

# Shifting Strategic & Diplomatic Relations with the Koreans

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# THE U.S.-JAPAN ALLIANCE AND THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

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## **I. Introduction**

Given the growing importance of East Asia to global stability and prosperity, sustaining the five U.S. treaty alliances in the region—Japan, the Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines—will remain one of Washington’s central foreign policy priorities in the decade ahead. The Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations and their counterparts have made significant strides during the past decade to adapt U.S. alliances with Japan, Australia, and the ROK to new circumstances. Sustaining these relationships as mature partnerships will require that the allies maintain candid, high-level political dialogues, further transform their armed forces, and redouble efforts to sustain domestic support. In light of the growing interest of East Asian governments in expanded regional cooperation, it will also be important to demonstrate how these alliances provide a stable context for and complement multilateral arrangements. Relations with Thailand and the Philippines have advanced in recent years on the strength of counterterrorism, humanitarian relief, and peacekeeping cooperation. Several partnerships in Southeast Asia are benefiting from practical cooperation on humanitarian activities and in combating terrorism and other transnational threats as well as the growth of democracy in the region.

All these efforts are intertwined with Washington’s handling of several complex challenges, including the North Korean nuclear weapons program and potential instability on the Korean peninsula, a rising China and cross-strait tension between China and Taiwan, the sustenance of regional cooperation in combating terrorism, the realignment and transformation of the U.S. military presence in the region, Japan’s expanding role in international security affairs, and the promotion of peace and prosperity in Southeast Asia.

## **II. U.S.-Japan Alliance**

For close to half a century, the U.S.-Japan alliance and the U.S. military presence in Japan have served as the foundation for security, stability, and prosperity in East Asia. The 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States commits both countries to maintain and develop their capacities to resist armed attack and provide mutual assistance against certain attacks, as well as grant the U.S. armed forces access to facilities in Japan “for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of

international peace and security in the Far East.”<sup>1</sup> Forward-deployed forces in Japan have allowed the United States to maintain vital economic and strategic interests in the region, including security commitments to Japan, the Republic of Korea, and other Asian allies and friends. About 75 percent of the costs of the U.S. military presence in Japan are offset by the Japanese government through direct payments and indirect cost-sharing mechanisms.<sup>2</sup> For Japan, the alliance offers security consistent with its “peace constitution” at reduced costs (less than 1 percent of gross domestic product [GDP]), extended deterrence against potential threats of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in the region, and safeguard against any future Chinese bid for regional hegemony. Without the alliance, Japan would face unattractive choices, including significant expansion of its defense capabilities, which could exacerbate regional tensions or trigger a destabilizing arms race that would force neighboring countries to choose sides.

At the same time, the alliance is a central pillar of U.S. global strategy and complements Tokyo’s 2005 Integrated Security Strategy of fuller international engagement to prevent threats from reaching Japan. The U.S. ability to project power nearly halfway around the world from Japan was critical to the coalition’s success in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. A decade later, the deployment of the USS *Kitty Hawk* to the Persian Gulf from Yokosuka, accompanied by Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force escort ships in Operation Enduring Freedom, underscored the global significance of the U.S. presence in Japan and the mutual benefits of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

As the Cold War ended, doubts about the viability of and need for the alliance surfaced on both sides of the Pacific. In Japan, many questioned whether the costs of hosting U.S. forces were still warranted in the face of a diminished Soviet threat. In the United States, the legacy of bilateral trade and economic disputes

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1. The 1951 security treaty between Japan and the United States provided the initial basis for the alliance and allowed for the presence of U.S. armed forces “in and about” Japan “to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East and to the security of Japan against armed attack from without.” It was replaced by the 19 January 1960 Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between Japan and the United States, which commits both countries in common to maintain and develop their capacities to resist armed attack. It declares that an armed attack on either country in territories administered by Japan will be considered dangerous to the safety of the other. However, Japan was relieved of any obligation to defend the United States if it were attacked outside of Japanese territories because of limitations on its armed forces under Article 9 of the Japanese constitution. It also grants the U.S. armed forces access to facilities in Japan “for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East.”

2. This figure recognizes both direct, on-budget payment of U.S. stationing costs and off-budget forgone revenue from taxes, rents, or other charges. Japan provided \$3.2 billion in direct cost sharing during 2002 (DOD 2004a, table E-5).

in the 1980s, vocal Japanese opposition to the U.S. military presence, limited Japanese support during the 1991 Gulf War, and Tokyo's cautious response to the 1994 North Korean nuclear crisis caused many Americans to question Japan's value as an ally (Hwang 2005, 2). In response, the two governments worked to update the alliance to meet the challenges of the post–Cold War security environment and agreed in April 1996 to the Japan-U.S. Joint Declaration on Security. In September 1997, Japan issued the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation (MOFA 1997) and subsequently enacted legislation that would allow Japan to provide the United States with rear-area support in “situations in areas surrounding Japan.”

Since 2001, Japan has assumed a greater role in support of international stability and security. At the time of the 1991 Persian Gulf War, Japan's security responsibilities extended only 1,000 nautical miles from the home islands. Developments since that time include the looming threat of North Korea's nuclear weapons and long-range missile programs and the growth of China's regional influence and military capabilities. Also, the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks challenged traditional assumptions regarding Japan's security environment, stimulated an evolution in thinking about Japan's security policies, and reaffirmed the strategic importance of the alliance with the United States. Much has been accomplished, but more needs to be done to transform the alliance into a global strategic partnership.

### ***Convergent Strategic Assessments***

The U.S.-Japan alliance has advanced on the basis of convergent assessments of the international security environment and a strong mutual conviction that the alliance enhances the security of both countries and the Asia-Pacific region and fosters global peace and stability. These assessments are reflected in the key national security documents of the alliance partners: the U.S. 2001 and 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) reports and the 2002 and 2006 National Security Strategy reports; and Japan's 2002 defense white paper, the October 2004 report of the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, and the December 2004 new defense guidelines, as well as various bilateral statements.

Both the 2001 and 2006 QDR reports focused on uncertainty as the defining feature of the contemporary global security environment—the United States could no longer know when, or from what direction, the country or its allies might come under attack. Security could be threatened by major war, asymmetric attacks by rogue states, the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missile delivery systems, or acts of international terrorism possibly employing WMD.

Both QDR reports envisioned Asia as “a region susceptible to large scale military competition,” as the Bush administration wrestled with the best course for coping with China’s rise. While it did not specifically mention China, the 2001 QDR (DOD 2001, 4) focused heavily on the requirements of dissuading and deterring a possible “military competitor with a formidable resource base” in East Asia. The 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) advocated cooperative ties with China, reflecting U.S. interest in ensuring Beijing’s support in combating terrorism and on other global and regional security issues. The 2002 NSS opened the door to closer relations if China demonstrated a commitment to international norms and good-neighborly relations, a theme that became a touchstone of U.S. policy in 2005 as the administration encouraged China to become a more transparent and responsible stakeholder in the international system, while hedging against less favorable outcomes (Zoellick 2005; White House 2006, 40–42). Thus, the 2006 QDR report called for steps to shape the choices of “countries at strategic crossroads” (most prominently China) to dissuade a major military competition and unveiled the concept of “tailored deterrence” to deal with “near peer competitors” and “regional challengers” such as North Korea (DOD 2006a, 27–31).

Twenty-four Japanese citizens were lost in the attacks on the World Trade Center, and Japan had prior experience with domestic terrorism—the 1995 sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system by members of Aum Shinrikyo. The Japan Defense Agency’s 2002 white paper declared that the 9/11 terrorist attacks “defy not only the U.S., but also the freedom, peace and democracy of international society including Japan.” The document noted that certain regional disputes, ethnic conflicts, and the proliferation of WMD, particularly possible terrorist acquisition of WMD, at a time of growing interdependence “have been recognized not merely as domestic issues, but as concerns of the international community as a whole.” The white paper highlighted Japan’s obligations to UN Security Council Resolution 1363 to cooperate with the international community in the suppression of terrorist activity and recognized the leading role the United States played in this struggle (JDA 2002, 1–2). Consensus on this assessment enabled Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to secure Diet passage in October 2001—and annual renewal through November 2007—of the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Laws that authorized Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to deploy to the Indian Ocean to provide logistical support to U.S. and coalition forces in Operation Enduring Freedom. When the U.S. secretaries of state and defense met with their Japanese counterparts for the first time after 9/11 at the December 2002 Security Consultative Committee session, they readily agreed to expand cooperation to combat terrorism and the proliferation of WMD, mentioning both North Korea and Iraq (DOS 2002).

Two major reports issued during 2004 reflected the emerging consensus in Japan that the contemporary international security environment required fundamental changes in the country's strategy and defense posture. In March, the Defense Policy Subcommittee of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) issued a report that advocated amending Article 9 of the constitution to reflect the legitimacy of a Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) role in collective self-defense, consolidation of crisis decision making in the prime minister's office, enactment of a general law to support international peacekeeping, and enhancement of cooperation with the United States on new security threats (LDP 2004). The subcommittee report also advocated a major restructuring of the SDF to make it more flexible, and possible development of capabilities to strike enemy missile bases in the face of an imminent attack. In October, the Council on Security and Defense Capabilities, an advisory body to the prime minister and chaired by Hiroshi Araki, issued its report. The "Araki Report" declared that the events of 11 September 2001 "marked the beginning of a new century for security affairs," noting the potential threats from both state and nonstate actors. The council recommended an "integrated security strategy" for the defense of Japan and improving the global security environment, aiming "to prevent a direct threat from reaching Japan . . . and to reduce the chances of threats arising in various parts of the world with the aim of preventing such threats from reaching Japan or affecting the interests of Japanese expatriates and corporations overseas." The strategy envisions use of both hard- and soft-power measures by Japan alone, in tandem with the United States, and in cooperation with the rest of the international community to improve the security environment and prevent the emergence of new threats. The commission report expressed concern with China's rise and the risks to Japanese and global security by a conflict over Taiwan (CSDC 2004, 4–11).

Echoing the 2001 QDR report, Japan's 2002 white paper noted that "unpredictability and uncertainty have persisted" in East Asia as a result the diverse national security perspectives of various governments; unsettled regional issues, particularly the continuing tension on the Korean peninsula; and the presence of enormous military forces, including China's growing military strength. It concluded that the alliance with the United States and presence of U.S. forces remained essential to regional peace and stability.

Thus, in the Asia-Pacific region, the two governments share a commitment to eliminating the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program and peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula. While U.S. and Japanese leaders have endorsed a cooperative relationship with China, they have also jointly encouraged Beijing "to play a responsible and constructive role regionally as well as

globally”; to seek “the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue”; and “to improve transparency of its military affairs.” They have also endorsed Russia’s “constructive engagement” in the region and full normalization of Japan-Russia relations “through the resolution of the Northern Territories issue” and pledged mutual support for “a peaceful, stable and vibrant Southeast Asia” (DOS 2005c).

### ***Japan’s Expanding Security Role and the Alliance***

A trend toward greater Japanese involvement in international security issues has been established during the past few years and will likely continue during the coming decade. Given constitutional limitations, however, steps along this path have been fitful and sometimes required special legislation. In December 2001, the Diet amended the 1992 International Peace Cooperation Law, which set restrictive conditions for deployments and limited involvement to logistical support activities, to allow the SDF to undertake a range of core peacekeeping missions. The Diet later had to approve special measures so that 600 noncombat SDF engineers could support humanitarian and reconstruction operations in southern Iraq between February 2004 and July 2006 (PMJ 2003). Prime Minister Koizumi overcame domestic skepticism about the Iraq mission by arguing that the deployment was essential to bolster stability in the wider Middle East, the source of 90 percent of Japan’s oil supplies, and to maintain alliance relations with the United States. In addition to support for the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Koizumi government agreed to acquire and deploy missile defenses, participate in the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI),<sup>3</sup> enhance intelligence cooperation, and provide strong diplomatic backing for the U.S. position on North Korea’s nuclear weapons program. Crisis management legislation passed by the Diet in 2003 and 2004 has further strengthened Tokyo’s crisis response authorities and ability to work with the United States in areas surrounding Japan (Przystup 2005, 7).

Changing attitudes, particularly among Japanese in their 30s and 40s, toward Japan’s international role, possible constitutional revision, and the exercise of the right of collective self-defense have underpinned these developments. Japanese public support for the alliance with the United States has remained strong during the past 40 years but has grown even stronger since 2002, with approval levels at

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3. Japan hosted a PSI exercise in October 2004.

70 to 80 percent (Gittler 2006).<sup>4</sup> Although favorable views of the United States in Japan fell in the year after the Iraq War from 74 percent to 68 percent and dropped further to 63 percent in 2006 polling, public trust in the U.S. defense commitment remains very high (Pew 2006). As for the U.S. military presence, a majority of Japanese surveyed in 2004 felt U.S. bases should be reduced—49 percent “somewhat,” but only 15 percent “greatly”—and 67 percent expressed the belief that the bases are important to Japan. Americans also have very positive views of Japan and the alliance. While 63 percent of the public had positive views of Japan in 2001, 69 percent of the public and 91 percent of opinion leaders characterized Japan as a reliable ally (Pew 2006; MOFA 2006).

### ***SDF Transformation***

Japan is also moving to transform the SDF to meet emerging security challenges. In December 2003, the Koizumi government called for a defense posture review to ensure that the SDF is able to respond effectively to the threats of terrorism and the proliferation of WMD and ballistic missiles and to conduct proactive activities in support of international peace and stability. In December 2004, the government approved the resulting “National Defense Program Guideline for FY 2005 and After” (NDPG) and the related “Mid-Term Defense Plan [MTDP] FY 2005–2009” (Embassy of Japan 2004a; 2004b). These documents embraced the integrated strategy and force posture recommendations of the LDP’s Defense Policy Studies Subcommittee and the Araki commission.

The NDPG prescribes a major transformation of the SDF between 2005 and 2015 from its Cold War posture designed for defense of the homeland against full-scale invasion. It envisions a smaller (reduced from 162,000 to 155,000 personnel), more flexible, and mobile force with enhanced readiness. The NDPG notes the SDF must be able to cope with a diverse range of threats, including low-intensity attacks in the vicinity of Japan, ballistic missile strikes, terrorist actions, airspace intrusions, and attacks by guerrilla or special operations forces against offshore islands or critical infrastructure. To enhance the international security environment, the NDPG calls for active SDF participation in international peace operations and for intensified cooperation with the United States. To deal with the threat posed by ballistic missiles as well as more traditional state-based threats in areas surrounding Japan, it proposes to pursue ballistic missile defense systems and to strengthen the link to U.S. extended deterrence. It called for the

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4. According to a survey conducted in May and June of 2006 sponsored by the U.S. embassy in Tokyo, 80 percent of respondents said they favored or strongly favored the alliance. A similar poll in 2004 found 68 percent of those Japanese surveyed had the same views. The polling sponsored by the embassy is supported by a variety of other survey data.

creation of a Joint Staff office (which was established in April 2006) to improve cross-service operational planning, enhanced intelligence collection and analytic capabilities, and qualitative improvements to the force through the acquisition of technology, particularly information processing and networking capabilities.

Transformation of the SDF's legacy force structure (which emphasized antitank, antisubmarine, and anti-aircraft capabilities) and operational practices will take time. Budgetary constraints—including a 24.3 trillion *yen* (\$234 billion at 2004 rates) ceiling set on the total MTDP, with annual budget growth decreasing—and the demands placed on social welfare spending by a rapidly aging population will limit resources available for transformation and extend its timeline. So, too, the 2004 NDPG did not fully address the sensitive issue of whether the SDF could be involved in collective self-defense actions, which limits the SDF's role in various regional and global operations. Nonetheless, the course charted by the NDPG and the programmatic recommendations of the MTDP will advance SDF transformation and enhance alliance relations.

At the 29 October 2005 Security Consultative Committee meeting, the United States and Japan reached a sweeping agreement to reshape the alliance in ways that reflect Japan's willingness to play a larger role in its own defense and in regional and global security (DOD 2005). This agreement established the framework for closer military ties by calling for more integrated contingency planning, collocating some U.S. and Japanese headquarters and units on the same bases in Japan, expanding combined military exercises in both countries, and enhancing intelligence sharing—all steps designed to strengthen interoperability. To enhance combined missile defense activities, Japan agreed to find a site for deployment of a U.S. X-band radar, and the United States agreed to deploy additional capabilities (Patriot and Aegis) in and around Japan as appropriate.

### ***Key Challenges Ahead***

Much has been accomplished in recent years, but the gains are not set in concrete. The Shinzo Abe government was seen as likely to maintain the direction set by Koizumi. In a historic January 2007 speech to the North Atlantic Council, Prime Minister Abe (2007) noted that Japan and NATO share common values and responsibilities for dealing with global security challenges. Abe stated that Japan would “no longer shy away from carrying out overseas activities involving the SDF if it is for the sake of international peace and stability,” and he pledged to expand cooperation with NATO in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Yet this commitment to international engagement was a significant factor in Abe's surprise resignation nine months later, following a difficult year in office

marked by a series of political scandals and loss of control of the upper house of parliament in July by his LDP. Abe cited his inability to break a parliamentary deadlock over extension of the antiterrorism legislation that authorized Japan's controversial naval mission in the Indian Ocean as the proximate reason for his resignation, and he expressed the hope that his LDP successor could secure passage of the measure. The opposition Democratic Party of Japan remains firmly against the mission, however, and sees it as a wedge issue with which to build political momentum and even force early general elections (RFE/RL 2007).

Completion of the realignment of the U.S. military presence in Japan is essential to advancing future bilateral security relations. Enhanced alliance cooperation on regional and global security problems will also require further strengthening of Japan's institutional, legal, and military capabilities as well as fostering domestic support for this role. The central strategic issues facing Asia and Japan—North Korea's nuclear weapons, Korean unification, and China's emergence as the region's dominant power—should keep the alliance as a core element of Japan's security strategy. That said, this does not mean that Japan's support for the alliance can be taken for granted. This is particularly the case if the United States fails to manage each of these issues—as well the local politics of realignment—to an outcome that protects Japan's security interests. Japan wants no part of an Asia dominated by China, but most Japanese also want to avoid a confrontation with Beijing.

**Realigning the U.S. military presence in Japan.** With regard to basing issues, Tokyo has focused on Okinawa, where public pressure for a significant reduction of U.S. forces has been intense for two decades. Discussions on the overall realignment of the U.S. presence in Japan began in 2003, in tandem with the internal U.S. Global Posture Review.

Implementation of the 1996 bilateral Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) final report was an area of frustration for more than a decade (MOFA 1996). The report contained some 28 initiatives to reduce the impact of U.S. forces on the residents of Okinawa Prefecture as well as procedural changes to the Status of Forces Agreement—all of which have been implemented. The heart of the SACO report called for return of approximately 12,000 acres of land, contingent on relocation of various facilities within the Okinawa Prefecture. The centerpiece land return—the reversion of Marine Corps Air Station Futenma in a densely populated area of Ginowan city to Japan upon completion of a replacement facility elsewhere in Okinawa Prefecture—has been bogged down

for years in Tokyo-Okinawa politics.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, discontent in Okinawa with operations at Futenma owing to safety and noise concerns grew, and Tokyo's plans for construction of the replacement airfield through a land reclamation project across a coral reef met with intense local opposition (Yonetani 2004).

At the end of 2002, the United States and Japan launched the Defense Policy Review Initiative (DPRI) to advance alliance transformation, interoperability, and force realignment. After protracted and sometimes contentious negotiations, DPRI led to agreement on a detailed road map for the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan at the 1 May 2006 meeting of the Security Consultative Committee (DOS 2006a; 2006b). Among the issues addressed in the road map are realignment on Okinawa, including completion of a Futenma replacement facility in a less-populated area off Cape Henoko and the relocation of approximately 8,000 Marine personnel to Guam, land returns and shared use of facilities, improvement in U.S. Army command-and-control capabilities, joint use of Yokota airbase, relocation of the U.S. Navy carrier airwing from Atsugi to the Marine Corps air station at Iwakuni, missile defense, and joint training. The road map commits Japan to contribute \$6.09 billion in 2008 U.S. dollars toward the estimated \$10.27 billion cost involved in the relocation of the Marines from Okinawa to Guam.

Timely completion of these realignment initiatives is essential to alliance transformation. This will be a challenge, as public opinion on Okinawa remains strongly opposed to the Futenma replacement (Masaki 2006). The political leadership in Tokyo needs to make clear to the Japanese public, particularly on Okinawa, that realignment and transformation are not simply real estate transactions but also involve the enhancement of military capabilities and Japan's assumption of new responsibilities.

**Alliance management.** Further steps could be taken to strengthen high-level dialogue. During its first term, the Bush administration pursued a strategic dialogue between the deputy secretary of state and the vice minister of foreign affairs as a long-term planning mechanism to review regional and global developments, sustain strategic cooperation, and develop a common understanding and strategy toward China. In the second Bush term, this has been formally raised to the level of secretary of state–foreign minister. In practice, however, the dialogue is now managed in the U.S. government by the under secretary of state for political

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5. The SACO report originally envisioned relocation of Futenma to a sea-based facility within eight years, but local communities rejected the plan, and the entire project stalled. In 2002, the government of Japan and the Okinawa Prefecture reached agreement on a basic plan calling for relocation to a dual-use military-civilian landfill facility; construction has yet to begin, however, and the government of Japan does not envision completion before 2015.

affairs. Meanwhile, in 2005, the U.S. deputy secretary of state initiated a strategic dialogue with China. Although this has raised some concern in Japan that the United States is now paying greater attention to China and its economic dynamism, it is important to underscore in this context, and elsewhere, that the alliance with Japan—and the shared democratic values at its foundation—remains the pillar of U.S. regional and global strategy. Given Japan’s increasing role in support of international security and the elevation in 2007 of the Japan Defense Agency to a cabinet ministry, defense officials should be included in the strategic dialogue to complement the alliance’s existing “two plus two” structure.<sup>6</sup>

**Missile defense cooperation.** North Korea’s continuing development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missile delivery systems stands as a direct threat to the security of Japan and the United States, making missile defense cooperation a critical element in advancing security and technology cooperation. In December 2003, the Koizumi government announced that Japan would acquire and deploy missile defense capabilities and continue participation with the United States in the development of missile defenses. The government earmarked 106.8 billion *yen* (\$929 million) to initiate its missile defense acquisition in the FY 2004 budget. Spending on missile defense has been one area of steady growth in Japan’s defense budget since that time. Driven by concerns about the growing threat from North Korea, it reached 182.6 billion *yen* (\$1.5 billion) in FY 2007 to pay for early deployment of the Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) interceptor missiles and acquisition of Standard 3 missile interceptors for Aegis-equipped U.S. warships. Definition of the full program was a major focus of the NDPG and MTDP. The target date for the initial deployment of the missile defense system is 2008, and the system is scheduled to be fully operational in 2011.

The missile defense decision marks a significant step forward in Japan-U.S. defense cooperation and integration, and it is complemented by the purchase of Aegis destroyers, licensed production of the PAC-3 missile, and joint research and development on advanced interceptors. Both governments have reaffirmed their commitment to missile defense cooperation, which allows both countries to hedge against the long-term challenge posed by China’s continuing military buildup and modernization of its missile force. Greater cooperation in missile defense R&D and production would be facilitated by a decision to alter the Japanese

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6. The Araki Report (CSDC 2004, 14) also wisely recommended that U.S.-Japan cooperation in dealing with new transnational security threats and in the areas around Japan utilize the comprehensive mechanism under the security guidelines to integrate the efforts of a wide array of military, civil, and police agencies. The Japan Defense Agency became the Japan Defense Ministry on 9 January 2007.

government's arms export control policy. At the same time, the development and deployment of an operative missile defense system should not come at the cost of other elements of the U.S.-Japan security relationship, such as host nation support payments or SDF modernization.

**Institutional development.** To become a fuller partner in the alliance and the management of international peace and security, the Japanese government needs to continue to develop its national security institutions, military capabilities, and interoperability with U.S. forces. An important step in this process is the effort since April 2006 to enhance joint planning among the SDF branches. Combined planning with the United States concerning threats to Japan and contingencies in areas surrounding Japan should also be undertaken at the appropriate command levels, and the creation of a new U.S.-Japan Joint Task Force Headquarters at Camp Zama in 2008 should facilitate this (Halloran 2006).

Additional steps could be taken to improve intelligence sharing and crisis coordination. Japan has created a National Security Council, but its capabilities for crisis management and policy development at the subcabinet level need to be further developed. Japan also needs a government-wide legal system to protect classified information from unauthorized release. All these measures would improve U.S.-Japan crisis management. Finally, the Japanese Diet should pass permanent, generic laws establishing generic principles to facilitate timely Japanese participation in international peace operations rather than rely on special legislation to authorize each engagement.

**Sustaining Japanese political support for the alliance.** Although Japan's leaders seem open to increasing involvement in global security issues and have concerns about threats from North Korea and China, its citizens remain decidedly pacifist and uncertain about military engagement. Unlike in South Korea, the U.S. global posture review and its call for greater flexibility in the use of stationed forces was not controversial in Japan because those forces have regularly undertaken off-island operations, and the Japanese are more wary of China. Although Tokyo seems generally satisfied with the current consultation arrangements with respect to operations by U.S. forces in Japan, differences could still arise over controversial U.S. military actions supported by forces based in Japan. Political leaders in both countries could do more to emphasize to their constituents how the alliance and the U.S.-Japan strategic partnership support convergent interests in supporting democracy, prosperity, and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and around the globe.

### III. The U.S.-ROK Alliance

The alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea still enjoys strong support in both countries but is facing its most complex set of challenges since the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 was signed. Bilateral efforts to transform the alliance into a fuller, more equal partnership and articulate a common vision of its future course are taking place within the context of a complicated and paradoxical security environment marked by lingering North-South military confrontation, but with a diminished sense of threat in the ROK; fitful negotiations to eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program, as the South's economic engagement in the North deepened; ROK involvement in the global war on terrorism, but divided opinion over engagement of its forces in Iraq; and strong support for the alliance and the U.S. military presence, coupled with fears that these ties could draw South Korea into a confrontation with China. Seoul and Washington have differing perspectives on the main threats to security in Northeast Asia and on the role of the alliance in regional and global contingencies. On a divided peninsula, the ROK is itself marked by deep political and generational cleavages on a range of issues, including attitudes toward the United States and policy toward North Korea. For the first 50 years of the alliance, the North Korean threat loomed so large that U.S.-ROK differences were generally sublimated in the interest of unity. The strengthening of democracy in Korea, the development of a genuine opposition party, and the emergence of a lively debate on foreign and national security issues in Korea have also made alliance politics more volatile.

#### *Shifting Attitudes in South Korea*

Anti-U.S. sentiment in some segments of the South Korean population has strained alliance relations. As memories of U.S. assistance in the Korean War and postwar reconstruction fade, frictions related to the ROK's continuing dependence on the United States for its security, and the sizable military presence associated with it, have become magnified. This dependence, coupled with Korea's history of being subject to colonial rule during the first half of the twentieth century, has left many Koreans with a deep sense of frustration over their inability to control their destiny (Hong 2005). Some segments of South Korean society feel that Washington has handled problems in the relationship, including certain incidents related to U.S. military operations in Korea and economic disputes, in an arrogant fashion.<sup>7</sup> The strident student protests and

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7. For a discussion of the underlying sources of Korean attitudes toward the United States, see Steinberg (2003).

more nuanced anti-U.S. sentiment voiced by some mainstream South Korean politicians in recent years do not pose a near-term threat to the alliance—more than 70 percent of the population favors maintaining or strengthening the relationship, and about 80 percent feel the U.S. military presence is important to South Korea’s security. If the current polarization of South Korean attitudes toward the United States and North Korea along political and generational lines persists, however, it could erode the fabric of the alliance (Lee and Jeong 2004, 30).

A good part of the shift in attitudes toward the United States can be traced to the coming to political power of the “386 generation”: people now in their 30s and 40s and who were born in the 1960s and educated during the period of protests for democratization in the 1980s. Two-thirds of South Koreans are now under age 40. The 386 generation is generally more nationalistic, outspoken, and questioning of U.S. intentions than their parents. The 386 generation was prominent in the administration of President Roh Moo-hyun, who supported the young democratic activists in the 1980s, and in the leadership of the progressive (center-left) Uri Party, which backed Roh Moo-hyun and held a large majority in the National Assembly. The 386 generation has no firsthand memory of the Korean War, but members of that generation did witness past U.S. support for authoritarian ROK governments and what they perceive as enduring U.S. unilateralism and lack of consultation in handling previous security crises on the peninsula. A number of intellectuals of this generation hold the view that U.S. policies facilitated Japanese hegemony over Korea between 1905 and 1945 and favored Japan over Korea after World War II. Some even believe that U.S. conduct of the Korean War led to the country’s partition.<sup>8</sup> These perspectives have also been influenced by leftist teachers in secondary and higher education and inaccurate, polemical information on the Internet.

Developments since 2001, including the Bush administration’s tough stance toward Pyongyang and skepticism of the ROK’s Sunshine Policy of engagement with the North, coupled with the accidental killing in 2002 of two Korean schoolgirls by U.S. soldiers who were subsequently acquitted of any wrongdoing, led to sharp drops in popular opinion about the United States. In U.S. State Department–sponsored surveys, South Koreans expressing favorable views of the United States declined from 66 percent in July 2001 to 47 percent in January 2003, and 59 percent felt bilateral relations were poor—the lowest reading in 15 years (DOS 2003, 1–2). Overall attitudes toward the United States and bilateral relations have improved somewhat since 2005 but are more evenly divided than

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8. For an incisive discussion of anti-Americanism in Korea and concerns of the 386 generation, see Park K. (2005, 22–24).

before 2001 (M-15-06).<sup>9</sup> The generational differences are reflected in 2005 survey data showing that, while 69 percent of those 50 and older held favorable views of the United States, opinion among those in their 30s (51 percent favorable, and 48 percent unfavorable) and 20s (52 percent favorable, 45 percent unfavorable) was more evenly split (DOS 2005a). As concerns about the North Korean nuclear threat, reductions of U.S. forces in Korea, and the attendant potential of an economic downturn have grown, attitudes of younger Koreans, particularly those in their 20s, have become more positive toward the United States and the alliance (Lee and Jeong 2004, 34–35).

The military accident in 2002 led to near-unanimous support for revision of the Status of Forces Agreement, which was seen as institutionalizing the ROK's subordinate role in the alliance. Nonetheless, support for the U.S.-ROK alliance remains strong, particularly among older Koreans and members of the opposition Grand National Party. In 2005 and 2006 polling, large majorities continued to express support for the alliance, and about 80 percent believed the U.S. military presence is needed for Korea's security. More than 70 percent see the United States as the most beneficial security partner for Korea during the coming decade, and 69 percent believe the alliance should be maintained after unification. The intensity of support for the U.S. military presence has diminished significantly since 2000 (in 2005, however, 26 percent of those surveyed said it is very important, down from about 40 percent in the late 1990s).

South Korean views on North Korea are also divided—43 percent positive and 52 negative in early 2005—but this is a significant shift since 2001, when 73 percent viewed the North unfavorably (Lee and Jeong 2004, 3). Most South Koreans are not worried about a North Korean attack. They are concerned about the North Korean nuclear program and the possible collapse of the North, with the attendant potential for instability and economic dislocation throughout the peninsula. In 2005, 80 percent of South Koreans supported efforts to engage North Korea through the development of economic and cultural relations.<sup>10</sup> That same year, a majority of South Koreans (59 percent) believed that Pyongyang

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9. Lee and Jeong (2004) note that several independent South Korean surveys showed a rise in support for a stronger alliance in 2003 and 2004.

10. In a May 2005 poll, only 13 percent of South Koreans surveyed saw North Korea as a threat to regional peace and stability. Ranking their security concerns about North Korea, 41 percent cited the North's nuclear weapons program, 30 percent the collapse of the North and a massive refugee flow, and only 5 percent worried about the prospect of North Korea supplying terrorists with WMD. Only 29 percent feel the North's nuclear program poses an immediate threat to South Korea's security, and 25 percent believe it poses no direct security threat but worry it could limit foreign investment (DOS 2005b, 1).

would surrender its nuclear program for a package of political and economic benefits. Although there is broad support for U.S. and international efforts in the six-party talks to eliminate North Korea's nuclear programs, most South Koreans favor an incremental approach featuring both incentives and punishments. In a 2004 survey, 27 percent of South Koreans blamed the United States for the lack of progress in the talks, and 70 percent lacked confidence that the United States would protect South Korea's interests in negotiations with the North. South Korean attitudes toward the North have hardened, however, and the Sunshine Policy has been tempered in the aftermath of Pyongyang's 9 October 2006 nuclear test (Cho and Sim 2006).

A troubling trend is the surge in anti-Japanese sentiment in South Korea. In early 2005, 80 percent of South Koreans had unfavorable views of Japan, and 90 percent felt relations with Japan were poor. South Koreans see Japan (29 percent), as well as North Korea (13 percent) and China (12 percent), as potential threats to regional peace and stability during the coming decade or more.<sup>11</sup> This sentiment is rooted in resentment over issues of history, the legacy of Japan's wartime occupation of Korea, as well as the reemergence of long-standing territorial controversies. Particularly among elites, however, there is a fear that growing U.S.-backed Japanese involvement in management of regional and international security affairs could revive Japanese militarism and ambitions for regional hegemony. So, too, South Korean leaders and the wider population fear that what is perceived as Washington's strategic tilt toward Japan will make their country both less secure and less important to the United States.

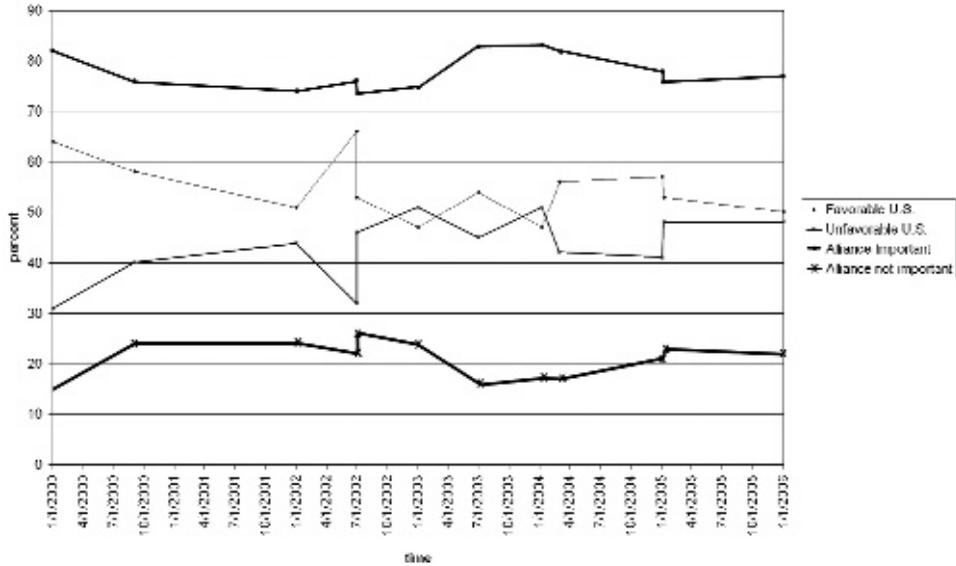
Attitudes toward China, which has been the ROK's top export market since 2003, have fluctuated but reflect an abiding wariness. Beijing is now widely seen as a constructive partner in managing the North Korean nuclear problem and other aspects of regional security affairs. In a 2004 poll, South Koreans expressed equally positive feelings (58 percent) toward China and the United States (CCFR 2004, 16). However, South Koreans also express lingering concerns about China's authoritarian political system and suspicions about its motives in Northeast Asia. The South Korean public and political leadership are well aware of China's history of domination of their country and know that China's rising economic and military power could at some point be used against Korean interests. In survey reported by *Dong-a Ilbo* on 4 May 2004, 61 percent of respondents noted that China was the most important country from an economic standpoint, but 51 percent also saw China as a "competitive rival," and

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11. In 2005, the numbers were Japan 29 percent, North Korea 13 percent, and China 12 percent. In 2006, the figures were Japan 17 percent, North Korea 14 percent, and China 14 percent.

78 percent said China’s products would surpass Korean goods in 10 years. The Korean public’s perception of China as an economic and political rival has grown since 2005, particularly as China has stirred historical territorial disputes.

**Figure 1: Shifting South Korean Attitudes**



**U.S. Goals and Strategy: North Korea**

Dealing with the DPRK’s nuclear program has also complicated alliance management issues with the ROK. The Bush administration has steadfastly defined North Korea’s nuclear programs as a challenge to security in Northeast Asia and to international efforts to stem WMD proliferation, not as a bilateral issue between the United States and the DPRK. Since early 2003, the administration has emphasized that multilateral negotiations are the best way to resolve the problem, and, with Chinese assistance, the six-party talks commenced in August 2003. The administration’s diplomacy has succeeded in getting China, South Korea, Japan, and Russia to agree on the need for complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of the DPRK nuclear programs, which has helped to minimize, though not eliminate, North Korean efforts to create fissures within this coalition. Multilateral coordination has been hampered by differing interests and Pyongyang’s efforts to play to South Korean sympathies and Chinese anxieties.

Given these challenges, progress in the six-party talks has been limited and marked by several lengthy boycotts by the DPRK. At the end of the fourth round of talks on 19 September 2005, the six parties produced a joint statement

of principles to guide negotiations. The statement was immediately subject to differing interpretations, particularly by the DPRK. However, the U.S. government made clear its view of the main tenets, which were generally endorsed by all the other parties: all nuclear weapons and all elements of the DPRK's nuclear programs will be declared and completely, verifiably, and irreversibly dismantled; the DPRK will return, at an early date, to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and come into full compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards; and various benefits, particularly the right to pursue nuclear energy for peaceful purposes at the "appropriate time," will accrue to the DPRK only when it has met these two obligations, demonstrated a sustained commitment to cooperation and transparency, and ceased proliferating nuclear technology (Hill 2005). The ROK government has been inclined to offer generous incentives to the North—including provision of energy and nuclear power early in the process—as a way to induce cooperation on the nuclear issue and to advance North-South reconciliation. Transforming the joint statement and the February 2007 initial action agreement on shutting down the Yongbyon reactor into an agreement acceptable to all six governments and the U.S. Congress will require a protracted and arduous diplomatic effort.

In addition to the nuclear issue, there remain differences between the United States and South Korea over policy toward Pyongyang; differences include assistance, investment, and dealing with the regime's illicit activities. The ROK government rightly wants to play the leading role in managing relations with the North, including contingencies related to internal collapse. Both governments, however, recognize that the United States has unique experience and capabilities to find and secure the DPRK nuclear program in such a scenario. The two governments will need to continue to discuss integration of various crisis management plans and harmonization of these plans with combined operational military plans for the defense of South Korea. Although the ROK has endorsed the principles of the PSI, it has yet to become a participant because of fears that engagement in certain PSI counterproliferation activities could have an adverse effect on relations with the North. U.S. and Japanese participation in any future PSI activities directed against North Korea would raise anxieties in the ROK government about various forms of North Korean retaliation against the South.

### ***Rebalancing the Military Relationship***

The two governments have agreed to the goal of a South Korean-led defense of the peninsula with the United States in a supporting role, but differences remain about the timing and ultimate structure of the new arrangements. Bilateral discussions on the future of the alliance (FOTA) between 2002 and 2004 focused on legacy

issues including adjusting the U.S. footprint, transfer of certain conventional defense missions from U.S. to ROK forces, and enhancing combined defenses. In particular, the FOTA talks produced plans to shift U.S. forces deployed close to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to consolidated bases south of Seoul and for transfer of the Yongsan Garrison in central Seoul and 59 other facilities to South Korean control. In tandem with the realignment, the ROK pledged to invest \$10 billion to modernize its capabilities, and the United States committed to enhancements in firepower, air, and naval support valued at \$11 billion and to maintain deterrence and support this evolving posture (Lawless 2006).<sup>12</sup>

In June 2004, before either the Global Posture Review or the FOTA talks were completed, the U.S. Department of Defense notified the South Korean government of plans to withdraw 12,500 troops (about one-third of total deployments) from the peninsula by the end of 2005. This move followed a May 2004 decision to redeploy one of two U.S. combat brigades (3,600 troops) in the ROK to Iraq and sometimes contentious FOTA discussions.

These developments surprised most Koreans and brought to the fore their conflicted feelings between the desire for and costs of a more self-reliant defense posture and the compromises attendant to continued reliance on the U.S. security guarantee. Korean officials worried about the ROK's ability to take on larger military missions and were concerned that the redeployments would mean that U.S. forces would no longer serve as the trip wire in mutual defense operations, leaving South Korea less rather than more secure. After several months of bilateral consultations, the governments agreed in October 2004 that the U.S. withdrawals and realignment would be stretched out through 2008 and plans to remove one artillery and one attack helicopter battalion would be cancelled.<sup>13</sup> The residual U.S. presence of 25,000 military personnel will be clustered around two

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12. Under this plan, the Second Infantry Division, the main U.S. ground combat force in the ROK, and Eighth Army Headquarters would relocate to consolidated bases in the Osan-Pyeongtaek region. Some of these adjustments had been under consideration since the early 1990s under the East Asian Strategy Initiative (EASI), an effort of the first Bush administration to develop a comprehensive vision of the alliance for the long term following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the changes in East Asian security at that time. EASI included a 10-year plan to reduce U.S. troops from 135,000 to about 98,000 by the end of 1995. The EASI also called for redefinition of U.S. alliances in the region.

13. During the first phase in 2004, 5,000 troops, including the Second Brigade Combat Team of the Second Infantry Division and associated units, were withdrawn (after a year in Iraq, the Second Brigade redeployed to Fort Carson, Colorado, in 2005). During the second phase, 2005–06, the United States redeployed another 5,000 troops (3,000 in 2005, 2,000 in 2006), comprising combat units, combat support and combat service support units, units associated with mission transfer areas, and other support personnel. In the third and final phase, 2007–08, the United States were scheduled to redeploy 2,500 troops consisting primarily of support units and personnel (DOD 2004b).

hubs in the Osan-Pyeongtaek and the Taegu-Pusan areas; however, the conditions for transfer of existing U.S. facilities and the acquisition of additional land for the consolidated bases by 2011 under the Land Partnership Plan, while agreed by both governments, remain contentious political issues in South Korea on environmental and legal grounds.

Greater self-reliance in defense has been a goal of South Korean governments since the 1970s. Investment of more than \$65 billion in several force improvement plans since that time has significantly enhanced the readiness and capabilities of the ROK Army but did not fundamentally reduce the country's dependence on the United States. President Roh came to office in 2003 determined to reduce this dependency, consistent with South Korea's current prosperity and international stature, and to make the alliance a more balanced partnership. Roh advanced the concept of "cooperative, self-reliant defense" as a means for the South Korean government to realize greater control over its defense plans and decision making and to reassure the public that, with improved capabilities, the ROK armed forces could provide for national defense even after the planned reduction and realignment of U.S. forces. President Roh and his advisers explained that that the term "cooperative" underscored the intent to both maintain a transformed alliance with the United States and develop regional security cooperation in Northeast Asia (Roh 2003a, 2003b; Hoon 2005).

While ROK defense budgets have grown significantly in recent years, maintenance and personnel costs absorbed 66 percent of the 2004 and 2005 budgets, leaving only about 34 percent for required force improvements.<sup>14</sup> In an effort to achieve a self-reliant posture, the Korean Ministry of National Defense (MND) unveiled "Defense Reform 2020," a plan for qualitative transformation of the ROK defense establishment during a period of 15 years. The 2020 plan calls for reducing standing forces by 26 percent but enhancing the capabilities of residual units through better joint planning and acquisition of state-of-the-art weapons and support systems. Force structure would be streamlined and include more professionals and fewer conscripts. Modernization would focus on improved mobility, situational awareness, and precision strike capabilities. The MND hopes to replace nearly every outdated major weapons platform; upgrade intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and command-and-control systems; and purchase new air defense missiles and Aegis-equipped destroyers. To ensure effective oversight of expenditures, a new Defense Acquisition Program Administration will be established.

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14. The ROK defense budget increased by 9.9 percent (\$20.08 billion) in 2005 and 10 percent (\$22.9 billion) in 2006 (Park J. 2005).

The 2020 plan calls for expenditure of \$662 billion between 2006 and 2020, with 43 percent of those resources to be earmarked for force improvements. To sustain this program, the MND estimates that defense spending would need to increase 9.9 percent annually from 2006 to 2010, 7.8 percent from 2011 to 2015, but only 1 percent from 2016 to 2020.<sup>15</sup> Under the ROK government's projections of 7 percent average annual GDP growth over the life of the reform program, the MND estimates that the program would consume 2.6 to 3 percent of GDP until 2010, after which time the burden would decrease.

Realization of Defense Reform 2020 will be a challenge for any South Korean government. Since the plan was issued, the Bank of Korea has projected lower out-year growth rates, and the potential for an economic downturn always exists. Pressures to control overall governmental expenditures and a general public skepticism about defense spending will likely remain impediments, absent a spike in concerns about North Korea. During the first half of the 2020 plan implementation, expenditures associated with the relocation of U.S. forces and the assumption of additional missions by ROK forces will likely raise MND operations and maintenance costs. Some analysts have questioned both the savings that can be achieved by cutting army personnel so steeply and the wisdom of taking such cuts before demographic trends require them, given the manpower-intensive demands of possible stabilization missions in the event of a North Korean collapse (Bennett 2006, 21–23, 37–39). Several analysts (Bennett 2006, 23–26; Han 2006, 127) assess that a truly independent ROK defense capability would require even greater defense spending.<sup>16</sup>

President Roh and his advisers also made transfer of wartime operational command (OPCON) of ROK forces a touchstone of alliance transformation. In 2005, Roh began a public campaign for transfer of wartime OPCON of ROK forces, calling it a matter of regaining sovereignty and a valuable step in diminishing North-South tensions. *Chosun Ilbo* on 2 October 2005 reported that President Roh argued that projected improvements in ROK defense capabilities would allow the transfer.

The United States supports the goal of Koreans playing a predominant role in their own conventional defense, including a change in command relationships. Washington's assessment is that ROK forces are capable of defending South

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15. The 2020 plan calls for 9.9 percent annual growth in defense spending 2006–10, 7.8 percent 2011–15, and 1.0 percent 2016–20 (MND 2005; Han 2006, 116–17).

16. The MND's original 2020 plan was \$725.55 billion and called for 11 percent growth in defense spending in 2006–10.

Korea, with certain U.S. support. U.S. officials accepted the move from shared operational control under a combined headquarters to a system of independent, parallel national commands as a natural next step in the evolution of the alliance and suggested that this could take place as early as 2009. This kicked off a firestorm of protests in Korea from former defense officials through the opposition parties that saw an OPCON shift by that date as premature and ill-advised, urging that further debate on timing be suspended until a new ROK government takes office in 2008. At the 38th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting, the ROK defense minister and the then U.S. defense secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, reviewed the results of a command relations study commissioned a year earlier and agreed to a road map that would transfer OPCON to the ROK after 15 October 2009 but not later than 15 March 2012 (DOD 2006b). In February 2007, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Defense Minister Kim Jang-soo concluded an agreement that firmly established the transfer date as 17 April 2012. The two governments have agreed to develop a strategic transfer plan. U.S. officials have underscored that the new command structure will maintain deterrence and combined U.S.-ROK defense of the Korean peninsula and that the United States will provide significant “bridging capabilities”—such as the CFC command-and-control system—until the ROK achieves a fully independent defense capability. Sorting out a transitional command structure and long-term crisis management arrangements on the peninsula will require transparency, good faith, and flexibility by both governments as well as candid discussions about handling sensitive issues relating to instability in North Korea.

### ***Shaping a Broader Vision of the Alliance***

U.S. and South Korean leaders have recognized that their mutual regional and global security interests, as well as a potential North-South rapprochement, require the development of a broader, long-term vision for the alliance—one that expands its function from its present narrow peninsular focus (White House 2003). Most ROK political leaders across the political spectrum believe their country’s security and prosperity are still somewhat fragile and that the alliance with the United States remains an important safeguard against instability on the peninsula and a balancing factor in relations with China and Japan. A majority of South Koreans also see shared democratic values and deep economic and personal ties as important underpinnings of the alliance. In contrast with Japan, however, the notion of the alliance serving purposes other than defense of the ROK is a relatively new concept in South Korean political discourse. President Roh, for example, justified the unpopular deployment of 3,500 ROK military personnel in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom as a necessary manifestation of alliance solidarity and good faith, not a Korean contribution to protection of

its own interests in Persian Gulf stability and energy supplies. Moreover, many on the left who object to the U.S. military presence are also skeptical of the benefits of the alliance for advancing South Korean interests. Without a shared vision of the future, both governments will have great difficulty making the case for the alliance to their publics.

Following the Future of the Alliance initiative, in late 2004 Washington and Seoul began the Security Policy Initiative (SPI), an interagency dialogue aimed at implementing agreements reached in the FOTA talks and developing a long-term vision of the alliance. The SPI reached a broad consensus on the main global and regional security challenges and produced agreement on a “Joint Study on the Vision of the ROK-U.S. Alliance” that describes how the alliance can contribute to peace and security on the Korean peninsula, in the region, and globally (DOD 2006b, para. 8). Going forward, SPI will focus on articulating a vision for the future development of the alliance and a concept for operationalizing that vision, including the roles of each partner in fulfilling these objectives.

At the November 2005 Gyeongju summit, President Bush and President Roh agreed to launch a ministerial-level Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership (SCAP) to promote dialogue on bilateral, regional, and global issues of mutual interest. The two presidents noted that the alliance not only stands *against* threats but also *for* the promotion of the common values and interests in Asia and around the world (White House 2005). At the first session of SCAP in January 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon set out an agenda for practical cooperation to promote democracy and human rights; to counter terrorism and proliferation of WMD; to prevent pandemic disease; to enhance regional stability; and to bolster multilateral peacekeeping, crisis response, and disaster management. The consultations will be followed by a subministerial dialogue.

A particularly contentious element of alliance transformation concerns *strategic flexibility*, a reference to off-peninsula operations by U.S. forces deploying from bases in Korea. Both the Korean government and the broader public are concerned that U.S. operations from the ROK could draw the country into regional conflicts, particularly a confrontation with China over Taiwan, and that the global missions of U.S. forces might diminish their deterrent value on the peninsula. U.S. officials have sought to allay South Korean concerns on both accounts, noting that the concept is a two-way street that would also facilitate rapid movement of U.S. forces stationed elsewhere to the Korean peninsula in a crisis. President Roh acknowledged the logic behind strategic flexibility but also affirmed that “USFK [U.S. Forces Korea] should not be involved in disputes

in Northeast Asia without Korea's agreement. . . . We will never compromise on this" (Min 2005). At the January 2006 SCAP meeting, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban issued a declaration formally acknowledging respect for the other's position.<sup>17</sup> Some South Korean analysts and politicians contend that this agreement requires amendment of the Mutual Defense Treaty, and hence approval by the National Assembly. In addition, the South Korean government would clearly like prior consultation on off-peninsula operations by units assigned to USFK, which could limit U.S. flexibility.

Another question on the horizon is clarifying how the alliance could complement any future Northeast Asian regional security cooperation or structure. Some in the ROK hope the six-party talks can evolve into such a permanent forum for dealing with regional security issues, while others envision structures limited to countries in the region. President Roh in a speech in Hong Kong on 11 May 2005 emphasized that his concept of "cooperative, self-reliant defense" would also allow for South Korea to act as a peaceful "balancing force" in a "cooperative security structure in the region based on the Korea-U.S. alliance" (Shim 2005). This statement was quickly clarified by Blue House advisers as not suggesting any notion of South Korea balancing China and the United States. However, Roh continued to send mixed signals. Rather than endorse the notion that an adapted alliance with the United States could play a stabilizing role in Northeast Asia, Roh chose to advance more independent notions, warning of the need to "overcome old divisions" in the region. Roh and most South Koreans clearly feared aligning their country with the United States and Japan in any future effort to contain China (Ser 2005).

### ***Sustaining the U.S.-ROK Alliance***

In light of changing political and geostrategic landscapes, sustaining the U.S.-ROK alliance will require concerted bilateral efforts to continue transforming the relationship. Several efforts are essential to this goal.

**Six-party talks and North Korea.** Resolute but creative diplomacy in the six-party talks remains essential to a durable resolution of the North Korean

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17. At the January 2006 SCAP meeting, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban issued a declaration that the ROK "respects the necessity for strategic flexibility," while the United States pledged that in implementing strategic flexibility, it "respects the ROK position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people" (DOS 2006c; Min 2005). Chinese officials have played into this debate in the ROK; the *Korea Times* reported on 22 March 2006 that, according to the ambassador of China to the ROK, China accepts the presence of U.S. forces in the ROK for bilateral security, but those forces should never be directed at a "third party."

nuclear challenge, maintenance of peace and stability in Northeast Asia, and further adaptation of U.S. alliances with the ROK and Japan. It is essential for the United States and other governments to demonstrate that every effort has been made to resolve the nuclear issue peacefully. Unilateral or coercive actions may ultimately be necessary but could well come at the cost of public support for the alliance in the ROK. The key challenge for U.S. diplomacy will be to demonstrate a forthcoming public face and tactical flexibility while remaining firm on strategic outcomes. In the aftermath of Pyongyang's October 2006 nuclear test, Washington has reassured Seoul that its long-standing pledge of extended deterrence through the U.S. nuclear umbrella remains in effect. U.S. and South Korean leaders also need to initiate a more candid and transparent dialogue about North Korea, leading to more coordinated policies. Otherwise, differences on this issue will continue to hamper adaptation of the alliance.

**Shaping a fuller and broader partnership.** The bilateral defense and foreign ministry dialogues are moving to adapt the alliance and develop a common vision to advance mutual interests. The U.S.-ROK Security Policy Initiative has produced agreement on a common vision of the alliance, but further efforts on the part of both governments are required to broaden and deepen political support for a transformed alliance. If reshaped as an equal partnership between two democracies committed to defending shared values and common interests, the alliance could weather most developments in North-South relations or the region. Rather than being organized against a specific threat, it would serve a number of common Korean-U.S. interests, including maintaining stability on the peninsula in the context of either a DPRK collapse or peaceful reunification; working with other Asian countries and institutions to enhance regional security cooperation; supporting international (UN) and other regional (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, NATO) efforts to stabilize failed states, combat terrorism, and slow WMD proliferation; and hedging against the emergence of an aggressive China. Such a vision of the U.S.-ROK alliance could engender the requisite political support on both sides of the Pacific. Indeed, it reflects the calls in South Korea for transforming the relationship into “a comprehensive, dynamic, and future-oriented alliance.” This kind of a mature partnership with the United States would allow South Korea to extend its global influence.

**Defense transformation and strategic flexibility.** A transformed alliance should reflect the ROK's desire to achieve greater control over its own security and destiny while concurrently serving mutual regional and global interests. This will require further changes in command structures, procedures for contingency planning, and force posture. The Combined Forces Command will need to be replaced by a new mechanism to coordinate U.S. and ROK military operations.

A sustainable long-term U.S. posture in the ROK should be sufficient to assure Seoul of the mutual defense commitment, fill critical gaps in ROK capabilities, allow for rapid augmentation to repulse any aggressor, and provide the United States with a reliable foothold to support global defense operations. The U.S. contribution to defense of the ROK will shift from a heavy ground presence to reinforcements and firepower provided by air and naval forces. With regard to off-peninsula operations, given the ROK's desire to avoid any provocation of China, Seoul seems likely to want further clarification of the circumstances in which U.S. forces might act, as well as advance notification of unilateral operations by U.S. forces in Korea.

**The alliance and regional security.** Given China's growing influence on the Korean peninsula and in the region and South Korea's commitment to good relations with Beijing, special efforts should be made to demonstrate how the alliance can support regional security cooperation. If Washington and Seoul fail to demonstrate how the alliance can serve this function, there is a danger that interest will grow in new, unproven structures for regional security cooperation to replace the alliance. Beijing continues to suggest that the U.S.-ROK alliance is an unnecessary anachronism in light of China's peaceful rise and efforts to bring peace to the peninsula. The Chinese have also advanced various ideas for a regional security architecture that would exclude the United States. Turning the six-party framework into a permanent regional security forum, which both governments agree could be pursued once the six-party talks realize their primary mission, merits further examination by the analytic community. In the interim, revival of the U.S.-Japan-ROK Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group, which focused on North Korea policy, might be a useful mechanism to enhance trilateral cooperation on a broader range of issues (Schoff 2005). Much as NATO's Partnership for Peace Program engaged Russia and other former Warsaw Pact countries in humanitarian and peacekeeping activities to build confidence in NATO's peaceful intent, trilateral participation in future humanitarian or peace support operations along with China and other Asian countries would perhaps be a way to demonstrate that both alliance relationships can contribute to regional security.

**Diplomacy and public affairs.** U.S. officials and the U.S. media need to be sensitive to political and social change in South Korea and to the mounting frustration with Korean dependency on the United States. There is a tendency in Washington to exaggerate the extent of genuine anti-U.S. sentiment in South Korea. U.S. public diplomacy needs to be more skillful in making the case for a transformed alliance, particularly with younger people in Korea. At the same time, the ROK government needs to be more outspoken in refuting irresponsible

attacks against the United States in the South Korean media and in public discourse and in explaining to its citizens how the alliance serves mutual interests. Enhancing the rather limited and formalized exchanges between South Korean legislators and their U.S. counterparts could help deepen mutual understanding and strengthen support in both countries for the alliance (Forrester 2007).

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