

U.S. Policy toward Northeast Asia: A View from South Korea

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U.S.-ROK relations have undergone a profound change during the last few years, facing major challenges including the North Korean nuclear issue, U.S. post-9/11 strategic priorities, the realignment of U.S. forces in Korea, the new domestic political situation in South Korea, and changing North-South relations. The inauguration of President Bush in his second term opened a new era for American foreign policy, entailing serious political, military, and economic implications for the Northeast Asian region in general and the Korean peninsula in particular.

In this presentation, I will first talk about the current situation of the North Korean nuclear issue; second, the changing U.S.-ROK alliance, the domestic development of South Korea and its implication for the U.S.-ROK relations; third, regional dynamics, in particular, the China factor in terms of the North Korean nuclear issue and U.S. policy toward it; and fourth, South Korea's strategic choices.

I. The Enigma of the North Korean Nuclear Issue

1. The Current Development of the North Korean Nuclear Issue

Since the inauguration of President Bush in January 2001, the U.S. government has adopted a noticeably more hard-line approach toward North Korea than the Clinton administration. It is a major departure from the Clinton administration's policy toward the North Korean nuclear issue. Therefore, it is normal that policy differences and divergences between the United States and South Korea have emerged, deepened and widened especially in the first two years of the Bush Administration.

President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea during that time vigorously pursued the so-called Sunshine Policy, which aimed at engaging North Korea by providing many incentives including political, diplomatic, economic and humanitarian support. The summit meeting between President Kim Dae Jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong Il in 2000 was undoubtedly the outcome of President Kim's Sunshine policy. The U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's trip to Pyongyang and President Clinton's abortive plan to visit Pyongyang were evidently the Clinton Administration's soft policy toward Pyongyang in line with the Sunshine policy.

However, the Bush Administration had different approaches toward and different

perceptions on North Korea, and different policy priorities from the Kim Dae Jung government. Due largely to these differences, there were no major movements on the North Korean nuclear issue at all on the part of the Bush Administration. The Kim government urged the Bush Administration to resolve the nuclear crisis through direct negotiations, an approach that the United States was highly reluctant to pursue. The Seoul government, in defining itself as a mediator, sought to arrange a direct dialogue between Pyongyang and Washington. But the Bush Administration refused to engage in such a dialogue, believing that the biggest policy blunder of the Clinton Administration was the Agreed Framework of 1994.

Right after the inauguration of President Roh Moon Hyun in South Korea, the United States suddenly set up tripartite talks with China and North Korea in Beijing in April 2003 without any close prior consultation with South Korea. In this first direct meeting between the United States and North Korea in the form of tripartite talks, Seoul was completely excluded even though it was a direct party that should have been involved. Seoul, however, could not help supporting the meeting. Later, it asked the United States for its participation in more broad multilateral talks. Several months after the tripartite talks, the United States proposed Six-Party Talks including all parties in Northeast Asia-namely, the United States, South Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and North Korea. The talks have had three meetings thus far.

During the last four years, although there have been discord and conflict between the United States and South Korea on how to cope with the North Korean nuclear issue, North-South relations have been improving especially in the form of dialogues and economic exchanges. For instance, more than 30 official-level talks between the two sides were held in 2003. That means they spent almost 100 days a year together in North-South dialogues.

Due largely to the South Korean government's 'dovish engagement policy' toward North Korea during the last four years, the image and perception of North Korea among the South Korean public have changed remarkably. For some Koreans, North Korea is no longer a major threat to South Korean security. Rather, they believe that the Bush administration's harsh policy toward North Korea, which might result in military response to the nuclear crisis, is much more dangerous for South Korea's security. Given that fact, changing North-South relations make the answers to some basic questions less clearer than they once seemed: what is the ultimate outcome of solving the North Korean nuclear crisis for the sake of South Korea's security?; in that regard, what should be South Korea's policy toward the alliance with the United States in the near future?

2. North Korea's Dilemma

North Korea has expressed its position on domestic and foreign policy every year throughout the so-called "Joint New Year's Address" in their editorials of the *Rodong Sinmun*, *Youth Vanguard* and the Korean people's Army newspaper. This year's Joint New Year's Address is ordinary and plain, not very different from previous ones. That is the most distinct feature of this year's address, if any. Nonetheless, there is one thing to which we have to pay attention. That is, North Korea, unlike last year, made no direct mention of the nuclear issue at all.

In last year's address, North Korea emphasized its nuclear deterrent capability. It also criticized U.S. hard-line policy, describing its development of nuclear weapons as a "defensive choice" to protect its sovereignty and survival.

This year, even though Pyongyang demanded customarily that the U.S. stop its attempts to militarily suffocate "North Korea" and urged the withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Korean peninsula, it did not mention the nuclear issue. Some observers have interpreted this as a positive signal. But I interpret this in a more cautious way. I think North Korea intends not to provoke the U.S. before the inauguration of the Bush administration. North Korea has not decided its position yet on how to deal with the upcoming Six-Party Talks and the overall situation. Probably, North Korea is weighing the relative importance of the early return to the Six-Party Talks and the attempt of brinkmanship to enhance its negotiating power. For North Korea, this year is very much a critical juncture.

There are roughly three paths ahead for North Korea as alternatives for dealing with its nuclear issue: (1) complete disarmament of its nuclear stockpile; (2) continuation of nuclear ambiguity and brinkmanship; and (3) actual possession of nuclear weapons.

The dilemma for North Korea is that none of these options are both desirable and feasible from its perspectives. The complete dismantlement of its nuclear program is highly likely to lead to regime collapse, because they are not confident about the success of economic reform and the stability of its society in the post-nuclear crisis period. The continuation of nuclear ambiguity as a strategy cannot be sustained any longer. North Korea has bluffed several times that it already has nuclear deterrent capability. The actual possession of nuclear weapons might cause a huge backlash from the United States, probably bringing about military sanctions.

That is why, I think, they cannot easily come to the negotiating table and are hesitating about joining the next Six-Party Talks. This is not just yesterday's or today's dilemma for them. This has been an enduring dilemma for them over the last ten years or maybe more, and it will continue to be a dilemma for them until the issue is resolved.

3. Questions remain for the U.S. and South Korea

The United States and South Korea have also problems too. The question is whether the U.S. and South Korea could accept it if North Korea openly declares its nuclear status with concrete evidence. If not, what kinds of options are open to us? Would the South Korean government continue to refuse sanctions against Pyongyang in these circumstances? What will the U.S. do if the South Korean government does not support the U.S. position on military sanctions?

These are the daunting questions that both the U.S. and South Korea will face. Unless the nuclear situation is resolved with full consent and consultation between the two countries, the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance is in danger.

Beyond these rather broad questions on strategic direction, there are some specific questions that have to be dealt with very carefully between the allies.

(A) The 2nd North-South Summit meeting

The South Korean government is pursuing the 2nd North-South Summit meeting. President Roh Moo Hyun clearly expressed his desire for it in his New Year press conference January 13 this year, saying that he was ready for an inter-Korean summit anytime, anywhere and on any subject. But he admitted that he believes the possibility of a summit at the moment is slight, saying “If you want to buy something and ask again and again, the vendor will raise the price. Likewise, if we keep sticking to something with a low possibility, our negotiating power will decrease.”

The 2nd North-South Summit meeting could be a clue for solving the problem. However, the summit must be promoted when it is required in accordance with the progress in the Six-Party Talks. Without progress in the Six-Party Talks, it could be detrimental to the talks and also our cooperation with allies in the talks.

(B) North-South Economic Cooperation

The other question regards North-South economic cooperation. In recent years, the South Korean government has vehemently promoted North-South economic cooperation. The Gaesung Complex is an ambitious experiment that marries South Korean capital and technology with North Korea’s cheap labor. It started last month after four years of turbulent preparation. However, the future is uncertain. Above all, unless the nuclear issue is resolved as early as possible, the Gaesung project will be in deep trouble. Export controls for strategic materials will be a major obstacle in building production facilities, and import restrictions will be a primary barrier in selling products manufactured from the complex.

North-South economic cooperation is closely related to the development of nuclear issue. It can work as a mechanism for inducing North Korea to come to the negotiating table. However, the opposite is also quite true. Therefore, we need a strategy to link North-South economic cooperation as an incentive to the development of the nuclear issue. However, the linkage should not be a rigid and bold one, but a flexible and soft one.

(C) U.S. Policy

The Bush administration should take its position on the issue more concretely and clearly. During the past four years, there have been some differences even within the Bush administration on how to deal with North Korea. Many observers believe that even though the Bush administration has sustained its firm stance toward North Korea with its principle of CVID (complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of the North Korean nuclear program), and so on, there have been some basic differences between the so-called “Neo-Cons” and pragmatists of the State Department. Therefore, the lack of consensus and consistency U.S. policy might give others the wrong signal and make them confused.

The second Bush administration seems to pursue long-term and short-term policy at the same time. Recently, American top policymakers expressed their views very broadly about North Korea. A month ago, Mr. Stephen Hadley, the new head of NSC said the U.S. is not seeking regime change in North Korea, but is hoping for “transformation of the communist regime.” Secretary of State Rice said in a confirmation hearing that North Korea is one of the “outposts of tyranny.” In his inaugural speech, President Bush emphasized that spreading liberty around the world was “the calling of our time.” However, all these three top policy-makers said that they prefer dialogue with North Korea rather than confrontation, with hopes resting on the next Six-Party Talks. Observers might ask how the U.S. government will pursue these two different goals at the same time.

II. Rearrangement of the U.S.-ROK Alliance

1. GPR (Global Posture Review) and rearrangement of the U.S.-ROK Alliance

The terrorist attack of September 11 became the major turning point for the fundamental reassessment of U.S. strategic priorities since the advent of the post-Cold War era. Terrorism was defined as the new enemy of the United States. The war against global terrorism, together with combating WMD (weapons of mass destruction) possessed by a small number of the so-called rogue states, became key objectives of U.S. comprehensive strategy in the post-9/11 era. The strategic reorientation resulted in the option of preemptive

actions to counter these new threats, as the National Security Strategy of the United States indicates.

“Given the goals of rogue states and terrorists, the United States can no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as we have in the past..... To forestall or prevent such hostile acts by our adversaries, the United States will, if necessary, act preemptively.”¹

The strategic transformation cannot be merely defined as a conceptual change of military strategy. It is more comprehensive, including transforming the U.S. global defense posture (GPR). The key facet of GPR is to “update the types, locations, numbers, and capabilities of U.S. military forces, and the nature of American alliances.”² GPR is, therefore, to enhance U.S. strategic flexibility, developing rapidly deployable capabilities. It results in tailoring U.S. forces overseas.

The ROK-U.S. alliance has been one of the major targets of the changing strategic priorities of the United States. The realignment of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) was begun in early 2003. The so-called “Future of the ROK-U.S. alliance Policy Initiative” (FOTA) was formed to implement the realignment of the USFK. The major tasks of FOTA are twofold: the relocation and reduction of the USFK. Throughout a series of meetings over the last eighteen months, both sides agreed that Yongsan base and the 2nd Infantry Division will be relocated south of Seoul and some 12,500 U.S. soldiers will be reduced by 2008. Whatever the root causes of the realignment of the USFK, it will bring about significant changes in the nature of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

2. Transformation of the U.S.-Japan Alliance

In contrast to the U.S.-ROK Alliance, the U.S.-Japan alliance has been transformed under the following principles during the last several decades. First, the United States and Japan have had close consultation in developing their alliance relationship. Therefore, Japan’s defense policy was the outcome of the dynamic linkages between the two countries.

¹ The White House, *the National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2002).

² Douglas J. Feith (Under Secretary of Defense for Policy), “Transforming the United States Global Defense Posture,” Excerpts of the speech presented to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, D.C., December 3, 2003, <http://www.defenselink.mil/speeches/2003/sp20031203-0722.html>.

Second, even if Japan continues to be a strong member of the U.S.-Japan alliance, Japan will not remain only as a “tamed state.” Japan’s defense policy will continue to change towards a strengthening of its military capability. U.S. policy toward Japan allows to do this. Third, Japan has been pursuing the goal of the so-called “normal state.” Japan’s defense policy reflects this idea, making legal and institutional arrangements for its national defense as well as international responsibility. As a result of this, despite Article 9 of Japan’s constitution, Japan possesses the right to defend itself and tries to expand its self-defense forces, dispatching them abroad as part of UN PKO activities.³

According to GPR, the United States classifies four different types of overseas U.S. bases: (1) Power Projection Hub (PPH); (2) Main Operating Bases (MOB); (3) Forward Operating Sites (FOS); and (4) Cooperative Security Locations (CSL). In Asia, it is known that U. S. Forces in Japan are classified as PPH and U.S. Forces in Korea as MOB. The United States plans to strengthen U.S. forces in Japan by relocating command of the U.S. Army’s First Corps from Washington State to Camp Zama in Kanagawa Prefecture, and naming a four star general or a lieutenant general its commander. The relocation of the command to Japan will enhance the status of the U.S. forces in Japan. It will also enable the United States to keep a more watchful eye on the Korean peninsula, as well as Northeast Asia, including China.

3. Asymmetrical Transformation of Alliance

The realignment of U.S. forces in Asia has been pursued in two different directions. U.S. forces in Japan will be enhanced greatly, while U.S. forces in Korea will be sharply reduced. The role of U.S. forces in Japan has already been adjusted to meet the post-Cold War regional environment during the last ten years. Accordingly, it has been gradually upgraded. To meet the post-9/11 strategic environment, the United States once again tries to transform the role of U.S. forces in Japan in the direction of enhancing its strategic value. Japan has been very actively and positively reacting to the transformation initiated by the United States.

However, the role, mission, and structure of U.S. forces in Korea have remained intact for a long time, owing largely to the North Korean factor. In light of the fact that Cold War-type confrontation on the Korean peninsula still continues, the current transformation of U.S. forces in Korea is unusual and unprecedented. Although the United States argues that the transformation is to enhance strategic flexibility, it is unclear whether the current relocation

³ Cheol-Hee Park, “Altered Alliance and Japan’s Strategic Choices,” paper presented at a joint conference on U.S. Alliance Transformation and Northeast Asian Security, hosted by Institute of East Asian Studies, Keio University and Ilmin International Relations Institute, Korea University, Tokyo, September 4, 2004.

and reduction of USFK could perfectly achieve its goal. One thing is evident. The United States proposed the relocation of its forces in Korea first and it has a clear strategic vision and purpose, while South Korea has been reactive and its strategic thinking on the post-relocation era has not been very well developed.

In fact, U.S. forces in Japan and Korea are interconnected. While the status of the USFK is downgraded, the strategic gravity of the USFJ is relatively greater. In contrast, while the role of the USFK broadens, its linkage with the USFJ is also greater. Since the current transformation of the USFK focuses on the strengthening of maneuverability and operational capability by enhancing air and sea power, the latter must be the case.

III. The China Factor

1. China as a status quo power or a rising hegemony?

In explaining the post-Cold war transformation of world politics, some scholars argue that due largely to the withdrawal of the Soviet Union, there would be a power vacuum in East Asia. They insist that in terms of historical legacy and the rivalry between regional powers, especially between China and Japan, peace is unlikely. Instead, they believe that “an unhappy future” characterized by an intensive arms race and severe conflicts is much more of a possibility.⁴ However, the pessimists’ prediction proved to be wrong and a power vacuum did not occur. Historical antagonism and the rivalry between China and Japan are over-exaggerated, even though they still exist.

In terms of relative power, whether China is a rising challenger or not in the post-Cold War international system is a subject of heated debates among international relations theorists. In light of the current relationship between the United States and China, China does not seem to challenge the United States, in terms of either balance of power politics or great-power rivalry. Moreover, it is doubtful whether China even reaches the status of a rising challenger. Some scholars argue that even the former Soviet Union never achieved hegemonic status. Rather, it was a declining challenger, but not a declining hegemon during the Cold War period.⁵ If that is the case, China must be merely a potential challenger, at least for the time being, if it is a challenger at all.

⁴ Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal, “Rethinking East Asian Security,” *Survival*, Vol. 36. No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 3-21.

⁵ William C. Wolforth, “Realism and the End of Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Winter 1994/95), p. 100.

However, China is not a spoiler in the post-Cold War era in Northeast Asia. China is a key member of the world economic community. China is one of the most rapidly growing economies in the world. In particular, China is deeply involved in the North Korean nuclear issue as a supporter of peace and stability in the region.

Nonetheless, the China-Taiwan conflict is a litmus test for whether China will continue to support regional stability as a status quo power. Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian government publicly pursues an independence policy, while China warns that if Taiwan does so, it will retaliate by force. However, both sides have been very cautious in their attitudes toward each other thus far. Although an immediate crisis is a rather remote possibility, a political earthquake in Taiwan and the resulting effect on Taiwan-China relations could be a *casus belli* in the strait. A China-Taiwan crisis, if it happened, could be detrimental to peace and stability in the region. China's military threats will endanger not only Taiwan's security but also the entire region. If it happens, the United States cannot help but involve in that situation deeply. This could be also a hard choice for Japan and South Korea.

2. Honest Broker on the North Korean nuclear issue

Despite China-Taiwan strain over the issue of Taiwan's independence, China has played an important role in solving the North Korean nuclear issue. One of the major differences between the first North Korean nuclear crisis (1993-1994) and the second one (2002-present) is the absence or presence of the China factor. In the first crisis, China did not play any important role. However, being a member of the so-called Four-Party Talks, which had been sustained during the Clinton administration, China began to participate actively in the process, assuming a "constructive role." Having played host to the on-going Six-Party Talks, China is now clearly in a position of exerting greater influence over the North Korean nuclear issue than any other country.

There are several reasons behind China's active involvement in the North Korean nuclear issue. First, the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula serves Chinese interests. The North Korean possession of nuclear weapons would even endanger China's security as well as change the Northeast Asia nuclear map. China tends to regard, much greater than before, the North Korean nuclear issue as its "vital" security concern.

Second, stability on the Korean peninsula is a great concern for China. China wants neither North Korea to possess nuclear weapons nor the collapse of the current Kim Jong Il regime. There is great concern over what China's choice will be when these two different goals come into conflict. China has already sided with the countries that did not tolerate North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons. The deeper that China becomes involved in

this issue, the more difficult it will be for Beijing to deviate from this stance. China's response should North Korea ultimately refuse to accept the non-proliferation status will be a key question for China to address in the near future.

Third, owing largely to the extensive role that China plays, China now has become a country that can exert a greater degree of influence on both Koreas. If China's role as an honest broker on the North Korean nuclear issue is successful, China's influence on both Koreas would likely be even greater in the post-crisis period than now.

Fourth, for both China and the United States, which seem to have different strategic interests on the Korean peninsula, China's contribution toward solving the nuclear issue might ease their potential conflict in this area. Moreover, this could have even a spill-over effect on the Taiwan issue between the two countries.

Last, but not least, China expects that through its positive and active role in the North Korean nuclear issue, China could have a new image as a peace broker. By creating an image of a peace-loving country, which can cooperate with key international actors, following international norm and institutions, China's influence would become greater.

On balance, the North Korean nuclear issue will be the testing case for China's diplomacy. China is now falling into a game that makes its interests more and more vital. If successful, China will be born again as a peace-oriented leading Northeast Asian country. However, China's involvement in the North Korean nuclear issue is Janus-faced. If China's diplomacy fails, it will lose its credibility as a reliable power.

3. Realignment of the ROK-U.S. Alliance and China

China will carefully watch the development of the realignment of the ROK-U.S. alliance. China, in particular, would have a serious concern on the contents and scope of the regional role played by the USFK and the USFJ and on the possibility of the birth of a tripartite joint military operation. It is, however, quite evident that despite the massive U.S. military transformation, it is not highly likely that the relationship between the United States and China would be seriously damaged. Increasing exchanges in non-military fields and deepening interdependence between the two countries would ease tension, if such a tripartite joint military operation occurred. Between China and the United States, there has already been some kind of consensus that they should continue to maintain a "strategic partnership" in coping with terrorism and WMD.

IV. South Korea's Strategic Choices

1. South Korea's "Neo-Bismarckian Strategy"

What should be South Korea's strategic choices in the future? We can distinguish South Korea's future grand strategy from six broad alternatives: (1) regional hegemony; (2) independent regional balancer; (3) regional balancer with alliance; (4) small power state with alliance; (5) bandwagoning state; and (6) isolationist state.

At present, there is no country to fit the concept of regional hegemony. China is closer to an independent regional balancer rather than a regional hegemony. The United States is not just first among equals but a hegemony per se. Japan is believed to pursue a role of regional balancer with alliance. A simply bandwagoning state or an isolationist state would not be South Korea's future grand strategy. South Korea's current status is similar to a small power state with alliance. South Korea's future strategic choices are quite limited. An independent regional balancer would not be an easily attainable or ideal goal for South Korea. In the process of pursuing that goal, South Korea would face a formidable backlash from all regional powers. A weak state without alliance would also not be an ideal goal. There would be no relative gains from strategic independence. Rather, it is highly likely that South Korea will be entangled in power competition among regional powers as history shows.

The most realistic and feasible alternative for South Korea's "Neo-Bismarckian strategy"⁶ is somewhere between a regional balancer with alliance and a small power state with alliance. Neither an independent strategy nor an isolationist one is a viable alternative for South Korea. Similarly, neither a beyond-regional power nor a simple bandwagoning small state is an ideal goal for it. Some kind of mixture of these alternatives between a regional balancer with alliance and a small state with alliance is the optimum goal for South Korea, even after unification.

2. Nuclear-Free State

In achieving the goal of a "semi-regional power with alliance" from its long-term perspective, South Korea should not pursue a nuclear state. First of all, if South Korea

⁶ Avery Goldstein uses the term to explain China's grand strategy. See his, "An Emerging China's Emerging Grand Strategy: A Neo-Bismarckian Turn?" G. John Ikenbery and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 57-106.

attempts to obtain nuclear weapons, its alliance with the United States would not be sustainable. Second, China and Japan will be suspicious about the intention of South Korea as being an independent regional balancer and therefore, South Korea's relations with these countries will be severely damaged. Third, it will change the Northeast Asian nuclear map. Japan might also think about nuclear status as an alternative for this. Instead of being a nuclear state, even under the scenario of the North Korean nuclear state, South Korea should continue to pursue the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Only a nuclear-free state serves South Korea's best interests.

3. Positive Thinking on Regional Role

In order to achieve this goal, South Korea should actively respond to the realignment of the USFK and the change of the ROK-U.S. alliance. In regard to this, the so-called "regional role" that is being discussed between the United States and South Korea for the future role of the USFK should be positively considered by South Korea. Since the concept of the regional role is a delicate and sensitive matter for countries in this region, its content and scope should be clarified. On the basis of this, South Korea should make its position clear sooner rather than later. The key point here is that South Korea should be active and positive on the strategic future. If South Korea does not participate in the regional role that the United States is now considering in terms of the transformation of the USFK, it means that South Korea denies the core concept of the future ROK-U.S. alliance. It is to narrow down South Korea's strategic horizon, not to broaden it up. Only with a robust alliance with the United States can South Korea persuade the regional powers including China.

4. Strategic Division of Labor

When South Korea plays a regional role, it should consider 'strategic division of labor' with the United States. For South Korea, non-traditional security issues, such as comprehensive security, human security, terrorism, international refugees, the protection of SLOCs, and international crime, are the most appropriate issues to deal with. Military conflicts in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait are geographically remote and politically sensitive for South Korea. The United States and South Korea, in this sense, should define clearly what kind of regional role they play. The realignment of the USFK should proceed with a sufficient prior consultation between the two countries. Otherwise, distrust and instability in the region are likely to build up.

5. Democratic Alliance

As a long-term goal, we should pursue a democratic alliance. The ROK-U.S. alliance, together with the U.S.-Japan alliance should be reborn as a democratic alliance based on common values and common norms. Alliance based on strong solidarity between democracies could have more cohesiveness rather than one based on anti-communism in the past. In doing this, we should establish common goals and agendas and make a great endeavor to realize them. In order to cope with the 21st century international environment, the ROK-U.S. alliance should be consolidated in a new dimension, looking beyond the Korean peninsula and finding a more appropriate way to closely cooperate with each other. From the South Korean point of view, its alliance with the United States is and should remain a backbone of its security. For the last fifty years, South Korea has been a “larger” beneficiary of this relationship. For the next fifty years, South Korea and the United States could be more “equal” beneficiaries of this relationship. The two countries should shape the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance in this manner.