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"We go together" is the well-known motto of the Combined Forces Command (hereafter CFC). As the phrase tells us, since the beginning of the ROK-U.S. alliance in 1953, with the signing of ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, this bond has been one of the key elements in each country's security strategy. For the United States, the ROK-U.S. alliance has served as a critical pillar of its East Asian strategy. For the ROK, the alliance relationship with the United States has been one of the cornerstones in its national security. For almost six decades, the Republic of Korea and the United States have overcome various challenges together. In the process they have deepened and widened their cooperation, not only in the area of military and security concerns but also in the political and economic arenas. Furthermore, the successful economic development and democratization of South Korea have contributed to the expansion of common interests and shared values, and created more opportunities for cooperation and the sharing of responsibilities.

However, over the past several years, the ROK-U.S. alliance has experienced severe stress, if not crisis, and has gone through "physical" adjustment or adaptation. Each side has had a different rationale and motivation for the changes and failed to understand those of the other side. South Korea has approached the alliance from a peninsular and subregional perspective, with little attention to, or understanding of, the U.S. strategic shift in its defense transformation and transformational diplomacy, whereas the United States has approached the alliance issue from a global and transformational perspective. The process of change itself has been poorly managed and trust between the two allies has eroded. Some have argued that the ROK-U.S. alliance has entered into a terminal phase with little hope of recovery. Despite the fact that concerns about the alliance were constantly raised throughout the Roh Moo-hyun government from both sides of the Pacific, South Korea and the United States resolved many sensitive, perhaps overdue, issues such

as the realignment, or relocation, of U.S. forces in Korea (USFK) and the Land Partnership Plan (LPP), strategic flexibility, transfer of special missions, operational control (OPCON) transfer, and so on. Unfortunately, these adjustments have been made without a clear common vision or blueprint. Whether intentionally or not, both sides have rarely arranged for in-depth discussion of the strategic assessment and vision that should have guided the whole process of alliance adjustment. Instead, the process has been driven by a series of pending issues at the time and by domestic political mood, especially in South Korea. With the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak in February 2008, South Korea began to reemphasize the importance of its alliance relationship with the United States, seeking to restore the traditional ROK-U.S. relationship and to transform it into a "twenty-first-century strategic alliance." For the United States, the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak government appeared to be a significant milestone for repairing and strengthening ROK-U.S. relations. The U.S. administration, for its part, emphasized the implementation of the agreements that had already been reached between the governments of the two countries and underscored the global aspect of the alliance in the new century. The United States once again has had high hopes and expectations for the ROK-U.S. alliance.

On June 16, 2009, upon their second summit, President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama adopted the long awaited "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America." In the Joint Vision Statement, two leaders envisioned the future of their nations' alliance by stating that "we will build [a] *comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust.* Together, we will work shoulder-to-shoulder to tackle challenges facing both our nations on behalf of the next generation" (emphasis added). Upon President Obama's more recent visit to Seoul on November 18 and 19, the two leaders agreed to hold the U.S. and ROK foreign and defense ministers' meeting, the so-called 2+2 meeting, in 2010 and to adopt guidelines for the implementation of the Joint Vision Statement. Eight months later the meeting took place in Seoul. While they did not adopt the guidelines, two sides have shown a strong determination to strengthen and transform the alliance, which will be able to tackle not only traditional security challenges coming from the North but also various challenges of the twenty-first century at both the regional as well as the international level.

Realization of the vision requires much additional attention to and an accurate understanding of both the challenges ahead and the ways in which a clearly defined alliance can meet those challenges. A strategic alliance for the twenty-first century, moreover, will have to be built in concrete terms and actions, because we have already passed the stage of

rhetoric and declaration. For that purpose, let us review the fundamentals of the alliance and set a new roadmap for it.

Alliance Adjustment in Retrospect

What We Have Accomplished

South Korea and the United States have discussed and settled various issues related to the adjustment, or transformation, of the alliance using diverse channels since 2003. Despite different perspectives and understanding of the issues, the two allies have hammered out agreements on the overall adjustment of the U.S. military base system, most notably the relocation of the Yongsan base, the reduction and realignment of the U.S. Second Infantry Division,[1] and the overhaul of the "Land Partnership Plan" through the Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative (FOTA) Talks.[2] They also came to a consensus on issues related to alliance operations, such as "strategic flexibility," Comprehensive Security Assessment (CSA), Joint Vision Study (JVS), wartime operational control (OPCON) transfer, and Command Relations Study (CRS), through discussions in Security Policy Initiative (SPI) Talks. However, differences of opinion came to light in the process, and with regard to strategic flexibility and the CSA, the two countries managed to find only partial closure rather than reaching a complete settlement. The process was poorly managed and thus trust and confidence between the two sides were damaged with the spread of anti-American sentiment in South Korea and the erosion of pro-South Korean, or pro-alliance, sentiment in the United States.

In parallel efforts, the two countries have reinforced the role of their existing deliberation procedures by establishing additional new high-level consultation mechanisms such as the "Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative (FOTA)," the "Security Policy Initiative (SPI)," and the "Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership (SCAP)."[3]

At Gyeongju, South Korea in November 2005, President Roh and President Bush adopted a joint declaration, the crux of which was the "development of the ROK-U.S. alliance into a *comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial* alliance" (emphasis added).

Table 1. Alliance-related ROK-U.S. Consultation Mechanisms

Consultation Mechanisms	Key Agreements	Note
FOTA	• Transfer of the Yongsan base • Relocation and revamping of the U.S.Forces Korea (USFK) • LPP • Transfer of specific missions • Review of the progress made in the implementation of FOTA agreements;follow-up measures	Superseded by the SPI after the conclusion of a comprehensive agreement and an implementation agreement (September 2004)
SPI	• Assessment of the general security situation • Vision for the future ROK-U.S. alliance • Wartime OPCON and a new command system	In operation
SCAP	• USFK's strategic flexibility	In operation

Note: In addition to these frameworks, ROK-U.S. Annual Security Consultative Meetings (SCM) and Military Committee Meetings (MCM) are held regularly. "Big 4 Meetings," comprising the ROK foreign and defense ministers, the U.S. ambassador to the ROK, and the commander of the USFK, are held when needed.

However, the two allies failed to come up with a concrete action plan or specific measures following the adoption of the joint declaration, and thus it remained an abstract and declarative document. Furthermore, Seoul and Washington took some items off the table without being able to reach full agreement, and with regard to other matters that they had agreed upon, they put off implementation. What is more, the two countries were not able to bridge the differences of opinion over the subjects on which they could not agree. The relocation of USFK bases was delayed mainly due to issues of land purchases, environmental treatment, and cost-sharing of base and facility construction.[4] Regarding the CSA, the ROK and the United States agreed on only those issues where their views converged. And the outcome of the JVS remains a mystery to this day. The two sides closed the talks on USFK strategic flexibility by taking note of each party's position, hence setting the issue back to square one.[5] Minister Ban and Secretary Rice agreed as follows:

> the ROK, as an ally, fully understands the rationale for the transformation of the U.S. global military strategy and respects the necessity for the strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the ROK. In the implementation of strategic flexibility, the U.S. respects the ROK position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people

The United States asked South Korea to foot a larger share of defense costs on the grounds of "equitable sharing," but South Korea expressed reservations. The transforma-

tion of "Concept Plan 5029 (CONPLAN 5029)"—a plan designed to prepare for contingencies in North Korea—into an operations plan fell through, with South Korea and the United States at variance over the plan's character, sensitivities, basic course of response, and the subject of the plan's enforcement. South Korea and the United States originally agreed to dismantle the Combined Forces Command (CFC) following the wartime OPCON transfer[6] and create and operate an "Alliance Military Coordination Center (AMCC)." In the course of reviewing this plan, however, South Korea called for a form of arrangement similar to the CFC, while the United States preferred a form of cooperation among operational units. The AMCC debate is therefore back at the starting point.

With the inauguration of President Lee Myung-bak, on both sides, the expectation for the restoration of the traditional ROK-U.S. alliance and the transformation of it into a global strategic alliance has become very high. The Lee Myung-bak government singled out the "creative development of ROK-U.S. relations" as one of the top ten key tasks for achieving the national goal of "Global Korea."[7] One of the basic goals of the new government is to restore the traditional ROK-U.S. alliance and develop ROK-U.S. relations into a "strategic alliance" that contributes to the peace of not only of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia but also of the world. This is to be accomplished by reinstating traditional ROK-U.S. relations, sharing liberal democratic and market economic values, and further broadening mutual trust and expanding strategic cooperation across a number of fields, including political, economic, and social sectors. Essentially, for the new ROK-U.S. alliance, three words stand out: trust, value, and peace.

Across the Pacific, the U.S. administration, Congress, experts, and the media have enthusiastically welcomed these developments and expressed high expectations. For the United States, the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak government appeared to be a significant milestone for repairing and strengthening ROK-U.S. relations. To strengthen and upgrade the ROK-U.S. alliance, the Bush administration and the subsequent Obama administration have embarked on a series of positive measures, such as a freeze on the USFK force level at 28,500, upgrading of the ROK's FMS (foreign military sale) status, and extended deterrence.[8]

What is more important than these specific measures is the announcement of the Joint Vision Statement on June 16, 2009, which had been argued for by many security specialists in both South Korea and the United States. They have laid out the foundation of the alliance in the future (common values and ideals), expanded the areas of cooperation (from security to political, economic, social, and cultural areas), and identified the issues of cooperation at different levels (peninsula, regional, and global). Furthermore, upon President Obama's first visit to South Korea, the two presidents agreed to have foreign and

defense ministers, the so-called 2+2 meeting, meet the next year, which marked the sixtieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, and discuss specific ways to develop the alliance in the future. It was expected that in their first meeting, ministers and secretaries would discuss and introduce the so-called security cooperation guidelines, which would probably contain more specific action plans. Thus, at this juncture, it is critical to lay a solid foundation for a strategic alliance. It may be time to make a comprehensive bottom-up review of the alliance and to identify roles, missions, capabilities, and the framework of the alliance into the future. In doing so, lest we make same mistakes again, it is necessary to learn the lessons from our past experience in alliance adjustment.

What We Have Learned

First, the lack of understanding of the concept of transformation has caused unnecessary misunderstanding and friction. A common problem of both the pro-alliance school and the pro-self-reliance school in South Korea was the lack of understanding of the essential nature of the transformation of international politics in the twenty-first century and the inclination to focus mainly on domestic elements in interpreting and understanding the problems. As a result, constantly changing variables such as public opinion on specific issues overshadowed the discussion of the alliance. In analyzing and seeking to resolve the problems, it was hard to move beyond the dichotomous framework of right vs. left, conservative vs. progressive, and pro-American vs. anti-American. Such debate hindered work toward understanding the need to transform the ROK-U.S. alliance, which paradoxically has been considered one of the most successful alliances of the twentieth century. Without such an understanding, it has been difficult to lay out the right direction for the alliance transformation.

To cope with the ever-more asymmetrical threats in the twenty-first century, the United States began to implement the concept of advanced flexible force, which is capable of responding to threats at any time and place with high mobility and precision strike capability. The shift in strategic paradigm was accompanied by changes in the traditional alliance concept and system, which used to be characterized by the mission of defense of specific regions or countries—rigid regional defense. Due to the nature of emerging threats, geographical boundaries of alliances became no longer valid in the new millennium. To effectively cope with unspecified threats with no geographical limit and to enhance the flexibility of troop movement—"strategic flexibility"—the United States began to transform the traditional alliance system of hub-and-spoke into one of a multidimen-

sional network-like alliance system backed up by a strong determination to emphasize new security values and deep trust. The 9/11 incident facilitated the transformation process in all dimensions. In addition, from 2003, the United States began to emphasize the need for a physical as well as conceptual transformation of the ROK-U.S. alliance and changes in USFK's strategy.

The U.S. strategy of transformation was not fully or correctly understood by the ROK government. In South Korea, debate over the ROK-U.S. alliance was mainly driven by the fear of abandonment vs. fear of entrapment, or pro-alliance vs. pro-self-reliance. The conservatives in South Korea argued that the Roh administration's mismanagement of the ROK-U.S. relationship and its progressive orientation resulted in the weakening of the ROK security posture. On the other hand, the progressives argued for sovereignty, national pride, and a self-reliant defense posture. Neither argument understood the U.S. transformation strategy at a global level and its implications for the USFK and the ROK-U.S. security alliance. Their understanding of an argument on the changes in the ROK-U.S. alliance and defense posture were the traditional twentieth-century peninsula-specific ones. Consequently, domestic debate was counterproductive and a waste of time and effort. Furthermore this approach failed to provide proper direction and any kind of blue print for alliance transformation. Rather, the domestic participants were driven by the issues of the time.

The second lesson we can draw from the past is the importance of cognitive elements in maintaining and strengthening the alliance. For the past several years of alliance adjustment, despite all the agreements between the two allies, we have suffered from the erosion of trust and confidence between them. Perceptual or cognitive gaps have been the source of this erosion of trust and little effort has been given to overcome or narrow them. Against the official statements and explanations of both the ROK and the U.S. government, throughout the Roh administration, friction, even conflict, between the policymaking and opinion makers in both countries has gone beyond simple policy differences. Both sides have become suspicious of each other's intention, sincerity, and integrity. This suspicion resulted in misinterpretation of each other's intention and policy and left a huge emotional scar.

For example, the Roh administration and the Bush administration had quite different understandings and outlooks on North Korea, China, and desirable regional security architecture. South Korea thought that the Bush administration exaggerated North Korean threats and did not understand North Korea's intention properly due to the U.S. preoccupation with the war on terror, whereas the Bush administration believed that the Roh administration was too sympathetic toward North Korea and underestimated the gravity of

North Korean threats and challenges. The two allies also showed differences in estimating the long-term regional security environment, most notably over the rise of China and its implications for regional peace and security. So it was reported that South Korea and the United States agreed only what they could agree in the comprehensive security assessment (CSA) and put aside what they could not agree. Another difference was that the Roh administration saw the multilateral security arrangement in Northeast Asia as an alternative, maybe more desirable, security structure, whereas the Bush administration emphasized the bilateral alliance system as the backbone for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. In other words, the two allies had different perspectives and interpretations on the present security reality as well as the future one.

Such cognitive differences exerted great influence over the policy consultation and coordination between the two allies in a negative way. While they were able to hammer out some sort of agreement on the pending issues, they were becoming less trustful of each other's genuine intentions. A series of issues such as the strategic flexibility of USFK, a preemptive strike in the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and the multilateral security cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia actually functioned to confirm the differences between the two allies, to misinterpret their genuine intentions, and to weaken their trust and confidence in each other. This was the result of failure in narrowing the cognitive gap through in-depth and frank strategic dialogue. Or the two allies were simply preoccupied with pending issues such as the North Korean nuclear problem, base relocation, and burden-sharing, and did not have time to review the fundamentals of the alliance.

The second lesson leads us to the third lesson: absence of vision for the ROK-U.S. alliance and issue-driven adjustment. The Roh and the Bush administration failed to identify the rationale of the alliance in the future and come to a common understanding of the desirable form of the future of the alliance. To stably and smoothly transform the fifty-year-old alliance, a new and fundamental common understanding of the blue print for the transformation was needed, as we have seen in the U.S.-Japanese alliance during the 1990s. In 1996, President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto adopted the Joint Declaration of U.S.-Japan Security Cooperation. A year later the United States and Japan agreed on the guidelines for implementation. Subsequently, they have had a relatively clear understanding of why, where, and how they are heading.

In contrast, the alliance adjustment process between South Korea and the United States has been driven by specific outstanding issues without a commonly agreed-on vision or guidelines for the alliance in the future. Consequently, the two sides failed to provide the rationale for transforming and strengthening the alliance and to identify roles,

missions, capabilities, strategies, and structure. In other words, without a clear conceptual framework of the alliance, South Korea and the United States dealt with the issues. Or the United States might have an idea, whereas the ROK did not have one of its own, except the desire to be less dependent upon the United States—the "self-reliant defense." The ROK lacked sufficient judgment and evaluation of what strategic meaning each issue had for their alliance and the system of the alliance. Unlike their official statements, South Korea and the United States did not show a strong interest in developing a vision and guidelines. They might also have had different ideas about the future of the alliance. As a result, the adjustment process itself became one of the sources of misunderstanding and misjudgment on each side.

In sum, during the past several years of alliance adjustment, the lack of understanding of transformation in international politics (or changes in challenges and ways to meet them), the lack of effort to narrow the perceptual gap and the erosion of trust and confidence between the two allies, and the absence of vision and guidelines are much more important and fundamental factors than the differences over specific outstanding problems at hand. Or, to put it in a different way, the Roh and the Bush administration did not have real in-depth strategic dialogue, consultation, and coordination. Rather, they opted for tactical discussion. Thus they failed to diagnose the symptoms and to identify the fundamental causes and nature of the problems. These experiences and lessons must be taken into account in realizing the ROK-U.S. strategic alliance in the twenty-first century—the past guides the future.

Challenges and Tasks

With the inauguration of the Lee Myung-bak administration in South Korea, from both sides of the Pacific, hope and expectations for the restoration and strengthening of the ROK-U.S. security alliance has risen again. And a series of meaningful measures and agreements have been adopted and implemented. Among these, the adoption of the Joint Vision for the Alliance on June 16, 2009, should be considered quite significant in laying out the direction for the ROK-U.S. alliance in the future. South Korea and the United States are in process of realizing this vision. To accomplish the twenty-first-century strategic alliance, there are many things to do.

Defining a "Strategic" Alliance

The first task for the Lee administration is to clearly define and operationalize the strategic alliance: that is, what a "strategic alliance" is in theory and practice. Forming an alliance itself is a strategic choice. Are there other types of alliances we can think of? Is it just another case of a term without substance? It is also necessary to explore the difference between an alliance and a "strategic" alliance. These definitions are also closely related to the roles and mission of the alliance in the coming years.

An alliance is formed to cope with common threat(s), notably military in nature, as a way to make up for a deficiency. What makes an alliance different from other forms of relations is that an alliance is primarily based on and aims at close military cooperation and coordination. An alliance is rather defensive and passive in nature, promoting stability by balance of power, or of the status quo. And it is reactive to any action which is intended to bring about changes. Traditionally, an alliance is perceived as a mechanism of geographic military cooperation, which is intended to preserve peace and security in a specific region by enhancing military cooperation among countries in a specific region. Most postwar alliances such as NATO, U.S.-Japan, U.S.-ROK, U.S.-Australia, and U.S.-Philippines show such characteristics.

The Lee administration has identified three elements of a strategic alliance in the twenty-first century: values, trust, and peace: members of an alliance share common values; the relationship between them is based on mutual trust; and the objective of the alliance is peace. Thus it is possible to say that the ROK-U.S. strategic alliance is different from the traditional threat-based alliance. In realizing a strategic alliance, both sides emphasize the expansion of scope of the alliance. From a geographical perspective, the ROK-U.S. alliance is not confined to the peninsula. Rather it intends to cope with regional and global security issues as well as peninsular ones. Second, the alliance covers not only military issues but also nonmilitary issues. Both South Korea and the United States have strongly emphasized cooperation in nonmilitary areas. Thus theirs is an alliance for comprehensive cooperation in a wide range of mutual concerns. The Joint Vision, which was adopted on June 16, 2009, at the summit of President Lee and President Obama, reads in part as follows:

> Over . . . time, our security Alliance has strengthened and our partnership has widened to encompass political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. Together, on the solid foundation, we will build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust. Together, we will work shoulder-to-shoulder to tackle challenges facing both our nations on behalf of the next generation.[9]

Both South Korea and the United States clearly recognize the interconnected and complexity of issues at present and in the future. In the twenty-first century, with the changes in the security environment and with the emergence of new types of challenges and threats, some changes in alliances have taken place. First of all, due to the nature of challenges in the post-Cold War era and advancements in science and technology, geographic boundaries or limits of alliances have become a less dominant and determining factor. In addition, the nature of issues and challenges is a more important factor than geographic boundaries in forming alliances or coalitions. Thus an alliance should be ready to tackle various types of threats and challenges beyond a region and its forces should also be able to carry out missions and roles at anytime and anywhere.

Second, this structure leads to the transformation of the alliance system from a U.S.-centered hub-and-spoke model to a cobweb-like global network model. U.S. allies should be linked organically among themselves. They should be structured and be able to work not only with the United States but also with other U.S. allies. The most notable example is Japan-Australian security cooperation. Nowadays, the United States strongly urges South Korea to enhance security cooperation between its allies, especially South Korea and Japan. So, to become a true and meaningful strategic partner, one should be closely integrated into the global alliance network.

Third, a new alliance should be geared to shape the future, not just to respond to situations. The function of an alliance is not just for maintaining the status quo, but for actively developing the desired strategic landscape. For that purpose, proactive and preventive actions and measures are desired. A combination of means across fields will be a dominant feature. So the concept of DIME (diplomatic, information/intelligence, military, and economic) has become very popular in discussions between allies. Comprehensive intergovernmental cooperation, which is far beyond just military-to-military cooperation, is more necessary than ever.

Fourth, responsibility-sharing, or benefit-and-burden sharing, is a key element. Alliances used to be a kind of patron-client relationship. Today mutuality is being emphasized from both sides. One's strategic value is highly determined by how much one contributes to the attainment of common goals. The issue is how to define and share responsibilities. In other words, who takes the leading role, while the other assumes the supporting role. For that purpose, it is necessary to think of the relative weight of the national interests at stake for both countries. A second element can be the capabilities: that is, who has what and how much.

Table 2. Common Denominators of Future Cooperation between South Korea and the United States
A Set of Common Goals for Future ROK-U.S. Cooperation

Implementing Agent / Strategic Level	ROK	Common	U.S.
Global-level	• To enhance ROK's status in the international community • To search for the complex Global order	• To realize the universal value for sustaining world peace • To promote the international political and economic cooperation	• To counter WMD-terrorism • To sustain the authority as a leading country in the global order • To maintain the U.S.-led international capitalist order • To promote "U.S." values
Regional-level	• To enhance the ROK's status in the order of East Asia • To contain the emergence of a regional hegemonic power • To oppose U.S. unilateralism	• To maintain regional peace • To contain the emergence of a regional hegemonic power • To promote economic cooperation • To secure major Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) • To prevent anti-humanitarian activities in the region • To counter terrorism and nuclear proliferation	• To maintain regional peace • To continue the U.S. superior status in the region • To check the regional hegemonic power, China in particular • To promote the expansion of democracy • To lead the regional economic order
Peninsula-level	• To deter and defend against the use of force or threats on the Korean Peninsula • To procure the relative autonomy • To achieve the inter-Korean reconciliation, cooperation, and common prosperity	• To prevent the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula • To sustain democracy and the market economy in ROK • To achieve ROK-led reunification	• To pursue the stability of the Korean Peninsula • To continue U.S. influence over the Korean Peninsula • To sustain democracy and the market economy

Using these criteria, we can say that a strategic alliance is proactive, balanced responsibility-sharing, issued-based, adaptive, future-oriented, and a highly and comprehensively integrated alliance. But the core of a strategic alliance is the enrichment of military cooperation and coordination by deepening and widening the contents of cooperation. This actually encompasses some elements of regional alliance, but goes beyond simple geographical extension of the ROK-U.S. alliance. It can be called a "multidimensional comprehensive alliance" or a "complex alliance." With this new alliance framework, South Korea and the United States should identify, eliminate, and deter the potential threats to peace and security to the region and the world. A new alliance should not be targeted toward specific state or bloc. Instead it should be a tool for realizing common and cooperative security.

Table 3. Comparison between Regional Alliance and Complex Alliance

Type of Alliance / Compositions	Regional Security Alliance	New Complex Alliance
Aims	• To pursue regional stability and peace • To deter the emergence of a regional hegemonic power	• To sustain/develop universal values • To cooperate against comprehensive security threats
Threats	• A possible regional hegemonic country	• Not a certain group or country but uncertain/unspecified security threats
Regions	• Mainly Asia-Pacific region, and other regions if necessary	• Regions including both Asia-Pacific and other regions
Level of Cooperation	• Response/reaction against a military threat	• Pursuit of comprehensive areas counting political, economic, socio-cultural, and military fields
The Role of USFK	• To maintain regional security • To focus on augmentation • To support the defense of the Korean Peninsula	• To take an appropriate role outside of Korean Peninsula • To follow the ROK-U.S. agreement in terms of conditions and processes when taking a the role in regional security • To back up the recovery and secure the strategic base during both wartime and contingencies
Relationship with Other Alliances	•Considering direct/indirect connection between ROK-U.S. and U.S.-Japan alliances	• To support the ROK's leading role in terms of unification or other ultimate goals after a war on the Korean Peninsula • Sustaining the feature of independency • Considering cooperation with other bilateral and multilateral relations if necessary

Strengthening the Fundamentals

There are several key elements in realizing a comprehensive, multilayered, and complex alliance, or more simply, a strategic alliance. These elements can be considered the basics, or fundamentals, of an alliance. The future of a strategic alliance is largely dependent on the degree to which we consolidate these basics.

First, there should be a common perception of threat among the allies. One of the most essential in forming and maintaining an alliance is the existence of commonly shared national (security) interests among the constituents. However, the existence of common national interests and the exchange of them among the concerned parties are necessary conditions, but not sufficient conditions, since it is possible to choose other ways and means to pursue those common interests than forming an alliance. It is a common perception of threat that makes an alliance different from other forms of cooperation in international relations. In a word, to form and maintain an alliance relationship, the allies should have a common perception of the environment, challenges, and threats they share. Of course, threat perception itself evolves over time and the changes in the internal and external environment bring about perceptual changes among allies. It is not difficult to find cases in which the allies tend to have threat perceptions that differ. In these cases, the cooperation among the allies becomes weaker and the relationship tends to become strained. Therefore the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance greatly depends on how effectively South Korea and the United States replace the original rationale for forming their alliance—the North Korean threat—with the threats to their current common values and interests in the twenty-first century. If new threat perceptions are shared by both, the ROK-U.S. alliance will be strengthened and, in turn, the alliance will function properly under the changing security environment. Thus, to strengthen and develop the alliance today, it is necessary to strengthen the perceptual linkage, or foundations, between South Korea and the United States.

Second, another important element in alliance relations is trust. The existence of a common threat perception and national interests does not ensure solidarity among allies. Since threat perception and national interests can be altered by changes in the internal or external environment, allies may shift policies and positions, or they may fail to carry out the commitments they have made. Under this uncertainty, the element which ensures the solidarity and integrity of the alliance is trust among allies: that is, belief in "whatever you do, I am with you." Of course, a common threat perception among allies enables them to maintain an alliance relationship not only during wartime or a contingency but also during peacetime. But the trust or belief that an ally will be with me at all times and that the

ally will fully honor the commitment maintains the solidarity and robustness of the alliance regardless of the timing and changes in the internal as well as the external environment. Trust is becoming more important in the era of defense transformation, and it requires a fundamental recognition of the congruence of strategic security interests between the allies. Furthermore, trust ensures a common identity in values, vision, and culture. To upgrade and strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, efforts should be made to deepen mutual trust—"we go together."

Third, there should be institutional mechanism(s), or a framework, between the allies to support the realization and strengthening of the cognitive foundation. Otherwise, the relationship will become an organization of "No Action Talk Only (N.A.T.O.)" and will not be able to operate effectively. To strengthen mutual trust between allies, it is necessary to have an effective institutional framework, including treaty-bound responsibilities. In introducing or inventing institutional mechanisms, the following points should be taken into account and the institutional mechanism should be able to strengthen these points in operation.

First of all, in developing the future ROK-U.S. alliance, it is important to honor the basic spirit of the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty. The Preamble of the Mutual Defense Treaty reads:

> The Parties to this Treaty,
> ….
> Desiring to declare publicly and formally their common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area,
> Desiring further to strengthen their efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security pending the development of a more comprehensive and effective system of regional security in the Pacific area. . . .

Thus we can say that from the beginning the ROK-U.S. alliance was not exclusively confined to the Korean Peninsula. This fact has significant implications for the development of any future ROK-U.S. alliance. First of all, the expression *"no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area"* (emphasis added) implies that the objective of the ROK-U.S. alliance is not only the deterrence of North Korea's use of force against South Korea but also responds to diverse potential security threats in the Pacific area. We can argue that from the beginning of the alliance the scope of the alliance has covered not only the Korean Peninsula but also East Asia and Asia-Pacific. This area can be further extended to cover global issues due to the increasing linkage of issues and challenges across regions in the world. Furthermore, it is geared to-

ward the establishment of "[a] *comprehensive and effective security mechanism*" (emphasis added) in the region: that is, the ROK-U.S. alliance should function as a cornerstone of collective security mechanisms in the region. The wording means that the ROK-U.S. alliance and multilateral security cooperation are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are mutually reinforcing, and efforts should be made to realize that relationship between the alliance and multilateral security cooperation.

Second, the ROK should be more concerned with the meaning and implications of the word "mutual" in the Mutual Defense Treaty. The establishment of the ROK-U.S. alliance by adopting a mutual defense treaty implies that when one party is in danger or faced with danger, both parties respond to it together. Until recently, the ROK-U.S. alliance has usually been understood as the U.S. commitment to the defense of the ROK. However, as it has developed its national power over the years, South Korea should recognize the fact that areas for cooperation and collaboration over U.S. security concerns have also widened and that South Korea should be able to share these concerns. To develop a balanced and robust alliance relationship with the United States, it is necessary for South Korea to assume greater responsibility and to identify and expand areas of cooperation and contribution. That is, South Korea should try to increase its strategic value to the United States by making meaningful and substantial contributions to U.S. efforts in managing and transforming the regional and global order. On the other hand, the United States should also be well aware of and concerned with subregional-level concerns and issues that affect South Korea's national interests directly.

Third, South Korea and the United States should think of ways to utilize the abstractness and possibility of flexible interpretation of phrases in the Mutual Defense Treaty. Some argue that to extend the scope of the ROK-U.S. alliance beyond the Korean Peninsula it is necessary to revise or amend the Mutual Defense Treaty, otherwise, they claim, the treaty may be violated. However, it is unnecessary and counter-productive to amend the treaty. Rather, as the United States and Japan did in 1996 when they adopted a declaration of new security cooperation, South Korea and the United States, by taking into account the development and changes in their security environment, should set the goals and directions of their alliance within the framework of the existing Mutual Defense Treaty. In addition, it is possible to lay out a kind of security cooperation guidelines or principles. The current command relationship and structure—the Combined Forces Command—should be adjusted accordingly to ensure that it will be effective in carrying out its roles and missions.

Fourth, even though South Korea and the United States aim at a "comprehensive alliance," which encompasses not only military security but also the political, diplomatic,

economic, cultural areas, the core element of this comprehensive alliance should be the widening and deepening of military cooperation. This aspect makes the alliance different from other types of relations and makes it more meaningful and important. From this perspective, the word "comprehensive cooperation" should not mean the weakening of military security commitment to each other. Rather it should be interpreted as a way to strengthen the alliance by adding other elements of common interest to the existing core relationship and by constructing a more complex, intertwined, and multilayered relationship among the allies. These additional elements and a richer relationship will ensure the stability of the two allies' security commitment and enhance their military security cooperation. With a comprehensive and multilayered alliance, that is, a complex alliance, South Korea will be able to maintain a robust security collaboration that is backed by the expansion of national interests in the political, economic, and social arena.

In sum, South Korea and the United States should seek a new form of alliance system and military cooperation that is appropriate to a strategic alliance. The two countries need to undergo a process of minimizing their gaps in perception by shoring up their security dialogue and intelligence cooperation, charting multiple plans tailored for various types of challenges, and setting the scope and level of cooperation and division of missions. By closing the fissures in understanding and acting in concert (think alike, act together), South Korea and the United States should aim at developing their alliance into a relationship where benefits and responsibilities are shared. Hence, under the principle of shared benefits and responsibilities, the two countries need to seek, expand, and advance cooperation in new areas, in addition to their existing security and military cooperation, in consideration of each other's capabilities. Moreover, the two allies should formulate a plan that addresses in what forms and to what levels they should cooperate to meet the challenges arising on the Korean Peninsula and at the regional and global levels.

The key to repairing and strengthening the ROK-U.S. alliance is to consolidate the foundations of the alliance by stepping up efforts to place priority on fine-tuning and coordinating each outstanding issue and promote shared understanding. The United States and South Korea are bound to have incongruent points of view and perceptions, but in order to consolidate the foundations of the ROK-U.S. alliance and encourage its health, it is vital that the two countries make efforts to bridge their gaps and foster confidence and trust. In order to move toward a "strategic alliance" that aspires to share values and broaden strategic cooperation, what the two countries need is a set of systems, institutions, and measures of closer consultations and cooperation capable of ensuring "comprehensive interoperability," where even situation assessments and prospects, discernments, and means of planning and response are shared.

For its part, South Korea needs to take the approach of expanding its national interests through the utilization of its alliance with the United States as a means of counterbalancing the burden of maintaining the alliance. South Korea also needs to take advantage of the alliance to supplement its weaknesses—notably its deterrence against North Korea and balance of power vis-à-vis neighboring countries—and raise its stature and influence in the security realm and regional security structure. Seoul also needs to make an effort to enhance its strategic value by developing and advancing the country's own areas of specialization which befit its international prestige, national power, and image in the outside world. To this end, South Korea, a successful model of democratization and economic development, may examine ways to blend "soft power" with other positive elements it possesses and make use of it as an asset of the alliance. South Korea can also consider ways to build on and take advantage of the expertise it has accumulated in the fields of peacebuilding, stabilization, social reconstruction and begin establishing its own areas of expertise.

There are some technical, but very important, issues to be reviewed and agreed between South Korea and the United States: the scope and degree of participation of the ROK-U.S. security alliance in shaping the future; the alternative defense cooperation mechanism and structure between South Korea and the United States, including command relations; the peace regime on the Korean Peninsula and the status of the United Nations Command; strengthening South Korea's defense capabilities and restructuring its forces; adjusting and redefining the roles, missions, and capabilities of USFK in the future; maintenance of the proper size of USFK; and base realignment.

Considerations

In order to cement and develop the ROK-U.S. alliance, Seoul needs to take the time it needs and conduct a bottom-up review of the alliance and introduce a vision for it, rather than taking an approach that is centered on short-term pending issues. Seoul should then seek to harmonize the form and content of the alliance and advance the relationship based on that vision. Before emphasizing the alliance *per se,* it should present an assessment of the meaning and importance the ally has for Korea. It can then pursue the alliance on the basis of that evaluation.

South Korea and the United States should make an effort to minimize their gaps in

viewpoint, understanding, and evaluation by bolstering dialogue and consultation channels between the two governments. The two allies need to examine ways to integrate their diversified security discussion mechanisms in line with the characteristics of the current comprehensive security era and transform them into a single system under which the two allies can carry out comprehensive discussions. They need to institutionalize the "2+2 security strategy dialogue" in which the foreign and defense ministers of both countries take part; they also need to conduct more in-depth dialogue and consultations by boosting high working-level—deputy minister–level—dialogue, a transition from and an expansion and reorganization of the existing SPI. The two countries should build and reinforce their realm of shared understanding by increasing their discussions on the long-term, macroscopic themes that arise at the regional and global levels, in parallel with deliberations on pending issues that merit instant attention.

In order to build a strategic relationship where benefits and responsibilities are shared, South Korea needs to make an effort to augment its capacity, identify the areas where it can make contributions, and develop in those spheres. An advancement to a strategic alliance signals broadened responsibilities for South Korea; thus South Korea should endeavor to amplify its own capabilities so that it can shoulder these responsibilities not merely with words but with action. Above all, South Korea needs to discover areas where it can make up for U.S. inadequacies and develop those areas into its own specialized fields. South Korea also should augment the foundations of military use for and cooperation on transport and logistics support, civil and stabilization operations, and peace-building beyond the Korean Peninsula and on human security issues prevalent in the twenty-first century. A joint quest for a common response to twenty-first--century security threats, such as mutual development and conduct of training and exercises, will contribute to developing the alliance as well. Issues of interest to the United States, namely CONPLAN 5029, PSI, MD, and defense cost-sharing, should not be addressed in terms of their meaning for the alliance. Rather, it would be desirable for South Korea to take the time to review them from the standpoint of its own needs and necessities before it comes to a conclusion.

At the same time, South Korea must make diplomatic efforts to preempt and mitigate neighboring states' concerns and sensitive reactions. With an eye toward minimizing their concerns, Korea should expand dialogue and cooperation with those countries that may react sensitively to a strengthened ROK-U.S. alliance. Seoul's endeavors to cement its alliance with the United States should proceed hand in hand with attempts to determine the content of cooperation with neighboring countries and conceive a plan to upgrade relationships with them, taking into consideration each country's distinctive qualities. Most

important, South Korea should emphasize that a strengthened ROK-U.S. alliance in no way targets any specific country and that a stronger alliance can actually promote regional stability and peace and contribute to buttressing the foundations of development and increasing opportunities for the region by increasing the stability and the predictability of the regional security structure. Seoul would also benefit from reinforcing multilateral cooperation diplomacy and dialogue. It should consider pushing for multilateral security dialogue on the one hand, while, on the other, conducting various small-scale multilateral cooperation dialogues (also known as "minilateralisms"), for example, ROK-U.S.-China, ROK-Japan-Australia, and ROK-China-Japan dialogues, and seeking issue-based cooperation, such as on the environment, disasters, catastrophes, and diseases.

The ROK-U.S. alliance cannot be consolidated without an unwavering national understanding of and support for the alliance. The South Korean government cannot rule out the possibility of the people's aversion to the notion of a "strategic alliance." It should, therefore, promote a national understanding of "why South Korea needs a strategic alliance with the United States" from the dimension of overall national interests, spanning both the security and the nonsecurity realms. South Korea needs to encourage constructive debates and foster a positive atmosphere by pushing ahead with a variety of "alliance discourse" undertakings. It would be reasonable for South Korea to evaluate the effect and the contributions of the alliance based on the prospects of the mid- to long-term security situation and structure and an assessment of the content and degree of key challenges; it can then use its findings as a basis for the alliance discourse.

Lastly, Seoul needs to step up public diplomacy with the goal of broadening and solidifying the support base for the alliance. In this context, South Korea should positively work toward building a network through which to win over fresh batches of personnel who are friendly toward or knowledgeable about South Korea and promote positive images of South Korea.

Conclusion

With the inauguration of the Lee administration, South Korea and the United States are faced with new long-awaited opportunities to repair and upgrade the ROK-U.S. alliance into a "strategic alliance." Saying this, of course, is one thing and doing it is another. Without concrete plans and action, the term "strategic alliance" may follow the undesirable

path of the previous effort at a "comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial alliance."

To realize a strategic alliance, a clear vision must be adopted and action plans should be devised carefully through intense and whole-hearted discussions. For that purpose, it is essential for South Korea and the United States to undergo a bottom-up, comprehensive review of the alliance. It is important to pay careful attention to: identification of challenges that South Korea and the United States must cope with together (for what); division of labor (who should do what); plans and strategy (how); and cooperation mechanisms (through what). Along these lines, it is important to think about how to enrich the content of military cooperation as the backbone of the alliance. To avoid any misunderstanding and over-expectation of the United States, South Korea must make it clear what it can do and what it cannot. Finally, mutual respect must always be there.

In conclusion, there need not be too much ambition in realizing the strategic alliance. It will take a substantial amount of time to set the strategic alliance in place and achieve it in practice. But the desire and sincerity to realize a strategic alliance must be clearly present at all times.■

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Endnotes

[1] In the FOTA process, the United States revealed its plan to reduce the size of USFK by 12,500 by 2007. The reduction went on until early 2008. However, President Lee and President George W. Bush agreed to freeze the size of USFK at 28,500 at their first summit in April 2008.

[2] From 2003 to 2004, FOTA talks took place twelve times. The last meeting was held in September 2004.

[3] In addition, the two sides have introduced the so-called 2+2 meeting as of July 2010. While the 2+2 ministerial meetings were rather ad hoc, the 2+2 high level meetings (Deputy Minister level) are likely to be institutionalized.

[4] As of January 2008, 38 out of the 79 USFK bases targeted for relocation have been returned, but the remaining 41 have not been returned. In 2008, 9 bases are supposed to be returned to South Korea.

[5] In the first SCAP meeting on January 20, 2006, South Korea and the United States agreed on this issue.

[6] Both sides agreed to transfer wartime OPCON on April 17, 2012, and the agreement remains valid.

[7] "Global Korea" is an indication of being a mature nation in the world.

[8] In addition, both sides agreed and reaffirmed to enhance cooperation on climate change, energy security, counter-terrorism, nonproliferation, peace-keeping operations, and the economy and trade.

[9] White House of the Office of the Press Secretary, "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea," June 16, 2009.

Author's Biography

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Kang Choi is a professor and Director-General for American Studies at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. From 1992 to 1998, and from 2002 to 2005, Professor Choi worked in the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses (KIDA). When at KIDA, Professor Choi assumed various positions such as Chief Executive Officer, Task Force for Current Defense Issues, Director of International Arms Control Studies, and one of the editors of Korean Journal of Defense Analysis. He has done more than 60 research projects on arms control, crisis/consequence management including pol-mil games, and the ROK-US security alliance. From 1998 to 2002, he served in National Security Council Secretariat as Senior Director for Policy Planning and Coordination. He was one of South Korean delegates to the Four-Party Talks. Professor Choi has published many articles including "An Approach toward a Common Form of Defense White Paper," "International Arms Control and Inter-Korean Arms Control," "Inter-Korean Arms Control and Implications for the USFK," "Future ROK-US Security Alliance," "A New Approach toward Inter-Korean Arms Control," "North Korea's Intensions and Strategies on Nuclear Games," and "A Prospect for US-North Korean Relations: beyond the BDA issue." Prior to obtaining his PhD from the Ohio State University in international politics, Professor Choi received his Master's Degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in International Politics and his Bachelor's Degree from Kyung Hee University in English Literature.

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