012, the originally scheduled year for the wartime OPCON between Roh and Bush, was crucial for both the ROK and the United States. Both countries had presidential elections in 2012, and the DPRK set the year as “the year of strong and prosperous country (*Kang Seong dae guk*),” which was also the centenary year of Kim Il-sung’s birth. In the ROK, presidential candidate Park Geun-hye in the conservative *Saenuri* party won the 18th presidential election, defeating candidate Moon Jae-in in the progressive Democratic United Party. In the United States, Democrat Obama won his second term.

President Obama officially started his second term on January 20, 2013, and Park Guen-gye was inaugurated on February 25, 2013. The ROK-U.S. alliance system has still been strong between ROK conservative and U.S. pragmatic administrations. At first, the Park government seemed to prepare to implement the wartime OPCON transfer process in early 2013. Also, Park Guen-hye, when she was a candidate in 2012, already pledged that the ROK would be ready for the wartime OPCON transfer by December 1, 2015, including the ROK-U.S. comprehensive defense capability.

With respect to the ROK wartime OPCON transfer, the United States has always maintained the position of acceptance to ROK requests. The complex process of ROK requests and U.S. acceptance was still valid in 2013, perhaps until now. However, the Park government’s delicate movement to re-delay was seen in 2013. ROK Minister of National Defense Kim Gwan-jin, for the first time, suggested the review of the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer to U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel at the Asia Security Council on June 1, 2013, mentioning the continuous North Korean threat since the 2010 sinking of *Cheonan* and the incapability of the ROK’s military against the North Korean asymmetric threat. It was welcome news and might be predicted for opponents of the transfer; however, it was a shocking announcement for proponents of the transfer. Kim Gwan-jin, after the 2013 Asia Security Council, said that the U.S. might review the

ROK request positively at the government-ruling party consultation in the National Assembly on July 18, 2013. The ROK DOD, however, announced that the meeting was only for review, not to determine policy, and explained the ROK and the United States would have more conversations in the 45th SCM (in October 2013).¹⁹¹

As a result, the debates on the wartime OPCON transfer rose again. Soon, President Park and Obama agreed to review the transfer year at the ROK-U.S. Summit in May 2013. Finally, both defense ministers Han Min-goo and Chuck Hagel agreed on the “Condition-Based Wartime Operational Control Transition,” which meant an indefinite delay, at the 46th SCM in 2014.

B. DETERMINANTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

1. Security Environment of the ROK

The security environment of the post-Cold war era is still diverse. What was the critical significance of the security environment of the ROK in 2014? According to *the 2014 Defense White Paper*, the ROK describes the environment as “U.S. led international order” as well as “the emergence of regional powers.”¹⁹² This meant that the ROK recognized and wrote about “the rise of China” in the governmental security document for the first time. Moreover, the ROK is going to play a critical role in the Northeast Asian region as one of the middle power countries in international or local conflicts—such as Middle East (ISIS: Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan), Ukraine, and Africa (Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia) conflicts, even though the influence is insignificant.¹⁹³ The ROK states, “The United States will continue to maintain its dominant position in spite of defense budget cuts, based on its overwhelming military superiority, advanced scientific technology and soft power.”¹⁹⁴ However, the ROK also knows that “China is also likely to continue to strengthen its international status with its rapidly growing economy.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Yonhap News, “Wartime OPCON Still Discussing,” *Yonhap News*, August 28, 2013, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=001&aid=0006452927>.

¹⁹² ROK Ministry of National Defense, *2014 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: MND, 2014), 8.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

The 2014 Defense White Paper officially uses the term “New Type of Great Power Relations” between the United States and China.¹⁹⁶ We can easily understand in this document that the role of the ROK is not just limited to North Korea today, in the context of the United States and China showing continuous competition and conflict on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁹⁷

Nonetheless, the North Korean threat is the vital interest for the ROK. Kim Jong-il suddenly died on December 17, 2011. In the Korean tradition, the descendants usually go through mourning (the funeral process) for three years, based on Buddhism. Therefore, some North Korea watchers called this period (2011. 12 – 2014. 12) as the power succession (or consolidation) period. Kim Jong-un appeared to successfully consolidate his power during this period, even purging his uncle Jang Sung-taek in December 2013. The North Korean aim of unification under communism has still been the rule of the KWP (Korean Workers’ Party)—it is the key to legitimacy in the DPRK. Moreover, there is one possible hypothesis; the DPRK is more likely to provoke South Korea when North Korea has internal problems such as power struggles or succession. During this consolidation time, the DPRK also provoked South Korea.

North Korea launched a long-range missile on December 12, 2012 and carried out its third nuclear test on February 12, 2013—On March 5, it declared the Armistice Agreement invalid in a statement issued by the spokesperson of the Supreme Command, and on March 8, it declared it would scrap the Inter-Korean Non-Aggression Agreement in its entirety.¹⁹⁸

This thesis cannot enumerate every North Korean provocation in 2014. One of the significant provocations involved the North Korean UAV. Small North Korean UAVs were found in ROK locations of *Paju* in *Gyeonggi-do*, *Baengnyeongdo* Island, and

¹⁹⁶ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 8.

¹⁹⁷ The deployment of the THAAD is one aspect of these conflicts. Also, Chinese President Xi Jin-ping has been giving the cold shoulder to North Korea about the approval of Kim Jong-un’s power succession. President Xi visited South Korea for a summit talk in 2014 (not North Korea yet). Furthermore, President Xi invited President Park for the “70th anniversary day of the victory of the Chinese people’s war of resistance against Japanese aggression” in August 2015. U.S. president was invited but did not attend.

¹⁹⁸ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 23.

Samcheok in *Gangwon-do* in March and April 2014.¹⁹⁹ The North Korean threat is still continuous in 2014 or stronger than before the death of Kim Jong-il. The continuous North Korean provocations affected the ROK request on the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014, and the rise of China, which made the ROK's position more important as a middle power, might also affect the U.S. perception toward the ROK, including the wartime OPCON transfer.

However, if Roh Moo-hyun had been the ROK president in 2014 or his progressive successor Moon Jae-in had won the 18th presidential election, the result of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014 (or in the future) might have been much different. ROK domestic political evolution was a major factor in the outcomes.

2. Domestic Politics of the ROK

a. *The Perception of Conservative Park Administration*

President Park Guen-hye, who is the first ROK female president, won the 18th presidential election with more than half of ROK voters (51.6 percent) for the first time of the ROK history. Moreover, Park Guen-hye also became the first president who has the same party-register with the former president (Lee Myung-bak) since 1987, when the ROK people could directly vote for their president. Beneath the details of the processes and main causes of *Saenuri* triumph in the 2012 election, the ROK conservatism won again.

The critical factor of the ROK's request for the re-delay was the Park administration's perception toward the North Korean threat, especially the DPRK's nuclear threats. According to Han and Jeong, the increased North Korean threat tremendously affected the decision of the ROK's request for the re-delay.²⁰⁰ After the third nuclear test of the DPRK in February 2013, Minister of National Defense Kim Gwan-jin advised President Park Guen-hye to review the wartime OPCON transfer, and

¹⁹⁹ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 24.

²⁰⁰ Han and Jeong, "Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue," 16.

Park agreed to the proposal—The ROK suggested the review to the United States beginning May 2013.²⁰¹

This perception of the Park administration toward the DPRK nuclear threats appeared in *the 2014 Defense White Paper* clearly. The CSIS summarizes this perception meticulously:

Table 7. DPRK Nuclear Threats in *the 2014 Defense White Paper*.²⁰²

- The ROK formally acknowledges North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, using the term “nuclear weapons of North Korea” for the first time in a Defense White Paper, and referencing its continued Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) program
- The Paper suggests North Korea has crossed the threshold of nuclear warhead miniaturization, stating the North has obtained “considerable” technical capability to mount warheads on ballistic missiles
- The Paper suggests North Korean long-range ballistic missiles capabilities can now threaten the U.S. mainland, and also notes growing North Korean efforts to develop a sea-launched ballistic missile capability
- The Paper cites the North maintains about 6,000 cyber-warfare personnel under its command, which is substantially larger than previous estimates

We can explain the Park administration’s decision for the re-delay with the Asymmetric Alliance Theory of James D. Morrow. In this view, the ROK abandoned autonomy when the North Korean threat increased. However, the conservatives in the ROK perceive the security as the most critical interest and the North Korean threat differently from the progressives. According to the Korean Gallup opinion in October 2014, 51 percent of those questioned were in favor of the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer.²⁰³ This number coincidentally corresponds with the polling rate (51.6

²⁰¹ Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 16.

²⁰² CSIS, South Korea 2014 Defense White Paper Highlights DPRK Nuclear Threats, last updated January 6, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/south-korea-2014-defense-white-paper-highlights-dprk-nuclear-threats>.

²⁰³ Korea Gallup, The Opinion on the Re-delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer, last updated October 20, 2014, <http://www.gallup.co.kr/gallupdb/reportContent.asp?seqNo=589&pagePos=1&selectYear=0&search=1&searchKeyword=%C0%FC%C0%DB%B1%C7>.

percent) of the 2012 presidential election, and most of the supporters for the re-delay were the *Saenuri* supporters (73 percent) or people who evaluate President Park positively (69 percent).²⁰⁴ The Park government, with these conservative supporters, made a decision for the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer to assure the security and stability on the Korean Peninsula. This is not an issue of sovereignty or self-esteem at least for the Park administration (the ROK conservatives) which prioritizes the security of the ROK as the most vital interest.

b. Condition-Based Wartime OPCON Transition

With increased perception of the Park administration toward the North Korean threat, the Park government might think that the hasty changes of the ROK-U.S. alliance system, such as the wartime OPCON transfer without well-prepared processes, are not helpful to maintain the security of the peninsula. This perception mainly resulted from the increased threat of North Korea since 2010:

North Korea's series of military provocations, including its second nuclear test and a long-range missile launch in 2009 and the attack on the ROK Ship *Cheonan* in 2010, heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, and the instability of the North Korean regime was deepened with the failure of their reform and deteriorating health of Kim Jong-il [who was already dead in 2011].²⁰⁵

Based on these perceptions, the Park Guen-hye administration created and proposed the concept of Condition-based Wartime Operational Transition, and the U.S. accepted this suggestion. *The 2014 Defense White paper* suggests that the "Condition-based wartime OPCON transition means to decide the transition time according to whether or not the conditions both countries agreed to are satisfied, rather than setting a specific date such as April 17, 2012, or December 1, 2015, as previously determined."²⁰⁶

To deter North Korean nuclear and missile threats, the ROK aims to set the Kill Chain and KAMD (Korea Air and Missile Defense) until the mid-2020s. These are core

²⁰⁴ Korea Gallup, Opinion on Re-delay Wartime OPCON Transfer.

²⁰⁵ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 124.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

conditions for the wartime OPCON transfer. *The 2014 Defense White Paper* clarifies the concept that “the ROK military has established the Kill Chain, capable of immediate *Find, Fix, Target, and Engage*, to prepare effectively for the North Korean missile threats.”²⁰⁷ To construct this system, the ROK should prepare and improve its radar system and surface-to-air missile—L-SAM and M-SAM, e.g., Patriot Missile (PAC-3).²⁰⁸ The ROK, in March 2015, decided to buy the PAC-3 missiles from the U.S. and will deploy them through 2020.

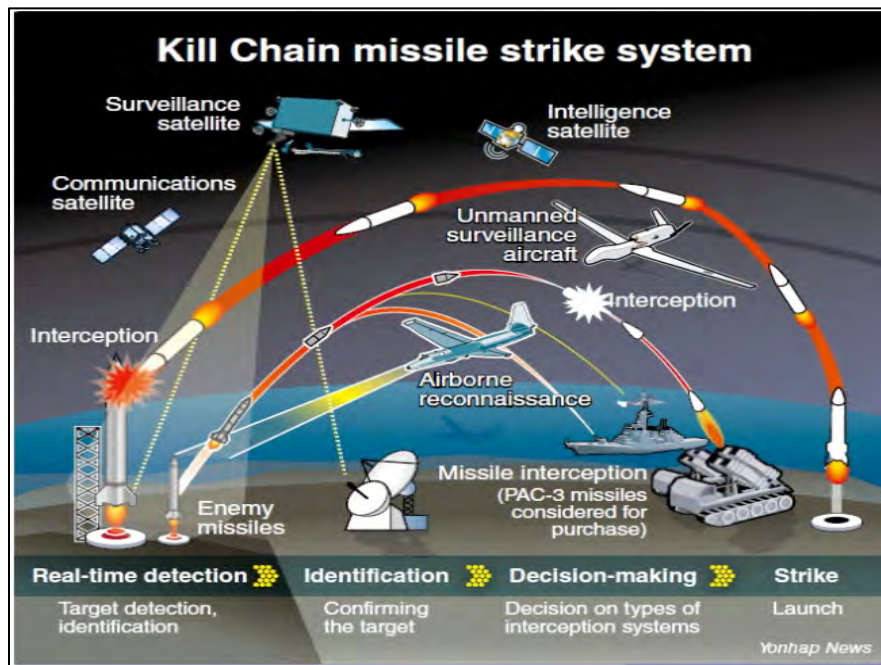


Figure 12. ROK’s Kill Chain and KAMD Systems.²⁰⁹

c. *The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy*

The increase of the ROK defense budget has not gone along well according to the decision of the wartime OPCON transfer since 2007. Under the world’s sluggish growth

²⁰⁷ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 61.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

²⁰⁹ Sang-ho Song, “Seoul Struggles with N.K. Deterrence,” *The Korea Herald*, February 14, 2013, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130214000947>.

rate since the 2008 GFC, the ROK defense reform plan had to be modified as well. The ROK real GDP growth rate was only 2.9 percent in 2013 and 3.3 percent in 2014.²¹⁰

Overall, the ROK actual increase rate of the defense budget is gradually falling short of its planned increase rate (see Figure 5, again). Moreover, the year 2014, when the ROK requested the second delay of the wartime OPCON transfer, held the second rank next to the 2010 (the year of first delay) with regard to the gap between planned and actual increase rates of defense budgets. Han and Jeong write that the total gap of the planned and actual defense budget during the 2008–15 is up to 13 trillion won (11 billion dollar).²¹¹ Although the total amount of the defense budget is somewhat different from the increase rate, the 2015 ROK total defense budget is about 33 billion dollars (the world twelfth), but the U.S. budget is about 577 billion (the world first)—it is more than 15 times the ROK budget.

Paul Kennedy, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, argues the relation of the military and economy—too much military spending—could shake the status of great powers. How about middle powers such as the ROK? The ROK still needed the security support of the United States in terms of economy in 2014. However, the economy of the United States was also tougher. Let us see *the 2014 QDR* briefly. The document explained the reason and the logic of Sequester for the first time in the security document and the role of allies. This has tremendous implications. That is the main reason that the ROK and the U.S. have still been negotiating alliance issues, including the OPCON issue. We will see the U.S. defense budget problem in the next section: Determinants of the United States.

The key military capabilities to deter the North Korean threats such as nukes and missiles are the Kill Chain and KAMD as noted above. Moreover, these capabilities need long-term plans for the ROK MND to accomplish them. According to the Korean media outlets such as *Joins (Joongang)*, *Newdaily*, and *Edaily*, the Kill Chain and KAMD (including PAC-2, PAC-3, UAV, and High Performance Radars) require more than 17

²¹⁰ Statistics Korea, GNP and GDP.

²¹¹ Han and Jeong, “Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue,” 23.

trillion won (15 billion dollar) in the next 10 years, and the KF-X (for getting F-35A fighters) plan needs more than 40 trillion won (35 billion dollar).

The ROK MND, in 2015, set the 2016 defense budget at more than 40 trillion won (7.2 percent more than the 2014) for the first time, considering the cost of Kill Chain and KAMD. However, the ROK parliament will need to carefully consider before deciding the amount of defense budget, given the world economic recession and pressure for social welfare. Moreover, the actual increase rate can fluctuate under irregular political and economic environments. When those situations happen, the ROK may have to also reconsider its whole defense budget plans.

In addition, the completion of KAMD and the Kill Chain system does not directly guarantee the wartime OPCON transfer (or the perfect deterrence of the North Korean threat). The critical military capability based on the meticulous defense budget is also just one crucial factor for the wartime OPCON transfer. The Park administration chose the security (status quo) of the Korean Peninsula rather than self-pride with deliberate economic calculation in 2014, and the perception of the ROK conservatives was the key in the center of that decision.

C. DETERMINANTS OF THE UNITED STATES

1. Security Environment of the United States

There are some difficulties in distinguishing the security environment of 2014 (the second Obama term) from 2010 (the first term) because the 2014 situations are almost same with the 2010 environments. In addition, it is natural that the security documents such as *the 2015 NSS* and *the 2014 QDR* of the second Obama period are not much different from the first period one: *the 2010 NSS* and *the 2010 QDR*. Moreover, the world attention in 2014 was on the Ukraine conflicts (or revolution).

The 2015 NSS still prioritizes “the security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners” as the U.S. top purposes and interests.²¹² One critical difference noted by the author is that *the 2015 NSS* specified the role of TPP. *The 2010 NSS* did not

²¹² White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America (NSS) 2015* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2015), 2.

write about the TPP. *The 2015 NSS* writes, “We are also working with our Asian partners to promote more open and transparent economies ... for global economic growth,” and right after this sentence there is one short sentence, “The TPP is central to this effort.”²¹³ This shows how the Obama administration still prioritizes the Asian and Pacific region, concerning the Chinese economic power, including the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership) and the AIIB (Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank).

Going back to the wartime OPCON issues, Korean Peninsula, and Northeast Asian region, we should focus on *the 2014 QDR*. Although the document still mentions the stability of the Middle East region, the most distinguishable elements of the document with respect to the OPCON issue were the risks of Sequestration-level cuts and the increased perception of the North Korean WMD threat in the Asia-Pacific region.

First, it sounds like a contradiction, but the 2014 security environment that the United States confronted was overshadowed by the deficit of the defense budget due to the Sequester since March 2013. After the activation of the Sequester in 2013, how to maintain world security and remap the U.S. overseas forces with the budget shortage has been the most significant issue for the Obama administration. In this context, *the 2014 QDR* articulated the risks of Sequestration-level cuts toward the defense budget. However, Howard McKeon, the chairman of the U.S. House Armed Services Committee, thought that it was inappropriate that the security document mentioned that issue, not focusing on the real security matters. In an unprecedented move, Congressman McKeon “rejected” the *QDR*, charging that its failure to plan beyond anticipated budget levels violated U.S. law, and threatening to withhold 25 percent of the Pentagon policy office’s budget if the DOD did not rewrite and resubmit the document.²¹⁴ We will see a process of the Sequester of 2013 briefly in the following U.S. domestic economic chapter.

Second, comparing to *the 2010 QDR*, the perception of the North Korean threat increased. *The 2014 QDR* writes:

²¹³ White House, *NSS 2015*, 24.

²¹⁴ Marcus Weisgerber, “McKeon Wants DOD to Redo QDR,” *Defense News*, May 5, 2014, <http://archive.defensenews.com/article/20140505/DEFREG02/305050022/McKeon-Wants-DOD-Redo-QDR>.

North Korea's long-range missile and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs—particularly its pursuit of nuclear weapons in contravention of its international obligations—constitutes a significant threat to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia and is a growing, direct threat to the United States.²¹⁵

This perception toward the North Korean WMD was not described in *the 2010 QDR*. Relating to those North Korean issues, the U.S. clearly assured the role of the USFK, “Even during the past decade while engaged in two war-fights, the U.S. Army maintained a viable, substantial presence on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia to deter aggression and demonstrate commitment to regional stability.”²¹⁶ The role of USFK is significantly strengthened to keep the peace in the Korean Peninsula. *The 2010 QDR* did not mention the “Substantial Presence” of the USFK like *the 2014 QDR*.

The ROK and U.S. governments in 2014 were negotiating and reconsidering the relocation of USFK, which was a part of GPR. As a result, they modified the plans at the 46th SCM in 2014 into the remaining of the CFC in *Yongsan* and the counter-fire forces (the 210 brigade) of the 2nd Division in *Dongducheon*.²¹⁷ These decisions were not just problems of the security environment of the ROK. We will examine the domestic politics of the U.S about these issues (the remap of YRP and LPP) in the next section. In addition, *the 2014 QDR* did not discuss the wartime OPCON transfer issue, unlike *the 2010 QDR* did. Overall, the extended deterrence and the security pledge on the Korean Peninsula increased.

To sum up, *the 2014 QDR* clarifies the concept of “Rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific Region.” This strategy did not mean that the United States would abandon the stability of Europe and the Middle East region. However, the Obama Doctrine, unlike the Bush Doctrine, strictly focuses on the Asia-Pacific region, rather than the Middle East. Relating to the security of the Korean Peninsula, the United States is holding a similar

²¹⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR) 2014* (Washington, DC: GPO, 2014), 4.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.

²¹⁷ Byung-soo Park, “The United States strongly demanded that CFC and counter-fire brigade in Dongducheon should stay in the current position,” *Hani*, September 18, 2014, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/defense/655852.html>.

viewpoint of the ROK as well. This was the indirect background of the re-acceptance of the ROK request for the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014. Nonetheless, the United States, under the Sequester pressures, continuously stresses the role of allies. That perception is related to the deal of the wartime OPCON transfer and the reason why we should investigate the domestic politics of the United States as well.

2. Domestic Politics of the United States

a. *The Strengthening of the Obama Doctrine*

Since Obama's inauguration in 2008, the Obama administration has been pursuing the multilateral foreign policy with pragmatism as mentioned before. It affected the first delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2010, stressing the relation of the alliance. This tendency has still been valid until now, or getting stronger.

The Obama administration has been keeping a policy of talks as well as sanctions, rather than just a policy of sanctions. As a result, the United States improved relations with Myanmar, especially after the 2011 APEC in Honolulu. On November 19, 2012, the United States finally relieved economic sanctions to Myanmar since the 2003 Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act on July 28, 2003. Moreover, Obama normalized diplomatic relations with Cuba on December 17, 2014. On July 4, 2015, Iran, Germany, the United Nations Security Council members, and the chairman of EU foreign policy negotiated the Iran Nuclear Agreement. Many people judge these accomplishments are the result of Obama Doctrine that emphasizes multilateralism and pragmatism, rather than the unilateralism of Bush or even the isolationism of Monroe. However, Obama has also clearly indicated that the retention of nuclear weapons, e.g., in North Korea, forecloses opportunities for cooperation with the United States and other countries.

Some people argue that the Obama Doctrine sometimes refers to the "Pivot to Asia," mentioning the 2011 Canberra Speech, which emphasized the Asia-Pacific region as the top security priority. Obama has still maintained the idea that another unilateral Middle East war would be harmful for the U.S. interest. In September 2014, President Obama stated this view directly:

This is not our fight alone. American power can make a decisive difference, but we cannot do for Iraqis what they must do for themselves, nor can we take the place of Arab partners in securing their region.²¹⁸

As a result, the Obama administration eventually finished the Afghanistan war on December 28, 2014, which lasted more than 13 years since October 7, 2001.²¹⁹ In the Asian region, Obama, in reverse, agreed to the “New Type of Great Power Relations” with Xi Jin-ping for international co-operation at the first Nuclear Security Summit on March 24, 2014 in Hague. Furthermore, both countries, at that summit talks, agreed on the peace of Korean Peninsula, aiming the settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue.

For the security and economy, the stability of Asian region is critical for both China and the United States. However, their competition for taking the initiative in this region is strengthening. Also, the North Korean threat is a significant issue to both the United States and China. Even Obama’s pragmatic foreign policy selected strict sanctions (or actions) against those nuclear threats of the DPRK. This U.S. tendency toward Northeast Asia was distinguishable in *the 2014 QDR*. Moreover, the document no longer mentioned the transfer of the ROK’s wartime OPCON transfer. Based on this perception, the United States stressed the ROK-U.S. alliance, including extended deterrence. It was still not so bad for the United States to keep the ROK wartime OPCON for a while in order to maintain the stability of the Korean Peninsula, considering the North Korean threat and the rise of China.

b. The Defense Budget: Analysis on Economy

According to the Budget Control Act of 2011 on August 1, the United States had to begin the sequestration on January 1, 2013. The Senate, however, passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 on January 1, 2013, which delayed the sequestration until March 1, 2013, considering a fiscal cliff—a sudden economic shrinkage. On March 1,

²¹⁸ Baron, “Don’t Expect Obama To Obama To Budge on His High Bar For Intervention.”

²¹⁹ After this declaration of the end of the Afghanistan war, the United States planned to gradually withdraw all of its troops by the end of 2016—from 9,800 to 5,500 troops in 2015 and down to 0 troops in late 2016. However, Obama delayed the original withdrawal plan on October 15, 2015 at the strong request of Afghanistan president Ashraf Ghani, considering the severe instability in the region due to the Taliban and ISIS. This decision also shows how the Obama doctrine can be flexible.

2013, the Sequester officially took effect with President Obama's signature under the conflicts between Republicans and Democrats. However, the Sequester will earnestly take effect in FY2016—the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 on December 26 allowed the sequester cap for FY2014 and FY2015 to impose in the cap of FY2022 and FY 2023.

As the Sequestration took effect in 2013, “the sequestration of discretionary funding in 2013 reduced budget authority subject to the caps by an estimated \$55 billion (and reduced budget authority for spending not constrained by the caps by an additional \$8 billion).”²²⁰ Moreover, under sequestration, “From 2014 to 2021, CBO estimates, the automatic spending reductions would reduce the caps by about \$90 billion per year.”²²¹ It turned out that the 2013 defense budget would be cut about 10 percent, and the annual increase rate of defense budget would be limited around 2 percent for 10 years.

How did U.S. economic situations such as the Sequester affect the wartime OPCON transfer issue? Why did the United States accept the ROK's request for the re-delay in 2014 in terms of economy? The conversation between American Ambassador to Korea Mark Lippert (October 29, 2014 - Present) and Senator John McCain at the senate confirmation hearing in June 2014 could explain this.

At the hearing, McCain asked Lippert, “A question for you [Mr. Osius, U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam] and Mr. Lippert: The Chinese obviously continue to stoke tensions...I think in the South China Sea, the situation remains more challenging...,” and Lippert answered, “Well, first, first, Senator, I do think we need to protect, where I sit currently in the Pentagon, robust defense spending in the Asia Pacific region... I think the initiatives we've had in Singapore, Australia, Philippines—also, we are now getting increased access to parts of Malaysia...”²²² Son Jae-min interpreted that the reason

²²⁰ CBO (Congressional Budget Office), “The Budget and Economic Outlook: 2014 to 2024,” (February 4, 2014): 20, https://www.cbo.gov/sites/default/files/113th-congress-2013-2014/reports/45010-Outlook2014_Feb_0.pdf.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² C-Span, Nominations: Ambassadors to the Republic of Korea, to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to the People's Democratic Re, *Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, last updated June 17, 2014, <http://www.c-span.org/video/?86833-1/nominations-ambassadors-republic-korea-socialist-republic-vietnam-peoples-democratic-re>.

Lippert could answer this question with confidence was that he served as Asia-Pacific assistant secretary and Chief secretary of DOD, although the answer was beyond his position—American Ambassador to Korea.²²³

McCain asked in succession, “Before I turn to Mr. Osius, the Camp Humphreys transition is proceeding OK?,” and Lippert answered, “My sense is that things are generally on track. I think the HHOP issue, as you know, remains challenging. The amount of money we’re asking U.S. service...”²²⁴ Finally, McCain said, “Well, I hope we can, because the movement obviously has to take place, and also this issue of Operational Control hangs out there as well.”²²⁵

As the author mentioned in the Chapter III, the relocation of the USFK into the Camp Humphrey is a part of the LPP and the GPR of the Bush administration. That was the main reason why the United States agreed to burden the cost for the LPP. However, the USFK could use the ROK’s defense burden sharing not just for its expense of stationing but also for its camp transfer cost during 2004–2013 according to the LPP in 2004. CINCCFC Sharp, when the first OPCON transfer delay agreement was reached in 2010, required that the USFK could use the ROK’s defense burden sharing into the LPP until 2015. The re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014 might have meant that the ROK should pay more defense burden sharing. Although the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in 2013, announced that the cost transfer of burden sharing into the LPP would no longer be allowed, the ROK after a long tug-of-war with the U.S. in the 9th 2014 SMA, allowed the continuous transfer of the cost into the relocation of the USFK, and the defense burden sharing was about 920 billion won (5.8 percent increased than 2013) in 2014 and would be more than 1 trillion won after 2017. There is no free lunch in the world.

²²³ Jae-min Son, “Why did the United States accept the ROK’s request for the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer?,” *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 29, 2014, http://news.khan.co.kr/kh_news/khan_art_view.html?code=990334&artid=201410292057485.

²²⁴ C-Span, Nominations: Ambassadors to the Republic of Korea.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Let us focus on the U.S. military complex for a while. As we know, the U.S. Congress has a close relation with the military complex not only just for their local electors (economies) but also by their lobbyists. There are numerous studies about their relations. When the ROK first reconsidered and requested the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in the early 2014, the reverse current of the U.S. Congress was strong. If the Congress had continuously maintained the opposite position strongly, the decision of the re-delay in 2014 would have been difficult. When the ROK decided to purchase more than 10 trillion won worth of weapons such as F-35A (contracted in September 2014), Global Hawk (contracted in December 2014), and PAC-3 (will be contracted in 2015), the U.S. Congress's opposition softened up toward the decision. One of the powerful Senate McCain aides anonymously said to *Hani*, "Now, the Congress has an open mind to Obama's decision (the re-delay)," after the ROK's decision for purchase of U.S. weapons.²²⁶ The purchase of U.S. cutting-edge weapons did not directly enable the re-delay, but it may have helped suppress Congress's opposition.

The ROK military weapon system has a high inter-compatibility to the United States under the ROK-U.S. combined military system, including the wartime OPCON. Since 2014, the deployment of the THAAD has been hot issue in the ROK. U.S. Congress and even Obama do not cut investing in the MD system under the Sequester.

Although the ROK continuously announces that the ROK military has not any plans for the deployment or purchase of the THAAD, CINCCFC Curtis Scaparrotti said in the forum of KIDA, "I requested the deployment of the THAAD, personally," in June 2014.²²⁷ Moreover, the ROK Minister of national Defense Han Min-goo showed a positive attitude toward the deployment of the THAAD at the National Defense Committee in June 2014—the THAAD system will be helpful to the ROK's security and defense.²²⁸ It seems that we need some time to see how the ROK and the U.S.

²²⁶ Hyun Park, "U.S. Weapons into the ROK: The Price for the Re-delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer?," *Hani*, October 20, 2014, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/international/america/660503.html>. [Note: quotation translated by the author from Korean language reporting.]

²²⁷ Byung-soo Park, "The Sign for the Deployment of the THAAD ...For U.S. Military Complex?," *Hani*, October 19, 2014, <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/defense/660472.html>.

²²⁸ Park, "Sign for Deployment of THAAD."

governments will resolve the THAAD issue and its relation to the KAMD and L-SAM given technology, budget, and other issues.

According to Lockheed Martin, the THAAD (40-150km) and the PAC-3 (0-40km) are inter-compatible and known as the current most powerful and effective MD system—surface-to-air missile; “THAAD can accept cues from Aegis, satellites, and other external sensors to further extend the battle space and defended area coverage, and operates in concert with the lower-tier Patriot/PAC-3 system to provide increased levels of effectiveness.”²²⁹ The ROK is going to purchase and deploy the PAC-3 system with the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014.

c. *Re-perception toward Korean Peninsula: The Role of USFK*

The traditional role of the USFK was to deter the North Korean threat and keep the stability in the Korean Peninsula. Furthermore, nobody can deny the fact that the USFK has guaranteed the stable growth of the ROK and the peace in the peninsula. In addition, both countries know the critical role of the alliance. Many people say that the mandate of the ROK OPCON to the U.S. has been a trip-wire to secure the U.S. automatic intervention. Through this OPCON system, the ROK could have minimized the possibility of U.S. abandonment and maximized the deterrence toward the DPRK.²³⁰ Despite the risk of the entrapment, the U.S. has demonstrated reliable security support toward the allies and established the effective battle capability through the combined chain of command.²³¹

According to the declassified document, the former CINCCFC Burwell Bell (Feb, 2006–June, 2008) estimated the capability of the ROK was more than expected and

²²⁹ Lockheed Martin, “THAAD: Product Card,” <http://www.lockheedmartin.com/content/dam/lockheed/data/mfc/pc/thaad/mfc-thaad-pc.pdf>.

²³⁰ Jung-in Moon, “What Are Problems of the Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer?,” *Open His* 58 (Spring 2015): 17, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06229611>.

²³¹ Ibid.

enough to get the wartime OPCON.²³² Sharp, in his project with the CSIS in 2013, took a similar stand:

The number one responsibility of a country is to protect its own people. Korea has this capability being the 12th richest country in the world with an outstanding military. By 1 Dec 2015, over 62 years will have passed since the end of the Korean War. It is time for Korea to command the defense of its own country.²³³

Then, what made the United States keep the wartime OPCON? One of possible explanations is that the maintaining of the wartime OPCON is helpful to the USFK as well, in the changed Northeast Asian security environment. Today, the role of the USFK is not just limited in the Korean Peninsula. The security environment of Northeast Asia is getting tumultuous not just because of North Korea but also from the conflicts among China, Japan, and South Korea. Jonathan D. Pollack considers this situation:

The risks of incidents or accidents between China and Japan have increased further with Beijing's declaration of an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) along its central eastern coast. We need to work with these states to reduce tensions and avoid situations that could rapidly escalate into a military confrontation that none wants, and ensure that China's ADIZ is implemented consistent with best international practice.²³⁴

Although it is a hypothetical argument, the United States also might have thought that keeping the wartime OPCON for a while is beneficial to the stability of Northeast Asia. Before the ROK's request, the U.S might have also seen a need for the re-delay.

Furthermore, the USFK, especially the 2nd infantry division, has been a significant symbol. Although the U.S. Department of the Army announced in 2015 that the Sequester could not affect the strength of the USFK, the U.S. Army might reduce its strength to around 420,000 troops by 2019. According to the U.S. Army, "If sequestration

²³² Wook-sik Jung, "The Report of the Former CINCCFC Sharp ...," *Pressian*, October 27, 2014, <http://www.pressian.com/news/article.html?no=121292>.

²³³ Walter Sharp, "OPCON Transition in Korea," CSIS (December 2013), http://csis.org/files/publication/131216_OPCON_Transition_in_Korea.pdf.

²³⁴ Jonathan D. Pollack, "Return to the Asia Rebalance and the U.S.-China Relationship," *Brookings*, last updated January 23, 2014, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2014/01/asia-rebalance-us-china-relationship-pollack-bader>.

level cuts are imposed in fiscal year 2016 and beyond, end-strength would be further reduced to 420,000 Soldiers by fiscal year 2019.”²³⁵ This would be the smallest number since the Second World War.

It is not an exaggeration that the USFK (2nd division) are the last U.S. army that sustains conventional army doctrine and tactics specifically for the topography and situation of the Korean Peninsula. Since the 7th division withdrew from the ROK under the Nixon Doctrine in 1971, the 2nd division has played in a critical role in the ROK. Both divisions were historic forces and established in 1917. However, the U.S. army had to reduce its number of brigades according to the GPR: “The Secretary of Defense approved the deactivation of the 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division in the Republic of Korea, and it will be replaced by a rotational brigade combat team from the United States [in 2015].”²³⁶

The original 2nd division in 2005 had four brigades (1, 2, 3, and 4 combat brigades) and one combat-aviation brigade. The 4th brigade was disbanded on March 14, 2014 in the U.S. In addition, the 1st brigade (Armored Brigade Combat Team) was disbanded on July 2, 2015 in the ROK—the 1st brigade was the only remaining U.S. Army force stationed in the ROK. Therefore, a brigade that is stationing in the continental U.S. will rotate to the ROK between 9th months. Today, except for the 2nd division’s artillery in Alaska and 2nd and 3rd SBCTs (Striker Brigades Combat Teams) in the continental U.S., only the separated 210 field artillery brigade in *Dongducheon* and the 2nd combat-aviation brigade in Camp Humphrey remain in the ROK.

What would be the headquarters of the 2nd division that was going to be disbanded in 2015? Rather than disbanding the 2nd division, both the ROK and the United States established the ROK-U.S. combined division in Camp Red Cloud of

²³⁵ Scout Reports, Army listens to community concerns about potential force reductions, U.S. Army, last updated December 5, 2014, http://www.army.mil/article/139467/Army_listens_to_community_concerns_about_potential_force_reductions/.

²³⁶ Eighth Army Public Affairs, Rotational Force Will Arrive for Deactivating 1st Armored Brigade Combat Team, U.S. Army, last updated November 6, 2014, <http://www.army.mil/article/137824>.

Uijeongbu (which will be transferred to Camp Humphrey soon) on June 3, 2015.²³⁷ It was the first example of the combined division and the second example of combined troops in the world after the France and Germany brigade. In the peacetime, it constitutes the combined headquarters and staffs—the U.S. division commander (major general), the ROK deputy commander (brigade general), and the combined staff members. It is expected to strengthen the combined exercise and deter the North Korean more effectively. In the wartime, one of the ROK brigades will be attached to the division.

The most critical role of the division is to maintain the stability of the Korean Peninsula in the changed security environment of Northeast Asia. However, we should pay attention to both countries' internal intentions as well. Under the Sequester, the U.S. army might have thought this structure would be beneficial to maintain the strength of army with the wartime OPCON. In the current ROK-U.S. military structure, there are three major U.S. army headquarters: the CFC (under U.S. four-star general), the 8th United States Army (under U.S. lieutenant general), and 2nd infantry division (under U.S. major general), except the 7th air force (under lieutenant general) and other generals who have duties as staffs in those headquarters. Four of the former CINCCFC commanders, John Tilelli (1996-96), Burwell Bell (2006-08), Walter Sharp (2008-11), and James D. Thurman (2011-13) said that the decision of the re-delay was the right decision in a 2014 interview with *DongA*.²³⁸ This was a different result from 2010. With the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer, the ROK could also get another combined organization—the combined division—in the current CFC system in case of the planned transfer.

D. CONCLUSION

The 2014 security environments of the ROK and the United States were almost similar in 2010. Nonetheless, the North Korean threat was continuously increasing with the third nuclear test in 2013, and the U.S. concerns about Chinese economic and military

²³⁷ For more information, see Courtesy, "U.S., Republic of Korea Armies to Establish Combined Division," U.S. Army, last updated January 15, 2015, http://www.army.mil/article/141268/U_S___Republic_of_Korea_armies_to_establish_combined_division/?from=RSS.

²³⁸ Suk-ho Shin and Seung-heon Lee, "The Re-delay of the Wartime OPCON, The Right Decision," *DongA*, October 27, 2014, <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20141026/67454082/1>.

power, which is getting strong. This security environment strongly affected the decision of the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2014. However, there are the ROK conservatives (the Park government) and U.S. pragmatists (the Obama government), who recognized the security environment with their own ideologies.

What this thesis found in 2014 is that the ROK conservatives prioritize the security of the ROK more than self-esteem (sovereignty), considering the political, economic, and military situations. This is the main reason that the ROK conservatives continuously request the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer. However, we can know that the United States has also been trying to maximize their national interests by pressing more defense burden on the USFK or U.S. weapons to the ROK when the ROK requested the delay of the wartime OPCON.

This thesis finds that the security environment is critical and could affect the continuous delay of the wartime OPCON; however, the key actors of those decisions are policy decision makers. In addition, the most important factors are their ideologies and perceptions. Based on their values, they always try to maximize their national interests. In the ROK wartime OPCON issues, the ROK progressives and conservatives and the U.S. neoconservatives (unilateralists) and pragmatists (multilateralists) will remain key members.

Nevertheless, the author found that it is hard to identify a pattern of the ROK-U.S. domestic politics in the wartime OPCON issue because extreme changes in the security environment and other factors could affect this problem as well. One attested-fact, however, is that domestic politics between progressive Roh Moo-hyun and neoconservative G.W. Bush affected the decision of the wartime OPCON transfer in 2007. It was a starting point of the debate for the weakened ROK-U.S. alliance and the wartime OPCON issue. In reverse, conservative Lee Myung-bak and Park Guen-hye and pragmatist Barack Obama changed the wartime OPCON transfer decision and re-strengthened the ROK-U.S. alliance.

In the current security environment of Northeast Asia, if the ROK conservative and U.S. pragmatic government would keep going, there would be no more big changes

in the OPCON issue. However, nobody knows the result of the ROK 2017 and U.S. 2016 presidential elections. If some future U.S. president really thinks U.S. security support to the ROK is “a free ride,” or if a future ROK president really wants the ROK’s autonomy in the OPCON issue, the ROK-U.S. alliance could waiver and the big debate will start again. We have learned that rapid change without any preparations can cause turmoil and tumultuous debates in the ROK and even the U.S. That is why the ROK should prepare the transfer process meticulously with the United States.

Table 8 summarizes the major findings of this chapter.

Table 8. Second OPCON Transfer Delay Decision Factors

	Specific nature of the factor	Direction of influence on alliance	Strength of influence on OPCON transfer delay	Outcome
ROK security conditions	Increasing DPRK security/WMD threats	ROK increasing conventional strength for DPRK threat	Moderate	Re-strengthening ROK-U.S. Alliance
ROK domestic politics	- Conservative government - Perceived increase in DPRK threat	- Concern transfer would weaken alliance - Hardline DPRK policies	<u>Strong</u>	<u>Delay OPCON transfer</u>
US security conditions	- Pivot to Asia - Rise of China - Advance TPP - Reduce overseas forces - Sequestration impact	- Improve U.S.-ROK relationship - Increase strength of ROK alliance - Increase ROK burden-sharing	Medium	Re-strengthening of Alliances in Asia
US domestic politics	- Multilateralism - Reduce defense spending	- Alliance fit to Asia pivot continues - Continued ROK support for PSI, MD	Medium	<u>Delay OPCON transfer</u>

V. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

The preceding chapters examined the security and political dimensions of debate over the original OPCON transfer decision and the two decisions to delay the transfer. The most important findings of that examination are as follows.

According to John Lewis Gaddis, “Historians, political scientists, economists, psychologists, and even mathematicians claimed to detect patterns in the behavior of nations.”²³⁹ However, Gaddis observes that IR theories’ failure to predict the end of Cold War demonstrates their ineffectiveness; he quips, “If you are a student, switch from political science to history.”²⁴⁰ Similarly, David A. Welch writes that “IR theorists should stop reading Thucydides,” explaining Thucydides did not intend to find “certain tendencies” or “patterns.”²⁴¹ Welch argues that “whether or not Thucydides was a constructivist himself ... I believe we would see that anthropomorphizing or black-boxing the state obscures from view the fact that the essentially domestic-political problem of *ruling well* is prior to, and inseparable from, international-political problems of stability and security.”²⁴² As Welch claims, dominant IR theories might be limited in their ability to explain the real domestic, regional, and world issues.

This thesis adopts these perspectives in focusing on domestic drivers to unravel the wartime OPCON transfer issue. Major IR theories such as “Asymmetric Alliance theory” and “Balance of Threat theory,” which previous studies utilized, are limited in their explanation of the continuous delay of the wartime OPCON transfer. So, this thesis focuses on domestic politics, in line with Allison’s models, to find better explanations. However, as Putnam writes, domestic politics and the international level (security)

²³⁹ John Lewis Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War,” *International Security*, no. 3 (1992-1993): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2539129>.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²⁴¹ David A. Welch, “Why International Relations Theorists Should Stop Reading Thucydides,” *Review of International Studies* 29:3 (2003): 316–17, http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0260210503003012.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 318.

eventually have interconnectivity. This thesis tries to fill a gap between domestic politics and security with regard to the wartime OPCON transfer issue.

In the 2007 wartime OPCON transfer agreement, the environment of post-Cold War and 9/11 altered the nature of the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, the negotiation between the administrations of ROK progressive Roh (strong factor) and U.S. neoconservative Bush (catalyst) was the key for the wartime OPCON transfer agreement. In the first 2010 wartime OPCON transfer delay, the rise of China and the increased North Korean threat catalyzed the re-strengthening of the ROK-U.S. alliance under the Pivot to Asia concept. However, the first delay could be accomplished with ROK conservative Lee's strong request and U.S. pragmatist Obama's acceptance. The perception of the conservative Lee government toward the North Korean threat was critical for the first delay. Similarly, in the 2014 wartime OPCON transfer delay, prioritizing the security of ROK conservative Park, debating with the ROK progressives, was the main reason for the second delay.

The result of this study indicates that the security environment is critical and could drive the continuous delay of the wartime OPCON transfer; however, the key actors of those decisions are policy decision makers. Unless the security environment changes drastically, the ROK conservatives and progressives and the U.S. neoconservatives and pragmatists will remain key factors.

B. CURRENT ISSUES AND PLANS FOR THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER

1. Current Issues

a. In the ROK: Pro and Con Debates

In the literature review of this thesis, the pro and con debates toward the wartime OPCON issue are mainly based on the interpretation of the ROK's military sovereignty and autonomy. The preceding chapters reviewing debate over OPCON transfer decisions clarified these issues and also revealed the political as well as security dimension of the ROK decision-making. This section examines how this debate is now framed.

Today, some ROK progressives always use the wartime OPCON issue to criticize the ROK military, referring to “The incapable ROK military without the wartime OPCON.” Let us examine prominent progressive arguments for examples.

First, Moon Jung-in argues that the continuous delay of the wartime OPCON transfer will be an obstacle to the construction of the Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula.²⁴³ The main reason for this argument is that the DPRK has not acknowledged the ROK as the state directly involved in the armistice agreement. Therefore, he claims that it makes sense that the North Korean decision makers look down on the ROK military, which cannot wage war independently. To sum up, he concludes that the transfer of the wartime OPCON will help to establish peace when the DPRK recognizes the ROK as an authentic sovereign state with independent control over its war-making powers, although it sounds like a paradox.²⁴⁴

Second, Kim Jong-dae, the progressive and influential editor of *Defense 21*, continually raises the question of whether or not the ROK’s military is inferior to Iraq’s military.²⁴⁵ He describes that when the shelling of *Yeonpyong* occurred in 2010, the ROK military high command was just arguing over whether or not to attack the DPRK independently. He also claims that the then-current high command could not determine whether or not to use the F-15K to attack the DPRK. The ROK progressives interpret this as the lack of the ROK’s wartime OPCON and military capability. According to Kim, the then current CFC Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations at U.S. Forces in Korea, John A. Macdonald, became angry when the ROK military asked him how to react to the DPRK’s attack, and Macdonald questioned to the ROK military, “Is the ROK military really inferior to Iraq’s military?”²⁴⁶

These progressive arguments sound correct superficially; however, rational judgment should be applied before making emotional criticism of both the ROK and the

²⁴³ See Jung-in Moon, “What Are Problems of the Delay of the Wartime OPCON Transfer?,” *Open His* 58 (Spring 2015): 14–23, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06229611>.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ See Jong-dae Kim, “The ROK military, which is inferior to the Iraq military,” *OhmyNews*, June 10, 2015, http://www.ohmynews.com/NWS_Web/View/at_pg.aspx?CNTN_CD=A0002117050.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

United States with regard to the states' political or military key decisions. Let us examine some conservatives' counter-arguments for these progressive claims.

First, in response to Moon's argument, what else could guarantee peaceful action from the DPRK—not hostile behavior—after the transfer of the wartime OPCON? Regardless of the wartime OPCON transfer, the North Korean major goal of unification under communism and the withdrawal of the U.S. Armed Forces from the Korean Peninsula will have not changed. The stability of the Korean Peninsula would totter unless the ROK and the United States prepare a future military structure which guarantees stability or peace on the Korean Peninsula before the wartime OPCON transition. A hasty transition without sufficient preparation might just deteriorate the status quo of the Korean Peninsula.

In contrast to Moon's claim, Hwang Jin-ha, a famous ROK conservative member of the National Assembly, writes that the wartime OPCON transfer would transmit the wrong strategic signal which might lead the DPRK to consider the deterioration of the ROK-U.S. combined deterrence toward North Korea, rather than induce the DPRK to recognize the ROK as a negotiating partner for the Peace Regime on the Korean Peninsula.²⁴⁷ He also mentions that the current ROK security issue of sudden change in North Korea is a problem of time, not a possibility.²⁴⁸

Second, in response to Kim's assertion, when the shelling of *Yeonpyong* broke out in 2010, the ROK Marine Corps in that island sufficiently counter-fired around 80 shells from K-9 self-propelled howitzers within 13 minutes. However, using fighters such as F-15Ks is a symbolic military action in peacetime and could make a diplomatic stir in every country. This is because that decision exceeds the peacetime ROE (Rule of Engagement). The ROK received two-civilian and two-soldier casualties. The number of DPRK deaths was unclear, but some argue that platoon or company troops were exterminated—others insist that the DPRK received light damage.

²⁴⁷ Jin-ha, Hwang, "The Wartime OPCON Transfer Deteriorating the Deterrence toward North Korea ... Should Delay," *The Institute for Peace Affairs* 318 (2010): 24, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/article/NODE01445105>.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

Nonetheless, according to *Radio Free Asia*, the North Korean army suffered around 40 casualties from the ROK's counter-fire of *Yeonpyong*.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, the North Korean army (especially the 4th Corp) has been afraid of the ROK's cutting-edge weapons and reluctant to fight a war (battle) with the ROK military since the shelling of *Yeonpyong*.²⁵⁰ This *RFA* report, in reverse to Kim's opinion, tells us how the ROK's counter-fire of *Yeonpyong* was sufficient and fearful to the North Korean army.

In the 2015 land mine incident, which almost escalated to total war, the ROK showed strong will and capability to the DPRK, including dozens of counter-fire shelling toward north of the DMZ when the DPRK only fired direct-fire-weapons toward the south of the DMZ in advance. If the DPRK clearly and massively fired into South Korea again, the ROK might have used F-15Ks to strike the source of provocation. Furthermore, co-operation with ROK's strong ally, the United States, is not strained. The security coordination with the U.S. would also be a rational choice, if necessary.

ROK conservatives have argued that the wartime OPCON transfer issue is not just a sovereignty problem. It is a more complex security issue for the ROK's defense and national interests, rather than simple self-esteem or emotional issues. According to Han, the wartime OPCON is part of military sovereignty, not a whole sovereignty.²⁵¹ The ROK has other military sovereignties such as the independence of the defense industry, a defense policy, and other rights. For this context, the ROK conservatives insist that more detailed political (harmony between autonomy and security), economic (self-defense capability), and military (ROK-U.S. trusted combined military structure) preparations should precede the wartime OPCON transfer.

Therefore, the Park administration's decision for the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer did make sense, especially in the viewpoint of the ROK conservatives. However, some criticize this decision because they might think that this re-delay was just

²⁴⁹ Radio Free Asia, Around 40 North Korean Army Casualties from the ROK's Counter-fire of *Yeonpyong*, last updated March 1, 2012, http://www.rfa.org/korean/in_focus/counterattack-02292012161205.html.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Han and Jeong, "Wartime Operational Control Authority Transfer Issue," 19.

political strife without any serious thinking. For example, the re-delay would raise tumultuous debates if the ROK government just consistently takes the “ABR attitude” or argues that the ROK military are not prepared to receive the wartime OPCON responsibility, without military reformation (or transformation) under the sufficient (or limited) defense budget. The debate between the logics of autonomy and security seems to be a wasted argument for the wartime OPCON transfer. What the ROK really needs is political, economic, and military measures of the strengths and weaknesses as a result of the wartime OPCON transfer. Furthermore, wartime OPCON transfer would significantly change a strong ROK-U.S. alliance, which has existed for more than 60 years; that is not easy in the short term. Again, these are reasons why the ROK, in advance, should prepare carefully for the process of the transfer with the United States.

Dan Bryan writes, “The analogy of a poker game is often used to describe Nikita Khrushchev, John F. Kennedy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.”²⁵² The decision makings of Kennedy and Khrushchev, when the Cuba Missile Crisis occurred in 1962, were like throwing in their hands in the card game where they could not know the result. Similarly, every foreign policy meets unexpected results in an uncertain situation. To minimize the risk of a card game, we need to be more rational, not emotional. The Park administration, in 2014, seemed to decide the re-delay of the wartime OPCON transfer based on a rational calculation of the security of the Korean Peninsula. History will judge whether or not this decision was right.

b. *Between the ROK and the United States*

In the complex process of the ROK’s request and U.S. acceptance, is the wartime OPCON issue just a problem for the ROK? Today, many Americans know that the ROK is a country wealthy enough to sustain its security on its own. Also, numerous military experts insist that the ROK military is strong enough to deter the North Korean threat and even wage a war against the DPRK. Some people might think that the support of the U.S. security is no longer needed and criticize the ROK as a free-riding country. If certain U.S.

²⁵² Dan Bryan, “The Cuban Missile Crisis, an Ultimate Poker Game,” *American History USA*, February 14, 2015, <http://www.americanhistoryusa.com/cuban-missile-crisis-ultimate-poker-game/>.

politicians and policy decision-makers maintain this attitude, the wartime OPCON issue would also be confronted by another transition period, not by the ROK, but by the United States.

To prevent this situation, not just for the wartime OPCON issue but also for the ROK-U.S. alliance, the role of U.S. think-thanks would be critical for the Korean Peninsula. ROK strategic thinkers need to engage their U.S. counterparts to expand awareness of why U.S. security for the ROK is not “a free ride.” The ROK also bears the defense burden sharing for the USFK around one trillion won (around 50 percent budget of the USFK) even though it is not satisfactory. The USFK has been using the cost for the relocation of its own base since 2004 as well. ROK strategic thinkers can do more to enhance U.S. awareness of ROK contributions and encourage U.S. decision-makers to continuously consider the role of the USFK and its benefits, not just for the United States but for the ROK-U.S. alliance in the Northeast Asian region.

Moreover, The ROK people also have to know the security benefits of the USFK. The value of the USFK is more than just the defense burden of the ROK. The ROK, if necessary, should continuously educate their people to prevent blind anti-Americanism, and to increase knowledge of the blood alliance history and the importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance. Domestic issues such as anti-Americanism of the ROK or anti-Korean sentiment of the U.S. could affect the alliance.²⁵³ Here is another reason why the ROK and the United States should prepare the wartime OPCON transfer carefully to maintain a mutual reciprocal strong alliance.

2. Plans for the Transfer: What the ROK Should Prepare

How should the ROK prepare for the wartime OPCON transfer? Again, we need to have a rational calculation not an emotional calculation. First, as professor Han Yong-sup argues, the ROK needs to examine political, economic, and military fields thoroughly

²⁵³ Stephen M. Walt also suggests three conditions for a renouncement of alliance—(1) the changed perception toward threats, (2) the mistrust between strong and weak nations, and (3) the situation when domestic issues (conflicts) are linked to the alliance.

See Stephen M. Walt, “Why Alliances Endure or Collapse,” in *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 39:1 (1997): 156–179, http://polsci.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/6B_Walt.pdf.

for the wartime OPCON transfer. Second, as *the 2014 defense white paper* reported, there need to be careful military preparations in detail. Finally, maintaining a strong ROK-U.S. alliance based on trust has always been the prerequisite, not just for the wartime OPCON issue but also for the ROK-U.S. alliance. This thesis is going to present preparations for the wartime OPCON transfer, even though it would be an approach in principle.

First, the ROK should assess and prepare political and economic fields for the wartime OPCON transfer. Politically, the wartime OPCON transfer issue is not just a simple exchange of autonomy and security as James D. Morrow argues in his asymmetric alliance theory. Although the autonomy of the ROK has increased, the tumultuous domestic conflicts between military sovereignty (self-pride) and security (defense) still exist. If the ROK did not prepare perfectly to get the independent wartime OPCON today, the ROK and the U.S. should also continuously develop the relation into the future oriented alliance for the wartime OPCON transfer in the near future. For this alliance system, reasonable agreements on defense burden sharing (the SMA) and the SOFA could calm both the ROK and U.S. extreme radical criticism toward the current alliance system. However, transparent information of those agreements opening to the ROK and U.S. publics will be more critical. To wrap up, the ROK-U.S. reasonable and acceptable change of the SMA and the SOFA could be catalytic factors for the future oriented ROK-U.S. alliance system for the wartime OPCON transfer.

Economically, the ROK should secure a sufficient defense budget for the KAMD and the Kill Chain military strength. Today, those capabilities are the critical prerequisites for the wartime OPCON transfer under the value of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. After the ROK accomplishes its goal for the KAMD and Kill Chain system, the ROK can get the wartime OPCON transfer against the North Korean asymmetric threat. However, if the ROK's situation of economy cannot support a sufficient defense budget, the ROK should keep trying to preferentially spend its limited budget for critical military strengths such as the Kill Chain and KAMD system to efficiently deter the North Korean asymmetric threat. Nonetheless, the ROK's conventional military force is strong enough to deter the North Korean conventional threat—the ROK, though, would not be able to ignore the conventional forces. Even

though the defense budget execution plan is difficult and unexpected, the ROK military high command should always try to secure a sufficient defense budget and devise a practical, efficient, and effective budget plan, mainly considering the North Korean nuclear threat, which is continuously increasing.

Militarily, the key point for the wartime OPCON transfer would be how the ROK could minimize the dependence on the United States. That means the ROK should improve its own ability to build their own strategic platforms in the fields of reconnaissance and surveillance; however, the most critical prerequisite for the wartime OPCON transfer is the combined military system that guarantees U.S. security support under the strong ROK-U.S. alliance in case of the sudden security crisis. *The 2014 Defense White Paper* suggests six military preparations in detail—(1) planning (2) organization (3) capability (4) exercise (5) strategic document (6) alliance initiative—for the wartime OPCON transfer and new ROK-U.S. combined military system.²⁵⁴ Let us examine the suggestions in detail, not just *the 2014 Defense White Paper*'s suggestions but also this author's proposals.

(1) Planning: The ROK and the United States should continuously cooperate and establish “the joint planning system” not only for the North Korean provocations in the peacetime but also for the combined wartime operation plan to substitute the current combined wartime plan—such as “the Operation Plan 5027.”²⁵⁵ Rather than the current combined operational wartime plan, the plan led by the ROK military with U.S. promised military support would be pivotal. Through the “MOA for Alliance Crisis Management,” the ROK and the United States could maintain a close military coordination.²⁵⁶ Even after the wartime OPCON transfer, this close and well-organized plan would promise the combined ROK-U.S. military efficient capability against North Korea and even other threats. For example, at the 47th SCM on November 2, 2015, both ROK Han Min-goo and U.S. Ashton Carter agreed to “the condition-based wartime OPCON transition” again and to a 4D operational concept, “detect, disrupt, destroy, and defense,” to counter the

²⁵⁴ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 126–7.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 126.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

North Korean nuclear and missile threat.²⁵⁷ This concept is known to be included in the ROK-U.S. operation plan. Until the completion of the wartime OPCON transfer, these constant consultations or plans will help maintain peace in the Korean Peninsula.

(2) Organization: The practice of these plans when both countries confront unexpected crises is much more critical than the literal combined planning. The new and upgraded organizations for this combined military coordination would be prerequisites for the wartime OPCON transfer. The scheduled USKORCOM in the Pacific Command will replace the role of the current combined command system—the CFC in the U.S. JCS. Some people are worrying about the practical role of the USKORCOM. The CDR USKORCOM would still be a U.S. army four-star general and maintain the command of UN forces. The current SCM and MCM system and expected AMCC (Alliance Military Coordination Center) will play a critical role between the ROK JCS and the USKORCOM. The reality of U.S. reinforcements in wartime is still in debate, not only for its concept feasibility but also for U.S. current real military strength number under the Sequester issue. To solve this issue of credibility, the enlarged numbers of direct command military strength under the authority of CDR USKORCOM could be another consideration and alternative after the wartime OPCON transfer. Today, as this author mentioned before, if assuming that there were no U.S. reinforcements, the practical U.S. forces that the CINCCFC can exercise are only the reduced U.S. 2nd division and the 7th air force in the ROK.

(3) Capability: Regardless to say, the capability of the ROK military is the most important factor for the wartime OPCON transfer. The KAMD and Kill Chain system against the North Korean asymmetric threat would be critical military strength as the author mentioned before. However, the combined battlefield information system would still be crucial even after the wartime OPCON transfer. To share the common operational

²⁵⁷ ROK Ministry of National Defense, “The 47th SCM Join Communique,” last updated November 2, 2015, <http://www.korea.kr/policy/pressReleaseView.do?newsId=156082934>. [Quotations translated by the author from Korean language statement.]

picture, *the 2014 defense white paper* suggests that the AKJCCS (Allied Korea Joint Command and Control System) system—the combined C4I system.²⁵⁸

(4) Exercise: The combined exercises could improve both countries' combined military capabilities to wage war. The current UFG exercise is the key for this goal. Even after the wartime OPCON transfer, both countries should continue this kind of exercise to improve and demonstrate a strong ROK-U.S. alliance. If necessary, multilateral peace keeping exercises such as the Khaan Quest in Mongolia could happen in the ROK. In addition, the first world example as a division level—the 2nd ROK-U.S. combined division—will have a critical role in the ROK. Moreover, a combined ROK-U.S. 7th division will be another alternative, although it is a limited and radical approach. The U.S. 7th division is now stationed in Fort Ord, Monterey, California, in the form of only a command group. The 7th division was the U.S. force stationed in the ROK before 1971. Today, a number of U.S. SBCTs (Striker Brigade Combat Teams) seem to be enough to cope with world conflicts, for example, as in the pinpoint-strike security environment, not for total war. The combined ROK-U.S. 7th division, either in the ROK or in the U.S., might also play a critical role both for the U.S. and ROK army by joining in multilateral peacekeeping operations together, not just within their limited role in the ROK.

(5) Strategic Document: According to the *DOD Dictionary of Military Terms*, the Strategic Direction is “The processes and products by which the President, Secretary of Defense, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff provide strategic guidance to the Joint Staff, combatant commands, Services, and combat support agencies.”²⁵⁹ In the ROK, the ROK JCS under the NCMA (National Command and Military Authority) gives orders of strategic guidance to the CFC for the major war command. In 1994, according to the Strategic Directive No. 2, the peacetime OPCON transferred from the U.S. to the ROK. Officially, when the wartime OPCON will be transferred to the ROK, the Strategic Directive No. 3 will be a substitute for the Strategic Directive No. 2, though it will be just

²⁵⁸ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 126.

²⁵⁹ DOD Dictionary of Military Terms, Strategic Direction, last amended June 15, 2015, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/?zoom_query=strategic+direction&zoom_sort=0&zoom_per_page=10&zoom_and=1.

a formal procedure. *The 2014 Defense White Paper* writes about these documents: “Accordingly, the Terms of Reference (TOR) and Strategic Directive No. 3 are being drafted to replace the old TOR and Strategic Directive No. 2 which were drafted upon the armistice OPCON transition in 1994.”²⁶⁰

(6) Alliance Initiative: Toward the future oriented ROK-U.S. alliance with the wartime OPCON transfer, the ROK and the U.S. have negotiated and agreed with the YRP in 2002 and the LPP in 2004, considering the relocation of the USFK. Each side, though, is trying to maximize their national interests in these issues, but both sides also recognize how the ROK-U.S. alliance is pivotal for them. To minimize criticisms from both countries’ domestic politics, the ROK and the U.S. should start and develop reasonable and acceptable agreements with regard to the future oriented ROK-U.S. alliance system, including, e.g., the SOFA and the SMA.

C. THE FUTURE OF THE WARTIME OPCON TRANSFER

In the current security environment, the North Korean threat seems to be steady. With the rise of China, the Northeast Asian region will be a more tumultuous nucleus for the world security and economy. When we assume that this security environment will long remain, the key factor for the wartime OPCON transfer will be ROK and U.S. domestic politics. There are two possible scenarios for this issue. First, this current ROK-U.S. decision for the wartime OPCON will remain for a while with the ROK conservative and U.S. pragmatic administrations. Second, this decision will become unstable under the ROK progressive and U.S. neoconservative governments (or with other forms).

Whatever domestic politics will follow in the ROK and the U.S., the tumultuous economic ups and downs will be much more catalytic factors for this issue as well. However, the economic factor will be perplexing in terms of anticipating the future outlook. Nevertheless, it is clear that the ROK should prepare under those unexpected conditions. For these reasons, the ROK should carefully prepare the wartime OPCON transfer in the military sector at first with U.S. military and security support. The ROK’s

²⁶⁰ ROK MND, *2014 Defense White Paper*, 127.

faithful military structural reform (e.g., the KAMD and Kill-chain) under a meticulous plan with the United States will be pivotal for the wartime OPCON transfer.

The ROK, in the near future, will be able to achieve wartime OPCON transfer without difficulties, once the ROK carefully prepares for the military consequences of the wartime OPCON transfer considering any possibilities and any situations. In conclusion, we need much more future oriented study of the ROK-U.S. military command structure to sustain a strong ROK-U.S. alliance after the wartime OPCON transfer is completed.

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