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**THE ROK'S CHINA POLICY UNDER
PARK GEUN-HYE:
A NEW MODEL OF ROK-PRC RELATIONS**

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The ROK's China policy under Park Geun-hye:
A New Model of ROK-PRC Relations (*Xinxing Hanzhong Guanxi*)¹

I. Introduction

From June 27-30, 2013, South Korean President Park Geun-hye made an official state visit to China. It was a “trip of heart and trust” (*sim shin ji ryoe* in Korean or *xin xin zhi ru* in Chinese). Korea and China publically announced that they would reinforce a bilateral strategic cooperative partnership. The anticipation of the development in the relationship between the two countries by their leaders and people has increased. During the Lee Myung-bak Administration, if ROK-US relations was seen to be at its peak, ROK-China relations was at its lowest. Although the mutual good feelings between President Park and Chinese President Xi Jinping played a significant role, at the time, the ROK-China relationship was at rock bottom and therefore, it was only bound to improve.²

Since then, there are those that have voiced concern over the need to choose between the U.S. and China. On the other hand, there are also those who have expressed that rather than having several unstable and uncertain insurance plans, it is better to have one solid insurance plan; that is, the ROK-US alliance.³ Although the concurrent growth of the ROK-China and ROK-US relationship is Korea's only answer at the moment, it is definitely not an easy task. How can Korea develop relationships with both countries harmoniously? Amidst the changing security environment around the Korean Peninsula, on what level should ROK-China relations be handled such that it is appropriate for Korea's security?

This paper will be separated into four parts. First, the meaning of the recently established enrichment of the strategic cooperative partnership, which was agreed upon by both countries this year, will be considered. Further, there will be an evaluation primarily in the four sectors of politics, economy, society, and culture and military due to the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Unlike the intimate cooperation in the non-security sector, there is much imbalance with the security and military sectors in which both countries have agreed to address. Next, it will analyze the factors of consideration that determined the agreement of the enriched strategic cooperative partnership. It will explain that the factors are not only personal affairs and tendencies of each leader, but are also rooted from the respective strategic concerns of China and Korea. Third, it plans to prospect the content and direction of Korea's China Policy. In regards to the China policy, Korea will first look to secure support from China on a trust building process regarding the Korean Peninsula. Then, Korea will pursue a trust building process with China. Taking this as a basis, Korea will establish a new model of the Sino-Korean relationship. Fourth, it will make policy suggestions on three levels, that is, Korea's China policy, development of the ROK-China relationship, and the alliance with the United States.

II. Evaluation on the Current ROK-China Relations

1992-2012, 20 years of ROK-China Relationship: A basic introduction

The ROK and China established diplomatic relations on August 24th, 1992. The Republic of Korea and China met in Beijing and established principles of reciprocal equality and peaceful coexistence embedded in the good neighbor policy, mutually supporting a “One China” and “peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula.” Both countries signed a joint statement establishing diplomatic ties, opening a new era in the ROK-China relationship. The meaning of diplomatic ties between China and the ROK can be broadly

understood on three levels. Both countries have settled and reconciled a historical hostile relationship, overcoming the differences in ideology and system composition and leading the Northeast region to the post-Cold War era. The establishments of diplomatic relations with China were significant to Korea, as it allowed to improve the security environment surrounding the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, Korea gained advantage against North Korea by responding actively to the changing international order. The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 became a diplomatic breakthrough for China, which has been isolated from the Western world till then.⁴ Furthermore, Korea's technology and investment in the 1990s greatly contributed to the economic development of China.

Within the short 20 years, the relationship between ROK and China greatly developed in respective sectors. In 2012, China was Korea's number one trade partner and to China, Korea was its third top trade partner. The trade scale in 1992 was 6.3 billion dollars between China and Korea, and increased 34 fold to 215 billion dollars in 2012. The total amount of investment in 2012 was 37 billion dollars from over 22,000 venture corporations. Personal exchange between the two countries in 1992 was over 13,000 people; in 2012, it increased 50 fold to 690,000 people. The number of Chinese exchange students in Korea was 55,000 in 2012. Also, with approximately 62,000 Korean exchange students in China, Korean students are ranked number one in foreign students. In addition, over 80,000 Koreans currently live in China, whereas in Korea, there are over 70,000 Chinese living in Korea, including approximately 45 thousand Chinese Koreans. There are 811 direct flights between both countries as of December 2013.⁵ Further, the Korean Wave (*Hanlyu*) is currently receiving sensational popularity in China; in Korea, the learning the Chinese language is a runner up next to English.

Non-economic relations between the countries have been strengthened as well. Mutual political trust has enhanced through frequent high-level official dialogues. The leaders of China and ROK have made active exchanges with one another through respective state visits and participation in international summits. Ever since President Roh Tae-woo made a state visit to China in September 1992, up until now, there has been a total of 33 instances of exchange between the leaders of both countries. Meetings amongst prime ministers have totaled 31 instances. Meetings and exchanges between assemblies and political parties numbered to 59 instances on the Korean side and 48 on the Chinese, totaling 107 instances. South Korea and China are cooperating on various international stages, such as the UN, APEC, ASEM, ASEAN+3, ARF, Korea-China-Japan Trilateral Summit and the East Asian Summit. Furthermore, they are working together to tackle the biggest security threat in Northeast Asia, the North Korean nuclear issue. In the national defense sector exchange, there were eight minister meetings, where 6 visits were to China and two visits to Korea. There were a total of 38 mutual visits among the upper commander level personnel in both respective countries.⁶

Assessment of Strategic Cooperative Partnership

The importance of maintaining a good relationship between South Korea and China is not only because the two countries share a familiar culture, geological accessibility and economic interdependence, but also as both countries share much interest in many international issues, particularly the situation on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. With the establishment of diplomatic ties during the Roh Tae-woo administration, the Friendship and Cooperative Relationship was declared. Thereafter, the relationship between ROK and China continued during the Kim Youngsam government, elevating to a Collaborative Partnership for the 21st Century in 1998 under President Kim Dae Jung. Shortly, in 2003, under Roh Moo-hyun, it transitioned into a Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership and finally during President Lee Myungbak in 2008, it became a Strategic Cooperative Partnership.⁷ This is evidence of how under different presidential leaderships every five years, the relationship between ROK-China elevated.

The scope of the Strategic Cooperative Partnership that was agreed upon between ROK-China in 2008 expanded the level of cooperation from a regional to a global one. Further, it was strengthened through economy, society, culture, politics and security. Han Xiandong defined this strategic partnership as the maintenance of a stable long-term cooperative relationship amongst related countries, which allows equal cognition and understanding of relevant issues. It would be easier if it were an alliance, but even if that is not the case, finding a relationship of that type can also be structured based on a realistic understanding of each other. Moreover, in order to be that type of a partner, they must be able to maintain the relationship at times of conflict. Hence, the main point is that both countries need to be able to cooperate on political and security issues.⁸ In this regard, Korea and China established a strategic partnership not only because of economic interdependence, but because of the strategic importance.

However, a strategic cooperative partnership was not able to reach the level on the following two reasons. A true strategic partnership would prioritize the development of the national defense sector. However, in the case of ROK-China, they were not able to meet the military sector's expectations of development. For the 20 years after the establishment of diplomatic ties between ROK-China, the relationship was able to gain light on the realms of economy, society, culture and politics. However, it was overshadowed in the military sector. Three annual defense strategic dialogues were held to write history on a future in developing military relations. For the first time in 20 years, the national defense exchange was allowed for expectations of the institutionalization of the sector.⁹ Although there was an increase of mutual visits and various exchanges were carried out, it languished on the level of personal exchange. Mutual military facilities and training participation between the two countries were not properly carried out. Due to the unique relationships of the ROK-US and DPRK-China relations, there are clear limitations to a military exchange.

Also, even in the time of conflict, the relationship must be maintained; however, let alone, the resolution of the problem maintaining the relationship was not easy. The two countries had to face the cold reality despite their continued declaration of a strategic cooperative partnership in 2010. The first obstacle came on the 26th March 2010, when the Korean Warship Cheonan sank underwater. Before the national upheaval had a chance to settle down, the second incident took place, in which North Korea shelled the South Korean island of Yeon-pyeong on 23rd of November, 2010, causing two civilian casualties. This was the first civilian casualty caused by an exchange of military fires after the Korean War; hence, it caused unrest in the international community. This strangled the South-North relationship and imposed continuous pressure on the relations of the two Koreas even until today.

The diplomatic cooperation seen from the aftermath of these two incidents clearly displayed to the international arena that the so called 'friendship' that Korea and China claimed they shared has been more of a rhetorical figure rather than a real, sincere attitude. South Korea expected Chinese support on the international stage, whereas China tilted more toward North Korea. ROK-US joint military exercise in the West Sea caused discomfort and complaints from China; the Chinese countered by exercising heightened tensions in the region. South Korea showed not only disappointment, but even anger toward the Chinese attitude and such anger spread out amongst the general public. This is where we have to look back to what has been going on between the two countries. What is China to South Korea, and what is South Korea to China? Has everything that has been declared in the 2008 Summit, including the elevation of relations to the strategic cooperative partnership, all just rhetoric? Are both countries really strategic cooperative partners to each other?

Generally, most meetings between officials of the two countries start with how much economic cooperation has deepened between South Korea and China. However, if the two nations were to be true strategic cooperative partners, they should be able to share much more than just economic affairs. South Korea and China were not yet ready to talk about sensitive issues. Maybe it was easier and necessary for both nations to act as if they were close to each other, ignoring the underlying fact that they may not yet have established such a friendship. Maybe they are just good trading partners rather than true friends. The relationship that the two nations have is more of an 'economic' cooperative partnership, and is not true to its full meaning.

III. Achievements and Background of the Enriched Partnership Agreement

The once awkward relationship between Korea and China has considerably subsided ever since the Park Geun-hye, the Sae-nuri Party candidate, won the presidential election on December 19, 2012. Even though both Japan requested the extradition of Yasukuni Shrine arsonist Liu Qiang, on January 4th of this year, South Korea sent Liu back to China. China was the first to dispatch a congratulatory special envoy immediately after Park was elected on January 11th. On January 22, China supported the UN Security Council sanctions against North Korea after the North's long-range missile launch on December 2012. At the meeting with the Korean special envoy Kim Mu-song on January 23rd, Secretary General Xi Jinping clearly stated that the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the nonproliferation of WMD are a consistent position for China. More importantly, President Park's visit to China last June 27~30 has become reinforced as the strategic cooperative partnership that was agreed back in 2008, in the name of "Enrichment of Strategic Cooperative Partnership."

Achievement of President Park's China Visit

Last June 27, both leaders of China and the ROK released a joint statement on the future vision of ROK-China along with an announcement of a proposal in order to reinforce the strategic cooperative partnership.¹⁰ Both leaders evaluated that they achieved great development in politics and security, economy and trade, and society and culture, largely under the principles of mutual respect, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. Under this mutual understanding, they strengthened future oriented mutual cooperation, respected the principle of equality and international standards, and finally contributed to the stability of the regional and international peace as well as the improvement of human welfare.

In comparison to the previous joint ROK-China statements, the current statement may not be as flowery words. Although the current statement is more moderate, much consideration was invested into the methodology in order to transform mutual interests into mutual benefits for both countries. In addition to the acquisition of China's support for the North Korean problem and their commitment to work toward an economic cooperation to sign the FTA, two things are worthy of notice.

First, there was a need to strengthen strategic communication. Both Korea and China have acknowledged that they are important partners in the dialogue for politics and security. The institutionalization of dialogue between the chief of national security at the Blue House and the Chinese state councilor displayed the will by both countries to place efforts in order to actively handle the security problems. The regularization of mutual visits between foreign ministers, continuous opening of semi-annual vice foreign ministerial dialogues, and the institutionalization between state run policy think tanks were established.

Second, the two countries established a “ROK-China joint committee on humanities exchange” in order to strengthen the bond of humanities.¹¹ Economic cooperation has sufficiently been going well and under the premise that both have a different understanding on security and military issues, Korea and China have remained satisfied. In this current state, in order to reinforce the strategic cooperative partnership, there is a need to cooperate on a different sector. That new platform would be the cooperation of humanities, where both countries can share each other’s Confucian culture and Asian values. Thus, both countries have agreed to a soft power cooperation to contribute and understand each other.

Background on the Agreement of the Enrichment of the Strategic Cooperative Partnership

Then, what is the reason for the background regarding the Enrichment of the Strategic Cooperative Partnership? First, we can look at the personality of both leaders of China and Korea as well as their level of empathy for each other. President Xi and Park are both decedents of previous national leaders. When Xi Jinping’s father, Xi Zhongxun, a communist veteran and vice prime minister, received political persecution during the Cultural Revolution, Xi Jinping was also forced to work in the Yanchuan County in Shaanxi for eight years, experiencing mental and physical bottom. In his political rise, he prioritized *Guanxi* and during his difficult times, he cherished personal connections. In February 2011, when vice president Xi Jinping visited the United States, he made it a point to visit a small town in Iowa. He made the visit as he remembered the warm hospitality he received twenty-seven years ago in 1985, when he took a delegation from the town of Hebei. In addition, when Xi visited Seoul in 2005 as a party chief in Zhejiang, Park Geun-hye, at the time the party chairman of the Hanara party, changed her schedule to welcome him.

President Park Geun-hye’s father is the former president Park Chung-hee. Park Geun-hye had to overcome a period of difficulty as both her parents were assassinated. The still single President Park considered General Zhao Yun of the Three Kingdom period in China as her first beloved and indulged herself in books by the Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan. She endured her difficult times through learning her Chinese. President Park’s understanding of China was easily revealed through her movements during her state visit last June. In comparison to the former presidents’ usual visit to Shanghai, the location of the interim Korean government during the Japanese colonial rule, President Park visited Xi’an. Xi’an is China’s pride of 3,000 years of history and symbolizes the Chinese Dream (*Zhongguomong*). President Xi Jinping’s father is also buried in Xi’an. This was a decision that considered both leaders’ sense of fellowship.

Aside from this personal mutual respect and fellowship, why is China actively further promoting bilateral relations? From last November until this year of March, China had an important domestic political event schedule. At the 18th CPC National Congress in November, Xi was appointed as the secretary-general, and in March at the National People’s Congress, Xi was elected as the new president. However, in November, North Korea launched another missile and in February, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test, ruining China’s festivities. In comparison to China’s refusal to agree to President Roh Moo-hyun’s proposal on a strategic cooperative partnership considering North Korea, this time around, North Korea’s continuous infringement on China’s national interests greatly angered China. China disregarded North Korea and felt unnecessary to take any consideration of them.

Broadly, China’s significant isolation after the return of the U.S. to Asia in 2010 along with the American rebalancing strategy allowed China to realize the strategic importance of the ROK. This suggests the rapid increase in Japanese military spending and its expanding military role in East Asia. By actively responding to the U.S. to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and as an active peace contributor supporting the American military partnership, Japan is leading the blockade of China.¹² The only country

that does not have to join would be South Korea. As indicated by a director of a policy think tank in China, in a situation where China is becoming isolated (*gudu*), it is very important for China to actively engage in South Korea.¹³

Then, why is Korea actively reinforcing relations with China? The Korean government has acknowledged the reality that China ranks as number two in its foreign affairs priority list. Comparing the level of priority of U.S.-Japan-China, respectively, by previous Korean presidents, after President Park took office, the act of sending her first envoy to China rather than to Japan was of great significance. It indicates that Japan has fallen to third place in Korea's foreign affairs priority list and that China has risen to be the next important nation after the United States. In reality, the importance of China in Korea's foreign affairs started awhile back. It was even apparent when the U.S. and Japan friendly Lee Myung-bak government opened FTA negotiations with China first.

In a self-reflection on the past five years of Korea's China policy, the transformation from sensitivity to rationality, in other words, being disappointed and angry at China, is not a single method. China displayed strong disapproval of the Lee Myung-bak government's strengthening of ROK-US relations and a hard line approach toward North Korea. In response, the ROK was disappointed with China's ambiguous stance with regard to the Cheonan Naval Ship sinking and the Yeon-pyeong Island attacks. With the death of a South Korea coast guard during the process of the illegal fishing boat crackdown by China in December 2011, the presidential visit to China was almost canceled. In addition to the repatriation of North Korea defectors to North Korea and the case of North Korea human rights activist Kim Young-hwan, feelings between both countries were much deteriorated. No matter how much South Korea criticized, it was difficult for China's North Korea Policy to gain the hoped wholehearted support for South Korea. Therefore, it was realized that the ROK must watch China and approach it more rationally and systematically rather than emotionally.

IV. Direction of ROK's China Policy

It is expected that the Park administration's China policy will be categorized into three different stages. The first is the attainment of China's support for the Korean Peninsula Trust Building Process, then the progress of the ROK-China Trust Building Process and finally, the establishment of a New Model of the Korea-China Relationship.

Securing support for the Trust Process on the Korean Peninsula (Hanbando Shinloe Process in Korean or Caoxianbandao Xinren Jincheng in Chinese)

The conceptual meaning of "trust" is the foundation of making mutual cooperation and peace settlement possible by accumulation through the process of conversation, reciprocating exchange and cooperation. "Process" is carried out continuously and gradually in phases. Due to its nature, the speed and scope is flexible depending on the situation.

During President Park's visit to the United States, she gave a speech in front of the U.S. Congress on May 8, 2013;

We are determined to embark on another shared journey toward peace on the Korean Peninsula...the Republic of Korea will never accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. Pyongyang's provocations will be met decisively...at the same time, I will not link humanitarian aid provided to the North Korean

people, such as infants and young children, to the political situation. And with the trust that gradually builds up, through exchange, through cooperation, we will cement the grounds for durable peace and –eventually- peaceful reunification...¹⁴

The trust process is, as in its name, means “building trust.” Trust is not developed overnight; rather, despite the threats, trust is when one overcomes via amicable feelings toward the other continuously. In the instance that one is disappointed with the other and criticizes them, it can be concluded that trust is lost in that relationship. Trust becomes more important at times of crisis rather than when times are favorable. It is important to be considerate of others so their feelings are not hurt.

The trust process is a “process” and not something that is achieved at one time. It must not be rushed or acted upon justification; further, it should act on things that ROK can do and moreover, things should not be taken lightly. It is not about changing the other; thus, actions should not be easily carried out because of economic interest. In conclusion, it is about having a conversation. Only with trust will the conflict be solved at the root. As a mutual concept, it must be carried out as a promise between the South and North Korea gradually accruing trust. Through politico-military trust and socio-economic exchange, the South-North Korea relationship will normalize and as a result, peace will be stabilized on the Korean Peninsula. South Korea should work effortlessly to show and persuade China the meaning, content and vision of the trust process so that gradually, China will support it.

Progress of ROK-China Trust Building Process (Hanjung Shinloe Process in Korean or Hanzong Xinren Jincheng in Chinese)

During President Park’s visit as a state guest to China in June, key issues, such as the North Korea nuclear issue, Korean Peninsula Trust Process and the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative, were discussed. Support for Park’s key point in her China policy was sought after and she listened to China’s opinion on the issues. Both countries discussed ways to change the state of tensions on the Korean peninsula through cooperation and peace. Having much anticipation on the newly elected Korean government’s North Korea policy, China looked forward to ROK’s constructive approach to North Korea. Also, in a state where the Asia paradox is heightened, the Northeast Peace Initiative was accepted as a very useful suggestion.

The motivational forces that allowed the strengthening of cooperation for both countries on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia can be concluded as the personal sense of fellowship amongst the two leaders arising from President Park’s “tour of heart and trust.” The most important goal for the recent summit was to solidify trust between the two leaders. Therefore, we can conclude that the start of the relationship between the two leaders is a success. There is a famous Chinese phrase “Friendship of *Guan* and *Bao*,” which means close friendship. It refers to the close friendship between Prime Minister Guan Zhong, who helped the Duke Huan of the Qi State in the Spring and Autumn Period (*Chunqiu Zhanguo Shidai*), and his friend Bao Shuya, who is famous for his royal friendship with Guan and was the one that persuaded Duke Huan to put aside personal animosity and promote Guan Zhong to Prime Minister.

Guan Zhong and Bao Shuya did not fight over material interests. They did not blame each other when affairs did not go as they pleased. At the time when situations did not go the way they projected, they trusted each other. Guan Zhong was quoted to say that it was not his parents, but Bao Shuya that believed in him. Simply put, their friendship was built on trust. Both leaders lead through life values of trust for President Park and “No Trust No Survival” (*wuxin buli*) for President Xi Jinping. It can be easily seen that both leaders’ life philosophy have common grounds.

During the former state councilor Tang Jiaxuan's visit to Seoul last June 16th of this year, he stated that "among the neighboring relationships, that of ROK-China has the most benefits. It has the most potential in development, is the most willing for development, already has beyond a bilateral level, and has the most optimistic future."¹⁵ In order to further develop the relationship, it is necessary to simultaneously build the ROK-China trust process for the future and peace of the Korean Peninsula as well as the trust building process on the Korean Peninsula for the two Koreas.

Establishment of a New Model of the Korea-China Relationship (Xinxing Hanzhong Guanxi)

At the U.S-China Summit that took place last June 7th, what China attempted to persuade the United States was to create a "New Model of Major Power Relationship (*Xinxing Daguo Guanxi*),"¹⁶ China displayed its intentions to have a close cooperative relationship with the United States. It is obvious that China also plans to develop these new major power relationships in the future with other great powers. In the future, China will build new relationships with neighboring countries (*Xinxing Zhoubian Guanxi*) as well. According to the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, at the conference on the diplomatic work with neighboring countries, which was held in Beijing from October 24 to 25, 2013, President Xi Jinping expressed the four key characters for China's neighboring country foreign policy: friendship (*qin*), sincerity (*cheng*), benefit (*hui*) and inclusiveness (*rong*). The four key character respectively means to become more close with neighboring countries, respect the neighboring countries to the fullest, share China's benefits of development, and more so embracing the neighboring countries.¹⁷ Furthermore, as a result, this can be seen as the core concepts for China to build a new model of neighborhood relations, which will become useful approaches to have the hearts of neighbors in order to be a Rise as a Great Power (*Daguo jueqi*). If the initial neighbor policy (*Sanlin* or three neighbor) was to maintain amicable diplomatic relations (*Mulin*), a peaceful security relationship (*Anlin*), and a win-win economic relationship (*Fulin*), now the new neighborhood relationship (*Silin* or four neighbor) would be the addition of the maintenance of a cultural relationship (*Wenlin*) with its neighbors.¹⁸

The representative case for China's new neighbor policy can be the ROK-China relationship. A New Model of Korea-China Relations (*xinxing hanzhong guanxi*) could be the basic frame for the future relationship of ROK-China based on mutual respect, mutual benefits and peaceful coexistence, which were agreed by the leaders of Korea and China during President Park's China visit. In addition to the principle of the mutual bilateral, regional and global levels, both countries will work toward peace and prosperity. Taking the trust of both countries in the strategic cooperative partnership as the basis, there are four "strategic cooperation" that can be considered.¹⁹ More specifically, by grafting the respective nation's philosophy, role and competitiveness, a larger synergy can be created.

First, both countries can establish a cooperative relationship for a safer environment (*Mulin*). For the peace and stability of Northeast Asia, collaboration can be achieved for a safer Korean peninsula. Second, both countries can establish a cooperative relationship (*Fulin*) that will create a more developed economic environment. Currently, it is predicted that over the next several years, 300 billion dollars of trade will occur between the two countries. Through the trade investment cooperation and FTA, a win-win situation can be predicted. Third, both countries can establish a cooperative relationship (*Anlin*) to further create a more improved human security environment. Both countries can lead human security against the non-state and non-military factors, which are disease, illegal immigration, natural disaster and environmental pollution. Fourth, both countries can establish a more improved cultural environment (*Wenlin*). Through the strengthening of ties in humanities, a valuable common denominator can be expanded, which will ignite the progress in political and economic security.

V. Policy Suggestions

The development of the ROK-China relationship is not solely determined bilaterally. The ROK-US alliance, China-DPRK relationship, U.S.-China relationship and the ROK-DPRK relationship must be taken into consideration in detail. Taking these considerations as a foundation, three types of policy suggestions will be made; First, the ROK's China policy, second, mutual efforts between ROK and China governments, and third, the Korean ally the United States.

Suggestions on ROK's China Policy

First, the understanding of China must be deepened. Although the ROK and China have initiated the strengthening of humanities exchange and it appears that both countries have a good idea of each other, in reality, both countries still do not have a full understanding of each other. The example is that the Korean government placed the slogan of journey of "heart and trust" (*shin-sim* in Korean or *xin-xin* in Chinese); however, it should have been the slogan of "trust and heart" (*sim-shin* in Korean and *xin-xin* in Chinese with more comfortable intonation). When looking at the meaning of the Chinese characters, without a proper explanation, it is not easy to understand and pronounce the phrase right away. For ROK and China, it could have been explained as a simple Chinese character cultural right and it would have been better understood if it was explained in this way. In Korean, *Shin-sim* means trust, which is the same in Chinese. China just accepted the name as it was something we designated. Thus, it is understood that what is good is good. Although it was an effort to win over the Chinese heart, it was a very Korean logic and way of approach.

Second, Korea must be very careful with its China policy regarding North Korea. South Korea must not eliminate the possibility that the ROK-China relationship with regard to North Korea can become uncomfortable. Even in that case, Korea must not 'demand' but 'request' China's assistance. At the time South Korea demands, there is a possibility that ROK relationship during Lee Myung-bak period will be reset. The Park government's policy toward China, particularly in relation to North Korea, for the next four years should be a Korean version of *Taoguang Yanghui* (not to show off one's capability but to keep a low profile). With the reduction of China's suspicion of South Korea's intention toward North Korea, Seoul must concentrate on its China policy. There must be no attempts to intentionally absorb North Korea. The ROK must accept the special relationship that China and North Korea possess and continuously send the message to China such that the ROK will not get in the way of its national interests. In order to gain the heart of China, ROK must push forward with a kind of policy "Many drops make a flood."

Also, rather than focusing on "solving all problems at once," the ROK must go in the direction of maintaining the current situation and strengthening cooperation. China does not want to be dragged into an uncertain and confusing situation, such as the collapse of North Korea, because of a change in its North Korea policy. Within the scope of not causing the collapse of North Korea and through the modification of aid, China appears that it will assert an invisible influence on North Korea. Therefore, as long as China seldom takes the role of seizing North Korea, it is necessary for the ROK to settle with its policy toward China. South Korea's realistic China policy should be one that insists China to assert influence by giving moderate pressure to North Korea such that the situation is not aggravated further.

Third, being under the pressure between China and the U.S. walking on eggshells on every action, Korea must not lose critical timing as there is a possibility of losing the heart of China and the United States.

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Rather, through responding actively, Korea can gain the hearts of both China and the U.S. Korea should have given the U.S. what it wanted quickly. Rather than being pushed into the TPP, Korea should have volunteered into it at the time when the U.S. would have been appreciative. As China joined the APEC through the active support of Korea in 1994, even for the TPP, Korea can join first and help China join thereafter. Likewise, Korea should have actively supported the joining of the U.S. into Asian gatherings.

Suggestions for Mutual Efforts between ROK-China

The first aspect that must be acknowledged is that there is a need for a change in the mutual cognition of each other. For example, China should recognize South Korea as a true strategic partner. While South Korea positively considers the elevation of relations with China, Seoul is deeply concerned with it as well. How will China try to move on with this new Strategic Cooperative Partnership with South Korea? Does China understand the realistic questions of a country with a powerful neighbor? Does China understand Korea's strategic dilemma between the U.S. and China? Does China understand how South Korea feels directly threatened by the threats from North Korea? In other words, South Korea is concerned with the sincerity of the Chinese government and hence, there is a need for China to provide such assurance and dissipate any doubts South Korea may have.

On the other hand, South Korea should understand the relationship between China and North Korea. It is not that China 'loves' North Korea, they just both clearly understand what they want from each other and why. Their relationship is more of a strategic relationship that is beneficial for both parties' national interests. This also means that once that usage is over, they can easily turn their backs easily. Behind the smiles and the so called 'blood relationship', there are fears for North Korea that China will abandon their support it has been providing, and also fears of China worrying about North Korea using China to be closer to the United States. Thus, it would be irrational to conclude that the Sino-North Korean relationship is an unchangeable, blood-bound relationship. One thing that South Korea should consider is the fact that as ROK-US relationship has a historic background that bounds the two nations together, Sino-North Korean relationship also has a history of an alliance that tied them together for more than 60 years.

Second, when President Xi makes a state visit to Korea this year, a new level of cooperative partnership must be declared in order to establish an increased new model of Korea-China relationship based on the Korean Peninsula Trust Building Process and ROK-China Trust Building Process. Both countries do not invest sufficient importance to the Korea-China relationship in their diplomatic priority.²⁰ When considering the regional security environment, a Strategic Cooperative Partnership is at a very high level. Therefore, a new elevation of relationship may not be a rational decision. There are three reasons to support this statement.

First, such terms does not indicate that we elevated to that level, but rather that both agreed to go in that direction. Strategically, the Chinese is implicating that in the long term, it would like to cooperate with Korea. Although the strategic cooperative partnership can be analyzed in various ways, it is a clear indication that both countries are in need of each other. Second, we must recall as to why China suggested the strategic cooperative partnership during the Lee Myungbak government, when Korea was more focused on the ROK-US alliance, and not during the Roh Moo-hyun government, when the ROK-China relationship was prioritized. Currently, there is no dire burden elevating the ROK-China relationship after both the ROK-China and ROK-U.S. relationship stabilizes. Upgrading the relationship with China at a time when the DPRK-China relationship is stagnant and when the surrounding environment is more favorable to South Korea is very important. Another method is to give in to China when they need Korea

the most. South Korea is in a greater need for a partner, not China. Finally, although this was not expressed, there is a need to express the relationship between Korea's new government and that of China's. This can be seen as a title for the relationship between ROK-China every five years. Therefore, there is a need to approach the relationship actively rather than passively.

However, this does not mean that we must only think about the ROK-China relationship and declare it to bring it to the highest level. China cannot be Korea's everything when it comes to foreign policy. Currently, what we can think about further from the strategic cooperative partnership is that it was agreed by both leaders, that they become "a strategic cooperative partnership on a trip of trust." Some other names could be considered as "a strategic cooperative partnership on peace and cooperation," "a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership" or "a strategic cooperative partnership based trust and cooperation."

Third, taking these relationships as a basis, both countries at the least can achieve three results in the next four years. First, both countries must work toward redefining a channel between the chief of national security at the Blue House and the Chinese State Councilor in order to discuss the security and foreign policy into a joint crisis prevention and management mechanism. Generally, crisis management consists of a threat assessment that focuses on threat detection and prevention, threat control that focuses on evaluating and negotiating existing threats and threat resolution that resolves the threat and takes preventive measures.²¹

Second, both countries should work toward establishing a comprehensive mechanism at a more high-level official dialogue. Currently the vice minister level dialogues for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense is being held separately, but we need to elevate the dialogues to ministerial level. Further, there is a need to develop this into a 2+2 ministerial level meeting.²² There is no ministerial level economic dialogue, which is necessary for the above establishment. Thereafter, it is recommended that when the timing is right, a merge of the three dialogues into a Korean version of vice premier level Strategic and Economic Dialogue is recommended. Being flexible with the names and formats of the meetings would be necessary in order to proceed with the elevating process smoothly.

Third, generally, when seeing a military relationship in the order of a military exchange stage through a military cooperation stage to a military alliance stage, there is a need to bring up the military exchange to the military cooperation level within the scope that the ROK-US alliance is not placed into conflict.²³ Both countries should make efforts to build mutual trust between the two militaries. First, the defense ministries of the two countries must actively support the Defense Strategic Dialogue that was already established in order to achieve substantial results. Second, at the time of military exercises of both countries, there must be a mutually advanced notice. Third, military bases can be selectively allowed to visit in the limited scope of mutual visits for both countries. Fourth, both countries must cooperate toward humanitarian efforts, such as the humanitarian rescue training and UN Peace activities. Fifth, on the level of the defense minister, an actual hotline should be managed. If it is possible to achieve all these steps, it will be of tremendous help in developing a military mutual trust for both countries in the future.

Suggestions relating to the U.S.

First, when it comes to Korea's China policy, the U.S. needs to understand that Korea takes into full consideration the position and benefits of the United States. Even though the special envoy visited China first, the U.S. still came before China in priority. As it was seen when President Park sent a policy consultation team to the U.S., the ROK-U.S. alliance and policy is being modified. In addition, during

President Park's China visit, South Korea was only accepted to create "ties in humanities (*renwen niudai*)," instead of agreeing to create "a humanities community (*renwen gongtongti*)" that their Chinese counterpart wanted, because it could be seen as a kind of value alliance.

Second, when it comes to the North Korean problems, the U.S. and South Korea must actively recognize China's role and utilize it. Every five years, when the new government is instated in the ROK, North Korea commits a rash act testing the new Seoul government. However, this year, the North was not able to commit a rash act not only because of the solid ROK-US relationship, but mostly because of China's hard line position toward North Korea. China's current DPRK policy is very useful in that DPRK is not able to act foolishly and emotionally. The U.S. and Korea must appreciate China for not giving carrots to the DPRK and encourage China to continuously place pressure.

Third, in the case of the ROK-Japan relationship, there is an expectation for understanding the role of the United States. At the APEC summit last October 7th, President Park's warm gesture to President Xi and cold gestures to Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was of hot issue. However, the U.S. must take a constructive go-in-between role rather than an expectant one as seen from ROK-US-Japan trilateral summit at the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague on 24 and 25 March 2014. An expectant role can be seen as America prioritizing the U.S.-Japan relationship, which can place great disappointment on Korea.

VI. Concluding remarks

Currently, South Korea's foreign policy is confronted by many challenges. It is faced with the decline of the United States and China's rapid rise along with Japan's normalization under the sponsorship of the U.S, and a continuous unstable relationship with North Korea. Further, the U.S.-ROK alliance is gradually transitioning from a security alliance to strengthen the economic relationship. On the contrary, the China-ROK relationship is expanding from an economy-focused one to include security. South Korea is cornered in a situation where it must strategically balance the U.S. and China. Korea must maintain the U.S.-ROK alliance and also manage well its Korea-China partnership.

President Xi Jinping stated that President Park is an old friend (*laofengyou*) of his and the people of China. In reality, he only has met President Park once in 2005, although they met three times this year. It is possible to discuss world affairs and become good friends after only meeting once. However, there are still much pending issues that both countries are faced with. Recently, the Ieodo situation heightening the KADIZ and CADIZ and the missile defense system along with various other issues are leading Korea to a situation where it must choose. Improvement in China relations after President Park's state visit to China and the declaration of 'enrichment' is stated to be at a risk of 'falsehood'. After June, China expected Korea would respond more flexibly to the Kaesong Industrial Complex situation. However, with no follow-up stating that North Korea's patience is reaching its limit, there is evidence of movements of folding all expectations of the Korean Peninsula trust building process. We can only verify China's basic principles in regard to the Northeast Asia Peace Initiative.

Last October 7th, President Park met President Xi at the APEC summit and quoted poet Wang Zihuan of the Tang dynasty stating that "In order to view the scenery farther, we must go a floor up (*yu qiong qian li mu, geng shang yi cheng lou*)," indicating that both countries have upgraded a level. The poem that President Park quoted was a poem written on a scroll given as a present to her by President Xi last June when she visited Beijing. She memorized the poem and presented it back to President Xi.²⁴ However, there is a possibility that both countries will not be able to go up at all and just drop. For example, in the

instance that the heart and trust is not properly delivered to each other between the ROK and China, the heart will break and the trust will become mistrust. This will bring the worst results to both countries, making the next four years painful. I truly hope that president Xi's visit to Seoul this year will be another tour of heart and trust that will turn an ill-fated history of the Korean Peninsula to a happy history.

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² Relatively, ROK-US relations are at a higher level than the ROK-China relationship; however, in comparison to the ROK-China relationship, the ROK-US relationship is only becoming estranged.

³ Yoo Sang Chul, "U.S. and China: Who do we choose?", *Joongang Daily*, Nov.6 2013, http://china.joins.com/portal/article.do?method=detail&total_id=13058511&code=001003; Cho, Gap-Chae, "Chun Young Woo, former chief of National Security, "There are many that confuse big brother between U.S and China", <http://www.chogabje.com/client/search/search.asp>

⁴ "Joint Declaration on the Establishment of the ROK-China Diplomatic Relations" (August 24, 1992), *Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives*, <http://diplomaticarchives.mofa.go.kr/show/picture/picture.do?boardNo=11&searchCon=not&searchStr=&cmd=cv>

⁵ ROK Embassy in China, <http://chn.mofa.go.kr/korean/as/chn/policy/relation/index.jsp>

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Heek Lee, "China's Policy toward (South) Korea: Objectives of and Obstacles to the Strategic Partnership", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2010), pp. 283-301; Jae Ho Chung, Korean Views of Korea-China Relations: Evolving Perceptions and Upcoming Challenges, *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (2012) pp. 219-236; Heek Lee, Jaebok Cha and others, *Chinese-South Korean Relations, 1992-012: Achievements and Prospects* (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2012) (in Korean).

⁸ Han Xiandong, "Re-understanding the ROK-China Strategic Cooperative Partnership: Alliance Measures", at The 1st Korea Research Institute for Strategy (KRIS)- China Strategic Culture Promotion Association (CSCPA) International Conference on "Korea-China Strategic Cooperative Partners on the tour of Trust for a New Twenty Years", (Seoul: Hilton Hotel), October 22, 2013, pp. 114-6.

⁹ Strategic Defense Dialogue was held three times: Seoul in July 2011, Beijing in July 2012, and Seoul in November 2013.

¹⁰ ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs Korea, <http://www.mofa.go.kr>

¹¹ The "Joint ROK-China humanities committee" was officially established on Nov. 19, 2013. Both countries completed its first vice minister level meeting and also adopted a declaration indicating the expansion and development of humanities exchange. This is seen as the measure of action of what was discussed last June at the ROK-China summit meeting. "Official Launching of the ROK-China Joint Humanities Exchange Committee", *Financial News* (in Korean), http://www.fnnews.com/view?ra=Sent0801m_View&corp=fnnews&arcid=201311190100210290010760&cDateYear=2013&cDateMonth=11&cDateDay=19

¹² Jaeho Hwang, "South Korea's Strategy in the G2 Era", *KNDU RINSA Forum* Vol.23 (2012), <https://www.kndu.ac.kr/rinsa/index.jsp?mid1=00000135>

¹³ His statement was made in August 2013 at a Track 1.5 dialogue between Korea and China in Changchun, China.

¹⁴ “Full text of Park's speech at U.S. Congress”, *Yonhap News Agency*, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2013/05/08/4/030100000AEN20130508010800315F.HTML>

¹⁵ “ Foreign Minster Yoon Meets Former State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan”, Press Release No. 13-315, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 June 2013, http://www.mofa.go.kr/webmodule/htsboard/template/read/korboardread.jsp?boardid=235&typeID=6&tableName=TYPE_DATABOARD&seqno=346489

¹⁶ The concept of the new model of major power relations was officially suggested by President Xi Jinping to President Obama this year in June at Sunnylands. Thereafter, this concept has been researched significantly; however, it still has not settled as a concrete concept. The following article explains thoroughly the limitations of this concept. See Richard C. Bush III, “Obama and Xi at Sunnylands: A New Pattern of Relations?”, *The Brookings Institution Blog*, June 4, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/06/04-obama-xi-new-pattern-relations-bush>; This concept in the American perspective: David M. Lampton, “A New Type of major-Power Relationship: Seeking a Durable Foundation for US-China Ties”, *Asia Policy*, No. 16 (July 2013), pp. 51-68.

¹⁷ “Xi Jinping: Let the Sense of Community of Common Destiny Take Deep Root in Neighbouring Countries”, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, October 25, 2013, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t1093870.shtml>

¹⁸ “Jaeho Hwang tells China Review Agency: The value of Seoul Defense Dialogue is high”, *Zhongguo Pinglunshu* (China Review News Agency) (in Chinese), November 13, 2013, http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1028/6/0/7/102860781_4.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=102860781&mdate=1113003003

¹⁹ The author has benefited with regard to the ideas of the first three strategic cooperation from an interview with Yang Xiyu of China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) in Beijing in May 2012.

²⁰ Men Honghua, “Evaluation and Prospects for the ROK-China Strategic Cooperative Partnership”, *Reinforcement of the ROK-China Strategic Cooperative Partnership*, Proceedings of the 2nd ROK-China Strategic Dialogue hosted by the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China and the Center for China Studies of ROK National Diplomatic Academy, at Qianjin International Hotel (Changchun, China), August 2013, p. 22.

²¹ Byungok Gil and Taehoi Heo, “Research on establishing a national threat management system and program development”, *Korea Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (2003), (in Korean), pp. 340-1.

²² The first 2+2 director level meeting between Korea and China was held on 23rd December in Beijing, “The first ever 2+2 meeting after the execution of Jang Sung-taek”, *The Korea Economic Daily*, 23 December 2013, <http://www.hankyung.com/news/app/newsview.php?aid=2013122380658>

²³ Jaeho Hwang, “Security and Defense Relations between Korea and China”, *Chinese-South Korean Relations, 1992-2012: Achievements and Prospects* (Seoul: Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2012) (in Korean), pp. 55-63.

²⁴ “Korea-China Leaders meet 3 times within 100 days to promote friendship...but ‘different opinion’ on the time of reopening the Six Party Talks”, *Kyunghyang Newspaper*, 7 October 2013, http://m.khan.co.kr/view.html?artid=201310072305245&code=910302&med_id=khan

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