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LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD:
NORTH KOREA, NORTHEAST ASIA
AND THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE

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1. Introduction¹

Following the inauguration of the Bush administration in 2001, South Korea and the United States entered into a period of dissonance and even mutual repugnance. It began with differences in North Korea policy in 2001, and expanded into other areas. The Bush administration's mismanagement ignited a surge of anti-Americanism in South Korea, which in turn led to a round of Korea-bashing in the United States.

Amid mutual distrust and pique, the ROK-U.S. military alliance underwent a major redefinition. The United States was also disgruntled with South Korea's apparent accommodation with China, as well as South Korea's desire to be a "balancer" in Northeast Asia. Some believed that the alarming gaps in North Korea policy, threat perceptions, not to mention geostrategic mistrust, might lead to the dissolution of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

From 2005 to 2006, both incumbent presidents had historically low approval ratings. American neo-cons and hard-line nationalists struggled with their South Korean counterparts – a group known as the "386 Generation" (young officials who were mainly in their 30s, who attended college during the 1980s, and were born in the 1960s), contributing to the deterioration of relations between the two countries. The climate changed starting in 2005 until early 2007, when the two governments agreed on principles of re-defined military alliance and started the implementation process. Seoul and Washington also narrowed gaps in North Korea policy, and produced documents of policy principles bilaterally, as well as with other countries.

In 2007, after the February 13 agreement in the Six Party Talks, Presidents Roh and Bush became cooperative. Their governments even concluded the KORUS FTA [free trade agreement] in April 2007. The denuclearization process will pose unquestionably daunting challenges to be coped with, before it enters a "bridge of no return." On a positive note, the major principles and blueprints for denuclearization have been agreed upon by all participants in the Six Party Talks. In the September 19 and February 13 joint statements, North Korea's denuclearization was clearly related to a new order in Northeast Asia that is to include North Korea's diplomatic normalization with the United States and Japan, a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula, and a multilateral Northeast Asian security mechanism.

With those milestones ahead, both countries are confronted with challenges which will affect mutual relations and their status in a "new" Northeast Asia in the future. In the short term, the incoming Korean and American presidents (in early 2008 and early 2009, respectively) may see an urgent need to reestablish his or her country's reputation as a wise and reliable strategic player. For the United States, as the only country which can

¹ Dr. Park's fellowship at Brookings was supported in part by a generous grant from the Korea Foundation.

manage conflicts in strategic calculations of other countries in Northeast Asia, the challenge will be how to show leadership and imagination must be dedicated toward realizing the mentioned objectives. For South Korea, whose interests will be strongly influenced by North Korea's denuclearization process, the challenge will be how to effectively find ways to increase its strategic importance and influence in its favor. Whether it is successful or not, the denuclearization process will give birth to a new reality both on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia, and the challenges for both countries will be how to maintain convergent understandings and cooperative relations along the road to the future.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the background of ROK-U.S. dissonances during the years from 2001 to 2006, and to explore the possibility of forging a joint ROK-U.S. strategy on North Korea. It has two main chapters: the first will review competing paradigms for how to explain the dissonances from 2001 to 2006, and will differentiate three dimensions of contention: North Korea policy, the ROK-U.S. military alliance, and the two countries' foreign and security policy options in Northeast Asia. The second begins with an examination of ROK-U.S. agreements regarding the purpose of North Korea policy, as expressed in the documents from the ROK-U.S. summits and from the Six Party Talks. It will be denoted that the process of denuclearization can only be successful when the strategic distrust among countries in Northeast is reduced. I will also discuss the challenges facing the United States and South Korea, while investigating possibilities for strategic cooperation between the two countries.

2. ROK-U.S. dissonances in 2001-2006

2-1. How to understand the surge of anti-American sentiment in 2002-2004

One of the central questions in reviewing ROK-U.S. dissonances in 2002-2006 is how to understand the surge of anti-American sentiment in South Korea from 2002 to 2004. In fact, there have been five competing paradigms in explaining this phenomenon. Depending on which paradigm is accepted, analysis about past relations as well as suggestions for the future will be different. The surge of anti-American sentiment can be seen as a result of various catalysts: that it was purely accidental, caused by societal changes in South Korea, was an eruption of South Korea's accumulated grievances against the United States, was an outcome of the Sunshine Policy, or that it was a consequence of the Bush administration's North Korea policy.

The "purely accidental" paradigm posits that the most important trigger was the overreaction of Koreans to the tragic deaths of two Korean middle school girls in mid-2002 in an accident involving a U.S. army vehicle. The second paradigm focuses on the structural "changes within the South Korean society itself - the growth of democratic values, development of civil society, economic development, generational change, and an overall growing sense of national confidence and pride - might be changing the

orientation of South Korean society and affecting its view of its long-time protector and ally.”² The future of the ROK-U.S. alliance was thought to be bleak, due to these structural changes that would also affect the future: for example, a common prediction was that the younger generation, among whom anti-Americanism was relatively prevalent, would dominate Korean society and politics for 30 more years, “with potential detriment to the long-term health of the relationship.”³ In this paradigm, the accused was clearly South Korea, particularly the 386 Generation. In the third paradigm, the central sources of anti-American sentiment are the “accumulated grievances”⁴ toward the United States’s role in South Korea since the brutal suppression of a popular uprising in the southwestern city of Kwangju in May of 1980. The United States’ “long-term support for dictatorship, the Kwangju Rebellion, the Korean financial crisis, and the changing perception of military (in)security provided by the United States since the crisis of 1993-94.”⁵ Koreans were said finally to have found the opportunity to burst out because of the changes in the Korean society. In this thinking, the United States is at fault for the downturn in relations. According to the fourth paradigm, the origin of early 2000s anti-Americanism dates back to June 2000, following the inter-Korean summit between then-President Kim Dae Jung and the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il. The summit led to a rise in nationalistic feeling and helped fuel the perception that the United States played the role of an “impeder” of inter-Korean reconciliation,⁶ and that the two Koreas would be able to tackle their problems “independently.”⁷ This sentiment “provided the basis on which U.S. Forces Korea (USFK)-related incidents received worse reactions from the South Korean population than expected.”⁸ In this logic, consequences of the Sunshine Policy helped create anti-American sentiment.

There is no denying that all four paradigms put forth explanations for the “Korean brand” of anti-Americanism in South Korea (other countries have their own brands of anti-Americanism). However, these paradigms do not clarify or take into account “a general favorable trend in South Korean views toward the U.S. since the early 1990s – on average, support was higher in the 1996 to 2001 period than during the 1990 to 1995

² Derek J. Mitchell (ed.), *Strategy and Sentiment: South Korean Views of the United States and the U.S.-ROK Alliance* (Washington D.C.: CSIS, 2004), p. 2; also see, Sunhyuk Kim and Wonhyuk Lim, “How to Deal with South Korea,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, Issue2 (Spring 2007), pp. 71–82.

³ Mitchell, *Ibid.*;

⁴ Katharine H.S. Moon, “Citizen Power in Korean-American Relations,” David I. Steinberg (ed.), *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), p. 233.

⁵ Meredith Woo-Cumings, “Unilateralism and Its Discontents: The Passing of the Cold War Alliance and Changing Public Opinion in the Republic of Korea,” Steinberg (ed.), *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics*, p. 77; see also, William M. Drennan, “The Tipping Point: Kwangju, May 1980,” *op.cit.*, pp. 266-279.

⁶ Victor D. Cha, “Anti-Americanism and the U.S. role in Inter-Korean relations,” Steinberg (ed.), *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics*, p. 117 and pp. 126-128.

⁷ Kim Sung-han, “Brothers versus Friends: Inter-Korean Reconciliation and Emerging Anti-Americanism in South Korea,” Steinberg (ed.), *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics*, p. 193.

⁸ *Ibid.*

period that preceded it.”⁹ The four paradigms mentioned above are contradictory to this survey finding: according to the paradigms, except for the “purely accidental” school of thought, South Korean views about the United States should not have been generally favorable in the 1990s, because all the explanatory factors mentioned above - “societal structural changes” including the advent of a new generation, the “accumulated grievances,” and America’s seemingly “impeding role” in inter-Korean relations - were also at work during that decade.

The question is, then, how could anti-American sentiment become exacerbated and politically virulent so abruptly and to such a level as experienced in 2002? The answer is that the Bush administration’s neo-conservative North Korea policy had a tremendous impact on ROK-U.S. relations. This is the fifth paradigm, and is the position taken by this author. From 2001 to 2002, it became increasingly clear that the Bush administration not only unilaterally disregarded South Korea’s desire to improve inter-Korean relations, but also overlooked the fact that American North Korea policy might become a source of instability on the Korean peninsula.¹⁰ Under this context, there is also no denying that there were opportunities for the expression of anti-American sentiment in an unfortunate series of events, including the tragic deaths of the two Korean school girls, a South Korean speed skater’s controversial loss of an Olympic gold medal to an American, President Bush’s “Axis of Evil” speech, and the FX fighter selection process. Though the Bush administration’s foreign policy provoked resistance and surges of anti-American sentiments in many other countries,¹¹ South Korea’s reaction was more intense simply because, due to North Korean issues, South Korea was more directly and negatively influenced by changes in America’s foreign and North Korea policy.

Ironically and unintentionally, the Bush administration’s neo-conservative North Korea policy contributed to President Roh’s determination to continue with the Sunshine Policy. “In a presidential election that was the closest in the short history of South Korea’s democracy,”¹² the Bush administration explicitly favored the conservative

⁹ Eric V. Larson, Norman D. Levin, Seonhae Baik, and Bogdan Savych, *Ambivalent Allies? A Study of South Korean Attitudes toward the U.S.*, Rand Corporation TR-141-SRF (March, 2004), p. xiv.

¹⁰ A former Bush administration Special Envoy to North Korea, Ambassador Charles L. Pritchard recalls: Based on the perception that Bush was pushing the peninsula closer to war, “(f)or the first time in a long time, citizens in Seoul and elsewhere in South Korea were openly talking about the prospect of a second Korean War.” Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), pp. 74 and 76.

¹¹ Steven Walt, *Taming American Power: The Global Response to U.S. Primacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005); G. John Ikenberry, “Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence: Great Power Politics in the Age of Unipolarity,” (28 July 2003); Graham E. Fuller, “Strategic Fatigue,” *National Interest* (Summer 2006), Issue 84.

¹² John S. Park, “Inside Multilateralism: The Six-Party Talks,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 4, p. pp. 80-81; the influence of the Bush administration’s North Korea policy on South Korea’s presidential election see also, Leon Sigal, “Misplaying North Korea and Losing Friends and Influence in Northeast Asia,” <http://northkorea.ssrc.org/Sigal/>.

candidate Lee Hoi-chang over the left-liberal candidate Roh Moo Hyun.¹³ Roh undoubtedly profited from the surge of anti-American sentiment at the time, and certainly didn't appreciate the open American opposition to his candidacy. Additionally, the Bush administration's public challenge to the Sunshine Policy made it the main issue in the presidential election and in a way, cemented it as the regime identity of the Roh administration. Furthermore, there has long been suspicion that the Bush administration's "real" North Korea policy is one of pursuing regime change. Emotions and personal feelings aside, this made it extremely difficult for the Roh administration to persuade itself to cooperate with the Bush administration's North Korea policy after the election. A vicious cycle of negative relations between the Roh and Bush administrations was therefore begun.

In this regard, South Korea stood out in the region. Though widespread unease over America's imperial strategic predominance and security-centered policy based on fear in general,¹⁴ and North Korea policy in particular, the Bush administration succeeded "where most of its predecessors has failed." For example, "nearly all regional states (in Northeast Asia) decided to accommodate the vigorous, unapologetic assertion of American leadership,"¹⁵ although some countries, including China and Japan, decided to support the United States "not because they share a common objective, but because they want to benefit politically, economically, and strategically from being associated with Washington."¹⁶ South Korea, by electing Roh Moo Hyun as president in December 2002, effectively decided to resist the United States in its most assertive and exceptional phase of foreign and security policy. In a nutshell, the clash between the 386 Generation and, the Pentagon – the former perceiving a diminishing threat from the North and wishing to improve inter-Korean relations,¹⁷ and the latter advocating and implementing

¹³ Charles L. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy: The Tragic Story of How North Korea Got the Bomb* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007), pp. 74-76.

¹⁴ G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, Number 5 (September/October 2002), pp. 44-59; Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (London: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁵ Jonathan D. Pollack, "Learning by Doing: the Bush Administration in East Asia," Robert M. Hathaway and Wilson Lee (ed.), *George W. Bush and Asia: A Midterm Assessment* (Washington D.C.: Wilson Center, 2003), p. 60. With regard to China, Robert Sutter praised the Bush administration: "The George W. Bush administration has done a better job than many previous U.S. administrations in employing incentives and disincentives from a position of overall strength to persuade Chinese leaders to pursue cooperative and moderate policies toward the United States and its allies and associates. U.S.-China relations are seen as better today than at any time since the Tiananmen incident and the end of the Cold War, despite the Bush administration's expanded support for Taiwan, construction of missile defenses, enhancing security ties with Japan, NATO expansion, sanctions on Chinese weapons proliferation, the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq, and other measures long sensitive to, and until recently sharply criticized by, China." Robert Sutter, "China's Regional Strategy and Why It May Not Be Good for America," David Shambaugh (ed.), *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 293-294.:

¹⁶ Jakub Grygiel, "Imperial Allies," *Orbis* (Spring 2006), p. 209.

¹⁷ Bruce Cumings, "Ending the ROK-U.S. Alliance," *Seoul-Washington Forum Conference Proceedings*, A Brookings-Sejong Institute conference, May 1-2, 2006, pp. 46-47.

hawkish policies toward North Korea – explains the abnormal degree of friction in relations between South Korea and the United States during from 2001 to 2006.

Discord between South Korea and the U.S. during this period can be analyzed by the differentiation of three dimensions: North Korea policy, redefinition of military alliance, and South Korea's relations with China and Japan.

2-2. North Korea policy

With the inauguration of the Bush administration, South Korea, North Korea and China were confronted with an abrupt change in U.S. North Korea policy, and were forced to find ways to come to terms with this change. The new U.S. administration preferred a more dominant role in Northeast Asia at the cost of regional interactions and the interests of regional countries, a more security-oriented approach at the expense of economic engagement, and a more enhanced and active role in political and security affairs for maritime countries like Japan and Australia in support of U.S. policy in Northeast Asia.¹⁸

However, in the aftermath of 9/11 and in support of the war on terror, U.S.-Chinese relations became more cooperative, and the Bush administration's attitude toward North Korea became more confrontational. At the time, however, South Korea as well as China and Japan, were moving to improve their bilateral relationships with North Korea.¹⁹ In fact, among Northeast Asian countries there was a convergence of interest in an engagement policy toward North Korea, starting with the Perry Process in 1998 and Pyongyang responded positively, at least to a degree. The Bush administration's ideological and hard-line approach to North Korea did not totally dampen the interactions between regional countries and North Korea. Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Pyongyang in September 2002, without due prior consultation with the Bush administration, was an important symbol of this dissonance. It was the first of this sort of independent actions by the Japanese side.²⁰

With the visit by James Kelly, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, to North Korea in October 2002, the Bush administration was partly successful in reversing the trend of its isolation in Northeast Asia with regard to North Korea policy – though not by altering its policy to reflect those of the other players. During the meeting with Secretary Kelly, North Korea confessed to (and later denied) having a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program. In the wake of Kelly's North Korea visit, the HEU issue was taken advantage of by the Bush administration in order to push

¹⁸ Gilbert Rozman, *Northeast Asia's Stunted Regionalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 288-301; Harry Harding, "Change and Continuity in the Bush Administration's Asia Policy," Robert M. Hathaway (ed.), *George W. Bush and East Asia: A first Term Assessment* (Washington D.C.: Wilson Center, 2005), pp. 45-58.

¹⁹ David Kerr, "The Sino-Russian Partnership and U.S. Policy Toward North Korea: From Hegemony to Concert in Northeast Asia." *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 49 (2005).

²⁰ Gilbert Rozman, "Japan's North Korea Initiative and U.S.-Japanese Relations," *Orbis* (Spring 2003).

forward its original objectives for North Korea: ²¹ (1) terminating the Agreed Framework; ²² (2) withholding any concessions until North Korea took visible steps to dismantle its nuclear programs and made concessions on other military issues; (3) persuading regional actors to apply diplomatic and economic pressure on North Korea; and (4) planning for future economic sanctions and military interdiction against North Korean commerce through a Proliferation Security Initiative.

In this atmosphere, the basic dynamic of Northeast Asian international politics changed. As Pyongyang employed escalating tactics, including the resumed operation of its 5 megawatt (MW) reactor and extraction of plutonium from spent fuel rods, among other steps, it became easier for Washington to demonize North Korea. Japan had to stop its endeavors for rapprochement with North Korea, and gradually sided with U.S. on North Korea policy. South Korea became further estranged from the United States, while ostensibly finding more common ground with China. For the Roh government, the U.S.'s North Korea policy during this period was too aggressive and contradictory to South Korea's plans. In contrast to the U.S.'s aggressive North Korea policy, China's emphasis on stability and cautious mediation between the U.S. and the DPRK was perceived to be benign by President Roh and his "386" supporters. Some of them regarded China as a more important future partner than the United States. ²³

Both Koreas waited for a "regime change" in the United States in 2004, but to no avail. After having observed that the second term Bush administration's North Korea policy was not significantly different than the first, the two Koreas took bolder initiatives in their respective policies in 2005. Ironically, at the time both Koreas were confronted with the same negative tides in the environment: aggravated disenchantment with the United States and Japan, strong Korea-bashing from those two countries, China's "charm offensive" in its Korea policy, and general anxiety amplified in South Korea by populist nationalism and in North Korea by its *juche* ideology. Meanwhile, North Korea continued to escalate the tensions: it declared in February 2005 that it possessed nuclear and demanded a permanent peace regime (to formally end the Korean War) in July 2005. In March 2005, President Roh proclaimed South Korea's role as "balancer" in Northeast Asia, an ill-defined concept which provoked confusion both within South Korea and within the region.

²¹ Larry A. Niksch, North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Updated December 30, 2004, p. summary.

²² Charles L. Pritchard suggests that the issue should have been differently dealt by the United States: "In late 2002, the United States should have immediately engaged Pyongyang in serious bilateral discussions about its concerns (of the existence of highly enriched uranium project) just as it confronted Pyongyang in 1998 over suspicions that North Korea was replicating its nuclear facilities in an underground facility at Kumchang-ri." Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 142. Since the first half of the fourth round of Six Party Talks, the United States downplayed the highly enriched uranium issue. The State Department stopped referring to highly enriched uranium and began instead to describe the problem as enriched uranium. Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 113.

²³ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner: Korea-China Relations and the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 92-107.

During this period of heightened insecurity and uncertainty in their foreign relations, the two Koreas shared a need for mutual accommodation. South Korea, which was isolated at the time, worried more about the tension between North Korea and the United States on the Korean peninsula, and sought to increase the pace of inter-Korean exchange. On the North Korean side, there were two motivations: on the one hand, North Korea needed stability with its neighbor while playing hardball with the United States, and it also needed supplementary assistance from the South to compensate for a decrease in aid from other countries and international agencies since the start of second nuclear crisis in October 2002.

On the inter-Korean front, despite North Korea's declaration of possession nuclear weapons, South Korea decided in early 2005 to expand exchange with North Korea, especially economic cooperation (assistance) as a way to increase leverage upon it to give up nuclear its weapons. South Korea sent a special envoy to Pyongyang on June 15 and received a North Korean envoy in Seoul on August 15, and discussed the possibility of a second summit "as early as possible."²⁴ According to South Korea, this attempt contributed to the convening of the fourth round of the Six Party Talks in September 2005,²⁵ and to the conclusion of the September 19 joint statement for the denuclearization of North Korea.²⁶ South Korea's initial euphoria over the joint statement changed to anger toward the United States because America's neo-cons were perceived once again to have intentionally blocked the progress through their imposition of financial sanctions on Macao's Banco Delta Asia (which reportedly handled more than thirty North Korean accounts) for the purpose of "regime change" in North Korea. Unfortunately, South Korea could not achieve anything meaningful with North Korea through its endeavor to expand inter-Korean relations before inter-governmental relations were broken because of North Korea's missile tests in July 2006. Deeply frustrated with North Korea, South Korea, with some astonishment by all concerned parties, stopped shipment of rice to North Korea after the missile tests. After North Korea's nuclear test in October 2006, however, South Korea resisted pressure from the United States and continued its cooperation with North Korea on the Gaesung Industrial Complex and Geumgang-san tourist project, in order to prevent a total breakdown of inter-Korean relations.

²⁴ Interview with the former Minister of Unification Chung Dong Young, *Yonhap News Agency*, 2006. 12. 28 (in Korean).

²⁵ Chung Dong Young, Minister of Unification, "The way to future – Previous fifty five years history after the liberation and inter-Korean relations," (2006.10.25) www.unikorea.go.kr

²⁶ Charles L. Pritchard has a different assessment: "I believe that Pyongyang made the decision to announce its return to six-party talks long before Kim Jong Il met with Chung Dong-young, the South Korean unification minister, in June 2005; the North Koreans were simply looking for a way to justify that decision. ... Another event that some point to as an inducement for North Korea to return to talks was South Korea's decision to offer, as part of a potential nuclear settlement, two million kilowatts of electricity. While it certainly got the attention of the North Koreans, I do not think that it was an essential part of their decision-making process. The South Koreans' provision of 500,000 metric tons of food also was useful, but it was not a significant part of the calculus." Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 109.

Though ideological and idealistic in North Korea policy, the Bush administration was unable to realize regime change in North Korea. Preoccupied by the Iraq War and fearful of uncontrolled escalation with North Korea, the Bush administration in effect subcontracted China to manage North Korean issues. China cooperated by mediating and hosting the Six Party Talks, but did not fully satisfy American expectations. It did succeed in increasing its prestige and influence on the Korean peninsula, and utilized its role in the Six Party Talks to improve its stake in the U.S.-China relationship. Although China was explicitly angry with North Korea over its “brazen act” of detonating a nuclear device, it abstained from taking any measures which could have seriously threatened the stability of the Kim Jong Il regime.²⁷

In a nutshell, difficulties faced by the Bush administration including the advent of the left-leaning and liberal Roh government, North Korea’s intransigency, South Korea’s resistance and non-cooperation, and China’s opportunism in dealing with North Korea, were caused mainly by its own North Korea policy. Furthermore, the Bush administration’s North Korea policy perceived as the spoiler and security threat, moreso than North Korea’s alleged persistent pursuit of nuclear weapons. The Bush policy shattered the loose consensus on engagement with North Korea that had developed among Northeast Asian countries since late 1990s.²⁸ Because the U.S.’s North Korea policy was perceived to be one of “regime change,” no country in the region could cooperate with the United States whole-heartedly; its policy was regarded as too dangerous and destabilizing.²⁹ An additional problem was that the Bush administration gave the impression that it was satisfied with non-proliferation, rather than the development of North Korean weapons at the cost of U.S.-DPRK negotiations. In 2003, the Bush administration did not react seriously to the crisis, and set no definite “red line” upon North Korea’s repeated threats to test and possess nuclear weapons and its ongoing

²⁷ Jim Yardley, “Sanctions Don't Dent North Korea-China Trade,” *The New York Times*, October 27, 2006 Friday Section A; Column 1

²⁸ David Straub, a former Korea desk chief of the State Department recalled that, though President Bush never intended to attack North Korea, “it’s a great failing of American, of President Bush’s diplomacy, that he has helped to create a situation in which not only the North Koreans say that they fear a(n) attack, but in which many South Koreans believe that the United States might attack North Korea, at great risk of the Republic of Korea.” See the summary of his talk: “American Expert Calls for a Roadmap to Solve North Korean Nuclear Issue,” KORUS House lecture of Oct. 24, 2006. http://www.dynamic-korea.com/korus_house/kh_view_news.php?main=KHF&sub=&uid=200600120709&keyword=

²⁹ James Kelly said that “regime change was not the policy. But it was so broadly talked about by other around the edges of the administration that it may well have become a permanent perception – and perceptions and realities certainly intermix in these matters.” East-West Center, *The United States and Asia: Assessing Problems and Prospects*, Senior Policy Seminar 2006. Appendix, p. 21. Michael Green and David Straub also denied that regime change policy was not the official policy. Michael Green, “The Case for the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *Seoul-Washington Forum Conference Proceedings*, A Brookings-Sejong Institute Conference, May 1-2, 2006, pp. 25-32; David Straub, “The Consequences of the North Korean Nuclear Test for U.S.-ROK Relations: An American Perspective,” Kun Young Park etc., *The North Korean Nuclear Test and the Future of Northeast Asia* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2006), pp. 82-86;

reprocessing of spent fuels,³⁰ but it did organize and implement the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) beginning in 2004.

Unhappy with their bilateral relationship but apprehensive about pursuing a divorce, both South Korea and the United States tried to engage in damage control. Initially from 2004 to 2005, spurred by dissonances in North Korea policy, the whole edifice of the ROK-U.S. alliance seemed seriously weakened. Symptoms included strong anti-American sentiment in South Korea and equally strong South Korea-bashing in the United States, divergent perceptions on China and Japan, and talk about the loss of the common threat perception on which the alliance was based. Among the friction and skepticism, Presidents Roh and Bush agreed on “the steady development of the ROK-U.S. relationship into a comprehensive, dynamic and mutually-beneficial alliance relationship” at the May 2003 summit in Washington D.C. and the November 2005 summit in Gyeongju. At the latter occasion, the two presidents also confirmed “the alliance is strong,” and “the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is essential for establishing durable peace on the Korean peninsula.”³¹

2-3. Redefinition of the ROK-U.S. military alliance

This redefinition of the ROK-U.S. military alliance, however, became yet another major dissonance between the two countries. Most proposed changes in the alliance fell into two major categories: the restructuring of the U.S. military presence in Korea, and the redefinition of the ROK-U.S. alliance in relation to a changed U.S. global military strategy. The first part was more of a technical adaptation, and included force reductions and relocations and the transition of wartime operation control.³² Those of the second category were more strategic. Usually, the decision for strategic redefinition of an alliance must precede the technical adjustments. However, the technical adaptation of the force and command structure of the ROK-U.S. military alliance was implemented without clear consensus on the strategic redefinition of the alliance. The main reason was that “the Americans failed to include the South Koreans in decisions that had significant security and political ramifications”³³ and so the South Korean side was not fully prepared to discuss the matter.³⁴ Force reduction and relocation were executed in

³⁰ Desaix Anderson, “Who Is Losing Asia?” *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Vol. 26 (2005), p. 1–10.

³¹ *Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula* on November 17, 2005

³² Terence Roehrig, “Restructuring the U.S. Military Presence in Korea: Implications for Korean Security and the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *KEI Academic Paper Series*, Volume 2, No.1(January 2007); IISS, “US troop withdrawals from South Korea: Beginnings of the end of the alliance?,” *Strategic Comment*, Vol.10, No. 5 (June, 2004); Chang-hee Nam, “Relocating the U.S. Forces in South Korea,” *Asia Survey*, Vol. 46, Issue 4 (July/August, 2006), pp. 615-631.

³³ Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 78.

³⁴ At the 34th ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) on December 5, 2002, the two countries agreed to establish Future ROK-US Alliance Policy Initiatives (FOTA) to discuss and negotiate the redefinition of the ROK-U.S. alliance. From March, 2003 to August, 2004, there were eleven meetings. According to one assessment, “The process allowed each side to preserve its dignity and led to useful discussions on how and when to execute the final agreement.” Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 77.

accordance with the U.S. strategic conception of military transformation, and change of command structure was driven by a Korean political emphasis on “independence” and “sovereignty.”³⁵ The magnitude of both changes was by far the most significant since the end of the Korean War, yet communication and consultation between the two allies were insufficient.³⁶

Though it was hardly unanticipated, the U.S.’s demands for troop reduction and relocation were based on the traditional and “correct” principle that “adjustment of its forward-deployed forces in Korea is a sovereign choice that requires neither approval nor permission from the host nation.”³⁷ As a result, “Seoul is essentially powerless to undertake more than holding actions to delay if not reverse decisions made by Washington.”³⁸ In early 2003, the United States unilaterally and unexpectedly demanded negotiations about relocation, reduction of troop levels, and “strategic flexibility” of U.S. Forces in Korea.³⁹ This occurred immediately after the inauguration of the Roh administration, when anti-American sentiment in South Korea was at its highest and tension with North Korea was escalating. The U.S.’s demand caused consternation in Seoul, and was perceived as intended to punish the left wing and anti-American Roh government.⁴⁰ With the further strong suspicion that the U.S. sought regime change in

³⁵ Kun Young Park, “A New U.S.-ROK Alliance: A Nine-Point Policy Recommendation for a Reflective and Mature Partnership,” *CNAPS Working Paper* (June 2005), pp. 16-20.

³⁶ Victor Cha, “Anchored or Adrift?,” Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg with Michael Wills (ed.), *Strategic Asia 2003-2004: Fragility and Crisis* (Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2003), p. 126; Discussion by a concerned Korean author, see, Chung Min Lee, “In Search of strategy: South Korea’s struggle for a new security paradigm,” *Disarmament Forum Two* (2005), pp. 13-23.

³⁷ Cha, *ibid.*, p. 126.

³⁸ IISS, “US troop withdrawals from South Korea,” *Strategic Comments*, p. 1.

³⁹ The ‘strategic flexibility’ means to make it possible for the U.S. forces in Korea to be deployed in contingencies of other areas than the Korean peninsula, in contrast to the past, when the U.S. forces in Korea has been solely for deterrence toward North Korea. The two governments agreed on the principle of “strategic flexibility” of the U.S. forces in Korea at the first session of the U.S.-ROK Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership held January 19, 2006. According to a joint United States-Republic of Korea statement on the launch of the Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership, “(r)egarding the issue of strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the ROK, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban confirmed the understanding of both governments 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 strategic flexibility of the 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.” U.S. Department of State (Office of the Spokesman), “United States and the Republic of Korea Launch Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership,” January 19, 2006.

⁴⁰ Alan D. Romberg said, “On the American side, ... a niggling resentment in some quarters at what were seen as anti-American demonstrations and a general lack of appreciation of what the U.S. views as substantial sacrifice over the past 50 years and more on behalf of the Korean people. ... there is an element of such bitterness in the way (the decision to redeploy U.S. forces within Korea) has been handled by some in the Pentagon. Moreover, the American insistence on pressing ahead with the redeployment (despite official denials of final decisions) whatever the Korean counterparts think has created a backlash of resentment and fear in Korea about the underlying U.S. purpose.” Alan D. Romberg, “The U.S.-PRC-ROK Triangle: Managing the Future,” Byong-joon Ahn etc., *Future of ROK-U.S.*

Pyongyang through a surgical military strike against North Korea, the relocation of troops to south of the Han River – out of reach of North Korea’s artillery – these actions were widely perceived as preparation for U.S. preemption against North Korea.⁴¹ The U.S. request for “strategic flexibility” of U.S. forces in Korea (though understandable considering increased troop demand in the context of war against terrorism and the Iraq War) set off South Korean fears of entrapment in a U.S. war with China over Taiwan.⁴² Besides changes in U.S. global military strategy, the decision for troop reduction in South Korea, the largest one since the early 1970s, was given added momentum by a combination of several American misgivings regarding South Korea: “slipping U.S. Army readiness, U.S. distrust of the South Korean government, Korean attempts to veto U.S. deployments from Korea, disagreements over command structure, South Korean restrictions on U.S. training, and arguments over U.S. bases being returned to South Korean control.”⁴³

Though negotiations were prickly, troop reduction and force relocation did not raise strong anxiety and opposition; but discussions on the transition of wartime operation control (OPCON) of ROK military forces from the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (headed by an U.S. Army four star general) to a separate ROK Command did.⁴⁴ This issue was pushed as a central agenda item by President Roh, though discussion had already started in 2002. As denoted in the main arguments by opposition in both countries, the decision to transfer wartime operation control was not based on military efficiency,⁴⁵ nor did it consider the possibility that it may unintentionally reduce

Alliance: Coping With Korea's Security Challenges Vol. 2 (Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, 2004), p. 156.

⁴¹ Two US military authors of a paper analyzed that “the Pentagon is now backing away from “tripwire” approach, since U.S. forces stationed with range of North Korean artillery undermine the American threat of preemptive strike.” Andrew S. Erickson and Justin Mikolay, “Anchoring America’s Asian Assets: Why Washington Must Strengthen Guam,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol.25, Issue 153 (March, 2004), pp. 160-161.

⁴² In their critical comments on the Bush administration’s policy, two American security experts argued “not to force the issue of how the ROK would respond to any U.S.-Chinese conflict over Taiwan. Seoul has understandable reasons to be very reluctant to discuss such hypotheticals. Rather than force it to do so, the United States should strive to make the alliance work well on more immediate matters.” Kurt M. Campbell and Michael E. O’Hanlon, *Hard Power: The New Politics of National Security* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), p. 207.

⁴³ Richard Halloran, “Phasing Out US Forces in South Korea,” *Real Clear Politics*, July 28, 2006.

⁴⁴ On July 1, 1950, directly after the outbreak of the Korean War, the operational commands of the Korean Forces were delegated to Douglas MacArthur, the Commander of the UN Forces. The ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Agreement of 1953 confirmed that the U.N. Command, headed by an American general, would continue to keep the operational control of the Korean Forces. With the creation of the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command in 1978, operational control of the Korean Forces was delegated from the U.N. Command to the former, while the Commander of both Commands continued to be the same American Army general. In 1994, South Korea resumed peace time OPCON over its forces.

⁴⁵ Michael E. O’Hanlon, “South Korea: A Disunited Allied Force?” *The Washington Times*, August 28, 2006.

the security of South Korea.⁴⁶ The truth was that President Roh's political aspiration to restore South Korea's "independence" and "sovereignty" in defense matters "has played into the hands of some Americans - including, it seems, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld - who wish to radically reduce the American ground presence on the Korean peninsula."⁴⁷ The only thing, which made the U.S. Department of Defense uncomfortable, was that the Korean side chose "withdrawal" as the term for indicating this change, as if, the American side thought, the United States had infringed on South Korea's sovereignty. The ultimate agreement reached by both sides referred to the "transition" of war time operation control.⁴⁸

In analyzing the whole process, two major issues can be differentiated. The first is political and procedural, and has been related to many disagreements between the two governments and between the South Korean government and its domestic opposition. The other is strategic and may cause friction and misunderstanding in future relations between the two countries and between the South Korean government and its public.

Let us begin with the political and procedural element. There is no denying that a major revision of force structure, strength, and command system is a sensitive issue and demands political and procedural considerations. Regrettably, what happened in the negotiation process was the opposite. First, the changes were decided on and implemented at an especially inopportune moment, considering that the threat from North Korea had already reached a high level at the start of the discussion and gradually increased with the time.⁴⁹ Second, Washington proceeded with the plan in a manner that conveyed unilateralism, a sense of pique over the anti-American sentiment in South Korea, and strong suspicions about South Korea's loyalty.⁵⁰ Third, though welcomed by both governments, the changes and procedures raised acute fears of abandonment among

⁴⁶ Richard C. Bush and Bruce E. Bechtol Jr., "Change of U.S.-ROK Wartime Operational Command," The Brookings Institution, September 14, 2006.

⁴⁷ Richard C. Bush, "Searching for a Strategy: The Bush-Roh Summit," *Brookings Northeast Asia Commentary* (September 2006).

⁴⁸ After being a nationally divisive issue in South Korea and going through rough wrangling about the timing, South Korea and the US finally agreed on February 24, 2007 that the operational control transition will begin in July 2007 and be finished on April 17, 2012. The agreement envisages that the current ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) will be disestablished and the transition to the new supporting-supported command relationship between U.S. and ROK forces will be completed on the designated date. The Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State, "U.S., South Korea To Transfer Wartime Force Command in 2012," 23 February 2007.

⁴⁹ Kurt M. Campbell and Celeste Johnson Ward, "New Battle Stations?" *Foreign Affairs*, Sep./Oct. 2003, Vol.82, Issue. 5.

⁵⁰ According to an observer: "Despite US pledge of an enduring commitment to South Korea's security, there is growing discontent (occasionally bordering on contempt) within some quarters of the Bush administration toward the policy priorities of South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun. The increased American tendency to arrive at decisions while giving policymakers in Seoul minimal advance notification, and sometimes without particular regard for South Korean policy needs and preferences, is a principal manifestation of this phenomenon. Washington sees few incentives to engage in protracted consensus building with Seoul, especially if such efforts divert Washington from pursuit of higher priority goals." "US troop withdrawals from South Korea," p. 2.

the conservative sector of the South Korean public, which were expressed by strong protests from high level retired military officials.⁵¹

A number of military changes on the Korean peninsula reflected the Bush administration's redesign of global military posture, yet meaningful consultation between Seoul and Washington on larger shifts in U.S. defense strategy was conspicuously absent. Rather, the changes were identified in documents such as the Bush administration's 2002 National Security Strategy, the Defense Department's 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review, and speeches and remarks by the president and administration officials. As described below, these developments eventually altered the U.S. conception with regard to the ROK-U.S. alliance, but the South Korean side was not well prepared for them.

First, the function of the alliance was changed from protection and deterrence to preemption and armed intervention. In the past, U.S. forces were based in other countries in order to protect them from invasion or hostile action by third parties. After the Cold War, most of the allies no longer faced threats that would likely require American military intervention. Such was the case with regard to South Korea, as South Korea and the United States shared perception of decreased conventional threat from North Korea, and while South Korea's capacity to defend itself increased. With advent of new security requirements for fighting terrorism and containing the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the U.S. strategy posits the need for far more flexible and rapid deployment of lighter American forces to various remote and unpredictable locations.⁵² Consequently, host states now are supposed to serve largely as staging points for operations elsewhere and to support U.S. military responsibilities and activities as the hegemonic manager of global, and often regional, security.⁵³

Second, in line with this concept, the traditional conception of bilateral alliance has lost its relevance. Alliance relations are perceived to be more ad hoc than based on "a continuous mutuality of interest." It appears that Washington now demands that alliance partners are to "be prepared to facilitate U.S. policy goals."⁵⁴

⁵¹ Terence Roehrig, "Restructuring the U.S. Military Presence in Korea," *Academic Paper Series*, Volume 2, No 1 (January 2007), p. 6. At the forefront in the protest against transition of wartime operation control are highest former military elites, including defense ministers, chiefs of joint staff, chiefs of army, navy and air force, and other generals. One of the demands by the conservatives is that the transition of wartime operation control must be renegotiated with the US after the inauguration of the new Korea government in 2008.

⁵² "US troop withdrawals from South Korea," p. 1.

⁵³ Campbell and Ward, "New Battle Stations?"; Patrick M. Morgan, "The U.S.-ROK Alliance: An American View," Paper presented at the ICKS-KAUPA-SIGUR Annual Conference 2006 U.S.-Korea Relations in the 21st Century Challenges and Prospects, October 6-8, 2006, Washington, DC., p. 8.

⁵⁴ Jonathan D. Pollack, "Between two worlds: U.S. Northeast Asian Strategy in Transition," *Discussion Paper* submitted at the 8th Waldbroel Group Meeting on the European and Euro-Atlantic Coordination of Security Policies vis-à-vis the Asia Pacific, Berlin, 14/15 (December, 2005), p. 8.

Third, American planners are endeavoring to reinforce America's maritime dominance across the region as a whole, while diminishing the U.S. profile in continental East Asia.⁵⁵ Accordingly, the United States tried to consolidate defense cooperation with maritime nations Japan, Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia. The diminishing U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula is an important part of America's post-Cold War transition toward becoming an East Asian maritime power.⁵⁶ This change corresponds to America's long-term hedging strategy toward China and engagement strategy toward India.⁵⁷

All the three changes – in the role of the alliance, conception of the alliance, and general posture in East Asia – have expanded the strategic differences and decreased the strategic value of the alliance between South Korea and the United States. On the one hand, with the longer-term strategic option of a maritime balance to China, the importance of military bases in South Korea, which could be vulnerable to attack Chinese, has been reduced. On the other hand, the Pentagon wished to use South Korea increasingly as a location for air and sea hubs which could facilitate missions—often unspecified—outside the peninsula. South Korea viewed this plan as unhelpful to its security interests, because it could implicate South Korea “in contingency planning against China.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, the United States became more strongly suspicious that South Korea might choose to live with a nuclear North Korea rather than continue to push for denuclearization. It seemed that South Korea has been fixated on maintaining inter-Korean exchanges, even while North Korea aggressively accelerated tensions on the Korean peninsula. Therefore, the United States also became wary of the possibility that South Korea might even try to inhibit U.S. military actions in case of a major crisis with North Korea.⁵⁹

For South Korea, the Pentagon's new strategy has weakened the linkage of South Korean security with the ROK-U.S. alliance. This is because the alliance now is designed more for assisting U.S. global and regional strategy than for the defense of South Korea in the narrow sense. Furthermore, the perception of irresponsibility and unpredictability of U.S. military policy increased, after experiencing the U.S.'s abrupt

⁵⁵ Bruce Vaughn, “U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationship in the Asia-Pacific Region,” *CRS Report for Congress* (January 22, 2007); Larry Niksch, “U.S. Security Policies in the Western Pacific,” Paper Presented at the 2005 Pacific Symposium sponsored by the National Defense University, the U.S. Pacific Command and the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies; Shirley A. Kan, Larry A. Niksch, “Guam: U.S. Defense Deployments,” *CRS Report for Congress* (January 16, 2007); Erickson and Mikolay, “Anchoring America's Asian Assets: Why Washington Must Strengthen Guam.”

⁵⁶ Robert S. Ross, “A Realist Policy for Managing U.S.-China Competition,” *Policy Analysis Brief* (The Stanley Foundation, November 2005), p. 5.

⁵⁷ Evan S. Medeiros, “Strategic Hedging and the Future of Asia-Pacific Stability,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 29, Issue1 (Winter 2005-06), pp. 145–167.

⁵⁸ Pollack, “Between two worlds: U.S. Northeast Asia strategy in transition,” p. 10.

⁵⁹ Jonathan D. Pollack, “The Strategic Futures and Military Capabilities of the Two Koreas,” *Strategic Asia 2005–06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty*, (Seattle: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005, p. 154.

and unilateral approach to decision making and implementation in the matters of utmost importance to South Korean security. Besides the U.S.'s endeavor to implicate South Korea in its strategy to cope with military contingency with China, the United States is now perceived as being somewhat disruptive to South Korea's security, "in contrast to its long-standing emphasis on peninsular deterrence, the U.S. focused far more on coercion short of war (i.e. interdiction and missile defense),"⁶⁰ to say nothing of 'regime change' with frequent mentions of 'all options on the table,' in confronting North Korea's threat of nuclear weapons development. If the gaps between U.S. strategy—centered on counter proliferation and emphasis on missile defense—and South Korea's reluctance to cooperate continue, the long-term security relations between the two countries may become problematic. Because military relations have loosened and South Korea has emphasized the development of an "independent" capability, the negative shock of any future ROK-U.S. dissonance will be amplified.

2-4. South Korea's relations with China and Japan

With the inauguration of the Bush administration in 2001, there was a paradigm change in the American government's perception of South Korea's relations with the United States, China, and Japan. Until the end of 2000, the central framework of discussion was how to "best bring the three sides, i.e. U.S., Japan, and South Korea, even closer together in a way that serves all three nations' national security interests."⁶¹ Sometime after 2001, pundits began to ask the question of whether South Korea was drifting toward China and away from the United States and Japan, or if it was still anchored in the ROK-U.S. alliance.⁶²

Trilateral relations among South Korea, the United States, and Japan improved noticeably, in 2000. On the one hand, relations between South Korea and the United States were in good shape, especially with respect to the consensus and cooperation reached in North Korea policy. On the other, the "weakest link" in trilateral relations, between South Korea and Japan, also advanced after Kim Dae Jung's bold initiative to improve ties with Japan. The institutional framework for trilateral cooperation in dealing with North Korea is the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG).⁶³ In 1999, an American observer noted that "close security cooperation among Tokyo, Washington, and Seoul has already paid rich dividends in pressuring North Korea both to keep its Agreed Framework commitments and, at least temporarily, to abandon its missile testing program."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Pollack, "Between two worlds: U.S. Northeast Asia strategy in transition," p. 9.

⁶¹ Ralph A. Cossa, "U.S.-Japan-Korea: Creating a 'Virtual Alliance'," *PacNet* 47, Pacific Forum CSIS December 3, 1999; Ralph A. Cossa (ed.), *U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations: Building Toward a "Virtual Alliance"* (Washington D.C.: CSIS, 1999).

⁶² Cha, "Anchored or Adrift?"

⁶³ See, James Schoff, "The Evolution of the TCOG as a Diplomatic Tool," The Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis, November 2004.

⁶⁴ Ralph A. Cossa, "U.S.-Japan-Korea: Creating a 'Virtual Alliance'," *PacNet* 47, Pacific Forum CSIS, December 3, 1999

Though the Bush administration took office with the intent to draw Japan closer Washington and turn the triangle with Japan and South Korea into a full-fledged alliance structure,⁶⁵ the previous trend toward increased trilateral cooperation was reversed. Again, the abrupt change in U.S. policy toward North Korea and alterations in its priorities of Northeast Asia policy are to blame. Though these changes brought the United States and Japan closer, South Korea distanced itself. South Korea felt betrayed by America's abrupt change in North Korea policy and Japan gradually accepted it, while South Korean-Japanese and Sino-Japanese relations deteriorated due to territorial and historical issues. National security scholars Kurt Campbell and Michael O'Hanlon argued that the Bush administration was "willing to see Sino-Japanese ties deteriorate without doing nearly enough to blunt or reverse this trend;"⁶⁶ it can also be claimed that the Bush administration was prepared to allow the same deterioration in Korea-Japan relations. This passive stance by Washington was noted in Seoul; it was interpreted that either the United States had lost the strength to guarantee a secure environment in Northeast Asia,⁶⁷ or it was perceived as complicit in Japan's obstinate behavior in order not to hurt deepening U.S.-Japan cooperation.⁶⁸ Indeed, the truth was that although Koizumi's annual visits to the Yasukuni Shrine antagonized China and South Korea to the detriment of stability in Northeast Asia, the United States took a rather indifferent attitude as to not embarrass Japan "out of gratitude for her support in Iraq."⁶⁹

As Washington has tolerated poor China-Japan and Korea-Japan relations in the name of strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, South Korea's cooperation with China has grown. The virtual trilateral alliance among South Korea, the United States, and Japan has been replaced by bifurcated camps in Northeast Asia. Under this new constellation, the prime framework of discussion has turned South Korea into the accused, arguing that South Korea is "adrift;" that South Korea "pushes the United States off the peninsula, chooses open-ended engagement with North Korea (even at the cost of nuclear proliferation), seeks a continental accommodation with China (or at least greater equidistance from the United States toward China) or balances (with China) against Japan."⁷⁰

Though the situation may not be favorable for stability in Northeast Asia, both the Bush and Roh administrations share an interest in degrading the alliance. The Roh administration and its supporters have long wanted to make the alliance with the United

⁶⁵ Rozman, "South Korean-Japanese Relations as a Factor in Stunted Regionalism," *Gugjegwangyeyongu* (), Vol. 11, Number 1, p. 109.

⁶⁶ Campbell and O'Hanlon, *Hard Power*, p. 205.

⁶⁷ Michael Weinstein, "South Korea-Japan Dokdo/Takeshima Dispute: Toward Confrontation," *Japan Focus* on May 10, 2006.

⁶⁸ David Shambaugh, "Asia in Transition: The Evolving Regional Order," *Current History* (April 2006), p. 157.

⁶⁹ Francis Fukuyama, "Japan's rising nationalism may isolate it in East Asia," *Project Syndicate* (March 27, 2007).

⁷⁰ Cha, "Anchored or Adrift?," p. 111.

States more “equal”—to gain independence in foreign policy by reducing the ROK’s security dependence on the United States. The endeavor for a reduction of security dependence can be symbolized by buzz words like “cooperative self-reliant defense” and the “drawback of war time operation control.” The pursuit of more autonomy in foreign policy was epitomized in phrases such as “strategic balancer in Northeast Asia,” and partly realized in the readiness to disagree with the United States on its policies toward North Korea, China, and Japan. The Roh government in particular regarded the U.S. North Korea policy as excessively confrontational and thereby detrimental to the stability on the Korean peninsula. South Korea has reduced cooperation with the United States and increased cooperation with China with regard to North Korea policy.

The divergence between South Korea and the United States appears more ominous with the continuing rise of China factoring the background. At the same time that American diplomacy was becoming less sensitive and more unilateral, to a majority of South Koreans and many other Asia watchers, China was beginning to emerge as a sophisticated and responsible actor, both on the Korean peninsula and in general. In the words of one leading American scholar, China “vastly improve[d] its image and position within the international system,” and enacted policies that were “more consistent with international norms, regional expectations, and U.S. interests.”⁷¹ But, seen from Seoul since 2001, the Bush administration conveyed the opposite impression. Its attitude of unilateralism, disrespect for important concerns, and hint of pique toward South Korea contrasted with China’s approach, whose diplomacy “has been remarkably adept and nuanced, earning praise throughout the region.”⁷² Furthermore, the Bush administration has shown “a greater willingness than many past administrations to reward and punish even close allies for the degree of their support for current and rapidly evolving American policies.”⁷³ The prime target for punishment has been South Korea, for failing to toe the line on North Korea policy, whereas Japan has been rewarded. As a matter of fact, South Korea was “adrift,” mainly because it was kicked out by American policies and a hostile attitude.

South Korea’s relations with Japan also suffered during this period. In addition to the divergence on North Korea policy since 2002, especially in 2005, hostility between Seoul and Tokyo reached a new height as a result of recurring territorial and historical issues and inappropriate remarks made by politicians.⁷⁴ The worsened relations between South Korea and Japan exerted a negative impact on the denuclearization endeavors, as Charles L. Pritchard observed with regard to the negotiation process at the fourth round of the Six Party Talks in September 2005: “Gone was the trilateral cohesiveness established with the TCOG (Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group) process to

⁷¹ Bates Gill, *The Rising Star: China’s New Security Diplomacy* (Brookings Institution Press, 2007), p. 2.

⁷² Shambaugh, “Asia in Transition: The Evolving Regional Order,” p. 155.

⁷³ Eric Heginbotham and Christopher P. Twomey, “America’s Bismarckian Asia Policy,” *Current History*, Vol. 104, No. 683 (September 2005), p. 244.

⁷⁴ Gilbert Rozman and Shin-wah Lee, “Unraveling the Japan-South Korea ‘Virtual Alliance,’” *Asian Survey*, Vol. XVI, No.5 (September/October 2006), pp. 761-784.

develop a common approach to a North Korea policy for Japan, the United States, and South Korea. Instead of being able to exploit the possible synergistic effects of a trilateral U.S.-Japan-South Korea session, the United States had to shuffle between its allies and make choices about which advice it would or would not incorporate in its next bilateral session with North Korea. That undoubtedly contributed to exhausting the U.S. delegation, which was ready for the fourth round to come to a close.”⁷⁵

Though the emotional tension with Japan was driven partly by populist nationalism for domestic consumption, there are also structural reasons for the deterioration. All three factors which helped upgrade U.S.-Japan relations— North Korea’s nuclear weapons development, the redefinition of U.S. military posture in the Western Pacific, and the “rise” of China—have had the opposite effect on ROK-U.S. and ROK-Japan relations. In contrast to South Korea’s cautious position, Japan has been more responsive to the United States’s demand to cooperate in hedging against a rising China. In this context, since the end of the Cold War, the United States has urged Japan to expand its military armaments and cooperation with the United States, including participation in missile defense programs. To the delight of some in Japan and the United States, threats from the North Korean nuclear and missile programs have helped legitimize and accelerate Japanese “normalization” and military expansion.⁷⁶ With regard to the redefinition of the U.S. military posture in the Western Pacific, in contrast to South Korea, Japan has exhibited no comparable equivocation in aligning with U.S. hedging strategy toward China. While Japan was ever more intent on reinforcing its status as America’s avowed partner of choice in Asia-Pacific strategy, South Korea was worried about the ROK-U.S. alliance being dragged down and degraded as a result of the U.S.-Japan/anti-China alliance.⁷⁷ All in all, South Korea was concerned about Japan drawing “ever closer to the U.S. and at times more extreme in its approach to China and North Korea.”⁷⁸

These structural developments and the deterioration in Seoul-Tokyo relations reinforced the perceived lack of respect and attention from the U.S. toward South Korea, and it began to feel abandoned and isolated from its ally. Furthermore, cooperation between Washington and Beijing in dealing with North Korea’s nuclear weapons development was increasing, and South Korea felt sidelined in that endeavor as well. As a result, the Roh administration overreacted by tinkering with thoughts of playing the “balancer” in Northeast Asia, and attempted in vain to improve relations with North Korea independently. The United States and South Korea—the former aggressive, the latter appeasing—were therefore effectively working at cross purposes in dealing with North Korea during the 2002-2006 period.

⁷⁵ Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 167.

⁷⁶ Richard P. Cronin, “The North Korean Nuclear Threat and the U.S.-Japan Security Alliance: Perceived Interests, Approaches, and Prospects,” *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 29, Issue 1 (Winter 2005).

⁷⁷ Kim and Lim, “How to Deal with South Korea,” pp. 80.

⁷⁸ Rozman, “South Korean-Japanese Relations as a Factor in Stunted Regionalism,” p. 109.

Under this circumstance, other than North Korea's detonation of a nuclear device in October 2006, China benefited from the discord between South Korea and the United States. China, deputized by the United States with the responsibility of managing North Korea's nuclear challenge, has made the most of its opportunity. It has helped defuse the dangerous tension between the United States and North Korea on its periphery, which has improved Chinese ties with the U.S.; and it has also increased its influence in both Koreas. Again, Japan helped push China and the ROK closer together, as Beijing found South Korea to be a natural partner in chastising Japan's attitude toward historical issues.

In a nutshell, the Bush administration's policies encouraged and acknowledged China's central role in Northeast Asian politics. With its increased weight and sophisticated policy in Northeast Asia, China started to play the role of security guarantor and honest broker, the traditional role and source of legitimacy for U.S. engagement in the region. The increased Chinese role also debilitated Japan's role and aspirations in Northeast Asia and therefore limited the relevance of the U.S.-Japan alliance mainly to military security.⁷⁹

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Looking back on the difficult relationship between South Korea and the United States from 2001 to 2006, both accidental and structural factors are apparent. Acknowledging that South Korea, a regional middle power, and the United States, a global superpower, cannot but have different sets of interests does not sufficiently explain why the relationship deteriorated so far. Rather, the accidental factors explained above combined with the structural factors to produce a serious downturn in the bilateral relationship.

In retrospect, the perception and policy gaps on North Korea policy between South Korea and the United States were most serious during the period from 2003 to 2005, when ideological and idealistic elements from both sides (i.e. neo-conservatives in the United States and the "386" elite politicians in South Korea) were simultaneously at the apex of their power and influence in their respective capitals. Driven by ideology and strong confidence in domestic support, they clashed with each other undiplomatically and irresponsibly. These clashes were underlined by strong anti-American sentiment in South Korea and anti-Korean sentiment in the U.S., and contributed to a most gloomy diagnosis about the long-term health of the relationship.

⁷⁹ Bates Gill prognosticates: "As present trends continue in the regional and global security dynamic, China may eclipse Japan as the predominant Asian power in the western Pacific, solidify its role as the key player shaping regional diplomatic and political developments around Eurasia, and strengthen China-driven security relationships in the region and around the world." Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy*, p. 1.

The most important accidental factors were the election of President Bush and 9/11 in 2001. The purpose of the Bush administration's foreign policy has been to establish a hegemonic international order of "imperial characteristics," which is an international order "built around unilateralism, coercive domination, and a reduced commitment to shared commitment to mutually agreeable rule of the game."⁸⁰ Though countries which resisted the dangers of "America's imperial ambition" comprised a good number including "old" European countries and Russia, South Korea suffered the most under the policy difference with the United States. In fact, the degree and impact of South Korea's alienation from the United States is probably behind only the three countries of 'axis of evil,' Iraq, Iran and North Korea, because of its strategic importance in confronting North Korea's nuclear weapons development and in countering the only long-term strategic rival to the U.S., China.

3. Exploration for an ROK-U.S. joint strategy

As the saying goes, "a misfortune can turn out to be a blessing in disguise." But where can one find comfort when reviewing ROK-U.S. alliance relations from 2001 to 2006? As demonstrated above, tension between Seoul and Washington harmed not only the bilateral relationship, but also the general strategic situation in the Northeast Asia region.

On the other hand, the era produced new principles and ideas and serious thinking in both Washington and Seoul about the alliance, North Korea policy, and international relations in Northeast Asia; the legacy of the Roh-Bush interaction may be that the new principles and ideas will form a starting point for a new future of the ROK-U.S. alliance, the allies' standing in Northeast Asia, and the effectiveness of their North Korea policy.

For example, through a tumultuous process, principles for modernization of the ROK-U.S. military alliance were agreed to by both sides. More broadly, the denuclearization of North Korea has been regionalized in the truest sense. China's increased role in the issue, and the September 19 and February 13 agreements in the Six Party Talks are the most obvious effects, and the international nature of the problem has also been recognized in the documents from the summits between South Korea and the United States. Seoul and Washington have agreed that denuclearization should go together with a resolution of Korean issues and a transformation of Northeast Asian international relations, which will only be achieved through reduction of strategic distrust among countries in the region in a new Northeast Asian security framework.

During 2005 to 2006, it became clear that Secretary of State Rice and Assistant Secretary for East Asia and Pacific Affairs Christopher Hill, as well as others in the Bush administration's second term, were trying hard to redirect America's North Korea policy

⁸⁰ Ikenberry, "Strategic Reactions to American Preeminence," p. 8; John Ikenberry, *Liberal order & Imperial ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics* (London: Polity, 2006).

onto a more realistic track.⁸¹ Beginning in 2005 the South Korean government also took steps to improve relations with the United States.⁸² Ultimately, North Korea's missile test in July 2006 and its nuclear test in October 2006 also made South Korea more realistic about North Korea's intentions and threat. In the meantime, the democratic mechanism purged some of the hard-line political influence in both the U.S. and the ROK: Donald Rumsfeld and others resigned after the Republican defeat in the American congressional election in November 2006, and the "386 generation" power block virtually disintegrated in South Korea.

In addition, beginning in 2005 Korean pundits suddenly had to struggle to find alarmist quotes—which had been so common in 2003 and 2004—in public opinion survey results about strong anti-American sentiment and pro-Chinese euphoria. Comparisons of poll surveys results since 2003 showed three elements:⁸³ first, anti-American sentiment in South Korea has retreated from its earlier high level; second, South Korean attitudes toward various policy issues between the two countries have changed depending upon the political situation; and third, the self-identification of "progressive," "center," or "conservative" has also been changing. For example, in 2006 more Koreans identified themselves with the center than with the left, when compared to 2002. The self-identified left decreased from 24.9 percent in 2002 to 18.6 percent in 2006, the self-identified center increased from 38.6 to 45.1 percent, and the right increased from 34.7 percent to 36.3 percent. The support for transition from "U.S.-centered" to "independent" foreign policy decreased from 42.1 percent in 2002 to 22 percent in 2006.⁸⁴

In 2005-2006, the power block which brought President Roh and the 386 political elites into power in 2002 began to disintegrate, a common occurrence in a democratic society.⁸⁵ President Roh's approval rate stabilized at around 10-15 percent in 2006, and

⁸¹ Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 107-108.

⁸² Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 80-81.

⁸³ Lee Nae-young, Jong Han-ul and Jong Won-chil, *ROK-U.S. Alliance in Transition and Public Opinion in South Korea: A International Surveys of Public Perception on Foreign Relations* co-implemented by EAI•CCFR•CIDE•COMEXI, East Asia institute Research and Survey Series 2 (May, 2005)(in Korean). This trend is also discussed by Lee Nae-young in the CNAPS conference, "The Changing Korean Peninsula and the Future of East Asia," co-sponsored with the Seoul Forum for International Affairs, *JoongAng Ilbo*, and the Korean-American Association in Seoul on December 1, 2005. <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2005/1201south-korea.aspx>

⁸⁴ Lee Nae-young, "Changes in ideological self-identification of the Korean people," *Hankug Ilbo*, 2006. 12. 18. (in Korean) In an article, published in Spring 2007, Sunhyuk Kim and Wonhyuk Lim falsely insisted: "Conspicuous in the current upsurge of anti-U.S. sentiment in South Korea, however, is that it is not limited to a radical fringe of the dissident movement. It appears to be becoming ubiquitous, in civil society, academia, and even in the government," and "South Korea's attitudinal shift has multiple causes and will endure through several future administrations." Sunhyuk Kim and Wonhyuk Lim, "How to Deal with South Korea," p. 72 and p. 79.

⁸⁵ For background analysis, see, Hoon Jaung, "2002 vs. 2006, The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism in South Korea: 'It's Korean Politics (Not U.S.), Mr. President!'"

the ruling Uri party also suffered from lower approval ratings at about 15-20 percent in 2006. After the conclusion of the KORUS FTA in April 2007, because of his personal leadership in the “pro-American” pact, President Roh’s approval rate increased from 10-15 percent to 30 percent, but the popularity of the ruling party, which opposed the pact, did not rise. On the other hand, the conservative opposition Grand National Party (Hannara) enjoyed about 40-50 percent approval ratings throughout 2006, and boasted the two most prominent potential candidates for the presidential election in late 2007.

This chapter will summarize the ROK-U.S. agreements on the “modernization” of the alliance and the principles for North Korea policy. In order to realize them, the United States will need to show leadership to reduce strategic tensions among Northeast Asian countries and to establish a new Northeast Asian security mechanism. South Korea will need to renovate its approach to North Korea in a way that increases cooperation with the United States.

3-1. Signs of a new beginning

The six years from 2001 to 2006, were also a period for adjusting or “modernizing” ROK-U.S. relations into a “comprehensive, dynamic and mutually-beneficial relationship.”⁸⁶ The rationale and principles for a new relationship were comprehensively declared in the Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula on November 17, 2005 and the Summary Report of the Joint Vision Study on September 27, 2006.

According to the latter document, the rationale for a future ROK-U.S. alliance consists of the following three dynamic elements:⁸⁷ 1) to meet direct threats to the peninsula; 2) to contribute to increasing regional stability; and 3) to indirectly contribute to addressing global challenges. With regard to the first element: “The ROK-U.S. alliance will remain essential to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula” and “will become increasingly vital in fostering favorable conditions for the establishment of an inter-Korean peace regime, the implementation of South-North confidence building measures, and the eventual peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula.” With regard to regional stability: “the alliance will meet security challenges, maintain regional stability, and assure economic prosperity.” With regard to global challenges: “the alliance will increasingly facilitate close ROK-U.S. coordination to encourage the spread of democracy and market economy; and to counter challenges such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), the spread of terrorism, and the occurrence of humanitarian crisis.”⁸⁸

http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/programs/program_pdfs/rok_us_hoonjuang.pdfhttp://www.mansfieldfdn.org/programs/program_pdfs/rok_us_hoonjuang.pdf

⁸⁶ *Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula.*

⁸⁷ *Summary Report of the Joint Vision Study* (27 September, 2006), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁸ *Summary Report of the Joint Vision Study*, p. 4.

With these three elements, it can be said that South Korea's interest – keeping peace and stability on the Korean peninsula – and the U.S. global perspective have been successfully harmonized, at least in principle. According to South Korea's then-foreign minister Song Min-soon, “even though much of our attention is drawn to Korean peninsula issues such as national unification and the North Korean nuclear program, I truly hope that we enlarge the scope of the alliance into a strategic partnership that will work closely together on regional and global issues, and further promote universal values.”⁸⁹

North Korea policy was a central subject of the Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula on November 17, 2005. The ROK-U.S. agreements on North Korea policy consisted of five parts:

First, with regard to North Korea's nuclear weapons development: A nuclear-armed North Korea will not be tolerated, and the North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means, North Korea should eliminate its nuclear weapons programs promptly and verifiably.

Second, with regard to South Korea's exchanges with the North: The ROK will continue to pursue the development of inter-Korean relations in harmony with progress in resolving the nuclear issue so that both are mutually reinforcing. The U.S. supports South-North reconciliation and pledged to continue close cooperation and coordination as it develops.

Third, with regard to a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula: The process of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue will provide an important basis to build a durable peace regime on the Korean peninsula. Reducing the military threat on the Korea peninsula and moving from the current armistice mechanism to a peace mechanism would contribute to full reconciliation and peaceful reunification on the Korean peninsula. Discussions on a peace regime should take place amongst directly-related parties in a forum separate from the Six Party Talks. The discussion should lead to a decreased military threat and increased confidence on the peninsula in a manner consistent with the peaceful intentions of the U.S.-ROK alliance.

Fourth, in regard of the North Korean people: Ways to improve the condition of the people of the North will continue to be sought.

Fifth, with regard to Northeast Asian multilateral security mechanism: Common efforts will be made to develop a regional multilateral security dialogue and a cooperation mechanism, so as to jointly respond to regional security issues. The

⁸⁹ Song Min-soon, “Korea-US Relations: A Vision for the Future,” *Luncheon speech* hosted by CSIS/KEI, March 2, 2007, Washington D.C. p. 3.

Six-Party Talks can develop into a regional multilateral security consultative mechanism once the North Korean nuclear issue is resolved.

Despite the reconfirmation of the joint ROK-U.S. approach to North Korea in November 2005, the foundation of a new joint vision in September 2006, and other occasions of reassurance, efforts to rejuvenate the alliance spirit have not been persuasive. The major reason was that the approach to North Korea's denuclearization was still perceived to be divergent between South Korea and the United States. Immediately following the inauguration of the 9/19 joint statement, two unfortunate developments disturbed the progress toward the implementation. On the U.S. side, the diplomacy-negotiation track represented by Assistant Secretary Chris Hill was overcome by the isolate-and-confront track nominally represented by Undersecretary Bob Joseph.⁹⁰ In reaction to this strategic shift, North Korea declared that it would boycott the Six Party Talks, declaring that the U.S. Treasury measures against North Korea's illicit financial activities, which came into effect on September 15, were proof of the U.S.'s hostile intention against it.⁹¹ Though dismayed by North Korea's boycott, South Korea also interpreted the Treasury measures as America's new strategy to accomplish regime change in North Korea, and thereby thought the U.S. was more responsible than Pyongyang for the new deadlock in the Six Party Talks.⁹² Following North Korea's missile launches in July and the detonation of a nuclear device in October 2006, the United States was dissatisfied with South Korea's soft measures towards North Korea's outright provocations.

With the Bush administration's surprising new North Korea policy initiative beginning in 2006, however, the situation changed. With this new initiative, the ROK-U.S. consensus on North Korea policy has been restored, teamwork with China strengthened, and North Korea successfully induced to agree on the Initial Actions to Implement Six-Party Joint Statement (referred to below as the 2/13 Agreement), which listed the initial measures for North Korea's denuclearization based upon the 9/19 joint statement in 2005. Consequently, with the February 13 Joint Agreement, the Six Party Talks entered into a new phase. As a result of this agreement, the six countries established five working groups and one separate forum. The five working groups are for: 1) The denuclearization of the Korean peninsula; 2) The normalization of DPRK-U.S.

⁹⁰ Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 134.

⁹¹ Philip Zelikow, a former Counselor of the United States Department of State, wrote that in 2005, the United States took two track approaches. The 9.19 joint statement was singled as a diplomatic approach, and law enforcement actions against North Korea's illicit financial activities as the other defensive one. Philip Zelikow, "The Plan That Moved Pyongyang," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2007, A.13. According to Pritchard, "the public policy of the Bush administration is to be seen working with regional friends and allies to address the North Korean nuclear issue diplomatically but that the administration does not believe that Kim Jong Il will ever give up his nuclear weapons program voluntarily." Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 134.

⁹² On March 16, 2006, Lee Jong Suk, Minister of Unification at the time, talked about a "sensitive change of situation on the Korean peninsula," implying that after the 9.19 joint statement the United States reversed the policy and was pressuring North Korea through the issue of counterfeit and human rights abuse to achieve regime change in North Korea. *Donga Daily*, March 17, 2006 (in Korean)

relations; 3) The normalization of DPRK-Japan relations; 4) Economy and energy cooperation; and 5) A Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism. The separate forum is for establishing a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

As we can infer from the names of six sub organizations of the Six Party Talks, their objectives go beyond the denuclearization of North Korea. These objectives were first agreed upon in the 9/19 Joint Statement of the fourth round of the Six Party Talks in 2005, and were confirmed by the South Korea and the U.S. at the Gyeongju Summit through the Joint Declaration on the ROK-U.S. Alliance and Peace on the Korean Peninsula on November 17, 2005. The objectives were referred to as a “common and broad” approach by South Korea after the ROK-U.S. summit on September 14, 2006, which encompassed politics, security, and economics in order to induce North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons and programs.⁹³ The previous consensus in the 9/19 Joint Statement was reiterated and detailed in the February 13th Action Plan. They can be also termed as a policy for, in the words of the former President Kim Dae Jung in 1999, “dissolution of Cold War structure in the Korean peninsula,” which, since then, was the official position of the South Korean government. Only after or simultaneously with the dissolution of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula, can the denuclearization of North Korea be completed.

The 2/13 Agreement showed once again that the American side perceived North Korean issues as broader than simple nonproliferation terms. According to Robert B. Zoellick, a former United States Deputy Secretary of State, the United States saw this as “a question of trying to work with the other four parties – China, Japan, South Korea, Russia – to create a pathway for North Korea to open up as it chooses, and then to set up a framework for dealing with broader issues of peninsula security, and then even the ultimate question of relations of the major powers in Northeast Asia.”⁹⁴ This broader framework was said to be designed as a triple strategy. First, it addressed Kim Jong Il’s fear of vulnerability by combining the notion of confidence-building measures, security assurances, and ultimately a peace treaty with North Korea. Second, it tried to solve the question of working with China as a responsible stakeholder on common security issues, and also dealing with some of South Korea’s anxieties about its powerful neighbor. Third, even if the 2/13 Agreement does not succeed, it will position the United States to work better with China and others to deal with the risk of North Korea.⁹⁵

⁹³ It is also called a “comprehensive strategy.” The Atlantic Council, “A Framework for Peace and Security in Korea and Northeast Asia,” Project Director Donald Gross, *Policy Paper* (April, 2007).

⁹⁴ Robert B. Zoellick, “Zoellick: A Survey of U.S. Diplomacy Abroad Interviewee: Robert B. Zoellick,” Interviewer: Bernard Gwertzman, *Council of Foreign Relations*, February 21, 2007; This strategy was originally designed by Philip D. Zelikow, counselor to Secretary of State Department Rice, about May 2006 and could began to be realized after the departure of Rumsfeld after the November mid term congress election in 2006. David E. Sanger, “U.S. said to weigh a new approach on North Korea,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2006; Karen DeYoung and Glenn Kessler, “Policy Successes – or U-Turns; Views Differ on Bush Moves on Iran and N. Korea, Mideast,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 2007.

⁹⁵ Zoellick, “Zoellick: A Survey of U.S. Diplomacy Abroad.”

At this juncture, it can be said that South Korea and the United States have shared more consensus than disagreement with regard to North Korea policy.⁹⁶ What was most important for the renewed strategic consensus and cooperation was the restart of America's attempt, which was broken since 2001, in order to resolve North Korean nuclear weapons development by direct and genuine negotiation with North Korea in the context of the Six Party Talks. It gave South Korea assurance that the United States sincerely intended to resolve North Korea's nuclear endeavor without pointlessly endangering the "peace and prosperity" of South Korea, and supplied rationale and legitimacy in the real sense, as South Korean foreign Minister Song Min Soon declared, to "maintain close coordination with the U.S. in moving forward in the inter-Korean talks, with a view to reinforcing progress at the Six Party Talks."⁹⁷ Once again, according to Song Min-soon, "We plan to manage inter-Korean relations strategically so as to enable the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue as this will in turn lead to promotion of inter-Korean dialogue, and vice versa."⁹⁸

3-2. Challenges for the United States

Three track strategy

The big question is, however, whether or not North Korea is ready to make a strategic decision to give up its development of nuclear weapons through diplomacy and negotiation, and with due economic, political and security compensation. With regard to North Korea's intention and its sincerity, when it comes to the negotiation table, there is strong skepticism and pessimism,⁹⁹ which are legitimate and rational considering Pyongyang's track record in the implementation of previous accords. On the other hand, there is a good chance that the current accord will be more binding on North Korea, because it reflects strategic consensus among the Six Party Talks participants, especially among the United States, China, and South Korea. The key question should be how to

⁹⁶ In late June 2007, though after six year conflicts about North Korea policy the two governments are sharing workable consensus on how to deal with North Korea, residual suspicion and concern about 'anti-American' South Korea with wide perceptions gap on North Korea with the United States are still strongly haunting around among pundits. See, Jason W. Forrester, *Congressional Attitudes on the Future of the U.S.-South Korea Relationship: A Report of the International Security Program*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington D.C., May, 2007); Richard Weitz, "The United States and South Korea: A Troubled Alliance," *World Politics Review Exclusive*(April 05, 2007) <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?id=686>; Ralph A. Cossa, "U.S.-ROK: Diverging Threat Perceptions of North Korea?," The Mansfield Foundation (June, 2007) http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/programs/rok_us_relations.htm; Alan D. Romberg, "George Bush and Northeast Asia: Anticipating the Final Two Years," The Henry Stimson Center (April 2007) <http://www.stimson.org/pub.cfm?id=423>; Kim and Lim, "How to Deal with South Korea," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 30, Issue2 (Spring 2007)

⁹⁷ Song, "The Korea-US Relations: A Vision for the Future," p. 6.

⁹⁸ Song, "The Korea-US Relations: A Vision for the Future," p. 6.

⁹⁹ Gary Samore, "Dear Leader: Inside the North Korean Nuclear Deal," *Global Asia*, Vol. 2, No.1 (April, 2007), pp. 66-68; *CSIS Press Briefing on the Six Party Talks* by Michael Green and Jon Wolfsthal, April 18, 2007.

bring forth a situation through “sustained, direct and aggressive diplomacy,” in the words of a leading American presidential contender,¹⁰⁰ where North Korea feels strongly that it would be better off giving up its nuclear weapons development rather than maneuvering to keep it. In the meantime, two extreme viewpoints should be guarded against: first is the excessive pessimism which is usually exhibited by the neo-conservative faction in the United States and expressed in the saying, “you’re never going to get a deal, so don’t even bother playing the game”; second is undue optimism, as the South Korean left-liberals tend to express in the maxim, “just negotiate with these guys, everything going to be fine.”¹⁰¹

The right answer to the North Korean conundrum lies in a three track strategy: the first track is that America should maintain the lead in negotiations with North Korea for its denuclearization, while “do(ing) everything (it) possibly can that doesn’t compromise (its) security to make it impossible for the North Koreans to get on the moral high ground.”¹⁰² The purpose of the first track is to make it politically and morally compelling for South Korea and China to support the American diplomatic lead in denuclearization, while isolating North Korea politically and morally when it hesitates or refuses to cooperate during the denuclearization negotiation process. According to Jack Pritchard, the successful implementation of this sort of strategic pathway demands that:

(T)he president of the United States makes a clear, strategic decision to accept the current North Korean regime as it is rather than wish for its demise; decides how to proceed; communicates his vision of what the relationship between the United States and North Korea would look like to Pyongyang following a negotiated nuclear settlement; and instills the discipline in his staff to work toward that goal, with one voice. It is unlikely that a satisfactory resolution will be achieved during the remainder of the current administration.¹⁰³

The second track is that America’s negotiation with North Korea should be supported by its regional policy to defuse strategic mistrust and promote cooperation among South Korea, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. The function of the second part is clear, besides the denuclearization of North Korea, the Six-Party Talks are to achieve much more ambitious objectives in transforming the Northeast Asian political and security framework. If the objectives of the Six-Party Talks, which include North Korea’s economic development and diplomatic normalization with the United States and Japan, are successful in establishing a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula and a Northeast Asian multilateral security mechanism, Northeast Asia will change dramatically. They are, on the one hand, essential background elements for the ultimate and successful resolution of North Korean issues including its denuclearization. On the

¹⁰⁰ Barack Obama, *Remarks of Senator Barack Obama to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs*, April 23, 2007.

¹⁰¹ Wolfsthal in the *CSIS Press Briefing on the Six Party Talks*.

¹⁰² Wolfsthal in the *CSIS Press Briefing on the Six Party Talks*.

¹⁰³ Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 162.

other hand, they can be realized only when the United States brings back its strong commitment and leadership for reconciliation and cooperation in Northeast Asia. Korean unification will be achieved at a time when it will not be a disruptive within the Northeast Asian international system, and when the Korean people can concur on unification under the principles of freedom and democracy through acts of self-determination.

The third track is for the United States to play a role of “promoter” in expanding inter-Korean relations and “facilitator” for Korean unification. This strategic path will promote the following two purposes: first, only through the successful resolution of various issues between the two Koreas by their own principal initiatives, and through inter-Korean reconciliation will it be possible to achieve permanent peace on the Korean peninsula and thereby eliminate a major factor for strategic mistrust and disturbance in Northeast Asian international relations; and second, ROK-U.S. cooperation on North Korea policy will be best served when it is made clear that progress in inter-Korean relations, U.S.-DPRK relations and denuclearization should go parallel and not conflict with the others. North Korea might have interests in prioritizing U.S.-DPRK relations as a way to gain leverage over South Korea in inter-Korean relations and to drive wedges between South Korea and the United States. It should be clear to all from the start that this sort maneuver serves no one’s interests and is harmful for improving relations between the United States and North Korea.

The crisis of the San Francisco system and the crisis of ROK-U.S. relations in 2001-06

To be successful, the three-track strategy should comprise the three sides of the one entity: U.S. policy toward North Korea in particular and Northeast Asia in general. In addition, its concrete policy blueprints must be realistic and appropriate to materializing potentials amid the changing realities of Northeast Asia.

The imperatives of the three-track policy can be better understood in the context of the outlived Cold War structure of Northeast Asian international relations, which was the background of the crises in ROK-U.S. relations in previous years. Though the most recent crisis was spurred by the clash of North Korea policies between the Roh and the Bush administrations, more structural causes can be found in the crisis of the Cold War alliance bargain in a “new Asia,”¹⁰⁴ where China “rises” and Japan “normalizes,” the two Koreas move toward reconciliation, and multilateral contacts among more self-confident regional actors increase. The foreign policy of the Bush administration, considered by some to be, “the most sweeping redesign of U.S. grand strategy since the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt,”¹⁰⁵ has, however, contributed to aggravate tensions which lurked in the outlived Cold War alliance structure. Only when the United States takes a different

¹⁰⁴ Morton Abramowitz and Stephen Bosworth, “Adjusting to the New Asia,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, Issue. 4 (July/August, 2003), p. 119

¹⁰⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, “Grand Strategy in the Second Term,” *Foreign Affairs*. Vol.84, Issue 1 (January/February, 2005).

approach to the “new Asia” for a “new strategic bargain,” which could significantly reduce strategic mistrust among Northeast Asian countries, can the objectives of the Six-Party Talks be achieved and the ROK-U.S. alliance stabilized.

Then what is meant by the crisis of the Cold War alliance structure? The Cold War U.S. alliance system in Northeast Asia can be termed as the “San Francisco System.” It refers to the “comprehensive, Japan-centric structure of interrelated political, military, and economic commitments between the United States and its Pacific allies that was initiated by the San Francisco Peace Treaty of September 1951.”¹⁰⁶ In the wake of the end of the Cold War and the advent of a “new Asia,” the outlived Cold War alliance system has been confronted with challenges and necessities for adjustments. Due to several reasons, which will be further explained, these adjustments have a serious impact on the ROK-U.S. alliance among others, including the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The first point is related to the initial strategic bargain between South Korea and the United States: “economics for security.” The alliance has, on one hand, supplied South Korea with privileged access to the U.S. market, and on the other, obligated South Korea to participate in an asymmetric security alliance favoring and led by the U.S. With the deepening globalization and opening of the Chinese market, however, the economic benefit of the alliance has diminished, and North Korea’s conventional war capacity, which has legitimized asymmetrical military alliance, has also declined. With this development, it has been more than natural that many in Seoul began finding “inequality” in their relations with the United States and started to diversify their foreign relations. Though confronted with the same problems, it was easier for Japan to do the same because its alliance with the United States has been relatively loose and flexible in comparison to that of South Korea, and regarded as more important to regional and global security by the United States.¹⁰⁷

The second point is related to the unequal status of Japan and South Korea in the U.S. alliance system. The San Francisco System offered special precedence to Japan in terms of both economic opportunities and security obligations. The purpose of the ROK-U.S. military alliance was to protect and enrich South Korea but also, to contribute to the enrichment and stability of Japan.¹⁰⁸ The magnitude of inequality has increased in the post-Cold War period and may increase in the future, because the relative importance of the two U.S.-led alliances has changed to the detriment of the ROK-U.S. While the U.S.-Japan alliance remains the “greatest strategic asset in the region”¹⁰⁹ and has been

¹⁰⁶ Kent E. Calder, “Pacific Co-Prosperity? The San Francisco System and Its Implications in Comparative Perspective,” Steinberg (Ed.), *Korean Attitudes toward the United States: Changing Dynamics*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁷ Koji Murata, “U.S.-Japan Alliance as a Flexible Institution,” G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds.), *The Uses of Institutions: The U.S., Japan and Governance in East Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ Calder, “Pacific Co-Prosperity? The San Francisco System and Its Implications in Comparative Perspective,” p. 27.

¹⁰⁹ Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020* (CSIS: Washington D.C., 2007), p. 15.

transformed from “an instrument to protect Japan against external threat into one designed to cope with contingencies on the Korean peninsula and in the Taiwan Strait,” as well as for “balancing against China,”¹¹⁰ the ROK-U.S. alliance decreased in its importance not only for the defense of South Korea, but also for the protection of Japan as a result of the decreased conventional threat from North Korea, developments in allied military technology, and Japan’s increased military capacity.

As a matter of fact, the U.S.-Japan alliance has become more essential as the pillar of U.S. alliance system in Northeast Asia since the end of the Cold War. Important thinkers in the U.S. – with high-level positions in the government – wished Japan to be “willing to make a greater contribution and to become a more equal partner.”¹¹¹ These strategists advised the revision of the Japanese constitution and an upgrade of Japan’s military capacity for self defense and cooperation with the United States in Northeast Asia and beyond. In contrast to the U.S.-Japan alliance transformation, no serious attention was paid to the problem of ‘modernizing’ the ROK-U.S. alliance until autumn 2002.¹¹² Only after the transformation of the ROK-U.S. alliance had technically started did the discussion about the strategic direction of the transformation begin. Besides, in contrast to the U.S.-Japan case, in which the United States urged Japan to be a more ‘equal’ partner, it was the South Korean side which demanded and obtained its more or less ‘equal’ status in the alliance. With the diminished North Korean conventional threat, reduced U.S. force deployment in South Korea, and an unclear role for Korea’s contribution to ‘regional security,’ the status and importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance will be further degraded in comparison to the U.S.-Japan alliance, and may become technically integrated with the latter as a sub unit.¹¹³

The third point is related to the stabilizing role of the U.S. alliance system in Northeast Asia, which again has been weighted toward Japan.¹¹⁴ First, the U.S.-Japan alliance solved Japan’s security problems, allowing it to forgo building up its military capabilities; second, it has served to solve or reduce the security dilemmas that would surface within the region if Japan were to re-arm and become a more autonomous and unrestrained military power. Besides both South Korea and China having positively assessed this stabilizing function of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the United States took advantage of its strong relations with both Korea and Japan to maintain functional

¹¹⁰ Wu Xinbo, “The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the U.S.-Japanese Alliance,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Winter 2005-06), p. 120.

¹¹¹ Armitage and Nye, *The United States and Japan: Advancing Toward a Mature Partnership*, p. 6.

¹¹² Toby Dalton and Scott Snyder, “Ties That Bind? Culture, Values, and Ideation in U.S.-Japan Security cooperation,” Tae-Hyo Kim and Brad Glosserman, *The Future of U.S.-Korea-Japan Relations* (Washington D.C.: CSIS, 2004), pp. 114-119.

¹¹³ Niksch, “U.S. Security Policies in the Western Pacific,” pp. 9-10.

¹¹⁴ G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, “Introduction,” p. 7 and Tsuyoshi Kawaski, “Layering Institutions: The Logic of Japan’s Institutional Strategy for Regional Security,” p. 82, both in G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi (eds.), *The Uses of Institutions: The U.S., Japan and Governance in East Asia* (New York: Palgrave, 2007).

relations.¹¹⁵ This benign attitude of South Korea and China to the U.S.-Japan alliance changed into a more or less suspicious one, as Japan increased its military capacity and became active and assertive in security policy,¹¹⁶ though the future direction of its strategic intentions remains unclear. In addition, as both South Korea and Japan tried to become “equitable partners” and more autonomous in their respective alliances with the United States, the American ability to restrain one or both of them in their nationalistic quarrels has decreased. Considering Japan’s relative importance to and stronger influence on the United States, it is legitimate for South Korea to worry about America’s structural bias toward Japan. Seoul therefore increased its pursuit of independence as the United States and Japan failed to “strike a delicate balance – satisfying American requests for Japan to become a more active player in regional security while assuaging concerns in key East Asian countries that a greater strategic role for Japan does not pose a threat to their national security.”¹¹⁷

The fourth point is related to an increased need for multilateralism. The San Francisco System has been based on bilateralisms, as the United States preferred this arrangement in order to be able to exercise its power in the region more freely.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, at the beginning, the U.S. alliance system in Northeast Asia had the function of excluding China and North Korea. In the meantime, and especially in the wake of the end of the Cold War, however, changes have been made which increased the necessity of multilateral relations. Regional actors become more interdependent, self-confident, and assertive in general. China became a major player politically and economically. With the beginning of inter-Korean exchange, and in light of Pyongyang’s wish to normalize relations with the United States and Japan, North Korea’s position within Northeast Asia was reconsidered. Arguably, “the Americans have maintained a bystander role and have not committed to a vision of multilateral institution building that would enhance regional integration,” to the benefit of both Japan and Korea but also the Korean purpose.¹¹⁹ The consequence has been that China, by default, has been able to

¹¹⁵ Victor Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

¹¹⁶ China has already begun to regard the U.S.-Japan alliance as targeted on China as a strategic rival. Wu Xinbo, “The End of the Silver Lining: A Chinese View of the U.S.-Japanese Alliance.”

¹¹⁷ Christopher Preble, “A Plea for Normalcy: U.S.-Japan Relations after Koizumi,” *The National Interest*, Issue 85 (Sep/Oct 2006), p. 73.

¹¹⁸ Michael Mastanduno, “The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Models of Regional Security Order,” G. John Ikenberry and Takashi Inoguchi, *Reinventing the Alliance: U.S.-Japan Security Partnership in an Era of Change* (London: MacMillan, 2003), pp. 27-29.

¹¹⁹ Kenneth B. Pyle, “Abe Shinzo and Japan’s Change of Course,” *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 17, Number 4 (October 2006), p. 23; Ok-Nim Chung, C.H. Kwan, Alexandre Mansourov, Kiyoshi Sugawa, Wu Xinbo, I Yuan, “Security Mutualism: Investing Stakes in a Prosperous and Stable Northeast Asia,” *CNAPS Working Paper* (Spring 2000). From its inauguration in 2003, the Roh Moo Hyun administration has seen institutionalization of Northeast Asian peace cooperation as one of its long-term foreign policy objectives.

play a stronger and more proactive leading role in establishing Asian multilateral institutions.¹²⁰

Some latent problems in the persistent San Francisco System, which has passed its prime, have been aggravated by the Bush administration's policies. First of all, America's post-9/11 mix of power has been lopsided: it overemphasizes military strength and takes insufficient advantage of the United States's economic and potential normative muscle. Second, because America has become so distracted by issues in the Middle East, it has not paid due attention to Northeast Asia in general and to the resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons development in particular. Third, the Bush administration summarily disregarded South Korea's interest and, to a lesser extent, regional consensus in the early 2000's to deepen engagement with North Korea. Because of the strong internal rivalry between factions in the administration, it could not maintain coherence in its North Korea policy, swinging back and forth between strong pressure and weak dialogue.

These three characters of the Bush administration's policy have been detrimental to America's reputation and leadership in Asia, even more so because they were more or less sharply contrasted with the Chinese policy in the same period. While the U.S. put more emphasis on its supreme military power and was regarded as disruptive, China used its economy as the primary tool in the conduct of its foreign relations, receiving more favorable ratings than the U.S. in international public opinion polls.¹²¹ This trend was summarized by David M. Lampton: "China is gaining a certain normative appeal in East Asia and beyond simply by defining a foreign policy paradigm that many nations feel contrasts favorably with that of the Bush Administration in the post-9/11 period."¹²² Though the advice for China to be a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system was invented by Robert Zoellick, an official of the Bush administration, China has been more responsible than the Bush administration's America. In that sense, though South Korea was condemned as "drifting" toward China, it would be fair to say that South Korea was pushed toward China by the inappropriateness of the U.S. policy.

Consequently, Northeast Asia faced both old and new challenges with more urgency. The Bush administration's hard-line North Korea policy unnecessarily alienated potential partners, especially South Korea, and undermined America's ability to secure cooperation. America's abrupt changes in North Korea policy in 2001 and 2006, and its intense internal rivalry and in the inconsistencies in its North Korea policy in the previous six years undermined America's reputation as a reliable policy partner. The worst result of the policy has been the opening of opportunities for North Korea to take advantage of

¹²⁰ Gill, *Rising Star: China's New Security Diplomacy*, pp. 21-73; Asian Regional Architecture Project, "Building an Open and Inclusive Regional Architecture for Asia," *Policy Dialogue Brief*, CSIS (November, 2006).

¹²¹ David M. Lampton, "China's Rise in Asia Need Not Be at America's Expense," Shambaugh (ed.), *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*.

¹²² Lampton, "China's Rise in Asia Need Not Be at America's Expense," p. 307.

dissonances, to muddle through with dangerous escalatory tactics, and to detonate a nuclear device. America's distraction with the Iraq War, its inability to deter North Korea's adventurous pursuit of nuclear weapons, and its simultaneous force reduction in South Korea and Japan, all have raised concern about U.S. credibility to deter conflict and reinforce security in Northeast Asia.

Furthermore, the outsourcing of the management of North Korea's nuclear weapons development to China and America's alienation of South Korea have contributed to Chinese expansion of influence within Northeast Asia and on Korean issues. America's emphasis on cultivating military security partners and its focus on balance-of-power alignments with particular attention to China have limited America's role in the region to only a hedge, which will be useful only in the event of acute instability or overt major power rivalry.¹²³ As noted above, in 2001-2006 the U.S. often neglected its allies' needs and concerns even as it requested their support for its national security requirements.¹²⁴ Furthermore, America's focus on military power and its neglect of the non-military aspects of international diplomacy diminished the appeal and leadership of American power even more. In fact, rather than enhancing security in Northeast Asia, the United States contributed to the exacerbation of regional tension, partly through the enhancement of its alliance with Japan, whose more active military posture has been accompanied by increased historical revisionism and a right-ward political tilt.¹²⁵

Establishing a convergent security regime in Northeast Asia

As described above, it is crucial for the United States to take a three-track strategy for the resolution of Korean issues: lead assertively in negotiations with North Korea; implement a regional policy to defuse strategic mistrust and facilitate strategic cooperation; and promote the expansion of inter-Korean relations leading ultimately Korean unification. Among these, the ultimate success of the first and third components will depend on whether the United States can achieve the second strategic objective. If strategic mistrust and competition continue to fester in the region, North Korea would be able to muddle through with its malicious domestic constitution and outward behavior, and the deepening rapprochement between the two Koreas would be perceived as disruptive and unacceptable to some parties in Northeast Asia.

As previously noted, the consensus among participants of the Six Party Talks is that the resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons development would be linked with the transformation of Northeast Asian international relations. This linkage can be said to have been an inadvertent product of the Six Party Talks. Though the Bush administration has insisted that North Korea's nuclear weapons development should be regarded as a regional problem, and not a bilateral problem between the United States and North Korea,

¹²³ Pollack, "Between two worlds: U.S. Northeast Asia strategy in transition," p. 3.

¹²⁴ Morgan, "The U.S.-ROK Alliance: An American View," p. 18.

¹²⁵ Heginbotham and Twomey, "America's Bismarckian Asia Policy," p. 125.

America's real intention for subcontracting the problem to China was to avoid direct negotiation with North Korea, and to buy time until the Iraq problem was resolved and the United States could exert decisive pressure on North Korea to unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons development.¹²⁶ With regard to the Six Party Talks, though the American assertion to define North Korea's nuclear program as a regional challenge in order to isolate North Korea has largely failed,¹²⁷ the U.S. did contribute to the notion that "only a regional multilateral effort to induce North Korean self-restraint stood any chance of achieving an acceptable outcome."¹²⁸ With this inadvertently-emerged consensus, the Six Party Talks represented "a far-reaching acknowledgement that the security of the Far East required some form of international architecture."¹²⁹

The need for a multilateral effort and a regional security architecture must reflect the background of the changes and challenges to the "new" Northeast Asia: the rise of China and its increased influence in Asia—its uncertain direction and future—and its gradual integration into the international system created by the United States; Japan's "normalization" as "a nation responsible for its own security and capable of assuming a wider strategic role in East Asia,"¹³⁰ its impact both on the future of the U.S.-Japan alliance and on the threat perception of its neighboring countries, especially China and the Koreans; uncertain relations among the U.S., China, and Japan; the ongoing reconciliation between the two Koreas; the progress of globalization and interdependence among states and societies; the proliferation of Asian multilateral institutions and China's important role in them; and the increasing importance of addressing non-traditional threats. Kenneth B. Pyle, an American historian of Japan, states the following:

Although American power was now preeminent in the world, it was not clear how this would affect regional order in Asia. In the 1990s, Asia entered what we might call an interregnum, a period of flux when the shape of a new order was not yet apparent. Cold War stability gave way to a new uncertainty.¹³¹

As is usually the case during historical periods of flux, there are enough materials in contemporary Northeast Asia which can contribute to the aggravation of mistrust, competition, and long-term instability and failures, but they may also promote trust, reconciliation, and long-term peace and prosperity. It is undecided which alternative will characterize the future Northeast Asia. What is determined is that the strategic evolution

¹²⁶ Morton Abramowitz and Stephen Bosworth, *Chasing the Sun: Rethinking East Asian Policy* (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 2006), pp. 63-64; Pollack, "The United States, North Korea, and the end of the Agreed Framework," *Naval War College Review* (Summer, 2003).

¹²⁷ Larry A. Nicksch, *North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Program*, Congressional Research Service, May 25, 2006.

¹²⁸ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Second Chance: Three Presidents and the Crisis of American Superpower* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), p. 166.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Preble, "A Plea for Normalcy: U.S.-Japan Relations after Koizumi," p. 72.

¹³¹ Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs TM, 2007), p. 282.

and interaction of the United States, China, and Japan will be crucial, while the Korean issue remains pivotal. There is no denying that “stability in East Asia will rest on the quality of the U.S.-Japan-China relations”¹³² and “neither North nor South Korea separately nor the peninsula as a whole rise to the stature of Japan or China in U.S. security or foreign policy calculations.”¹³³ There is also, however, no denying that the uncertainties lurking in Korean issues will have a great impact on the “quality” of the trilateral relations and that, as Pyle and others anticipate,¹³⁴ the most probable catalyst for the emergence of a new international order in Northeast Asia would be the resolution of North Korean issues, the outcome of which will have the “potential to reshape the regional order in fundamental ways.”¹³⁵ This “catalytic trigger” role of the Korean issues has been proved through the Six Party Talks process, which put in place “an innovative framework that may prove important” not only to “managing change on the Korean peninsula” but also simultaneously “promoting security in Northeast Asia in the future.”¹³⁶

If the objectives of the Six Party Talks are fully realized, not only will drastic changes take place on the Korean peninsula but also throughout Northeast Asia. The challenge is that these objectives can be achieved only through meaningful improvements in the status quo in Northeast Asian international relations. The crux of the problem is that any attempt to change the status quo has always been met with resistance, anxiety and complexity. Therefore, the objectives of the Six Party Talks can be fully realized only if relations among Northeast Asian countries are characterized by reconciliation and cooperation as opposed to suspicion and competition.

To induce this sort of constellation, the role of the United States is critical because only the United States can influence Northeast Asian international relations to a meaningful degree, in either direction. In the future, as in the past, the two Koreas, China, and Japan will define themselves and their choices based on their resistance to or cooperation with U.S. plans and interests. In the case of China and Japan, they either prefer the comfortable status quo to the uncertainties which would be produced by the

¹³² Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020*, p. 14.

¹³³ Northeast Asia Working Group, “The Japan-China-United States Triangle: Interest, Uncertainty, and Choice,” *Northeast Asia Working Group Paper Number 1* (November 2006), p. 3.

¹³⁴ Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, pp. 341-345; Jonathan D. Pollack (Ed.), *Korea: The East Asian Pivot* (Washington D.C.: Naval War College Press, 2006); Charles K. Armstrong (eds.), *Korea at the Center: Dynamics of Regionalism in Northeast Asia* (New York: M.E. Sharpe; 2005); Robert Dujarric (ed.), *Korea: Security Pivot in Northeast Asia* (Washington D.C.: Hudson Institute, 1998); Charles M. Perry and Toshi Yoshihara, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Preparing for Korean Reconciliation & Beyond* (Dulles: Brassey’s Inc, 2003); Aaron L. Friedberg, “U.S. Strategy in Northeast Asia: Short and Long-Term Challenges.” Wilson Lee etc. ed. *U.S. Strategy in the Asia-Pacific Region. A Conference Report*. (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2003), pp. 18-30.

¹³⁵ Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, p. 341.

¹³⁶ Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020*, p. 7.

resolution of Korean issues,¹³⁷ or are incapable of developing or taking a proactive policy.¹³⁸ South Korea also lacks the strategic and material resources to be a leading actor in reshaping Northeast Asia in a way, which will be compatible with its strategic wishes. To put it concisely, regional strategies of South Korea, Japan, and China are rather substantially devised in response to U.S. decision.¹³⁹ Any decision made by the U.S. will have a corresponding chain of reactions both in domestic and foreign relations of each country at both the strategic and tactical levels.

Momentum will only be created by a new American new strategic vision for the region. The vision must be based on a framework that promotes trust, reconciliation, and long-term peace, replacing the once successful but outlived San Francisco System. To make a long story short, constructing a “convergent security” framework will be a positive alternative to the old structure. This concept was developed by William T. Tow, an Australian security expert, and, for the purpose of this paper, is worth a long quote:

Convergent security envisions giving regional great powers such as China and the United States a collective stake in an evolving multilateral regional security order while encouraging middle and small powers to assume responsibility in shaping and preserving any such framework. Bilateral security alliances would be adjusted to allow greater equality in alliance relations and to broaden the network of security consultations and trust-building mechanisms. Sensitivity would be extended towards each state’s strategic prerogatives and concerns by identifying and implementing confidence-building measures and by conducting wide-ranging regional security dialogues. Strategic reassurance would be retained by sufficient deterrence commitments and guarantees to ensure that regional aggression could be avoided or defeated.¹⁴⁰

In this framework, the vital interests of the United States will be kept, while a renewed structure for regional trust building, reconciliation, and long-term peace and prosperity will be provided. First, “exclusive bilateral alliances” can work in conjunction with more inclusive multilateral arrangements¹⁴¹; second, changing relations in America’s bilateral alliances with regional states including Japan and South Korea, and possible future trends among regional actors in Northeast Asia, will be taken into account in a positive-sum way; third, in its conception, it takes into account the vital importance of the trilateral relations among the United States, China, and Japan, but does not neglect the importance

¹³⁷ Fei-Ling Wang, “Joining the Major Powers for the Status Quo: China’s Views and Policy on Korean Unification,” *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 2. (Summer, 1999), pp. 167-185.

¹³⁸ Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, p. 344; Kent E. Calder, “China and Japan’s Simmering Rivalry,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.85, Issue. 2 (March/April, 2006), p. 4; Victor D. Cha, “Defensive Realism and Japan’s Approach toward Korean Unification,” *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 14, Number 1 (June, 2003).

¹³⁹ Northeast Asia Working Group, “The Japan-China-United States Triangle: Interest, Uncertainty, and Choice,” p. 9.

¹⁴⁰ William T. Tow, *Asia-Pacific Strategic Relations: Seeking Convergent Security* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 213.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

of other middle powers, such as South Korea; fourth, the 9/19 Joint Statement and 2/13 Action Plan can be considered as legitimizing documents for the start of this undertaking.

Fortunately, this type of strategic thinking is not alien to America's mainstream centralist conception, and has recently been clearly articulated in strategic positions developed partly as criticism against and as an alternative to the Bush administration's catastrophic pursuit of a neo-conservative foreign policy.¹⁴² The general prescription can be summarized in three points. First, with regard to China's emergence as a great player, the new strategy tries to get China to be a "responsible stakeholder" in the international system rather than contain it and/or balance it while overemphasizing the military dimension. Second, the United States will try not to take advantage of Sino-Japanese competition and maintain a more vigorous military U.S.-Japan alliance directed against China, but will work seriously to reduce tensions between the two, getting Japan to come to terms more effectively with its past so that it may play a more effective role in the region. Third, the United States will take a much more active role in promoting the development of institutions in Asia (rather than subtly undermining them, or at best attending but not actively participating).¹⁴³ In this regard, a related suggestion of the Princeton Project can also be quoted:¹⁴⁴ "While strengthening ties with democratic allies, the United States should strive to establish an East Asian security institution that brings together the major powers – China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, and the United States – for direct and ongoing discussions about regional security issues."¹⁴⁵

In a nutshell, in its Northeast Asia policy, the United States must find ways accommodate a rising China, allow Japan to "normalize," and promote the reconciliation of the two Koreas without creating new suspicions or conflicts. According to John Ikenberry, "the trick will be to hold on to the U.S.-Japan alliance and the other U.S.

¹⁴² The Princeton Project on National Security, *Report of the Working Group on Grand Strategic Choices* (Princeton: The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2006); Report of an Independent Task Force, *U.S.-China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda, A Responsible Course* (New York: Council of Foreign Relations, 2007); Jeffrey A. Bader and Richard C. Bush III, *Contending with the Rise of China: Build on Three Decades of Progress*, Opportunity 08, Issue Briefing 01 (Brookings Institution February 2007); Goodby and Merritt, *A Framework for Peace and Security in Korea and Northeast Asia*.

¹⁴³ Heginbotham and Twomey, "America's Bismarckian Asia Policy," p. 249; Abramowitz and Bosworth, *Chasing the Sun*, pp. 25-26.

¹⁴⁴ Similar suggestions are also put forward by: Francis Fukuyama, "Re-Envisioning Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 84, Issue 1 (January/February, 2005); Ikenberry, "American Strategy in the New East" *The American Interest* (Autumn 2006); Gerald L. Curtis, "East Asia, Regionalism, and U.S. National Interests: How Much Changes?," *American Foreign Policy Interests*, Number 26 (2004); Goodby and Merritt, Co-chairs, *A Framework for Peace and Security in Korea and Northeast Asia*; Calder, "China and Japan's Simmering Rivalry"; Joseph S. Nye, "The East Asian Triangle," *Project Syndicate* (October 2006); Michael Shiffer, "Time for a Northeast Asian Security Institution," *PacNet* No. 59, December 8, 2006; Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, pp. 169-184.

¹⁴⁵ Princeton Project (G. John Ikenberry and Anne-Marie Slaughter, Co-Directors), *Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century* (Princeton: The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, 2006), p. 50.

bilateral security pacts, while looking for ways to embed them in new multilateral regional arrangements.”¹⁴⁶ Japan will remain the bedrock of American strategy in Northeast Asia, and it must move very cautiously in revising Article 9 of its postwar constitution, and should do so within a new multilateral framework through which it can consult and reassure South Korea and China.¹⁴⁷ For this strategy to work, a “new grand bargain” is needed, in the sense that “just as a rising China should tie its growing power to commitments to strengthened regional security cooperation, so should Japan tie normalization to commitments to a new regional cooperative security organization.”¹⁴⁸

With regard to the resolution of North Korea’s nuclear weapons development, the new strategy will have an essential character: it will facilitate a common approach and cooperation among South Korea, the United States, China, and Japan. Along this new strategy, there will be no zero-sum calculations among South Korea, the United States, China, and Japan, which could obstruct close strategic cooperation among them. Even if it is true that “the question of how to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue also involves the geopolitical realignment of Asia, Washington’s reorientation of relations with its Asian allies, and China’s rise as an influential regional player and the subsequent regional response,”¹⁴⁹ this should be managed as a positive-sum game for all participants. In this framework, the increasing trade volume and interdependence between South Korea and China and the possible impact on South Korea’s security thinking¹⁵⁰ may not be a concern for the health of the ROK-U.S. alliance. Likewise, South Korea may not be anxious about an expanding Sino-American strategic dialogue on North Korea and Korean issues,¹⁵¹ and about the U.S.’s assertion that China’s interests will be taken care of with regard to the resolution of Korean issues.¹⁵² Under the current international system, Seoul may take these as infringements on its aspiration to be a leading actor in

¹⁴⁶ Ikenberry, “American Strategy in the New East,” p. 90.

¹⁴⁷ Princeton Project, *Forging a World of Liberty under Law: U.S. National Security in the 21st Century*, p. 50.

¹⁴⁸ Ikenberry, “American Strategy in the New East,” p. 90.

¹⁴⁹ Xiaohui (Anne) Wu, “China and the US Beyond the Korean Peninsula: The Bigger Power Game,” *The Nonproliferation Review*, Vol. 13, Number 2 (July 2006), p. 32.

¹⁵⁰ Scott Snyder, “Sino-Korean Relations and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *NBR Analysis*, Volume 14, Number 1 (June, 2003), pp. 51-72.

¹⁵¹ Minxin Pei and Oriana Skylar Mastro, “How to Deal with North Korea,” *Financial Times*, December 12 2006; Jon B. Wofsthal, “China’s Newfound Flexibility toward North Korea,” *CSIS Freeman Report* (November 2006).

¹⁵² Scott Snyder and Joel Wit, *Chinese Views: Breaking the Stalemate on the Korean Peninsula*, United States Institute of Peace, Special Report 183, February 2007; Assistant Secretary Christopher Hill said in a congressional hearing: “I would say one of the benefits of this process for us has been in our development of a relationship with China. China has played a constructive role in this process. We have been able to harmonize with the Chinese not only the goals of this process, that is denuclearization of North Korea; we have also in many cases been able to harmonize with the Chinese our strategy for achieving these goals and even our tactics for realizing this. We are working closely with China. We feel ultimately this will be a very key factor in whether we are successful or not.” *North Korea: Briefing and Hearing before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives*, One Hundred Tenth Congress First Session, January 18 and February 28, 2007, Serial No. 110–15, p. 62.

the resolution of Korean affairs and a possible omen for being dictated to an undesired solution by concord between the United States and China.

In a more multilateral framework, the gaps in perception between Washington and Seoul on the North Korean threat may not be perceived as so exacerbating as to exert negative influence on the health of the ROK-U.S. alliance and invoke worries about a Korea-China counter alignment against the U.S. and Japan,¹⁵³ or for an end to the alliance. Rather, South Korea and China may be assured of and praise Japan's constructive international role, while its international and security roles and cooperation with the United States increase. This will be a huge benefit to both the United States and Japan; as only with South Korea's and China's equanimity with the U.S.-Japan alliance will it be possible for the latter to "realize its full potential as an instrument of global peace and security."¹⁵⁴ Under this circumstance, bad relations between South Korea and Japan cannot be used as convincing counterfactual proof against strategic advocacy for the promotion of democracy;¹⁵⁵ that sharing democratic values cannot assuage bitter historical animosities. Under this circumstance, China may feel assured that America's relations with South Korea and Japan will be factors for stabilization rather than instability in Northeast Asia. Under this circumstance, the United States can renew its indispensability as "stabilizer" and "honest broker" in the post-Cold War Northeast Asian context, and thereby can re-legitimize active engagement, its alliance system, and forward deployment in the region. This framework would also "strengthen rather than weaken U.S. bilateral alliances," because it would "significantly lessen South Korea and Japan's concern that their alliances with the U.S. will lead to inevitable conflict with a rising China."¹⁵⁶ This will enhance incentives for South Korea and Japan to "retain their alliances with the U.S. over the long-term."¹⁵⁷

Last, but not least, North Korea must give up its nuclear weapons development in the manner of a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement. The critical minimum for peacefully resolving North Korea's nuclear weapons development and realizing the objectives of the Six Party Talks will be the united front and cooperation among South Korea, the United States, and China. Considering the Pyongyang regime's survival mindset, North Korea can be peacefully and forcefully persuaded to forgo its nuclear weapons development only if the three countries can maintain strategic cooperation. This minimum condition for the successful resolution of North Korean issues will be facilitated with the inception of America's new strategy. Once the new

¹⁵³ Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ Council of Foreign Relations, *U.S.-China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda, A Responsible Course*, p. 34.

¹⁵⁵ Michael J. Green, "Democracy and the Balance of Power in Asia," *The American Interest* (Autumn, 2006), pp. 95-102.

¹⁵⁶ Donald G. Gross, "Transforming the U.S. Relationship with China," *Global Asia*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 2007), p. 83.

¹⁵⁷ Gross, "Transforming the U.S. Relationship with China," p. 84.

strategy is implemented, North Korea must brace itself for the possibility a policy such as the following, as suggested by a Council on Foreign Relations task force:

The Task Force finds that despite differing threat perceptions of North Korea, the United States and China have an opportunity to expand areas of policy coordination and, in concert with Japan and especially South Korea, to begin to form a common vision for the future of the Korean peninsula. A more balanced blend of incentives and disincentives – Asian sticks and American carrots to go along with the Asian carrots and American sticks – could yield positive results and maximize the chance that North Korea will follow through on its commitments of September 19, 2005, and February 13, 2007, to denuclearize.¹⁵⁸

Under this circumstance, even though “Pyongyang’s behavior since 1990 strongly suggests that it is trapped in its own political and economic system” and “Kim Jong Il harbors deeply ingrained distrust of the United States and tends to view proffered U.S. economic incentives as a ‘poison apple,’”¹⁵⁹ this should not be cause for resignation. It will be indispensable to try a “Grand Bargain,” contrary to policy suggestions by the Armitage and Nye report of 2007, because, confronted with common solutions and a unified front among South Korea, the United States, China, and Japan, Kim Jong Il will have no alternative but to accommodate, change his behavior, and improve the living conditions of his people. It is also important to educate both the North Korean elites and people that they may have an alternative future in the waiting.

3-3. Challenges for South Korea

Starting points for South Korea’s North Korea policy after the presidential election in December 2007

A good starting point for thinking about challenges for South Korea with regard to its future North Korea policy is that the current thrust of America’s North Korea policy will be continued in the next administration. The reason is simply that the current policy, which virtually vindicated the Democrats’ position of sustained, direct, and aggressive negotiation with North Korea, and because it was initiated by the Republicans. It is likely that the winner of the November 2008 election, no matter his or her party, will continue the current policy direction.

In the one and half years ahead, the United States and North Korea share interests in not aggravating the situation. For America, this is because of the Iraq War and

¹⁵⁸ Council of Foreign Relations, *U.S.-China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda, A Responsible Course*, p. 66; The Sino-US dialogue about “a common vision for the future of the Korean peninsula” has already been explored by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her deputy, Robert B. Zoellick. Glenn Kessler, “Zoellick Details Discussions with China on Future of the Korean Peninsula,” *Washington Post*, September 7, 2005, A22.

¹⁵⁹ Armitage and Nye, *The U.S.-Japan Alliance: Getting Asia Right through 2020*, p. 7.

upcoming presidential election, and for North Korea it is because of its internal economic hardship and the risk of being isolated by its powerful neighbors. As long as the United States maintains the principle of sustained, direct and aggressive negotiations with North Korea, it will not be easy to unilaterally break the deal without risking isolation. South Korea and China will also have strong interest in stabilization of the situation, and contribute to the implementation of the 2/13 Agreement, which all six countries have signed.

If the current posture of America's North Korea policy is continued by the next administration, what is certain is that South Korea and the United States will share an extended common ground in North Korea policy and will therefore find it necessary to increase strategic and tactical coordination. The United States, on the one hand, could demand more strongly that South Korea balance its use of "carrots" and "sticks," pointing out that the United States has already done the same in contrast to previous years, and that South Korea should do its part in the bargain. On the other hand, progress in the denuclearization process, which will affect strategic relations of the two countries, will make it imperative for South Korea and the U.S. to intensify coordination of their North Korea policies with a view toward a desirable future shape of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

However, this may not be the case. If the new Korean government is left-liberal, the risk is that it will prefer South Korea's "independent" and "soft" accommodation to North Korea. If the new government is conservative-right, the danger is that the "stick" will be too tough and a new conservative government may become a disruptive factor both in inter-Korean relations and in the progress of the Six Party Talks. Being pulled from the right, it will try to change the terms of purpose and/or relations between the two Koreas, which have been maintained with continuity by the two left-liberal Presidents Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun since 1998. Angered by and/or in fear of being pressured by the new government in Seoul, the North would tactically, with vituperative remarks, shun inter-governmental relations for a shorter or longer period, expecting domestic pressure to be mounted for a "normalization" of inter-Korean relations in South Korea.

Elements of South Korea's strategic thinking in the previous years

Before searching for a "magic solution" to the northern dilemma for South Korea, one which should satisfy a mix of contradictory expectations in the current and future conditions, it is necessary to review briefly the strategic thinking behind South Korea's North Korea policy, its purpose, resources, and instruments, and their limitations during the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun presidencies.

The basic logic of South Korea's engagement polity to North Korea can be summarized as follows: first, North Korea will be shown ways for regime survival through opening and reform within the context of current Northeast Asian international relations; second, South Korea will help the North in its endeavors to reform, open, and survive through different ways and means; and third, through the intensification of

cooperation with North Korea for its system transformation, the two Koreas gradually will construct relations for ultimate reunification.

This strategic logic is still abstract, and can be interpreted either “progressively” or “conservatively,” and can be combined with different policy elements and implemented into different environments with different levels of statecraft. It was first articulated by President Kim Dae Jung in 1998 as the “Sunshine Policy,” and combined with President Kim’s political baggage and style. It meant a break from the South’s traditional North Korea policy of deterrence and containment, and, since then, has framed North Korea policy debate in and out of South Korea. After confronting strong opposition since its inauguration in 1998, the conservative opposition finally endorsed the basic logic of engagement as its own North Korea policy principles in early 2007 in order to accommodate its policy position to the changed domestic and foreign environment, as will be mentioned later in this paper. It remains to be seen what the conservative imagination of engagement looks like in implementation and how effective it will be.

The Kim and Roh variants of engagement should also be differentiated with each other, though they share much in common as left-liberal variants. Kim’s “Sunshine Policy” at least during the years between 1998 to 2000, was supported by the United States and Japan. In this sense, it can be said that the South Korean position regarding North Korea was quite strong in comparison to the later period of South Korea’s isolation, which lasted from 2001 to 2006. In contrast, Roh’s plan of “Peace and Prosperity” has been pursued in opposition to both Washington and Tokyo, and was strongly influenced by a nationalistic mindset and a defensive reaction to the Bush administration’s North Korea policy. Though the Roh administration tried strenuously to strike an independent deal with North Korea despite an intensification in the nuclear crisis, it had to suffer from being in a weaker position and its early attempts to convene a second inter-Korean summit failed.

What is certain is that the conservative engagement will be influenced both positively and negatively by Kim and Roh left-liberal variants because of the same basic logic and unchanged structure of inter-Korean relations, as will be further discussed. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate between the constants in the engagement framework, which may be presumed to remain under a conservative government in Seoul, and the portions of engagement policy that were influenced by the left-liberal philosophies of Presidents Kim and Roh.

First, any South Korean government, left or right, will want to play a leading role in the resolution of Korean issues because the stakes are so great and include basic conditions of South Korea’s security and international status. In addition, an active role is demanded by the electorate, and the issue is instrumental in the democratic competition of political forces in South Korea. In addition, left-liberal pundits argue that the expansion of inter-Korean relations has increased South Korea’s influence not only in North Korea but also with the United States, China, and Japan.

Second, the left-liberal pundits tend to regard the resolution of North Korea's nuclear weapons development and improvements in inter-Korean relations as separate issues. North Korea's nuclear weapons development is basically regarded as a defensive reaction to America's North Korea policy. Though South Korea is ready to contribute to the resolution of nuclear issues, this is considered as going beyond the responsibility and competency of South Korea. The nuclear issue should be resolved between the United States and North Korea, and it should not hamper reconciliation endeavors between the two Koreas. At most, there should be division of labor between the United States and South Korea. Washington should work for the resolution of nuclear issues, while Seoul should endeavor to reduce tensions with regard to conventional armaments. This way of thinking is bolstered by a certain perception of America's strategic intentions with regard to the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia: the United States did not want tension reduction and improvement in inter-Korean relations because this would deprive it of the legitimacy to maintain a U.S. military presence and political influence on the Korean peninsula, and consequently in Japan. It is argued by some proponents of this view that the two nuclear crises in 1993 and 2002 were intentionally initiated by the United States and exploited as a pretext to disrupt the ongoing progress at the time in inter-Korean relations.

Third, any South Korean government will prefer development of inter-Korean relations over stalemate. The reasons are obvious. In the previous ten years (from 1998 to 2007), an expanded level of inter-Korean relations became normal and there will be pressures from the public that this will be maintained and expanded. In addition, left-liberal strategists think that the expansion of inter-Korean relations can work as insurance and as a buffer against a disruptive force with regard to maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula. North Korea would have bigger stakes in protecting inter-Korean relations, because the benefits it would receive from South Korea would be considered indispensable. If the two Koreas share an interest in keeping the peace, they can keep disturbing outside factors from causing instability between them and on the Korean peninsula. The expectation is that North Korea would also behave more responsibly.

Fourth, South Korea's accommodation with Kim Jong Il will be inevitable, if a higher level of inter-Korean relations is to be maintained. The Kim Jong Il regime is a reality to be dealt with. It is necessary to acknowledge Kim Jong Il as the leader of that regime and to convey due respect as a negotiating partner, through political flattery and material bribery if necessary. The South Korean perception of the North Korean regime and the status of Kim Jong Il tend to be more unitary and absolute than the American, so it stresses the necessity to deal directly with Kim Jong Il. The calculation is that because only Kim Jong Il can freely talk about reform and opening up, so South Korea must help Kim stabilize the regime and enable him to take measures for reform and opening up. In this sense, left-liberal thinking has been more realistic and flexible than its conservative counterpart, though it seemed at times that there is confusion between the need for instrumental expression of respect and true admiration.

Fifth, South Korea's negotiating position has been and will be hampered by North Korea's effective veto power. From the North Korean perspective, it must deal with the United States to resolve the problems of security and diplomacy, while negotiations with South Korea are of secondary importance. North Koreans think that if they can succeed in solving problems regarding their international status and peninsular security issues through bilateral negotiations with the U.S., they will be rewarded with legitimacy and structural superiority, and can then deal with South Korea from a position of strength. Therefore, North Korea's basic strategy is to induce situations in which North Korea-U.S. direct bilateral negotiation is inevitable, and to make South Korea anxious and thereby make it ready for more concessions. North Korea has been keen to find pretexts for the exclusion of South Korea from negotiations.

Obviously, this is worrisome for Seoul. For North Korea, it is easy to exclude South Korea, especially when South Korea takes a tougher position than the United States and there are conflicts between them, as was the case during the Kim Young Sam administration between 1993 and 1997. During this period, North Korea stubbornly refused to meet with South Korea and accomplished its strategic objective by materializing a bilateral Geneva Agreement with the United States in 1994. When the left-liberals argue for a softer position toward North Korea and for the importance in improving relations with North Korea, they tend to mention the North Korea policy during the Kim Young Sam administration as a nightmarish option for South Korea. In addition, the left-liberal thinkers usually argued that, despite challenges, however grave they may be, South Korea should abstain from taking tough measures. Otherwise, South Korea would be the odd man out because North Korea would take revenge in the near future by persistently refusing to deal with it.

In the opposite case, where there are ROK-U.S. conflicts because of South Korea's softer position, as was the case with the Roh-Bush experience, North Korea can opportunistically take advantage of South Korea's generosity until the U.S. changes its stance. In this case, as was observed during the Roh administration, North Korea's accommodation to South Korean demands was tactical, in order to keep South Korea's assistance flowing and to expand the wedge between South Korea and the United States. Contrary to the wishful thinking of the left-liberal pundits in South Korea, North Korea has refused to discuss issues of any substance, all the while taking South Korea's assistance. Pyongyang views this as a worthwhile gamble. While South Korea's assistance is valuable to it, it believes that accommodation with the United States must precede rapprochement with South Korea, especially when it realizes that South Korea's influence on the U.S. position on North Korea is minimal.

Sixth, economic engagement will remain as the most important leverage for South Korea to influence North Korea. The reasons are simple: military pressure is self-destructive; South Korea's political leverage is not comparable to America's; and North Korea is more interested in negotiating with the United States. The Southern rationale is that economic engagement will increase North Korea's dependence on the ROK and make North Korea more responsive to it. The official logic has been that inter-Korean

economic exchange will contribute to the reduction of political and military tension and induce conditions favorable to the resolution of nuclear issues. The South Korean government thinks that if economic interaction is to be increased, it makes it unavoidable for North Korea to agree on a military confidence building measure to facilitate lucrative economic transactions. The establishment of Gaesung Industrial Complex, the Geumgang Tourist Zone in militarily important areas directly north of the Demilitarized Zone, and railroad connections through the DMZ are a concrete example of this thinking.

Economic engagement is made up of two components: aid and commercial transactions. The former embraces humanitarian and developmental assistance, and the latter includes trade and investment. South Korea is the only country with which North Korea enjoys a trade surplus. North Korea's trade volume has increased from about \$3 billion in 2002 to about \$4 billion in 2006, and its trade deficit from about \$0.9 billion to \$1.3 billion, all in the same years. During the period, North Korea's trade surplus from the South amounted to \$0.2 billion average per annum, even when the benefits of non-payment annual transactions of about \$0.3 billion is not considered.¹⁶⁰

It is critical, however, to understand there are gray areas in between aid and commerce. One of the most important examples is South Korea's supply of rice and fertilizer to North Korea. Since 2002, South Korea delivered to North Korea annually about 400,000 to 500,000 tons of rice and 300,000 to 450,000 tons of fertilizer.¹⁶¹ The fertilizer delivery can be regarded as humanitarian aid to help North Korea increase agricultural production. It has not been accompanied by monitoring with the implicit assumption that the fertilizer can only be used for food production. The character of rice transfers is more complex. Officially the annual rice delivery is considered to be commercial trade between South and North Korean governments in the form of South Korea's loan to North Korea, which is scheduled to be repaid after ten unredeemed years through 20 years of down payments by a 1% interest rate. However, very few expect North Korea, a country with a long record of financial irresponsibility, will repay its loans. Though the rice delivery is sometimes perceived as humanitarian assistance, it can not be considered as such, because it has been implemented with zero due regard for principles of humanitarian assistance. The South Korean government delivered rice directly to the North Korean government and demanded virtually no monitoring with regard to distribution, leaving it up to the North Korea government to identify the recipients. In contrast, when the World Food Programme gives aid to North Korea, it specifies from the start who the recipients will be. The WFP monitors this and makes sure that the target population groups actually get the donation. The WFP's primary concern lies with the most vulnerable groups within the population including orphans, pregnant women, and participants in the "aid for work" programs, while South Korean assistance has had no such specifications. While the amount of South Korean

¹⁶⁰ Lee Suk, *North Korea's dependence on foreign economic assistance and South Korea's influence* (Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification, 2006), pp. 49-57.

¹⁶¹ Because of North Korea's missile test in July 2006, there was no delivery of rice in 2006. South Korea decided to resume rice supply for the year 2007.

contribution has been maintained at about the annual level of 400,000 to 500,000 tons of rice, WFP assistance has gradually decreased, especially after the outbreak of the second nuclear crisis in 2002, to the level between 100,000 to 200,000 tons of food in 2004 and 2005.

South Korea's rice deliveries can best be understood not as aid or commerce, but as a political deal between the two Koreas:¹⁶² the South Korean government desired a more stable continuation of inter-governmental relations including ministerial talks, inter-governmental economic cooperation meetings, and "reunion of separated families," a euphemism for the brief meetings between families separated during the Korean War, under North Korean surveillance; the North Korean government needed food assistance, which could be disbursed according to its own priorities. This deal was concluded, when Lim Dong Won, South Korea's Special Presidential Envoy, visited Pyongyang in April, 2002. Since then, South Korea has delivered 400,000 to 500,000 tons of rice annually with virtually no monitoring, and North Korea has cooperated in maintaining inter-governmental relations. When South Korea stopped a rice delivery after North Korea's missile test in July 2006, North Korea in turn brought inter-Korean governmental relations to a close, including the reunion of separated families. If the demands were that rice should be delivered for free with a reliable level of monitoring, or the delivery of rice as "humanitarian assistance" should continue even in the period of broken-down inter-governmental relations, both demands would mean that the character of the current deal between the South and North governments should be changed.

All of the above factors in the engagement policy – the obsession with South Korea's leading role, separation between the resolution of nuclear issues and improvement of inter-Korean relations, expanding inter-Korean relations as leverage over North Korea, worries about North Korea's veto to South Korea, and the inability to put leverage other than that of economics into practice – have been explicitly and implicitly part and parcel of Kim Dae Jung's and Roh Moo Hyun's North Korea policy. When South Korea and the United States cooperated on North Korea policy, such as during the first three years of the Kim Dae Jung administration, the weakness of the Sunshine Policy package was under control and did not cause problems with the United States. When South Korea was isolated during 2001-2006, the latent negative effects of the Sunshine Policy package became more pronounced both politically and in its real relations with North Korea. In addition, during the first years of the Roh administration, the policy environment, evolving around the second nuclear crisis, can be said to have been more difficult and turbulent, and should have been dealt with through stronger and more experienced statecraft. Though President Roh's engagement policy was almost the same as Kim Dae Jung's in its basic conception, the new and isolated left-liberal administration was hampered by a lack of strategic imagination, which contributed to limiting South Korea's strategic and tactical flexibility in dealing with North Korea. Whenever signs of

¹⁶² Ministry of Unification, *Explanation Material: Why We Deliver Rice to North Korea?* (May, 2003) <http://www.unikorea.go.kr/> (in Korean).

deadlock or escalation of tensions appear in U.S.-DPRK relations, the left-liberals in the South worry about the possible negative impact on inter-Korean relations, and on the stability of the Korean peninsula. They usually begin to argue that a breakthrough in inter-Korean relations, usually sweetened by dispatching a special envoy and with increased aid from the South to the North, might help resolve the tense situation.

Policy challenges for the new president in South Korea

Liberal or conservative, the next government in South Korea will face challenges in adapting a North Korea policy in the new environment of domestic and international conditions, while taking into account all limiting conditions outlined above.

There is good chance that, if Mr. Lee Myung-bak, the candidate from the opposition Grand National Party (GNP), is elected, he will take a center-right variant on North Korea policy. As a matter of fact, the traditional position of the opposition party has been much more conservative than center-right. After the conclusion of the 2/13 Agreement, however, moderate conservatives in the GNP initiated changes in North Korea policy in opposition to traditionalists in the party. Their motivation for softening the conservative party's North Korea policy were as follows: first, after they found that American policy had changed, they anticipated a long-term phase of engagement with North Korea. Second, they wanted to be more appealing to voters in the center and thereby increase the chance for their presidential candidate to be elected in December 2007. Third, with a softer position, they wanted to lessen North Korea's opposition to their anticipated winning of the presidency. The GNP's new North Korea policy therefore narrowed some gaps with Kim Dae Jung's and Roh Moo Hyun's basic principles, though it retains a different ideological ethos.

The new policy was characterized as an "active peace policy."¹⁶³ It shares with the Kim and Roh policy the purposes of "helping North Korea's economic regeneration and building a 'South-North economic community,'" though with the explicit emphasis that they will be pursued "relying on strong national power, self confidence, and primacy of a free democratic system." It has three principles: first, though the objectives are the same as "establishing peace regime on the Korean peninsula and achieving unification," they will be realized on the principles of "free democracy and market economy" instead of pan-Korean nationalism. Second, though reconciliation and cooperation will be expanded and coexistence promoted, they will be pursued in the principles and ethos of the Basic Agreement of 1991 instead of the 6/15 Joint Inter-Korean Communiqué in 2000. Third, multiple exchange and cooperation will be promoted and massive aid will be given after denuclearization, with the explicit mention of their purpose "to enhance the quality of life of the North Koreans."

¹⁶³ It was officially declared through the address to the parliament on behalf of the Grand National Party by Kim Hyeong-Oh, the representative of the party's parliamentary members, on May 5, 2007.
<http://cafe.daum.net/lovehannara>

Whoever the next president may be, what is needed is a realistic and centrist North Korea policy. This policy should enhance South Korea's strategic importance in dealing with North Korea and can contribute to the realization of the objectives of the Six Party Talks in cooperation with the United States, while expanding inter-Korean exchange in renewed terms. A policy agenda for the new president will be suggested in more detail in the following:

Enhance South Korea's strategic importance

The first priority is to enhance South Korea's strategic importance in the resolution of the Korean issues and in Northeast Asia. This can be achieved only if South Korea develops sensible strategies toward North Korea and the Northeast Asia region. Clumsy and emotional remarks, nationalistic agitation, over-simplification of international relations, false alternatives between "pro-independence" and "pro-alliance," and half-boiled and impulsive strategic visions should be avoided. First, South Korea should deepen strategic understanding and cooperation with the United States, maintain good relations with China as well as Japan, and expand inter-Korean exchanges. As long as the United States maintains a centrist Northeast Asia policy to reduce strategic distrust in the region, and a North Korea policy based on a balance of "sticks" and "carrots," South Korea's active cooperation will be imperative for its own interests.

Second, South Korea needs to take North Korea's security threat more seriously and thereby to be respected as a "responsible stakeholder" in this regard. North Korea's development of weapons of mass destruction may not noticeably increase an additional threat from North to South Korea, but it gravely deteriorates South Korea's security environment by aggravating security dilemma and competition in Northeast Asia.

Third, South Korea needs to be more prudent in dealing with North Korea, and to find an appropriate balance of "carrots" and "sticks." South Korea should hedge against the possibility that its optimistic understanding of North Korea's benign intentions and its capacity for reform and change should not come true. A common understanding and cooperative relations with the United States will be the best hedge for South Korea with regard to North Korea's failure to denuclearize and other possible contingencies.

Fourth, South Korea should better understand the geopolitical dynamics in a "new Asia," from which usually South Korea has been distracted due to its preoccupation with North Korea, as well as bilateral issues with the United States. In this regard, South Korea should pay more attention to and invest much more time and energy to analysis of the "region's key uncertainty," i.e. "U.S. intentions and policies in the region and the reliability of U.S. commitments," which "creates a cascade of uncertainties over national policies in the region, at both the strategic and tactical levels."¹⁶⁴ Unfortunate

¹⁶⁴ Northeast Asia Working Group, "The Japan-China-United States Triangle: Interest, Uncertainty, and Choice," p. 9.

misunderstanding about the future environment and consequent un- or mis-preparedness should not be repeated, such as South Korea's concurrence with the importance of keeping the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty with Russia at the Kim-Putin summit in late February 2001; the misunderstanding over the Bush administration's policy disposition and expectation at the first Kim-Bush summit in early March 2001; intensive internal strife between "pro-independence" and "pro-alliance" factions in the early years of the Roh presidency; and no anticipation of an American push for a renegotiation of the military alliance in 2003.

Enlarge common understanding with the United States

The second priority for the new government will be to enlarge a common understanding about the future of North Korea and Northeast Asian international relations and to deepen cooperation and coordination in the resolution of Korean issues with the United States. On the U.S. side, there will be forceful reasons for redesigning its Northeast Asia policy to rectify negative legacies of the Bush administration's policies and to adjust itself to the realities of a "new Asia," of which the three most important points will be a "rising" China, "normalizing" Japan, and "reconciliation" between the two Koreas. The "catalytic trigger" for acceleration of the U.S. adjustment to a "new Asia" will be the process of North Korean denuclearization negotiations, of which the purpose and roadmap were agreed upon in the Six Party Talks. From the standpoint of the United States, it has been and will be a process of transforming the San Francisco System and of fumbling about for a new strategic vision and order which will guarantee its leading position in Northeast Asia.

It is an open question as to what kind of a strategic vision the United States will pursue in the region, but the necessities are recognized and options are debated. The United States and Japan, the two most important beneficiaries of the San Francisco System will be cautious and afraid of infringements on their vested interests, because "the interests of Japan and the United States, the two great status-quo powers of the region, will be the ones most challenged"¹⁶⁵ by the emergence of a new order. China has already become a strategic challenge for the two, and the inter-Korean reconciliation process and a unified Korea will be another. The best option for the future will be a South Korea-U.S. strategic coordination, and a new strategic vision on the part of the United States, which will benefit all regional powers. South Korea needs to be conscious about the regional ramifications of its strategic goals of reconciliation and unification with North Korea. South Korea also needs to deepen strategic dialogue about the process of inter-Korean reconciliation and its impact upon relations in Northeast Asia with the United States.

This does not mean that South Korea's Northeast Asia and North Korea policy should be a sub-unit of U.S. North Korea policy. Each country will have to find areas for

¹⁶⁵ Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose*, p. 311. He has used the quoted remark only with regard to the rise of China.

specification and political ingenuity for a constructive synthesis. U.S. leadership is indispensable in achieving the objectives of the Six Party Talks: denuclearization of North Korea; its normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States and Japan; establishment of permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula; and a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia. The reality is that no other nation will be able to manage the complexity and conflict of interests among Northeast Asian countries and induce process for the resolution of Korean issues.

This means that the U.S leadership will significantly influence South Korea's security and status in Northeast Asia. This is the compelling reason why South Korea should increase understanding and cooperation with the United States. The main contribution of the United States will be to exert political leadership to reduce strategic mistrust and competition among Northeast Asian countries, so that a diplomatic and peaceful solution of the Korean issues will be possible and that North Korea will compellingly feel it is better to give up nuclear weapons and to transform itself into a "normal state."¹⁶⁶ South Korea's contribution will be to facilitate and, if possible, manage North Korea's internal transformation through its model character of freedom, democracy and successful market economy, as well as its cultural attraction, appeals of ethnic affinity and economic contribution.

Renovate North Korea policy

The third main concern for South Korea will be the renovation of its North Korea policy. In this regard, three challenges can be mentioned: the first is to forge a common ROK-U.S. strategy toward North Korea; the second is to innovate South Korea's aid-giving to North Korea; and the third is to reformulate South Korea's ideational relations with North Korea.

The first problem is how to forge a common front between Seoul and Washington, and how not to allow North Korea to drive a wedge between the two. The materialization of a joint strategy will pose challenges for South Korea and the United States. It is important for the United States not to lose its political credibility as a "responsible stakeholder" for peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia. It would be fatal if the American national security doctrine in general and/or North Korea policy in particular should give the impression that the United States has no interests in resolving North Korea's nuclear weapons development, and that its real objective is to

¹⁶⁶ It is still an open question whether the United States will be ready to assume and maintain an active leadership in achieving objectives of six party talks. Charles L. Prichard strongly urges for the United States to take a leadership especially with regard to establishing a multilateral security mechanism in East Asia irrespective of whether the Six Party Talks are successful: "The challenge for the United States is to look beyond the narrow confines of the six party talks and to avoid basing the future security of Northeast Asia on the vicissitudes of North Korea's cooperation in resolving the current nuclear crisis. The United States opted out of a leadership role in the development and management of the six-party talks in favor of China; it cannot afford to repeat the same mistake when it comes to establishing a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia. Washington should act now ..." Pritchard, *Failed Diplomacy*, p. 183.

maintain the tension on the Korean peninsula in order to legitimize its continued military engagement in Northeast Asia. The U.S.'s reputation in general is extremely important, considering that recently Chinese diplomacy and security policy toward neighboring countries have become more sophisticated and accommodating. For South Korea, it will be crucial to take North Korea's security threat to itself and others much more seriously and to be more prudent in its North Korea perception and policy. In addition, both sides should pay much more considerate attention to interests of the other side. An ROK-U.S. common front will be much easier to materialize and be more effective, if "a more balanced blend of incentives and disincentives" is combined by endeavors of both sides, i.e. "(Korean) sticks" and "American carrots" to go along with the "(Korean) carrots" and "American sticks."¹⁶⁷

The cooperation between the two countries will be greatly facilitated, if the United States endorses South Korea's leading role in the management and transformation of inter-Korean issues. This may ease South Korea's two concerns related to its obsession in playing a leading role in the resolution of Korean issues. One the one hand, North Korea preferred an exclusive bilateral negotiation with the United States, and persistently tried to induce such situations. To a certain extent, North Korea achieved its strategic goal of being acknowledged as a negotiating partner to the United States through intensifying the threat of possession and proliferation of nuclear weapons. While South Korea acknowledges that some issues may be better dealt with U.S.-North Korea bilateral negotiations, it is not compatible with South Korea's interest that North Korea concludes agreements about Korean issues with the United States while Seoul remains outside the negotiations. It is also incompatible with South Korea's interest for the resolution of Korean issues to be so internationalized, which implies the involvement of more outside powers, further diluting Seoul's voice. South Korea would want to see the United States take a more benign attitude to its economic and political engagement with North Korea, and to promote situations where inter-Korean agreements will be the centerpieces of establishing both the permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula and the Northeast Asian multilateral security mechanism.

Innovate South Korea's aid giving to the North

The second issue at hand in dealing with the renovation of South Korea's approach to North Korea is that South Korea's economic "carrots" should enhance rather than deteriorate the North's economic "health." According to lessons from international aid-giving experiences, some ways and forms of giving aid can actually harm rather than do good, contradicting the donor's benevolent intentions.¹⁶⁸ For example, if aid flows in continuously, the recipient country may become permanently dependent on it, and the government may feel it is unnecessary to take steps to improve the humanitarian

¹⁶⁷ Council of Foreign Relations, "U.S.-China Relations: An Affirmative Agenda, A Responsible Course," p. 66b

¹⁶⁸ World Bank, *Assessing Aid: What Works, What Doesn't, and Why* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

situation; it may then spend its own funds according to its own priorities. Lacking experience in aiding other countries, and driven by humanitarian concern over its ethnic compatriots in the North and by optimism in the North Korean regime's intentions, both the South Korean government and public in general, with the exception of conservative critics, have ignored the possible negative effects of their own aid giving practices.

As hinted, South Korea's governmental and civilian assistance to North Korea derive from a complex set of motivations or explanations. Three are especially important: humanitarian concern; a perceived need to "bribe" the North Korean regime to do something it wouldn't otherwise do; and to increase South Korea's influence in the north. For example, the South Korean public and foreign observers have generally regarded the annual delivery of rice as "humanitarian aid" to North Korea, though Seoul's foremost rationale has been to induce Pyongyang to maintain inter-governmental relations. Defending against harsh political criticism from the conservatives that the South Korean government has helped the Kim Jong Il regime strengthen itself and muddle through, the left-liberals also emphasized two points: that the assistance facilitated North Korea's economic reform and change; and that the assistance contributed to a favorable image of South Korea among North Koreans. The Ministry of Unification and its friendly pundits in South Korea have tried their best to accumulate evidence and of these positive effects. Unfortunately, however, the discussion about the rationale and effects of governmental assistance to North Korea has been badly politicized and is now a tool in party politics.

This situation may be fixed by acknowledging that each side has valid points and, more importantly, by reformulating the question. Since 1998, liberals and conservatives have debated about whether to assist North Korea and the terms of reciprocity. The reality is that there is no other way than to assist North Korea because of humanitarian concerns and of the need for using the aid as political leverage. The important questions, therefore, are whether aid can be given appropriately and whether there is a good chance that it will be consumed correctly. The questions of amounts and reciprocity, the current sticking points in the South Korean debate, will cease to be relevant questions.

The South Korean government and civilians must take into account the theories and practices of international aid and development organizations, which reflect international consensus.¹⁶⁹ Because this is not the place for a longer discussion, it will be enough to indicate the ways and methods of aid-giving. Be it humanitarian or developmental, aid must be differentiated depending on the recipient's ability to productively use the assistance from outside. The question of whether a recipient country has this capacity or not boils down to whether it has either the will or capacity for good

¹⁶⁹ Steve Radelet, "Aid Effectiveness and the Millennium Development Goals," *Center for Global Development Working Paper*, No. 39, April 2004; Magui Moreno Torres and Michael Anderson, "Fragile States: Defining Difficult Environments for Poverty Reduction," *PRDE Working Paper 1* (Aug-04); Chris Berry, Ali Forder, Sonya Sultan, and Nagui Moreno-Torres, "Approaches to Improving the Delivery of Social Services in Difficult Environments," *PRDE Working Paper 3* (Oct-04).

governance, or whether it has both of them. There are three categories of aid recipient countries:

In the first group of countries, the government of the recipient country does have the will, but does not yet possess capacity for good governance. In this case, technical and material assistance for capacity development can be productive in the longer term. The aid receiving process is to be regarded as a learning process for the development of indigenous capacity.

In the second group of countries, the government of the recipient country has both the will and capacity for good governance. Aid can be given directly to the government in cash, because there is a guarantee that it will be spent efficiently, in the right way, and for the right purpose. In this case, aid can be considered an investment rather than aid. As a matter of fact, private investment often plays a more important role than free aid for the resolution of developmental problems in such countries.

The third category of countries includes those whose governments have neither the capacity nor the will for good governance. Aid should not be given directly to such governments, nor should it be given in cash. Rather, it should be supplied directly to the target population groups, as either material goods or direct services, both of which should be managed and distributed or implemented by non-governmental organizations under strict monitoring. The trouble is that this method of aid-giving does not increase the indigenous capacity for problem solving of either the government or the society. Even worse, in some cases continuous foreign aid deteriorates the situation by allowing the government to behave irresponsibly and making the country permanently dependent on foreign aid. A vicious cycle emerges: while the same crisis repeats every year, the government does not change its behavior, and though aid is given every year there is no chance that the situation really improves.

The sad reality is that North Korea belongs to the third category. International humanitarian aid has been given to North Korea since 1995. The goods and services have been managed by outside organizations and given directly to the target population. Though this aid helps ameliorate the symptoms year by year, it does not prevent the same crises from occurring the next year. Though, in general, humanitarian aid can be effective for a period of one or two years, it was provided to North Korea for over 10 years. There is no clear sign that the government has changed its internal behavior, and this denotes that North Korea has become structurally aid-dependent. As noted above, in contrast to the aid given to North Korea by major international organizations such as the World Food Programme, South Korean governmental aid has been given directly to the North Korean government and virtually without monitoring. As a political deal, South Korea's practice might be legitimate, but it is inappropriate as a form of humanitarian assistance.

It should also be noted that South Korean officials usually promise massive infrastructural investment for North Korean economic development on the condition that North Korea gives up its development of nuclear weapons. This, however, appears to be

Seoul's only necessary condition for massive infrastructural investments. A further condition must be that North Korea demonstrates its will and capacity for good governance through reform and opening, without which massive investments will prove to be a huge waste of resources and will produce a negative backlash. It has also been the South Korean government's wish to mobilize the resources of international financial organization such as the World Bank, especially for investments in infrastructure renovation in North Korea, Seoul has not considered that those organizations will not lend money to a country which lacks the will and capacity for good governance.

It is well advised that the next South Korean government, as well as other countries and international aid organizations including the World Food Programme, should be conscious of the negative effects of previous aid-giving to North Korea. They should cooperate in developing a wiser aid strategy for North Korea. Though changes in aid giving are necessary for the long-term health of the North Korean economy and society and for inter-Korean relations, the North Korean regime would feel threatened if South Korea and other donors suggest changes in aid-giving. In this regard, cooperation for forging a common aid strategy and coordination in implementation among donors will be indispensable, otherwise North Korea will resort to its time-tested tactic of divide and conquer.

Reformulate South Korea's ideational relations to North Korea

The third issue to be dealt with in regard to the renovation of South Korea's North Korea policy is the contents and system of "Unification Education." Traditionally, South Korean governments have had a strong attitude toward North Korea and inter-Korean relations. They have tried to influence South Koreans and established a comprehensive influencing mechanism. After the inauguration of the Kim Dae Jung administration in 1998, the government's main thrust has changed from anti-communism and anti-North Korea to "reconciliation and cooperation."

The two consecutive liberal governments also tried to take advantage of their governing power to influence public knowledge and attitudes about North Korea and inter-Korean relations in various ways. Though the mechanism has become more indirect and subtle, the fact that it continues to be utilized has not changed. The left-liberal government's endeavor, supported by administrative power, to influence public knowledge and attitudes about North Korea has shown two problems, both of which originated because "Unification Education" has been officially managed by the Ministry of Unification, the main negotiating partner to North Korean government as well as the main implementer of South Korea's North Korea policy. The first problem is that its contents lacked or avoided analysis and facts which may offend the North Korean government. Second, its purpose of knowledge construction on inter-Korean relations was to legitimize and give the impression of perfection with regard to the incumbent government's theory and practice of North Korea policy.

The next administration may find it necessary to renovate its “Unification Education.” Its purpose should contribute to change South Korea’s ideational relations to North Korea, and to supply a realistic view and capacity for coping with challenges in the process of reconciliation and unification. In the past, left-liberal pundits advertised the former West German policy to East Germany as the forerunner, although it was interpreted in such a way as to legitimize the left-liberal practices of the Sunshine Policy. What the liberal pundits failed to mention, among many others, was that the policy of conservative Prime Minister Helmut Kohl toward East Germany in the 1980’s, just before unification, was based on the aggressive emphasis of ideological and systemic differences between the two Germans. While his government actively promoted comprehensive engagement with East Germany, it constantly emphasized its solidarity with the Western bloc and systemic contrasts between West and East Germany. West Germany represented freedom, human rights, democracy and a market economy, while East Germany’s one-party dictatorship contributed to major human rights violations and poverty.

A new ideational relation to North Korea that recognizes systemic differences may help the South Korean government and society be better prepared for increased relations and exchanges with the north. On the one hand, it is foreseeable that, for an extended period, the South Korean government may find it necessary to make political compromises with the communist dictatorship in Pyongyang for the benefit of peace and implications for the North Korean people. On the other hand, South Korea’s developed, though imperfect, civic and political culture, achieved autonomously through long years of industrialization and democratization, would clash with that of North Korea, whose culture has developed through long years of an archaic and totalitarian system. During the next administration, the social debate about the political necessity to respect North Korea’s current regime as a negotiation partner, and the moral concern over its rampant human rights violations, will likely be strengthened. A renewed ideational relation with North Korea would help the government and South Korean people keep a political self-identity, while simultaneously accommodating to possibilities, and keeping the long-term purpose of interactions with North Korea. Additionally, it may increase understanding about South Korea’s expanded relations with North Korea among other countries and societies which share values of freedom, democracy and a market economy.

One caveat should not to be forgotten: it will be tempting for the next government, as it was for the previous ones, to apply the old “ideological” apparatus toward its own purposes, but this can not be called democratic practice. The principle for political education in democracy of “what is controversial in the society must be reflected as such in the classroom” should be maintained and the proper measures should be taken.

Maintain balanced relations with neighboring countries

In previous years, South Korea has generally been preoccupied with promoting inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, while neighboring countries anxiously calculate the impact on their own country, and on international relations in Northeast Asia. South

Koreans are well-advised not to forget that their aspiration for inter-Korean reconciliation and ultimate unification will be significantly obstructed if any one of its neighboring countries feels that inter-Korean development is detrimental to its own interest. Neighboring countries may extrapolate current South Korea's bias in relations with any of them, friendly or unfriendly, to the future unified Korea's attitude and thereupon calculate its impacts on their country. This should be understood because it is clear that Korean unification will have the potential to change drastically the balance of power in Northeast Asia. If South Korea desires unification, it should not behave in a way that increases strategic mistrust among Northeast Asian countries. Rather, it should promote reconciliation and cooperation in the region. If the U.S.'s Northeast Asia policy also moves along this trajectory, it will be a blessing. It will not be an easy task for South Korea if any regional power chooses to not cooperate in this direction, but this must be Seoul's only long-term choice. If Northeast Asia becomes a more unstable region because of Korean unification, the effects on that unified Korea may be fatal. South Korea should find ways to convince neighboring countries that Korean unification will contribute to peace and prosperity.

In this regard, the next government should try to mend fences with Japan, while keeping good relations with China. Though serious gaps will remain, South Korea and Japan should endeavor to maintain functional working relations. If there is a re-installment of a mechanism such as the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG), consultation will be facilitated. It was not in South Korea's best interest to have not done its best to eliminate the suspicion, especially in the early years of the Roh government, that a unified Korea would keep North Korea's missiles and nuclear weapons. It was also not good for South Korean interests for Japan to have the feeling of being the only target of North Korea's missiles and nuclear weapons. It should also be remembered that "while official statements out of Seoul express concern for Tokyo's security policies, little consideration is given to how South Korean foreign policy is factoring into Japanese strategic calculations."¹⁷⁰ South Korea should persuade Japan that a deterioration of relations between the two countries is also not in Japan's best interest. But it will not be an easy task to improve ROK-Japan relations for several reasons. First, many leaders in the post-cold war "Heisei" generation do "not feel burdened by guilt or remorse for Japan's imperial past."¹⁷¹ Second, Japan, led by the Heisei generation, will increase its security role in Northeast Asia and, though in the context of U.S.-Japan alliance at least for the time being, will be more independent¹⁷² and assertive. Third, Tokyo's hard-line North Korea policy will not be easily changed because it has roots in

¹⁷⁰ Leif-Eric Easley, "Securing Tokyo's Positive Role in North-South Reconciliation: The Need for a Strong U.S.-ROK Alliance to Reassure Japan," *Academic Paper Series*, Korea Economic Institute, February 2007, Volume 2, No. 3, p. 1.

¹⁷¹ Kenneth B. Pyle, "Abe Shinzo and Japan's Change of Course," p. 8.

¹⁷² Preble, "A Plea for Normalcy: U.S.-Japan Relations after Koizumi,"; Christopher W. Hughes, "Why Japan Could Revise Its Constitution and What It Would Mean for Japanese Security Policy," *Orbis* (Fall, 2006); Northeast Asia Working Group, "The Japan-China-United States Triangle: Interest, Uncertainty, and Choice," pp. 10-13.

Japan's domestic dynamics.¹⁷³ These three characteristics rankle policymakers and the public in South Korea.

South Korea should maintain good cooperative relations with China. Since 2003, the Chinese role in the management of North Korea's nuclear weapons development has been constructive, and South Korea should promote cooperation in this regard. China has played the role of the chairman of the Six Party Talks and, and through this role it has been reconfirmed by the United States as an indispensable power in the process of resolving Korean issues. China also increased common understanding on how to deal with North Korea's development of nuclear weapons with both South Korea and the United States, while retaining its influence on North Korea. Increased Chinese influence may pose challenges to South Korea, however, especially in case something goes wrong with the Six Party Talks. The increased importance of the U.S.-China consultation on Korean issues can also cause problems for South Korea, though Seoul should welcome the narrowing Sino-American divergence on the Korean issues even as it keeps an eye on the relationship. In short, South Korea should hedge against uncertainties in future Chinese internal and external development, while taking into account that China's influence can contribute to positive developments on the Korean peninsula.

4. Summary and policy recommendations

From 2001 to 2006, South Korea and the United States experienced an unusual deterioration in their bilateral relationship. The unfortunate situation was caused by the unusual convergence of negative factors, both accidental and structural. Ideological and idealistic factions from opposite ends of the political spectrum—neo-conservatives in the United States from the right side and the 386 Generation in South Korea from the left—simultaneously came to power. They clashed irresponsibly and ominously over how to deal with three structural problems, which originate from the outlived Cold War system of Northeast Asian international relations, the so called San Francisco system. The three problems were: reconciliation between the two Koreas; the need to redefine the ROK-U.S. military alliance; and America's loss of confidence in South Korea's strategic orientation in Northeast Asia.

Fortunately, the most ominous phase of this adjustment ended at the start of 2007. ROK-U.S. relations are now in good shape and the causes for conflicts remain latent. Depending on whether both countries have strategic and realistic leadership simultaneously, these issues can be managed in the future, and remain latent. They will be eliminated only when a new stable structure for Northeast Asian international relations is established. The new structure must enable a more or less a positive sum solution to changes and aspirations of regional stake holder countries: China's rise, Japan's

¹⁷³ Christopher W. Hughes, "The Political Economy of Japanese Sanctions Towards North Korea: Domestic Coalitions and International Systemic Pressures," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 79, Issue 3 (Fall, 2006).

normalization, the two Koreas' reconciliation, and last but not least, America's objective of maintaining leadership in the region. North Korea's denuclearization can then be fully successful. Pyongyang will have no option but to dismantle its nuclear weapons development in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way when it faces a unified front of all regional actors.

A positive result of the tumultuous and difficult process from 2001 to 2006 is that a new framework, principles, and ideas were developed in the documents from the summits between South Korea and the United States as bases for a new start, including the modernization of the ROK-U.S. military alliance, the 9/19 and 2/13 Agreements in the Six Party Talks, and agreements on the future direction of alliance relations and North Korea policy. All documents demanded major changes in Northeast Asian international relations in step with the progress made in North Korea's denuclearization: North Korea's diplomatic normalization with the United States and Japan; its economic reconstruction; establishment of multilateral security and peace mechanism for Northeast Asia; and building a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

This means that the denuclearization of North Korea can only be achieved through the resolution of Korean issues and a transformation of Northeast Asian international relations. What is needed is a convergent security mechanism through which a renewed structure for regional trust building, reconciliation, and long-term peace and prosperity will be provided. This, in turn, will only be achieved after strategic mistrust is reduced among countries through meaningful changes in the immediate status quo of Northeast Asian international relations as a whole. The crux of the problem is that any attempt to change the status quo has been always entangled with resistance, anxiety and complexity.

In this regard, the U.S.'s role is critical, because only the United States can, to a meaningful degree, influence the relations in Northeast Asia in either direction. Indeed, through its leading role, the United States will benefit most by the transformation in Northeast Asia catalyzed by the need to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons development. First, it can re-legitimize its involvement in Northeast Asia in the post-Cold War world; second, it can recapture its leadership as honest broker and indispensable stabilizer; third, it can thereby exert influence to remold Northeast Asia on behalf of its interests, where China "rises," Japan "normalizes," and the two Koreas move toward reconciliation.

South Korea will need to appreciate more strongly the implications of inter-Korean relations on the regional context and increase cooperation with the United States on North Korea policy. The reason for this is because if the United States is the central player in achieving the objectives of the Six Party Talks, it would be in South Korea's best interest to cooperate and coordinate its policy with the United States. Furthermore, South Korea should try more consistently to reassure its neighbors that improvement in inter-Korean relations will be achieved in a way as to not disturb stability in Northeast Asia. Inter-Korean reconciliation may confront difficulties, if and when other countries in

the region suspect it to be disruptive to the stability and “power balance” in Northeast Asia. With this in mind, South Korea’s North Korea policy should be renovated.

Following from these understandings, a number of policy recommendations must be made:

ROK-U.S. alliance in Northeast Asia and beyond

South Korea and the United States should develop a shared vision of South Korea’s standing and its relations with the United States in a “new” Asia, where China “rises” and Japan “normalizes” and both parties become more important diplomatic and security partners not only of regional but also of global importance to the United States. South Korea should develop the ways and means to be recognized as an indispensable power in Northeast Asia, which should be calculated as an important voice on any matters of significance in the region. South Korea should gain respect from the American public and policy community because of its own intrinsic strategic and cultural values, while avoiding being considered as just a pawn in America’s relations with other countries in the region.

South Korea and the United States should intensify consultation on two major strategic issues for their future relations. First, the purpose and status of the ROK-U.S. military alliance in Northeast Asia, especially with regard to the establishment of a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula and a peace and security mechanism in Northeast Asia. Second, the two sides should discuss strategic conceptions and develop the means to cooperate in dealing with North Korea’s internal transformation and advancement in international relations.

The recent redefinition of the ROK-U.S. military alliance was not framed in the context of establishing a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula and a multilateral security mechanism in Northeast Asia. If the two objectives are pursued in the context of North Korea’s denuclearization, South Korea and the United States should be jointly prepared for this change. The two countries need to develop dialogue on the kind of Northeast Asian relations that should be constructed and how the two countries could cooperate with each other.

In the past six years of divergent perceptions of North Korea, South Korea and the United States have also independently developed divergent scenarios and strategies on how to deal with the current state and future of North Korea. Although South Korea and the United States narrowed policy gaps on how to denuclearize North Korea, after the 2/13 Agreement, they still lack a common perception on North Korea and joint strategies to manage North Korea’s future internal and external developments.

Managing bilateral public relations

South Korea and the United States need to be attentive about managing public perceptions about the other side. In the past, it was usual for bilateral issues to have an asymmetrical importance to Koreans and Americans. For example, bilateral issues such as North Korea policy, the transfer of war time operation control, and the conclusion of the Free Trade Agreement were of national importance to South Korea and caused turbulence in Korean politics. However, most Americans were not conscious of most of these issues.

In this respect, though both parties are responsible for the successful management of bilateral relations, the United States should be more concerned about its style of relations with South Korea, in the sense that the “style,” i.e. public positioning and packaging of “substance,” “creates the context in which we deal with others and they respond to us.”¹⁷⁴

For its part, South Korea should be more concerned about and more prudent in the status of its relations with the United States, and learn to better manage emotions while finding better substance and “styles” in dealing with bilateral issues. Politicians, at least those who are in the parliament and/or hold high positions, should be careful and think twice when they intervene in diplomatic and security issues and try to influence the Korean public.

North Korea policy, denuclearization and beyond

Regarding South Korea

First, South Korea should deepen strategic understanding and cooperation with the United States on North Korea policy. As long as the United States maintains a reasonable centrist Northeast Asia policy to reduce strategic distrust in the region and a North Korea policy based on aggressive diplomacy and a balance of “sticks” and “carrots,” South Korea’s active cooperation with the United States will be imperative for its own interests.

Second, South Korea needs to take North Korea’s security threat more seriously. North Korea’s development of weapons of mass destruction may not noticeably increase the threat from North to South Korea. However, it gravely deteriorates South Korea’s security environment by aggravating the security dilemma and competition in Northeast Asia.

Third, South Korea needs to be more prudent in dealing with North Korea, and should locate an appropriate balance between “carrots” and “sticks.” South Korea should

¹⁷⁴ Denis Ross, *Statecraft and How to Restore America’s Standing in the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p. 6.

review its means of economic assistance to North Korea, as increasing assistance means greater expenditures, and questions of efficiency and effectiveness would come up.

Fourth, South Korea should better understand the geopolitical dynamics in a “new Asia.” If South Korea wishes unification with the North, it should not behave in a way to increase strategic mistrust among Northeast Asian countries, and it should promote reconciliation and cooperation among them.

Regarding the United States

First, the United States should maintain the aggressive diplomatic lead in the negotiation with North Korea for its denuclearization, while “doing everything it possibly can that doesn’t compromise its security to make it impossible for the North Koreans to get on the moral high ground.”¹⁷⁵ If an impression is created in the region that the United States would be satisfied with or have only the ability to achieve incomplete denuclearization of North Korea—rather than complete denuclearization—its credibility and reputation would be hurt beyond recovery in Northeast Asia.

Second, America’s negotiations with North Korea should be supported by its regional policy to defuse strategic mistrust and promote cooperation among South Korea, the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia. The United States should convey leadership and determination in establishing a multilateral security and peace mechanism in Northeast Asia. It should also show its ability to manage conflicts of interests and a potential increase of mistrust among Northeast Asian countries during the six party process.

Third, the United States should play the role of promoter to expand inter-Korean relations and should serve as a facilitator for Korean unification.

¹⁷⁵ Wolfsthal, *CSIS Press Briefing on the Six Party Talks*.