

ISSUES & INSIGHTS  
VOL. 23, SR 5

JUNE 2023

PACIFIC FORUM  
INTERNATIONAL

# ROK-US Alliance: Linchpin for a Free and Open Indo- Pacific

EDITED BY  
ROB YORK





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Rob York

ISSUES & INSIGHTS

EDITED VOLUME

VOL. 23, SR 5 | JUNE 2023

## Issues & Insights

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# **Introduction**

*Rob York*

The US-ROK alliance in 2023 celebrates its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and in both countries remains broadly popular. Previous doubts that both countries have had about the other's commitment have largely given way to a sense of shared opportunities, and shared challenges. Not only is there an ever-more belligerent North Korea, with its growing nuclear and missile arsenals, but the People's Republic of China uses both military and economic means to coerce other countries and Russia has demonstrated a willingness to upend norms, redraw borders, and dare former partners (including Seoul) to risk its ire.

This is also an era of the minilateral, as the US seeks to move past its previous hub-and-spokes alliance system in Asia and draw its partners into closer cooperation. South Korea, especially under its current administration, demonstrates increased interest in becoming a regional player, with its recent gestures toward old frenemy Japan representing a key test: historical differences between the US' two closest partners have prevented a "normal" relationship from emerging despite many similarities in political systems, values, and interests, and Korean public opinion remains skeptical of the Seoul-Tokyo rapprochement. Furthermore, there is always a chance that issues complicating US-ROK relations in the past—conduct by US military personnel in Korea, trade disputes, environmental concerns related to US bases—could resurface.

All of these issues present challenges for the alliance that will require addressing. In that light, the Pacific Forum, with the generous support of the Korea Foundation, has launched the "ROK-US Next Generation Leaders Initiative" program, bringing together young burgeoning scholars and analysts from both countries to discuss pressing issues in the alliance the way forward. This edited volume contains edited papers on pressing topics—extended deterrence, North Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and much more—by rising scholars we expect to see addressing these issues in the years to come. Their active engagement, we believe, will help the alliance endure another 70 years, will providing for the security and prosperity of both countries.

Rob York  
Director for Regional Affairs  
Pacific Forum

# 1

## **North Korea's Evolving Nuclear Threat and the US-ROK Extended Deterrence**

*Chanyang Seo*

## Introduction

The United States and South Korea have forged and maintained a strong security alliance grounded on extended deterrence and defense vis-à-vis North Korea, an existential threat to both states for decades. Amid North Korea's emerging nuclear ambitions, the U.S. nuclear umbrella has grown in importance as a security guarantee necessary for a non-nuclear armed South Korea to avert North Korea's nuclear threat. Extended deterrence has enhanced an 'ironclad' bilateral alliance by successfully deterring North Korea since the end of the Korean War, but North Korea's rapidly expanding nuclear and missile capabilities pose a great challenge to the US-ROK alliance.

Since the historic US-DPRK détente and reconciliation of inter-Korean relations between 2018 and 2019 ran aground, North Korea has shored up its military at an accelerated pace, demonstrating obstinate nuclear ambitions. While the Biden administration has long signaled readiness to resume bilateral talks, North Korea has shown little interest in diplomacy and rather sprinted to expand and advance its military might. At the 8th Worker's Party of Korea (WPK), held in January 2021, Kim Jong Un announced the five-year plan for 'the development of defense science and weapon system' including development of strategic and tactical nuclear weapons. Pyongyang unveiled new weapons, conducted a series of tests, and launched an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in breach of its self-declared 2018 moratorium on nuclear and ICBM testing. Pyongyang's apparent preparation for its 7<sup>th</sup> nuclear test and enactment of a new nuclear law authorizing preemptive nuclear strike in case of threat are greatly adding to the problem.

South Korea's concerns about the effectiveness and credibility of the US-ROK extended deterrence and security assurance are growing with North Korea's nuclear threat. Will the United States be willing to risk its mainland to defend South Korea from the North? Will extended deterrence continue to dissuade North Korea from attempting a preemptive attack on South Korea? The United States and South Korea must work together to enhance extended

deterrence and secure mutual security interests by reflecting the multifaceted nature of the problem.

To unravel these tangled threads and better understand the various aspects of the challenge, this paper addresses the underlying problem, which includes North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities, their purposes and the DPRK's nuclear posture. Then, it examines the framework of extended deterrence in the US-ROK alliance and existing challenges. Finally, it presents strategic policy recommendations to revitalize credible extended deterrence and reassure the US-ROK security alliance.

## I. North Korea's Rising Nuclear Threat: Capabilities, Purposes, and Strategies

### Recent Nuclear Moves

North Korea has been ratcheting up its defense capabilities and expanding deterrence against the United States and South Korea. At the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in January 2021, Kim Jong Un called the United States the "fundamental obstacle to the development of our revolution" and North Korea's "principal enemy", reaffirming its resolute commitment to bolster defense and nuclear capabilities against the United States.<sup>1</sup> While praising his military's progress regarding its nuclear and missile programs, Kim announced the five-year plan for 'the development of defense science and weapon system' and stressed the development of "tactical nuclear weapons" and "advanced capabilities for preemptive and retaliatory nuclear strikes".<sup>2</sup>

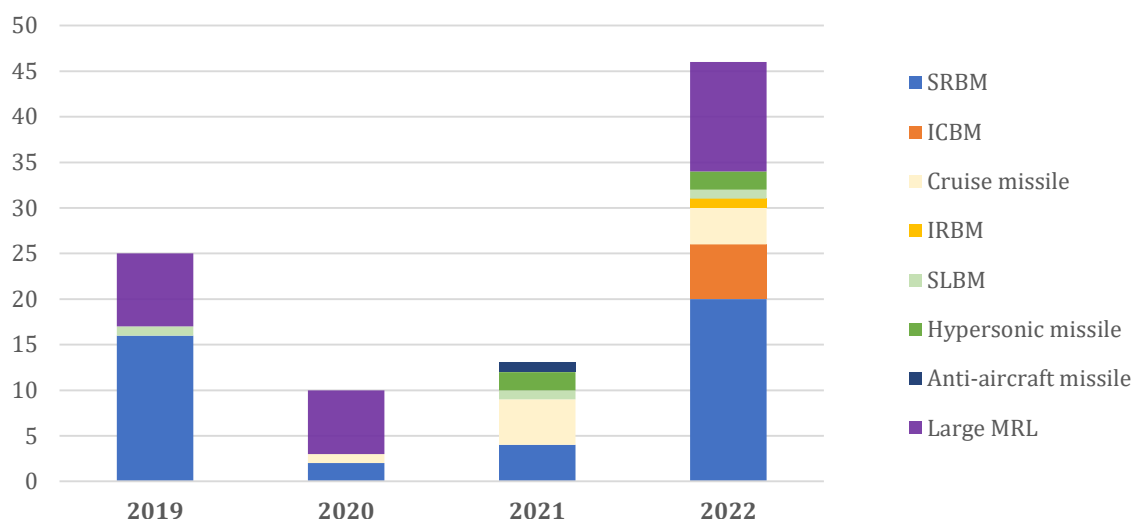
Highlighting the significance of powerful defense capabilities, the five-year plan pursues development of strategic and tactical weapons including: miniaturized nuclear warheads, tactical nuclear weapons, super-sized nuclear warheads, hypersonic gliding flight warheads, solid-fuel propelled intercontinental ballistic rockets, nuclear-powered submarines, an underwater-launched strategic nuclear weapon, and a military reconnaissance satellite.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Great Programme for Struggle Leading Korean-Style Socialist Construction to Fresh Victory on Report Made by Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un at Eighth Congress of WPK," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 9, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> "Great Programme"

<sup>3</sup> "Great Programme"



	SRBM	ICBM	Cruise missile	IRBM	SLBM	Hypersonic missile	Anti-aircraft missile	Large MRL	Total
2019	16	0	0	0	1	0	0	8	25
2020	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	7	10
2021	4	0	5	0	1	2	1	0	13
2022	20	6	4	1	1	2	0	12	46

Figure 1 North Korea's Missile Tests (2019 - September, 2022)

Source: Ministry of National Defense

Falling in line with its five-year defense plan, North Korea pursues modernization and diversification of its weapons systems. Two months after declaring the new defense plan, it launched two cruise missiles on March 21 and two ballistic missiles into the East Sea on March 25. In October, it unveiled a set of new weapons on a large scale at the first-ever national defense development exhibition. In his remarks at the exhibition, Kim Jong Un said in a relatively benign tone that North Korea's main enemy is not the United States or South Korea, but "war itself". Instead of expressing no hostility to the United States, these comments rapidly raised the level of provocation, intensifying pressure on the United States. At the Sixth Politburo Meeting launched in early January 2022, Kim Jong Un emphasized the need to "develop, produce and deploy physical means to subdue the hostile acts of the United States".<sup>4</sup>

This year, Pyongyang fired missiles more frequently than ever before, and in a variety of forms. It tested a total of seven missiles in January alone, including a self-proclaimed hypersonic ballistic missile and a ground-to-ground medium-range ballistic missile (Hwasong-12). The total number of missiles launched between January and July of 2022 has already

exceeded that of 2019. North Korea tested various types of missiles, including 22 short-range ballistic missiles, six intercontinental ballistic systems, and two hypersonic missiles (see Figure 1). To make matters worse, signs of an imminent nuclear test have been captured since March. New activities taken at Tunnel 3 and 4 in the Punggye-ri nuclear test site, which was shut down in 2018, indicate a resumption of nuclear testing. From a functional and technical view, carrying out multiple rounds of missile launches is a necessary process to test new weapons. In this sense, resuming nuclear testing would entail verification of new technology and equipment performance, such as miniaturized nuclear warheads, linear implosion, and explosive capability.

#### New Triggers: Security Challenges and Geopolitical Opportunity

As the Kim regime's 'treasure sword', nuclear weapons serve vital goals including defense and deterrence, regime survival, economic leverage, and reunification. Pyongyang's nuclear politics is neither new nor surprising, but the recent nuclear buildup is undoubtedly a grave concern and beyond expectation given the rapid pace of modernization.

<sup>4</sup> "6th Political Bureau Meeting of 8th C.C., WPK Held," *Rodong Sinmun*, January 20, 2022.



After the 2019 Hanoi summit ended in a stalemate, North Korea has paid a steep economic price and faced international isolation for failing to denuclearize. Despite the burden of nuclear weapons, Kim Jong Un rejected the Biden administration's requests for dialogue and rather chose to accelerate nuclear development, posing an ever greater threat. What is driving North Korea to rush into development of its nuclear and missile programs?

First, amid the growing military imbalance between the North and the South, Pyongyang has no choice but to resort on its nuclear weapons. To deter and defend against the de facto nuclear North Korea, South Korea has been bolstering its conventional force with large investments in defense. During the Moon administration, the South's defense budget increased by 7.0% annually.<sup>5</sup> South Korea's defense budget for 2022 is USD 46.3 billion, ranking 8 of 142 countries.<sup>6</sup> Over the past years, South Korea has pushed forward various military projects to improve independent conventional counterforce capability against North Korea. For instance, South Korea has accelerated the 3K Defense System, which consists of the Kill Chain preemptive strike system, the Korea Air and Missile Defense (KAMD), and the Massive Punishment and Retaliation (KMPR). Facing a growing asymmetry in conventional force capability, North Korea has decided to invest in its nuclear capabilities rather than an aging conventional force—both cost-wise and strategically—to rebalance the power on the Korean peninsula.

Second, shifting geopolitical dynamics that deepen tensions among the United States, China and Russia present a great opportunity for North Korea to speed up its nuclear buildup. Recognizing that the world is entering a new Cold War, North Korea has deepened strategic ties with China and Russia, promoting an anti-US coalition. Following the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China and the 60th anniversary of DPRK-China Treaty of Friendship, there were a series of exchanges between North Korean and Chinese government officials. Pyongyang spoke out for Beijing on various issues, such as the Indo-Pacific region, human rights, and Taiwan, which lies at the heart of US-Sino competition. Backing Russia, North Korea voted against a UN resolution denouncing Russia's

invasion of Ukraine. Meanwhile, China and Russia not only called for lifting sanctions on North Korea but also vetoed a UN Security Council Resolution aiming to add new ones. Both countries defended North Korea, who violated UN resolutions by conducting consecutive ballistic missile tests. As long as China and Russia side with North Korea and remain unwilling to engage in North Korea's nuclear problem, North Korea will continue to step up to achieve its nuclear quest.

### Evolving Nuclear Policy and Strategy

North Korea's nuclear policy has evolved over the years. As a rising nuclear state, it does not release official documents regarding its nuclear doctrine on a regular basis like those major nuclear powers, the United States and Russia.<sup>7</sup> Instead, after Kim Jong Un came to power, it unveiled its nuclear thinking and position through declaratory statements outlining fundamental principles of its nuclear policy (see Table 1).

In 2012, North Korea granted itself the status of a 'nuclear weapons state'. A month after conducting its third nuclear test, the 12th Supreme People's Assembly (SPA) adopted a nuclear law called "On Consolidating the Position of a Nuclear Weapons State for Self-defense", which contains a set of ten principles. These principles include the purpose of deterrence and retaliatory strikes, monolithic command and control, safekeeping and management, and interestingly, nuclear nonproliferation. In 2016, Kim Jong Un declared North Korea "a responsible nuclear weapons state" and said North Korea will "not use a nuclear weapon first unless its sovereignty is encroached upon by hostile aggression forces with nukes".<sup>8</sup> North Korea's no first use (NFU) policy resembles India's conditional NFU more than China's unconditional NFU. Notwithstanding, its NFU statement is controversial because the language is vague and inherently subjective, leaving considerable room for interpretation. In September 2022, North Korea adopted a new law "On the North Korea's Policy on the Nuclear Forces", replacing the previous nuclear law passed in 2013.

The new nuclear law made some major changes to its nuclear policy, one for command and control and the

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of National Defense Republic of Korea Press Release, May 24, 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Defense Spending by Country (2022), Global Fire Power.

<sup>7</sup> The U.S. administration issues Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), a regular public statement, to lay out its nuclear policy. Russia's Military Doctrine is

public official document containing its position on nuclear weapons. In 2020, Russian President Vladimir Putin published a new nuclear policy document entitled "Foundations of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the Area of Nuclear Deterrence".

<sup>8</sup> Decision of Seventh Congress of WPK Adopted, KCNA, May 8, 2016.

other for the right to use nuclear weapons first. In Article 3, Kim Jong Un holds “all decisive powers” on command and control, but the state nuclear forces

quality of nuclear weapons, how weapons are managed, and how it conducts operational planning. Despite some limitations, it is quite apparent that North Korea’s nuclear strategy has become upgraded

April 13, 2012 12 <sup>th</sup> SPA (5 <sup>th</sup> session)	April 1, 2013 12 <sup>th</sup> SPA (7 <sup>th</sup> Session)	May 8, 2016 7 <sup>th</sup> WPK	September 8, 2022 14 <sup>th</sup> SPA
<b>Constitutional amendment declaring ‘nuclear weapons state status’</b>	<b>Enacting a law on North Korea’s nuclear policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose: deterrence and defense against US threats</li> <li>• Command and Control: Kim Jong Un</li> <li>• Use of nuclear weapons: deterrence, defense, and retaliatory role against nuclear states and non-nuclear states colluding with nuclear states</li> <li>• Negative Security Assurance (NSA)</li> </ul>	<b>Declaring itself a responsible nuclear weapons state</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of nuclear weapons: ambiguous conditional no first use</li> <li>• Negative Security Assurance (NSA)</li> </ul>	<b>Enacting a new law on North Korea’s nuclear policy</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose: deterrence and defense against external military threats and aggression</li> <li>• Command and Control: Kim Jong Un</li> <li>* implementation of nuclear weapons use decisions assisted by National Nuclear Forces Status Organization</li> <li>• Use of nuclear weapons: authorizing preemptive strikes</li> <li>• Mobilization posture: normal</li> <li>• Negative Security Assurance (NSA)</li> </ul>

Table 1 Timeline of North Korea’s Nuclear Policy

Source: Ministry of National Defense

command organization assist implementation of the use of nuclear weapons. Also, it allows automatic and immediate launch of nuclear weapons in case its command-and-control system is in danger. This suggests North Korea renders limited delegation of authority to use nuclear weapons in case of an emergency. The caveat of the updated nuclear policy is the first use of nuclear weapons. Article 6 allows preemptive nuclear strikes when it is judged that military attack is imminent against “the state leadership, the command of the state’s nuclear forces, or important strategic objects of the state”. North Korea seeks to resort to its nuclear force against both nuclear and conventional threats from the United States and South Korea. Intentionally lowering the nuclear threshold, it aims not only to strengthen deterrence and defense but also to restrain what is considered rising threats, such as South Korea’s counterforce capability and the US-ROK joint military posture.

Reclusive North Korea’s nuclear strategy is puzzling due to insufficient knowledge of key elements and an overall lack of information, such as the quantity and

and is moving in a more aggressive direction given its new nuclear policy and advanced nuclear and missile capabilities. Considering North Korea’s distinct nuclear policy, capabilities, and position, North Korea’s nuclear strategy rests on ‘triangular deterrence’ and ‘asymmetric escalation’.

Given the unique security environment, North Korea’s nuclear strategy distinguishes it from those of other nuclear states. North Korea seeks to achieve deterrence vis-a-vis the United States as well as indirect deterrence toward South Korea. The concept of triangular deterrence is unique in that a regional nuclear state, lacking technological parity with its rival, seeks to counter the major nuclear power by threatening a neighboring state that is neutral or allied to the major power.<sup>9</sup> Facing overwhelming U.S. nuclear and conventional superiority, North Korea appears to boost indirect deterrence vis-à-vis South Korea. While testing missiles capable of reaching U.S. territory in pursuit of increasing deterrence against the United States, North Korea has embarked on strengthening tactical nuclear weapons against South Korea. The ‘preemptive strikes’ policy has further

<sup>9</sup> Harkavy, Robert E. 1998. “Triangular or indirect deterrence/compellence: Something new in deterrence theory?” *Comparative Strategy* 17(1), 63-81.

added to pressure against South Korea, effectively deterring the United States.

Applying Vipin Narang’s nuclear strategy model for a regional power in the modern era, North Korea’s nuclear strategy has evolved into asymmetric escalation (see Table2).<sup>12</sup> In its nascent stage of nuclear weapons development, North Korea’s strategy was perceived as a catalytic one, deterring the United States by provoking China’s military or diplomatic intervention on its behalf in the event of a crisis.<sup>13</sup> However, given North Korea’s nuclear capabilities, management, and level of transparency nuclear strategy, North Korea’s nuclear strategy has further progressed from catalytic into asymmetric escalation (see Table 2). Pyongyang is on a trajectory to build tactical nuclear capabilities, including miniaturization and diversification of nuclear warheads and an expansion of delivery systems. It also passed the law allowing nuclear first use under certain circumstances. From a management aspect, Kim Jong Un has also created a framework that allows some level of delegation of control and command by establishing a control organization that

enables the military to execute an ‘automatic launch’ when the leadership is threatened.

## II. ROK-US Alliance and the Extended Deterrence

### Extended Deterrence Evolved as a Security Guarantee

The security alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) has contributed to building peace and security on the Korean peninsula and in the region for over seven decades. After the three-year-long Korean war ended with an armistice agreement, the ROK-US alliance began in earnest with the signing of the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty on October 1, 1953. Forging the military alliance, the two countries vowed to “preserve peace and security” by deterring armed attack and ‘take suitable measures in consultation and agreement’.<sup>14</sup> The establishment of the United States Forces Korea (USFK) and the ROK-US Combined Forces Command (CFC) are concrete examples of the

	Capabilities	Management	Level of Transparency
<i>Catalytic</i>	A small number of nuclear weapons	Recessed and opaque	Ambiguous capability and deployment
<i>Assured Retaliation</i> <sup>10</sup>	Having a secure second-strike capability to be able to retaliate	Assertive civilian control	Unambiguous capability; ambiguous deployment
<i>Asymmetric Escalation</i>	First-use capabilities (tactical nuclear weapons)	Delegative	Unambiguous capability and deployment
<i>North Korea</i>	<b>* Adopted first nuclear strikes policy</b>	<b>* Assertive civilian control and partial operation of delegative control system</b>	<b>* Unambiguous capability and ambiguous deployment</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 20-30 nuclear warheads and fissile materials for more than 50 nuclear weapons<sup>11</sup></li> <li>- Developing tactical nuclear capabilities</li> <li>- Expanding SLBM and ICBM (known as second-strike capabilities)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monolithic nuclear command of Kim Jong Un</li> <li>- Authorizing military to launch an automatic nuclear strike if the leadership or command and control organization is threaten (New nuclear law, 2022)</li> </ul>	<p><i>Capability</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Declared completion of state nuclear force (2017)</li> <li>- Sequenced nuclear and missile tests</li> </ul> <p><i>Deployment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dispersed unknown missile bases</li> </ul>

Table 2 Strategies for the Regional Nuclear States and North Korea

Source: Vipin Narang 2013

<sup>10</sup> Despite continuing efforts to ensure second-strike capabilities against the United States, North Korea lacks assured retaliatory means. Also, the United States has advanced its missile defense system to intercept North Korea’s missiles, declaring itself a responsible nuclear weapons state.

<sup>11</sup> Kristensen, Hans M., and Matt Korda. “Nuclear Notebook: How many nuclear weapons does North Korea have in 2022?” Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, September 8, 2022. Estimated counts of North Korea’s nuclear warheads and fissile materials vary across institutions.

<sup>12</sup> Narang, Vipin. “What Does It Take to Deter? Regional Power Nuclear Postures and International Conflict.” The Journal of Conflict Resolution 57, no. 3 (2013): 478–508.

Narang applies three nuclear postures to six nuclear regional powers, except North Korea and two nuclear great powers, United States and Russia.

<sup>13</sup> Narang, Vipin. “Nuclear Strategies of Emerging Nuclear Powers: North Korea and Iran,” Washington Quarterly 38, no. 1 (2015): 73-91.

<sup>14</sup> Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of Korea, October 1, 1953.

treaty's implementation, providing South Korea with a credible security guarantee.

The military alliance has evolved with North Korea's increasing provocations. In the late 1960s, North Korea conducted a series of hostile attacks against South Korea and the United States. In 1968, North Korea raided the Blue House in an attempt to assassinate the South Korean president Park Chung Hee and captured the U.S. Navy surveillance ship *Pueblo*, detaining its 83 crewmembers for 11 months. Amid increased tensions due to North Korea's hostile actions, the ROK-US Defense Ministerial meeting was first launched in 1968, discussing measures to strengthen security and peace. In 1971, the bilateral meeting was upgraded to the Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), an annual meeting dealing with security-related issues between the ROK and US senior officials and experts in defense.

The two states have built a strong alliance for deterrence and defense vis-à-vis North Korea, underpinned by the U.S. nuclear umbrella. Seoul and Washington have bolstered extended deterrence by implementing wide-ranging measures aligned with North Korea's escalating nuclear menace. These comprehensive mechanisms include joint consultative meetings and US-ROK joint military drills.

The ROK-US alliance launched a string of formal channels to discuss strategy and planning on security, reaffirming a shared determination for extended deterrence against North Korea. In response to North Korea's first nuclear test, Seoul and Washington formally confirmed that the United States would provide South Korea with extended deterrence including the U.S. nuclear umbrella. When North Korea conducted its second nuclear test in 2009, extended deterrence came to take concrete shape as the two parties, at the 41th SCM, agreed on "using the full range of military capabilities, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities".<sup>15</sup> To improve the extended deterrence posture, new forums were launched including the Extended Deterrence Policy Committee (EDPC) in 2010 and the Korea-US Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD) in 2012.

After Kim Jong Un came to power, Pyongyang ramped up its nuclear buildup. At the 45<sup>th</sup> SCM following Pyongyang's third nuclear test in 2013, US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan Jin announced the 'tailored deterrence strategy' as the alliance comprehensive policy-level framework against North Korea's nuclear and WMD threats.<sup>16</sup> In 2015, Seoul and Washington signed the implementation of the 4D Operational Concept, which combines critical capabilities to detect, disrupt, destroy and defend against North Korea.<sup>17</sup> They also agreed to develop interoperable capabilities with alliance systems including South Korea's Kill Chain and Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) systems.<sup>18</sup> The Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group (EDSCG) meeting, a regular meeting of US-ROK vice-ministerial officials in defense and diplomacy, began in 2016 to strengthen the strategy's effectiveness.

Annual military drills and force projection have become an essential part of extended deterrence, demonstrating joint capabilities and the willingness to forcefully respond to North Korean aggression. When North Korea resumed its third nuclear test, the annual joint field exercise Foal Eagle (FE) was conducted with army, air force, and navy units, including B-2 stealth bombers and nuclear-powered submarines, to display the alliance's capability and resolve. As North Korea conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear test and fired a long-range rocket in defiance of international condemnation, Seoul and Washington held joint military exercises—Key Resolve, simulation-based command post exercise (CPX), and Foal Eagle—on a larger scale. In 2016, the joint military exercises mobilized a large military force of about 17,000 U.S. military personnel and 300,000 ROK-U.S. Combined Forces. This included deployment of U.S. strategic assets like the B-2 Spirit stealth bomber, F-22 Raptor, nuclear submarines with Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAM), and the aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis. The joint drill in 2017 brought around 36,000 U.S. soldiers and 300,000 ROK-U.S. Combined Forces and deployed B-1B Lancer, F-35B stealth fighters, and the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson.

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<sup>15</sup> The Joint Communique of the 41th US-ROK Security Consultative Meeting.

<sup>16</sup> Parrish, Karen. "U.S., South Korea Announce 'Tailored Deterrence Strategy'", United States Forces Korea, October 3, 2013.

The tailored deterrence agreement reaffirmed the extended deterrence mechanism using the full range of military capabilities, including the U.S. nuclear umbrella, conventional strike, and missile defense capabilities.

<sup>17</sup> The Joint Communique of the 47th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting, United States Forces Korea(USFK), November 1, 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Extended deterrence faltered with the easing of US-DPRK relations through bilateral meetings, along with the inter-Korean summits. Existing extended deterrence mechanisms were partly discouraged as the Moon and Trump administration pushed forward denuclearization in North Korea as their foremost objective. The EDSCG was suspended after the second meeting in January 2018. The military-level measures followed suit, including the reduction or suspension of joint military exercises. The major joint drills, Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, drew to an end in 2019. New CPX and Dong Meang drills replaced Key Resolve while smaller exercises replaced Foal Eagle, the large field exercise that had occurred for 44 years.

On top of that, the Trump administration's disdain of the ROK-US alliance coupled with unpredictable dogmatic foreign policy undermined the extended deterrence posture. Trump called Kim Jong Un "Rocket Man" and said he has a "bigger and more powerful nuclear button" than Kim Jong Un. After the Trump-Kim summit in Singapore, President Trump turned to North Korea with a surprisingly mild attitude. Despite no visible progress made in the Singapore Summit, President Trump said North Korea is "no longer a nuclear threat"<sup>19</sup> and even said he "fell in love" with Kim.<sup>20</sup> While making unexpected statements and tweets on North Korea, President Trump revealed a flagrant disrespect toward the ROK-US military alliance. At the press conference following the Singapore Summit, President Trump called the joint military drills "war games", "inappropriate", "expensive", and "provocative" and abruptly announced that Washington would suspend the military exercises.<sup>21</sup> Seoul responded that it was trying to figure out what Trump's comment meant. Meanwhile, Washington continued to threaten to withdraw USFK from South Korea unless South Korea bore more costs for stationing the U.S. force. The lack of consultation on North Korea policy with South Korea and unnecessary alliance pressure greatly weakened the ROK-US alliance, reducing the credibility of extended deterrence.

After the short-lived *détente*, North Korea's nuclear problem grew further. Pyongyang made a dash for

nuclear weapons while refusing to resume dialogue with any of its counterparts, dampening the mood for peace and reconciliation. Encountering North Korea's fast-growing nuclear capabilities, South Korea's newly elected president Yoon Seok Yeol and the U.S. president Joe Biden reaffirmed their commitment to credible extended deterrence in the concrete ROK-US alliance. The Biden administration reassured the importance of USFK stationing in South Korea, encouraging enhanced bilateral ties. The EDSCG, the high-ranking consultative group, was revived after four years of dormancy. Also, South Korea revived regular joint military exercises, Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS), involving field training.

### Remaining Challenges

The extended deterrence in the ROK-US alliance has its own dilemma due to its complex nature. The concept of deterrence is dissuading an adversary from taking an unwanted action by convincing him the risks and costs of the action outweigh the potential gains. In order for deterrence to work successfully, 3Cs – capability, credibility, and communication – are imperative.<sup>22</sup> Capability means the ability to implement threats while credibility refers to firm confidence that a threat will be executed. Communication is to deliver a message to the adversary about the possibility of retaliation. It is certainly true that the US-ROK extended deterrence has strong capabilities against North Korea. Such a firm deterrence posture is signaled through the deployment of USFK, the joint military drills, and diplomatic and military cooperation over North Korea. However, the failure to deter North Korea's hostile military provocations has damaged the credibility underlying extended deterrence.

In March 2010, North Korea launched a torpedo attack on a South Korean naval ship, *Cheonan*, killing 46 sailors. In November of that year, North Korea shelled Yeonpyeong Island, killing two marines and two civilians. Later, Robert Gates, a former US Secretary of Defense, disclosed that the Obama administration dissuaded South Korea from launching massive retaliatory attacks using aircraft and artillery on North Korea out of concern for the

<sup>19</sup> "Trump Claims North Korea is 'No Longer a Nuclear Threat' ", CNBC, June 13, 2018. <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/13/trump-says-north-korea-no-longer-a-nuclear-threat.html>

<sup>20</sup> Gallo, William. "Trump-Kim 'Love Letters' Reveal Friendship, Flattery", Voice of America, September 10, 2020. <https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific-trump-kim-love-letters-reveal-friendship-flattery/6195698.html>

<sup>21</sup> Press Conference by President Trump Following June 12, 2018 Summit with Kim Jong Un, The National Committee on North Korea (NCNK), June 12, 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Haffa, Robert P. "The Future of Conventional Deterrence: Strategies for Great Power Competition." *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (2018): 94–115.



risk of escalating tension on the Korean peninsula.<sup>23</sup> This series of North Korea's deadly attacks not only led to doubt over the efficacy of extended deterrence but also raised demand for autonomous counterforce capability. These incidents brought a transfer of wartime operation control (OPCON) to the forefront in South Korea. Lingering memories of the sinking of *Cheonan* and bombardment of Yeonpyeong Island have a profound impact on South Korea's negative views on the credibility of extended deterrence. Emboldened with successful nuclear tests, North Korea is now seeking to acquire both strategic and tactical nuclear capabilities against the United States and South Korea. How will extended deterrence work? How will extended deterrence effectively deter North Korea's potential preemptive attack? North Korea's continued nuclear and missile saber rattling and potential military provocation pose profound threats to be reckoned with. Concern for the credibility of extended deterrence has no sign of abating.

Another salient issue is confidence building between the deterrence provider, the United States, and the client, South Korea. It is not easy for the nuclear patron to assure the client in an asymmetric alliance framework. Asymmetric alliance relationships can involve diverging threat perception. Such different threat perceptions might lead to fears of entrapment or abandonment.<sup>24</sup> As South Korea is bordered by North Korea, it inevitably frets about North Korea's rapid nuclear buildup. In addition to geographical proximity, the threat perception could differ largely due to the confrontation between the United States and alignment between China and Russia. Amid US-China strategic competition and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Biden administration's primary security concerns are China and Russia, not North Korea. Washington and Seoul should make efforts to bridge the gap of security perception and rebuild mutual confidence within the alliance and extended deterrence against North Korea.

ROK hedging remains a potential challenge. North Korea's tactical nuclear capability is beyond the level of bluffing. Amid an escalating nuclear threat from North Korea, there is growing demand for nuclear armament in South Korea. Despite Washington's persistent objection, voices calling for the redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to

South Korea never seem to dissipate. If North Korea elevates its nuclear threats and continues nuclear brinkmanship, South Korea might strategically opt to acquire its own nuclear force to maintain a balance of terror on the Korean peninsula. During the Cold War, Washington deployed tactical nuclear weapons in NATO member states in a bid to credibly deter the Soviet Union's attack on its allies in Europe. NATO's nuclear weapon stockpile increased as the Soviet Union rapidly built its nuclear force. Deployment of nuclear weapons not only strengthened credibility and effectiveness of extended deterrence, but also reassured NATO allies that the U.S. commitment to NATO remained ironclad. It is essential to come up with measures that assure non-nuclear South Korea so as to prevent South Korea from hedging.

### **III. Policy Recommendation**

Although previous administrations made substantial efforts to contain North Korea's nuclear development, they failed to make much progress. After the collapse of the Hanoi Summit, North Korea, a deprived rogue state, has doubled down on its nuclear build-up. The importance of ROK-US extended deterrence and the U.S. nuclear umbrella is becoming even greater. Amid North Korea's evolving nuclear force, Seoul and Washington have reaffirmed the alliance and their commitment to bolstering extended deterrence mechanisms. However, the rising threat posed by North Korea coupled with the existing security dilemma casts a great deal of doubts on the current extended deterrence framework. It is imperative to build a new constructive and pragmatic policy approach tailored with strategic goals.

#### **Strategic Objectives**

The United States and South Korea have mutually agreed on the role of extended deterrence in safeguarding security and peace from threat posed by North Korea. To achieve this security objective, the short-term goal is to enhance US-ROK extended deterrence posture in line with reinforcing 3Cs—capability, credibility, and communication—as well as security assurance. The following strategic objectives serve as guidelines for the policy recommendation.

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<sup>23</sup> Park, Hyun. "Gates memoir says MB had to be talked out of all-out war in 2010", Hankyoreh, January 16, 2014. [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/620021.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/620021.html)

<sup>24</sup> Snyder, Glenn H. "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics" *World Politics*, Vol.36, No.4 (July 1984). Pp 466-468  
In 1960, France began developing nuclear weapons, questioning the US' extended deterrence capabilities.

- Enhance balanced conventional and nuclear deterrence and defense
- Reinforce joint military readiness aligned to North Korea's advanced nuclear posture
- Strengthen security assurance measures corresponding to North Korea's existential threat
- Promote the implementation of extended deterrence at the military and policy levels

### **Strategic Policy Recommendations**

Rebuilding extended deterrence posture requires a comprehensive policy approach that upholds strategic objectives and improves effectiveness of the operation. Joint cooperative efforts between South Korea and the United States are required to enhance the credibility of extended deterrence in the bilateral alliance.

#### ***Joint Military Exercises***

The recent resumption of the field training exercises, to include the deployment of U.S. strategic assets, is a powerful signal for a revival of the extended deterrence posture. To further improve joint military capabilities in strategic readiness, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and the U.S. Korea Command (US KORCOM) should collaboratively design military exercises, both field training drills and simulation, in accordance with North Korea's advanced capabilities and changed nuclear policy and strategy. The military exercises can apply various potential scenarios, such as an electronic warfare attack, nuclear electromagnetic pulse (EMP) attack, or a North Korean preemptive conventional/nuclear attack against South Korea or the United States. In preparation for the transition of wartime operational control, the two countries need to produce a new joint command structure focusing on comprehensive response capabilities, combined deterrence and defense capabilities, and mutual trust.

#### ***Intelligence Sharing***

Secure and consistent intelligence sharing between the United States and South Korea is critical both in peace time and in times of crisis. To detect North Korean activities related to nuclear development or nuclear weapons and missile tests, the United States could continue to support the stable operation of the intelligence sharing pacts including the Trilateral Intelligence Sharing Arrangement (TISA). The two

countries could also cooperate at the diplomatic level to restore the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).

#### ***Non-nuclear Capabilities***

Seoul and Washington agreed to deepen cooperation in non-nuclear capabilities, such as in the space and cyber domains, to ensure an effective joint response against North Korea's threat to a free, safe and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.<sup>25</sup> At the forthcoming consultative dialogues, such as SCM and EDSCG, Seoul and Washington should discuss a detailed approach to building cooperation on defense science and technology modernization for the future force. The existing bilateral consultative channels including Defense Technology and Security Consultative Mechanism (DTSCM) or Defense Technology Strategy and Cooperation Group (DTSCG) could establish a strategic cooperation agenda and strengthen US-ROK partnerships in core high-tech areas such as 5G, semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), unmanned system, and 6G.

#### ***Advanced Missile Defense***

Defeating North Korea's evolving missiles is of critical concern to the United States and South Korea. It is important to advance missile defenses capable of intercepting North Korean missiles attacks on the U.S. homeland and South Korea. North Korea is rapidly developing missiles with multiple nuclear warheads and hypersonic missiles capable of flying irregular trajectories, which may penetrate existing ground-based missile defense systems. It is crucial to establish integrated missile defense systems that can intercept these missile attacks at all stages by utilizing cyber jamming, space-based missile defense, ground-based missile defense, and other missile defense systems.

#### ***ROK Conventional Deterrence***

South Korea's conventional deterrence with its 3K military system—Kill-chain, KAMD, KMPR—will greatly contribute to countering North Korea's nuclear threat. With the end of the US-ROK missile guideline in 2021, South Korea is now in a better position to strengthen its missile capabilities without limitations on quantity and the weight of warheads. Developing a new series of high-yield ballistic missiles like Hyunmoo-4 or SLBMs with longer range or heavier warheads can improve the effectiveness of Kill-chain and KMPR. To effectively deter North

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<sup>25</sup> Joint Statement on the Extended Deterrence Strategy and Consultation Group Meeting, US Department of State, September 16, 2022

Korea's modernized missiles—ICBM, SLBM, cruise missiles and hypersonic missiles—South Korea needs to make rapid progress in its own monitoring system, like military reconnaissance satellites, and multi-range missile defense systems.

### *Nuclear Warfighting*

Given the fact that North Korea has adopted a more aggressive nuclear posture, the ROK-US alliance should discuss the possibility of war with North Korea, including limited warfare. South Korea and the United States need to include the worst-case—North Korea's nuclear attack in war—in the upcoming new military operation plan (OPLAN) as well as other mechanisms, such as tabletop exercises (TTX) and simulation-based joint military drills. Assessment of military preparedness for nuclear warfighting with North Korea will, to be sure, further improve the scope and scale of the extended deterrence.

### *Tactical Nuclear Sharing*

The U.S. government could also build a bilateral or Indo-Pacific regional nuclear sharing group drawing on the US-NATO nuclear sharing model to strengthen extended deterrence.<sup>26</sup> B61 bombs—tactical nuclear weapons deployed in five NATO member states—would be the best option as it is capable of being delivered by fighter jets.<sup>27</sup> The B61 would be a powerful means of deterrence as it has higher likelihood to be used than strategic nuclear weapons, thwarting North Korea's aggression.<sup>28</sup> The United States would sustain command and control over the B61s, but allow involvement of South Korea in the command system. South Korea and the United States could launch a new consultative group for establishing a nuclear sharing mechanism and discuss details such as infrastructure, cost, and nuclear weapons safety and security.

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<sup>26</sup> Kort, Ryan W., C. Bersabe, D. Clarke, and D. Di Bello. "Twenty-first century nuclear deterrence: Operationalizing the 2018 nuclear posture review." *Joint Forces Quarterly* 3 (2019): 74-79.

<sup>27</sup> Woolf, Amy F., and Emma Chanlett-Avery. "Redeploying US Nuclear Weapons to South Korea: Background and Implications in Brief." (2017).

<sup>28</sup> Leah, Christine M. "Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence," *The Diplomat*, June 12, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/tactical-nuclear-weapons-and-deterrence/> Low-yield tactical nuclear weapons can destroy limited areas and targets while minimizing the range of impact and human damage.





# 2

## **The Escalation Risks of Conventional Military Operations against North Korea's Land-Based Ballistic Missile Forces**

*Kyungwon Suh*

## Introduction

Since the failure of the Hanoi Summit in 2019, the prospect of North Korea's voluntary abandonment of its nuclear weapons is becoming increasingly remote, and Pyongyang remains dedicated to expanding its nuclear arsenal quantitatively and qualitatively. As a result, South Korea and the United States are slowly accepting a grim but inevitable reality: they need to learn how to live with a nuclear-armed North Korea.

To live with a nuclear-armed neighbor, one should learn how to manage the risk of nuclear escalation, even during wartime. Although fighting a conventional war against a nuclear-armed neighbor involves significant escalation risks, the history of international conflict demonstrates that states can fight conventional wars against nuclear-armed states without triggering nuclear escalation. Therefore, it is likely that policymakers of South Korea and the United States do not completely rule out a conventional war against North Korea as a viable option, even if they would like to minimize the risks of nuclear escalation in wartime as much as possible.

One of the key questions about nuclear escalation in a conventional war against North Korea is whether the alliance's conventional military campaigns could *inadvertently* lead Pyongyang to contemplate the use of nuclear weapons. Even if the alliance's conventional operations only attack North Korea's conventional forces, it is still possible that such

operations unintentionally threaten North Korea's nuclear forces. This would pose challenges to the alliance's wartime escalation management strategies. Leaders of South Korea and the United States might believe that the allied force's military operations targeting North Korea's conventional forces could have manageable escalation risks, especially compared to direct attacks against North Korea's nuclear forces. If what those leaders view as less risky military options might trigger North Korea's escalatory moves, such as visible alert behavior, demonstrative shots, and even limited nuclear strikes, then those actions are likely to be seen as an unprovoked escalation, which could lead to counter-escalation or preparation for preemptive attacks against North Korea's nuclear forces.

Despite its importance, our understanding of the potential causes of inadvertent nuclear escalation in the next Korean War remains incomplete. There is now a sizeable literature on when and how North Korea would employ its nuclear weapons during wartime, and how South Korea and the United States would (and should) respond to North Korean nuclear threats.<sup>1</sup> It provides useful insights into understanding the drivers of North Korea's nuclear decisions and what responses the alliance should adopt to reduce nuclear escalation risks while countering North Korea's nuclear threats. Within this literature, however, relatively little attention has been paid to exploring when and how the alliance's wartime conventional military operations spark inadvertent nuclear escalation by North Korea.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For recent works on when and how North Korea might use nuclear weapons, see Bennett et al. (2021); Lee (2022); Lieber and Press (2013). For recent works on how South Korea and the United States have responded (and should respond) to North Korean nuclear threats, see Bowers and Hiim (2020/21); Kim and Warden (2020); Mount and Rapp-Hooper (2020); Pauly (2022); Press (2022); Sukin and Dalton (2021).

1. Bruce W. Bennett et al., *Countering the Risks of North Korean Nuclear Weapons* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, April 2021).
2. Sangkyu Lee, "Prospects for DPRK's Nuclear Use Scenarios and Deterrence Measures of the US and ROK Alliance," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. S1 (2022): 69-84.
3. Keir A. Lieber and Daryl G. Press, *Coercive Nuclear Campaigns in the 21st Century: Understanding Adversary Incentives and Options for Nuclear Escalation* (Monterey, CA: U.S. Naval Postgraduate School Center on Contemporary Conflict, 2013).
4. Ian Bower and Henrik Stålhane Hiim, "Conventional Counterforce Dilemmas: South Korea's Deterrence Strategy and Stability on the Korean Peninsula," *International Security* 45, no. 3 (Winter 2020/21): 7-39.
5. Jina Kim and John K. Warden, "Limiting North Korea's Coercive Nuclear Leverage," *Survival* 62, no. 1 (February-

March 2020): 31-38.

6. Adam Mount and Mira Rapp-Hooper, "Nuclear Stability on the Korean Peninsula," *Survival* 62, no. 1 (February-March 2020): 39-46.
7. Reid B.C. Pauly, "Deterrence and Compellence on the Korean Peninsula" (Working Paper, Brown University, 2022).
8. Daryl G. Press, "The Deliberate Employment of US Nuclear Weapons: Escalation Triggers on the Korean Peninsula," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. S1 (2022): 101-114.
9. Lauren Sukin and Toby Dalton, "Reducing Nuclear Salience: How to Reassure Northeast Asian Allies," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (2021): 143-158.

<sup>2</sup> Some exceptions include Narang and Panda (2020); Panda (2022). Even those works, however, do not provide detailed analysis of when and how inadvertent nuclear escalation would occur.

1. Vipin Narang and Ankit Panda, "North Korea: Risks of Escalation," *Survival* 62, no. 1 (2020): 47-54.
2. Ankit Panda, "Sure, Deter China—But Manage Risk with North Korea, Too," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 2 (2022): 73-77.

To fill this gap, this paper examines the escalation risks of a particular category of scenarios: the alliance's conventional military operations against North Korea's land-based ballistic missile forces. Not only do Pyongyang's land-based ballistic missiles constitute the backbone of its nuclear arsenal, but they are also a key conventional military capability for coercion and warfighting. For instance, experts note that North Korea might use both its conventionally armed medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) and short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) to overwhelm South Korea's missile defense systems.<sup>3</sup> As a result, they are likely to be targets of the alliance's conventional military attacks during wartime. The fact that some of those ballistic missiles are a crucial asset for North Korea's nuclear deterrence, however, raises several questions about nuclear escalation: would the alliance's conventional operations against those missiles inadvertently threaten North Korea's nuclear deterrent? How would Pyongyang perceive the implications of such operations? Can the alliance's conventional operations be conducted without generating a serious risk of nuclear escalation?

Using open-source literature and scholarly works on inadvertent nuclear escalation, I argue that the South Korea-U.S. alliance's conventional attacks against North Korea's ballistic missile forces create non-trivial escalatory pressures. However, the expected risks of nuclear escalation vary depending on the targets of a given operation. Specifically, conventional attacks against MRBMs are likely to create the highest level of escalation risks. Conventional campaigns against North Korea's short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) could also involve comparable but lower risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation. Lastly, conventional operations against forward bases housing MRBMs and SRBMs also generate non-trivial risks of nuclear escalation, but the danger of those risks might be lower than in the other scenarios of conventional campaigns.

Some caveats on the scope of this paper may be in order. First, this paper does not make any arguments about the likelihood of a conventional war on the Korean Peninsula. Rather, the goal of this paper is to explore the escalatory potential of conventional military operations that the South Korea-U.S. alliance would conduct should such a war occur. Second, this paper does not examine the consequences of

conventional campaigns *directly* targeting military assets having exclusively a nuclear role, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), or decapitating attacks against North Korea's leadership, which implies direct attacks against North Korea's command-and-control of nuclear forces. Lastly, although conventional operations against military forces that support and enable nuclear operations, such as air defense units, command-and-control networks, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets, could also have significant escalatory implications, these issues are not examined here given space constraints.

This paper proceeds as follows. I first present a theoretical framework explaining how inadvertent nuclear escalation occurs and identifying relevant variables influencing the level of escalation risk. I then offer a brief overview of North Korea's land-based ballistic missiles that are assessed to have a nuclear role. The fourth section provides estimates of the survivability of North Korea's ballistic missile forces and the degree of conventional-nuclear entanglement in North Korea's ballistic missile forces. After that, I discuss North Korea's expectations about the alliance's preemptive counterforce strikes and its nuclear strategy, and their effects on inadvertent escalation. The sixth section provides my expectations about the escalation risks of the alliance's conventional campaigns against North Korea's ballistic missiles. I conclude with a brief discussion of actionable policy recommendations to minimize the risk of inadvertent nuclear escalation in a conventional war with North Korea.

## **A Framework for Explaining Inadvertent Nuclear Escalation**

Of course, not all conventional campaigns have the same risks, and several military-technical and perceptual variables affect the anticipated risk of inadvertent escalation created by different conventional military operations. I focus on two military-technical variables and two perceptual variables. The former includes the expected survivability of North Korea's nuclear delivery platforms and the level of conventional-nuclear entanglement in North Korea's land-based ballistic

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<sup>3</sup> Sang Jin Kim, "Buk Nodong Missile Kogak Balsahatnah ... 'Sukuhshomyun Jaeraesik Hyoyong Geukdaehwa,'" *JoongAng*, February

27, 2022, accessed August 25, 2022, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25051444#home>.

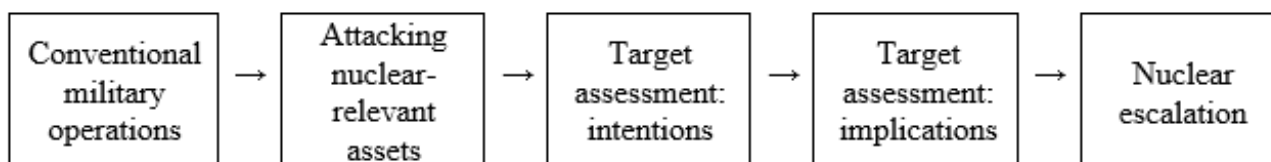


Figure 1 *Inadvertent Nuclear Escalation: A Process*

missile forces. The latter includes North Korea's fear of the alliance's counterforce preemption and its nuclear strategy.<sup>4</sup>

Each variable plays a different role in shaping escalation risks. The degree of conventional-nuclear entanglement affects the likelihood of a state's inadvertent conventional attacks against the target's nuclear-relevant assets.<sup>5</sup> It could also change how the target interprets the intentions behind those conventional attacks by determining their frequency and the magnitude of the threats posed by them. On the other hand, the survivability of the target's nuclear forces affects its threat assessment by shaping its expectation about how survivable its nuclear forces would be from the attacker's conventional campaigns.<sup>6</sup> Third, the target's fear of counterforce preemption affects its evaluation of whether the attacker is deliberately attacking its nuclear forces. Lastly, its nuclear strategy, or a theory of how nuclear weapons contribute to its security, also influences the target's assessment of the implications of those attacks by shaping its belief about whether the remaining capability is sufficient for credible nuclear deterrence.<sup>7</sup>

Estimating the value of each variable in the context of a conventional conflict between the South Korea-U.S. alliance and North Korea will help us form informed expectations about how the alliance's conventional campaigns against Pyongyang's land-based ballistic missiles could lead to inadvertent escalation. Before doing so, however, it would be helpful to know the

current state of North Korea's land-based ballistic missiles that might have a nuclear role.

## North Korea's Land-Based Ballistic Missiles That Might Have a Nuclear Delivery Role

This section provides a brief overview of North Korea's land-based ballistic missiles that are believed to be assigned nuclear missions. There are several authoritative open-source estimates on North Korea's ballistic missiles but given significant uncertainty as to the operational status of each missile and its numbers, estimates of North Korean ballistic missile capabilities should be interpreted with caution.

The most likely category of operational missiles having a nuclear role is MRBMs. Specifically, the Nodong (Hwasong-7) missiles have been believed to have operational nuclear capabilities.<sup>8</sup> U.S. National Air and Space Intelligence Center (NASIC) reports that Pyongyang deploys fewer than 100 Nodong launchers with a potentially larger inventory of missiles.<sup>9</sup> It is also possible, albeit with a greater level of uncertainty, that other MRBMs, such as the Pukguksong-2 (KN-15) and the Scud ER (Hwasong-9), might have a nuclear role.

North Korea's intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) could also be used for nuclear delivery missions. North Korea has conducted several rounds

<sup>4</sup> These variables do not constitute a comprehensive list of relevant variables. See Logan (2020); Talmadge (2017); Riqiang (2021/22) for discussions on other military-technical and perceptual conditions.

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional Entanglement in China," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020)
2. Caitlin Talmadge, "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 50-92.
3. Riqiang Wu, "Assessing China-U.S. Inadvertent Nuclear Escalation," *International Security* 46, no. 3 (Winter 2021/22): 128-162.

<sup>5</sup>

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional

- Entanglement in China," *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020): 6-9.
2. Caitlin Talmadge, "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 60.

<sup>6</sup> Caitlin Talmadge. 2017. "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States." *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring): 60-61.

<sup>7</sup> Barry R. Posen, *Inadvertent Escalation: Conventional War and Nuclear Risks* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991): 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 283.

<sup>9</sup> National Air and Space Intelligence Center. 2020. "2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat." July. Accessed August 6, 2022. [https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1-/1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT\\_FINAL\\_20C\\_T\\_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD](https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1-/1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT_FINAL_20C_T_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD). 25.

of successful launch tests of the Hwasong-12 (KN-17), but its deployment status, let alone its nuclear role, remains unclear.<sup>10</sup> Pyongyang claims that the Hwasong-12 "is meant to serve as a medium-long range strategic ballistic missile ... capable of reaching Guam."<sup>11</sup> Assessments about the deployment of the Hwasong-10 (Musudan), another North Korean IRBM, have been divided. While the South Korean Defense White Paper and U.S. NASIC state that it is operational, some U.S.-based nuclear experts cast doubt on its operational status.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, some experts argue that some of the IRBMs, such as the Hwasong-12, could be used for conducting nuclear strike missions against distant targets, such as Guam.<sup>13</sup>

North Korea's ICBMs are likely to have a nuclear role, although whether Pyongyang currently deploys operational ICBMs is unclear. The Hwasong-14 has been estimated to have major cities on U.S. west coast in its reach, but it is believed to be still in the development stage, and whether Pyongyang has successfully developed reentry vehicles for its ICBMs remains unclear.<sup>14</sup> There are other ICBMs that might have greater ranges of operation with heavier payloads, such as the Hwasong-15 and Hwasong-17, but their deployment status remains unknown.<sup>15</sup>

Recently, North Korea has conducted numerous tests of new SRBMs. Combined with Pyongyang's declared dedication to the development of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs),<sup>16</sup> this new generation of SRBMs could be assigned battlefield nuclear missions. Those SRBMs include the KN23, KN24, and KN25,<sup>17</sup> and a new, smaller SRBM tested in April 2022.<sup>18</sup> It

should be noted, however, that as of 2022, there is little authoritative information that North Korea has succeeded in miniaturizing nuclear warheads so that they can be mated to those SRBMs.

## **Military-Technical Causes of Inadvertent Escalation**

### **Survivability of North Korea's Nuclear Delivery Platforms**

The first military-technical variable I focus on is the expected survivability of North Korea's land-based nuclear delivery platforms. If the South Korea-U.S. alliance launches conventional military operations against North Korea's ballistic missile forces, it would be likely to use a range of strike platforms, such as air-launched cruise missiles and land-based ballistic and cruise missiles. How survivable would North Korea's ballistic missiles that might be assigned nuclear missions from conventional attacks using those platforms?

I first discuss the survivability of MRBMs, the platforms that are most likely to be used for nuclear delivery missions. To begin with, the Nodong and Hwasong-9 are liquid-fuel missiles, carried on a transporter erector launcher (TEL).<sup>19</sup> While mobile missiles typically entertain a greater level of survivability than silo-based missiles, the use of liquid fuel means that those missiles may need to operate with conspicuous logistical supporting units, such as tanker trucks, which increases their detectability. In addition, liquid-fuel missiles have a longer launch time than solid-fuel ballistic missiles.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 284.

<sup>11</sup> National Air and Space Intelligence Center. 2020. "2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat." July. Accessed August 6, 2022. [https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1/-1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT\\_FINAL\\_2OC\\_T\\_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD](https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1/-1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT_FINAL_2OC_T_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD). 23.

<sup>12</sup>

1. Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense. 2020. 2020 Defense White Paper. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense. 297.
2. National Air and Space Intelligence Center. 2020. "2020 Ballistic and Cruise Missile Threat." July. Accessed August 6, 2022. [https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1/-1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT\\_FINAL\\_2OC\\_T\\_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD](https://media.defense.gov/2021/Jan/11/2002563190/-1/-1/1/2020%20BALLISTIC%20AND%20CRUISE%20MISSILE%20THREAT_FINAL_2OC_T_REDUCEDFILE.PDF?source=GovD). 25.
3. Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 284.

<sup>13</sup> Matt Korda, "Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Systems That Might Be Implicated in Nuclear Use Involving the Korean Peninsula," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. S1 (2022): 115-31. 11.

<sup>14</sup> Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 284-286.

<sup>15</sup> Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 281.

<sup>16</sup> Joshua Berlinger and Yoonjung Seo, "Kim Jong Un Says North Korea Is Developing Tactical Nukes, New Warheads and a Nuclear-Powered Submarine," *CNN*, January 9, 2021, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/09/asia/north-korea-nuclear-development-intl-hnk/index.html>.

<sup>17</sup>

1. Matt Korda, "Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Systems That Might Be Implicated in Nuclear Use Involving the Korean Peninsula," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. S1 (2022): 116-117.
2. Ankit Panda, "A Call to Arms: Kim Jong Un and the Tactical Bomb," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 10.

<sup>18</sup> Vann H. Van Diepen, "North Korea's New Short-Range Ballistic Missile," *38 North*, April 25, 2022, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://www.38north.org/2022/04/north-koreas-new-short-range-ballistic-missile>.

<sup>19</sup> Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 281.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, a Nodong missile's launch time could amount to thirty to sixty minutes (Schilling 2017).

1. John Schilling, "The Pukguksong-2: A Higher Degree of

North Korea's MRBM launchers may also rely upon a limited number of launch sites, as launching a ballistic missile requires solid ground.<sup>21</sup> Those features further increase the chance that TELs carrying the Nodong or Hwasong-9 missiles are detected by the alliance's ISR assets.

Once detected, those MRBMs are unlikely to complete their launch before they are exposed to incoming attacks. For instance, given its use of liquid propellant and the maximum range of North Korea's latest air defense systems, a Nodong TEL is likely not to be able to launch its missile even if it receives a launch order immediately after a B-52 bomber fires a JASSM-ER cruise missile outside the range of North Korea's air defense systems. A JASSM-ER's range of operation extends to 1,000 km, and it cruises at a subsonic speed.<sup>22</sup> A typical subsonic cruise missile cruises with a Mach 0.8 speed, or roughly 988 km/h.<sup>23</sup> If we assume that a B-52 bomber launches a JASSM-ER outside the range of North Korea's latest air defense systems, such as the Pyonghae-5 or its improved version,<sup>24</sup> which is assessed to be between 150 km and 400 km,<sup>25</sup> then a Nodong TEL might only have nine to twenty-four minutes before launch. North Korea's limited early warning capability<sup>26</sup> is another factor decreasing the survivability of its liquid-fuel mobile MRBMs, as they may not be able to have enough time for launch before incoming missiles reach them.

If the alliance encounters a situation where it should deploy additional ISR assets that might be vulnerable to air defense systems, the allied force may need to

carry out intense air defense suppression campaigns before targeting ballistic missile launchers. This may give those launchers extra time for launch. However, whether this could make up for liquid-fuel missiles' long launch time is unclear. The allied force would likely be able to conduct both air defense suppression campaigns and conventional strikes against ballistic missile launchers in well-coordinated ways.

If the alliance attempts to destroy North Korea's ballistic missile launchers before they leave their bases, then those launchers might have a better chance of survival. After all, the allied force has to destroy underground facilities (UGFs) in missile operating bases, where the launchers are likely to hide. This may require more destructive strike platforms than air-launched cruise missiles, such as Hyunmoo SRBMs or air-delivered guided munitions. Information about the depth of a typical North Korean UGF in a missile operating base is scarce, but North Korean UGFs may be located hundreds of meters underground, which is the known depth of a typical Chinese underground tunnel for its land-based missiles.<sup>27</sup> Even a Hyunmoo-2B, which carries a 997kg payload, does not have enough firepower to penetrate such depth.<sup>28</sup> It should be noted, however, that North Korea's wartime launch doctrine requires ballistic missile launchers and their supporting units to disperse from bases to initiate operations.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, if a conventional war breaks out, then North Korea's ballistic missile units are likely to leave their bases for conducting wartime strike missions.

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Mobility, Survivability, and Responsiveness," 38 North, February 13, 2017, accessed August 6, 2022, <https://www.38north.org/2017/02/jschilling021317>.

2. Matt Korda, "Nuclear Weapons and Delivery Systems That Might Be Implicated in Nuclear Use Involving the Korean Peninsula," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 5, no. 51 (2022): 121-122.

<sup>21</sup> Caitlin Talmadge, "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 72.

<sup>22</sup> Airforce Technology, "AGM-158 JASSM (Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missile)," July 5, 2013, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/agsm-158-jassm-standoff-missile>.

<sup>23</sup> BrahMos Aerospace, "Classification of Missile," accessed August 7, 2022, <https://brahmos.com/content.php?id=10&sid=9>.

<sup>24</sup> Abrams, A. B. 2022. "4 ways North Korea Can Counter the F-35." *Diplomat*, July 19. Accessed August 7, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/07/4-ways-north-korea-can-counter-the-f-35>.

<sup>25</sup> Those ranges are Russian S-300 and S-400 air defense missile systems' range, which is estimated to be comparable to North Korea's latest air defense systems (Abrams 2022). Data on Russian S-300 and S-400's range are from CSIS Missile Defense Project (2021a, 2021b).

1. Abrams, A. B. 2022. "4 ways North Korea Can Counter the F-35." *Diplomat*, July 19. Accessed August 7, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/07/4-ways-north-korea-can-counter-the-f-35>.

[counter-the-f-35](#).

2. CSIS Missile Defense Project, "S-300," *Missile Threat*, July 6, 2021, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/defsys/s-300>.

3. CSIS Missile Defense Project, "S-400 Triumph," *Missile Threat*, July 6, 2021, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/defsys/s-400-triumf>.

<sup>26</sup> e.g. Roehrig 2017.

1. Terence Roehrig, "The Abilities—and Limits—of North Korean Early Warning," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 27, 2017, accessed October 27, 2022, <https://thebulletin.org/2017/11/the-abilities-and-limits-of-north-korean-early-warning>.

<sup>27</sup> Tong Zhao, "Conventional Counterforce Strike: An Option for Damage Limitation in Conflicts with Nuclear-Armed Adversaries?" *Science & Global Security* 19, no. 3 (2011): 204-205.

<sup>28</sup> According to Zhao (2011, 204), even a 5,250 TNT-equivalent yield weapon's (U.S. Massive Ordnance Penetrator) range of destruction is less than 40 m.

1. Tong Zhao, "Conventional Counterforce Strike: An Option for Damage Limitation in Conflicts with Nuclear-Armed Adversaries?" *Science & Global Security* 19, no. 3 (2011): 204.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Dana Kim, "Undeclared North Korea: The Kal-gol Missile Operating Base," *Beyond Parallel*, December 24, 2020, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/undeclared-north-korea-the-kal-gol-missile-operating-base>.



The above analysis is also applied to all North Korean IRBMs and ICBMs, all of which are liquid-fuel mobile ballistic missiles. As such, those platforms would have similar strengths and weaknesses in terms of survivability under the alliance's conventional campaigns.

By contrast, North Korea's mobile SRBMs and the Pukguksong-2 MRBM use solid propellants. It gives these missiles a significant advantage in terms of survivability against standoff missile strikes as they are more likely to be able to launch missiles promptly. Although South Korea's conventionally armed SRBMs provide a faster strike option, given the limited number of deployed Hyunmoo ballistic missiles, it is unclear whether South Korea has enough SRBMs to destroy entire North Korea's solid-fuel ballistic missile launchers.<sup>30</sup> This suggests that some of Pyongyang's solid-fuel ballistic missile units might survive even a full-scale South Korean conventional missile strike.

Force survivability, however, captures only a part of a broader picture. Even if North Korea's ballistic missiles that have a nuclear delivery role are heavily vulnerable to conventional kinetic strikes, they might not become targets of conventional military campaigns if those missiles and other conventionally armed missiles are not entangled. Therefore, conventional-nuclear entanglement is another critical factor, which will be addressed next.

### **Entanglement in North Korea's Ballistic Missile Forces**

Conventional-nuclear entanglement could occur in multiple ways.<sup>31</sup> First, nuclear forces might be co-located with conventional forces within the same geographical areas. Second, nuclear forces may demonstrate similar operational practices or rely



*Figure 2. General Arrangement of North Korea's Ballistic Missile Belts*

*Source: Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: Missile Operating Bases Revealed," Beyond Parallel, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-koreas-undeclared-missile-operating-bases>.*

upon similar military institutions. Lastly, nuclear forces, especially the delivery platforms carrying nuclear warheads, may have similar physical characteristics to conventional forces.

As shown in figure 2, it has been known that North Korea deploys its ballistic missile forces in roughly three separate areas: Tactical Belt, Operational Belt, and Strategic Belt.<sup>32</sup> Some missile operating bases within the Tactical Belt are believed to host SRBMs and a small number of the Nodong or Hwasong-9 MRBMs.<sup>33</sup> The Nodong MRBMs are also believed to

<sup>30</sup> As of 2022, roughly 30 Hyunmoo SRBM launchers are believed to be deployed (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2022, 284). South Korean Defense White Paper states it has a total of 60 launchers for surface-to-surface guided missiles, but it does not specify the types of missiles those launchers can carry (Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense 2020, 290).

1. Republic of Korea Ministry of National Defense. 2020. 2020 Defense White Paper. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense. 290.

<sup>31</sup> Here I heavily rely upon David Logan's (2020, 6-9) typology of various forms of entanglement.

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional Entanglement in China." *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020): 6-9.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: Missile Operating Bases Revealed," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12,

2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-koreas-undeclared-missile-operating-bases>.

<sup>33</sup> The Sakkanmol operating base, for instance, is originally equipped with SRBMs but is also expected to be able to house MRBMs easily (Bermudez, Cha, and Collins 2018a/b).

1. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: Missile Operating Bases Revealed," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-koreas-undeclared-missile-operating-bases>.

2. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: The Sakkanmol Missile Operating Base," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/undeclared-north-korea-sakkanmol-missile-operating-base>.



be located in some of the operating bases within the Operational Belt.<sup>34</sup> Lastly, North Korea's IRBMs and ICBMs are assessed to be in the bases within the Strategic Belt.<sup>35</sup> The bases within the Strategic Belt appear not to house other SRBMs or MRBMs.

This deployment pattern suggests that there is at least a non-trivial possibility that the Hwasong-9 and Nodong MRBMs might be co-located with other SRBMs in the bases within both the Tactical and Operational Belt. There is some evidence from official statements supporting this conjecture. For instance, a spokesperson for South Korea's Blue House once said that the Sakkanmol missile base, which is located in the Tactical Belt, houses short-range missiles such as the Scud or Nodong, suggesting a possible co-location of both missiles.<sup>36</sup> It is also possible that MRBMs' areas of operation might overlap with SRBMs' operational routes, given their potential co-location.

On the contrary, operational entanglement may not be substantial. Nuclear-armed mobile missile units are likely to have unique supporting elements that conventionally armed missile units do not have, such as special units assigned for nuclear warheads management.<sup>37</sup> In addition, North Korea keeps its nuclear warheads unmated to delivery systems, storing them in an extremely small number of storage

facilities in peacetime.<sup>38</sup> As such, those warheads would need to be delivered from the storage facilities to be mated to the ballistic missile units having a nuclear role during a crisis or wartime to prepare for prompt nuclear attacks. Delivering those warheads to missile operating bases could create visible signatures detectable by the alliance's ISR capability. These signatures may help the alliance identify which bases house missile units assigned nuclear missions.

On technological entanglement, the level of entanglement between different categories of missiles (e.g., between MRBMs and SRBMs) appears to be lower than within a given type of missile (e.g., between conventional and nuclear variants of the same missile). North Korea's MRBMs are largely distinguishable from SRBMs, except for the Hwasong-9 missiles. Its TELs look very similar to the TELs for the Hwasong-5 and -6.<sup>39</sup> However, the Nodong missiles and their TELs have different appearances from the Hwasong-5 and -6 and their TELs.<sup>40</sup> The Pukguksong-2's tracked TELs are also different from other wheeled TELs, which could be used for identification.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, the Hwasong-10, -12, and -14 TELs have different physical characteristics from other MRBMs or SRBMs.<sup>42</sup> Pyongyang's latest SRBMs, such as the KN23, 24, and

<sup>34</sup> Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: Missile Operating Bases Revealed," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-koreas-undeclared-missile-operating-bases>.

<sup>35</sup>

1. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: Missile Operating Bases Revealed," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/north-koreas-undeclared-missile-operating-bases>.
2. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: The Sangnam-ni Missile Operating Base," *Beyond Parallel*, February 15, 2019, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/undeclared-north-korea-sangnam-ni-missile-operating-base>.

<sup>36</sup> Whether the Scud missiles the spokesperson referred to indicates Hwasong-5 or -6 SRBMs or Hwasong-9 MRBMs remains unclear.

1. Joseph S. Bermudez Jr., Victor Cha, and Lisa Collins, "Undeclared North Korea: The Sakkanmol Missile Operating Base," *Beyond Parallel*, November 12, 2018, accessed August 7, 2022, <https://beyondparallel.csis.org/undeclared-north-korea-sakkanmol-missile-operating-base>.

<sup>37</sup> For Chinese examples, see Logan (2020), 24.

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional Entanglement in China." *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020): 24.

<sup>38</sup> Ankit Panda, Kim Jong Un and the Bomb: Survival and Deterrence in North Korea (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 245-246.

<sup>39</sup> Other SRBMs, such as the KN23, KN24, and KN25, however, may have different appearances from the Hwasong-9. A KN24 missile is launched from a canister, which is different from the Hwasong-9. The KN-25 launchers also have launch tubes, a feature not shared by the Hwasong-9 (CSIS Missile Defense Project 2021c; Elleman 2020).

1. CSIS Missile Defense Project, "KN-25," *Missile Threat*, July 31, 2021c, accessed August 25, 2022, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/KN-25>.
2. Michael Elleman. "Preliminary Assessment of the KN-24 Missile Launches." 38 *North*, March 25, 2020. Accessed August 25, 2022. <https://www.38north.org/2020/03/melleman032520>.
3. Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 283.

<sup>40</sup> A Nodong missile is larger than a Hwasong-5 or -6 missile, and a Nodong TEL is a five-axle truck, while a TEL for either the Hwasong-5 or 6 is a four-axle truck (CSIS Missile Defense Project 2021d, 2021e, 2021f).

1. CSIS Missile Defense Project. 2021d. "Hwasong-7 (Nodong 1)." *Missile Threat*. July 31. Accessed August 8, 2022. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/no-dong>
2. CSIS Missile Defense Project. 2021e. "Hwasong-5." *Missile Threat*. July 31. Accessed August 8, 2022, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/hwasong-5>
3. CSIS Missile Defense Project. 2021f. "Hwasong-6 (Scud-C)." *Missile Threat*. July 31. Accessed August 8, 2022. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/hwasong-6>

<sup>41</sup> CSIS Missile Defense Project, "Pukguksong-2 (KN-15)," *Missile Threat*, July 31, 2021g, accessed August 25, 2022, <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/pukkuksong-2>

<sup>42</sup> For example, a Hwasong-10 missile is carried by a six-axle TEL, and a Hwasong-12 missile is carried on an eight-axle TEL. A Hwasong-14 is also carried on an eight-axle TEL (Kristensen and Korda 2022, 284).

1. Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "North Korean Nuclear Weapons, 2022," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 78, no. 5 (2022): 284.

25, also have some distinct physical characteristics.<sup>43</sup> However, there appear to be no open-source analyses claiming that nuclear-tipped MRBMs (e.g., the Nodong) and their TELs show different physical appearances from their conventional variants. This indistinguishability, if correct, would complicate the alliance's ISR effort by undermining its ability to identify a TEL carrying a nuclear-tipped MRBM among other TELs carrying its conventional variants. If a portion of the latest SRBMs delivers TNWs, then it is also possible that those nuclear-armed SRBMs display little differences from their conventional counterparts.

## Perceptual Drivers of Inadvertent Escalation

Perceptual variables are another set of factors that strengthen or suppress escalatory pressures created by conventional operations.<sup>44</sup> Specifically, I highlight two perceptual variables that might shape North Korea's escalation decisions: North Korea's fear of counterforce preemption and its nuclear strategy.

### Pyongyang's Fear of Counterforce Preemption

First, North Korea's belief about whether the alliance has plans to carry out a preemptive counterforce strike against its nuclear forces has a significant effect on the chance of inadvertent nuclear escalation. The more North Korea is worried about a potential counterforce strike by the alliance, the more likely that it would draw alarming inferences from the alliance's inadvertent attacks against its ballistic missiles for nuclear delivery.

One's belief about an opponent's counterforce strikes is shaped by several indicators that are observable

before and during a conflict. Specifically, verbal statements of leaders of South Korea or the United States about counterforce preemption could have a significant effect.<sup>45</sup> From North Korea's perspective, both South Korea and the United States have long posed substantial threats to its nuclear arsenal. For instance, both states have repeatedly announced their intentions to launch preemptive attacks against North Korea's nuclear assets if necessary. When he was a presidential candidate, for example, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol stated that "the only method" to prevent North Korea from launching a nuclear attack against South Korea is "conducting a preemptive strike."<sup>46</sup> The United States has also not hesitated to reveal its intent to launch a preemptive strike in contingencies. During the 2017 North Korea nuclear crisis, it was reported that U.S. policymakers were preparing for preemption if necessary.<sup>47</sup> In addition, South Korea is continuously expanding its precision-guided munitions inventory for potential counterforce operations,<sup>48</sup> and the United States possesses arguably the most advanced long-range conventional and nuclear counterforce capabilities in the world.

Combined with its substantial counterforce capabilities, the South Korea-U.S. alliance's publicly revealed intentions to preempt North Korea's nuclear use are likely to make North Korea exceptionally concerned over the alliance's counterforce attacks against its nuclear forces. As such, North Korea's baseline threshold for inferring the initiation of a counterforce campaign from the alliance's conventional campaigns would be considerably low.

<sup>43</sup> For instance, the Hwasong-5 and -6's length is much longer (10.94 m) than the KN23 (7.5 m) and KN24 (less than 6 m). The KN25's launch tube is a distinct feature that is not shared by the Hwasong-5 and -6. The new SRBM tested in April 2022 appears to look similar to the KN23. See CSIS Missile Defense Project (2021h, 2021i).

1. CSIS Missile Defense Project. 2021h. "KN-23." Missile Threat. July 31. Accessed October 31, 2022. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/KN-23>.
2. CSIS Missile Defense Project. 2021i. "KN-24." Missile Threat. July 31. Accessed October 31, 2022. <https://missilethreat.csis.org/missile/KN-24>.

<sup>44</sup>

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional Entanglement in China." *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020): 13-15.
2. Caitlin Talmadge, "Would China Go Nuclear? Assessing the Risk of Chinese Nuclear Escalation in a Conventional War with the United States," *International Security* 41, no. 4 (Spring 2017): 62-64.

<sup>45</sup> Logan (2020, 13-15) emphasizes the role of pre-crisis perceived entanglement and intra-crisis signaling as another set of perceptual drivers of inadvertent escalation.

1. David C. Logan, "Are They Reading Schelling in Beijing? The Dimensions, Drivers, and Risks of Nuclear-Conventional Entanglement in China." *Journal of Strategic Studies* (2020): 13-15.

<sup>46</sup> Jeongmin Kim, "Yoon Suk-yeol Backs 'Preemptive Strike' to Stop North Korean Hypersonic Attacks," *NK News*, January 11, 2022, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://www.nknews.org/2022/01/yeon-suk-yeol-backs-preemptive-strike-to-stop-north-korean-hypersonic-attacks>.

<sup>47</sup> William M. Arkin, Cynthia McFadden, and Kenzi Abou-Sabe, "U.S. May Launch Strike If North Korea Reaches for Nuclear Trigger," *The Hills*, April 13, 2017, accessed August 10, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/u-s-may-launch-strike-if-north-korea-reaches-nuclear-n74636>.

<sup>48</sup> Ian Bower and Henrik Stålhane Hiim, "Conventional Counterforce Dilemmas: South Korea's Deterrence Strategy and Stability on the Korean Peninsula," *International Security* 45, no. 3 (Winter 2020/21): 10-13.

## Nuclear Strategy

The second perceptual variable is North Korea's theory of what is needed for credible nuclear deterrence. If Kim Jong Un believes that credible nuclear deterrence only requires a handful of survivable nuclear delivery platforms that can launch second-strike nuclear attacks, then even a substantial degradation of its nuclear forces does not necessarily result in nuclear escalation. On the other hand, if he believes that credible nuclear deterrence needs a capability for not only nuclear retaliation but also for coercive nuclear signaling or nuclear warfighting, then threats to nuclear capabilities for coercion and battlefield applications can create a strong use-it-or-lose-it pressure, which could lead to nuclear escalation. Consequently, deciphering North Korea's nuclear strategy—a state's "operational blueprint for how it might employ nuclear weapons"—is critical for understanding how North Korea would assess the threats posed by the alliance's conventional campaigns to its nuclear forces.<sup>49</sup>

Early works on North Korea's nuclear strategy argue that North Korea would use its primitive nuclear capability to trigger a diplomatic intervention from China.<sup>50</sup> As North Korea's expansion of its nuclear arsenal continues, scholarly estimates gradually change. Some argue that North Korea envisions the prompt, first use of nuclear weapons either for signaling purposes or battlefield use in the early stages of a conflict.<sup>51</sup> Others disagree, claiming that North Korea intends to use its nuclear capability as a second-strike retaliatory capability, after absorbing a potential first strike.<sup>52</sup> Still, others argue that North Korea's nuclear strategy is essentially a mixture of crucial elements of different types of strategies to maximize the chance of deterrence success.<sup>53</sup>

Two conjectures arise based on insights from those works and North Korea's Law on Nuclear Forces Policy, passed last September. First, North Korea is likely to highly value long-range nuclear delivery platforms. While disagreeing with the primary focus of North Korea's nuclear strategy, experts generally agree that Pyongyang would maintain its long-range nuclear missiles as a reserve to credibly threaten the United States that any U.S. nuclear use would result in a retaliatory nuclear strike.<sup>54</sup> Nuclear-tipped ICBMs (and potentially IRBMs, too) will be a critical capability for North Korea to make Washington think twice before launching nuclear strikes against North Korea. But nuclear-tipped MRBMs could also play a role in issuing nuclear threats against the United States or Japan. For instance, North Korea could use its nuclear-armed MRBMs to coerce both states by threatening to launch a nuclear attack against Japan if either Tokyo or Washington crosses the red line.

Second, North Korea may also emphasize the role of a battlefield nuclear capability, such as nuclear-tipped MRBMs or SRBMs in its nuclear strategy. The Law on DPRK's Nuclear Forces Policy, which was passed last September, indicates that North Korea would contemplate nuclear use against an adversary's major conventional attacks.<sup>55</sup> There are also multiple instances where Kim Jong Un indicates his willingness to develop and use TNWs.<sup>56</sup> In addition, long-range nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles may have limited utility for coercive signaling or battlefield use. The limited number of those missiles means that any use of a long-range missile for coercive purposes or battlefield applications reduces the number of missiles it can use to launch nuclear retaliatory attacks against the United States. Features of long-range nuclear ballistic missiles, such as high-

<sup>49</sup> Vipin Narang, "Nuclear Strategies of Emerging Nuclear Powers: North Korea and Iran," *Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 82.

<sup>50</sup> Vipin Narang, "Nuclear Strategies of Emerging Nuclear Powers: North Korea and Iran," *Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 82-85.

<sup>51</sup>

1. Vipin Narang, "Why Kim Jong Un Wouldn't Be Irrational to Use a Nuclear Bomb First," *Washington Post*, September 8, 2017, accessed August 8, 2022, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/why-kim-jong-un-wouldnt-be-irrational-to-use-a-nuclear-bomb-first/2017/09/08/a9d36ca4-934f-11e7-aace-04b862b2b3f3\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6dd9d40c5939](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/why-kim-jong-un-wouldnt-be-irrational-to-use-a-nuclear-bomb-first/2017/09/08/a9d36ca4-934f-11e7-aace-04b862b2b3f3_story.html?utm_term=.6dd9d40c5939).
2. Ankit Panda, "A Call to Arms: Kim Jong Un and the Tactical Bomb," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 7-24.

<sup>52</sup> Dong Sun Lee and Iordanka Alexandrova, "North Korean Nuclear Strategy: Envisioning Assured Retaliation," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 21, no. 3 (September 2021): 371-400.

<sup>53</sup> Hyun-Binn Cho and Ariel Petrovics, "North Korea's Strategically Ambiguous Nuclear Posture," *Washington Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (Summer 2022): 39-58.

<sup>54</sup>

1. Vipin Narang, "Why Kim Jong Un Wouldn't Be Irrational to Use a Nuclear Bomb First," *Washington Post*, September 8, 2017, accessed August 8, 2022, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/why-kim-jong-un-wouldnt-be-irrational-to-use-a-nuclear-bomb-first/2017/09/08/a9d36ca4-934f-11e7-aace-04b862b2b3f3\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6dd9d40c5939](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/why-kim-jong-un-wouldnt-be-irrational-to-use-a-nuclear-bomb-first/2017/09/08/a9d36ca4-934f-11e7-aace-04b862b2b3f3_story.html?utm_term=.6dd9d40c5939).
2. Panda, Ankit. 2020. *Kim Jong Un and the Bomb: Survival and Deterrence in North Korea*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 85.

<sup>55</sup> Ildo Hwang, "DPRK's Law on the Nuclear Forces Policy: Mission and Command & Control," *IFANS Focus*, September 14, 2022, accessed October 26, 2022, <https://www.ifans.go.kr/knda/ifans/eng/pblct/PblctView.do?csrfPreventionSalt=null&pblctDtaSn=14058&menuCl=P11&clCode=P11&koreanEngSe=ENG&pclCode&chcodeId&searchCondition=searchAll&searchKeyword&pageIndex=1>

<sup>56</sup> Ankit Panda, "A Call to Arms: Kim Jong Un and the Tactical Bomb," *Washington Quarterly* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2021): 9-12.

yield warheads and low accuracy, may also reduce the effectiveness of those platforms for battlefield use. Possessing a series of short-range, accurate nuclear delivery platforms can help North Korea mitigate this problem. Nuclear-tipped MRBMs could also be used to destroy critical military infrastructures in South Korea or key U.S. forward bases.

Admittedly, these arguments paint a grim picture: from Pyongyang's perspective, *all* types of nuclear capabilities are critically important for its national security. Long-range nuclear-tipped missiles serve as a means to launch retaliatory strikes against the United States. Medium- and short-range missiles, on the other hand, constitute a battlefield nuclear capability to complicate the South Korea-U.S. alliance's overall military operations. A significant threat to either type of capability, therefore, is likely to be interpreted by North Korea as creating a major gap in the capability foundation for nuclear deterrence.

## **Assessing the Risks of Inadvertent Nuclear Escalation**

The previous sections address key military-technical and perceptual variables that are expected to shape the risk of inadvertent nuclear escalation. Based on this analysis, I present my expectations about how the alliance's conventional military operations against Pyongyang's ballistic missile forces could generate the risk of inadvertent escalation. Three types of operations are particularly important: operations against MRBMs, SRBMs, and missile operating bases. If the alliance wants to avoid making its conventional warfighting trigger inadvertent nuclear escalation, then it is highly unlikely that it would target North Korea's IRBM and ICBMs, as well as missile operating bases within the Strategic Belt. Experts estimate that those missiles are likely to exclusively have a nuclear role.<sup>57</sup> Thus, attacks against those assets are direct and deliberate threats to North Korea's nuclear arsenal. Similarly, attacks against the bases within the Strategic Belt are also considered direct threats to Pyongyang's nuclear deterrent. Given that the bases appear not to house any MRBMs or SRBMs, Kim Jung Un might have no doubts that the alliance is directly targeting its capability for nuclear deterrence.

First, conventional military campaigns against North Korea's MRBMs would involve the substantial risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation. Given that MRBMs are the most likely category of missiles that have a nuclear role, attacks against them already have arguably the highest baseline risks of nuclear escalation. Moreover, liquid-fuel MRBMs, such as the Nodong and Hwasong-9, are more likely to be detectable than solid-fuel MRBMs and SRBMs, given their conspicuous logistical footprint. Furthermore, once located, they are less likely to be survivable from the alliance's kinetic strikes.<sup>58</sup> Given North Korea's limited warning capability, those launchers might not be able to launch the missiles before an incoming missile or bomb arrives. Lastly, it would be substantially difficult for the alliance to avoid targeting launchers carrying nuclear-armed MRBMs and to only destroy the launchers carrying conventionally armed MRBMs, given the few observable signatures it could use.

Once Kim Jung Un receives updates from frontline forces about his MRBM nuclear forces being destroyed by the alliance's conventional operations, his long-standing fear of counterforce preemption is likely to make him believe that those operations are a prelude to an all-out counterforce preemptive strike. As the loss of nuclear-tipped medium-range missiles might mean a significant degradation in North Korea's ability to threaten military infrastructures in South Korea and U.S. forward bases, Kim may end up believing that the deterrent utility of his nuclear forces is rapidly declining. This might lead him to alert his remaining nuclear forces to prepare for nuclear strikes, which could spark the beginning of a dangerous action-reaction process. Kim may even issue a launch order for a demonstrative shot to coerce the alliance into backing down.

What is the escalatory potential of conventional campaigns against North Korea's SRBMs? Those operations could also involve some escalation risks, but they might be relatively less dangerous than conventional attacks against MRBMs. First, the alliance might be able to avoid targeting the SRBMs having a nuclear role, especially the latest SRBMs, by using signatures from the unique features of those SRBMs. This would reduce the probability that the alliance's conventional campaigns inadvertently target those latest SRBMs. If the allied force plans to

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<sup>57</sup> James M. Acton, *Is It a Nuke? Pre-Launch Ambiguity and Inadvertent Escalation* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2020): 57.

<sup>58</sup> Solid-fuel MRBMs, such as the Pukguksong-2, might have higher survivability.

target the new SRBMs because some of them are also assigned conventional missions, however, then it might have still difficulties identifying launchers carrying nuclear-armed SRBMs, considering that there might be little clues available for the allied force to find out TELs carrying nuclear-armed SRBMs. As a result, the alliance's conventional operations could still inadvertently target some launchers carrying tactical nuclear warheads mated to SRBMs, depending on their targets.

On the other hand, all of the new generation of SRBMs use solid propellants, which reduces their vulnerability under the allied force's kinetic strikes as their launch time would be far shorter than liquid-fuel missiles. This could mitigate escalating pressures on North Korea, compared to scenarios of attacks against MRBMs. It is conceivable, for example, that after receiving the news that his new SRBMs are under attack, Kim Jung Un may still believe in the survivability of his tactical nuclear forces and decided not to issue launch orders or take steps to prepare nuclear use.

Third, the allied force's attacks against missile operating bases within the Tactical/Operational Belts could generate lower escalation risks than attacking ballistic missile launchers. First, attacks against those bases could significantly disrupt any nuclear operations that North Korea conceives by destroying support facilities for maintenance and reloading. As fixed targets, the survivability of those bases from kinetic strikes is questionable, except for some UGFs. This could significantly reduce the reliability and effectiveness of Pyongyang's nuclear forces, which could create strong use-it-before-lose-it pressure. On the other hand, there are some ways in which the alliance could avoid targeting the bases that might house ballistic missiles assigned a nuclear delivery role. For instance, North Korea's nuclear warhead release procedure could produce some signatures the alliance's ISR capability could use. It could be conceivable, as a result, that the allied force could deliberately limit the scope of military operations by targeting the bases that are assessed to have conventionally armed ballistic missiles only. This would reduce the likelihood that critical facilities supporting North Korea's nuclear operations are inadvertently exposed to the alliance's conventional campaigns.

## **Conclusion**

This paper explores the escalation risks of the South Korea-U.S. alliance's conventional military campaigns to destroy North Korea's land-based ballistic missile forces. Using theories of inadvertent escalation and open-source literature on North Korea's nuclear forces and ballistic missile capability, it concludes that 1) the alliance's conventional military operations could trigger inadvertent nuclear escalation, but 2) not all operations are equally dangerous. Specifically, conventional kinetic attacks against North Korea's liquid-fuel MRBMs are likely to generate substantial risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation. Conventional operations against North Korea's SRBMs could also create escalation risks, but the danger of such risks may be lower than attacks against MRBMs, given the survivability of the new generation of solid-fuel SRBMs and their distinguishability from older SRBMs. Lastly, conventional campaigns against the bases within the Tactical and Operational Belts could also generate non-trivial risks of nuclear escalation, but they might be relatively less dangerous than operations against missile launchers, given that the allied force could leverage several observable signatures to make their operations limited to the bases housing conventional missile forces.

How could the South Korea-U.S. alliance achieve its military objectives with conventional military operations without sparking nuclear escalation inadvertently? Unfortunately, not all variables conducive to inadvertent escalation can be "manipulable" by the alliance's policymakers, at least in the short term. For example, without a sustainable arms control agreement, it would not be viable for either South Korea or the United States to substantially reduce its military capability having counterforce implications to reduce North Korea's fear of counterforce preemption. Similarly, it would be unwise for the alliance to completely forgo conventional military operations against North Korea's ballistic missile capability, given the substantial level of threats posed by this capability.

Nevertheless, understanding the problem of inadvertent nuclear escalation and the conditions under which it could be triggered is an important first step to crafting war plans that serve the South Korea-U.S. alliance's security interests with acceptable costs. As the alliance's planners are developing a new war

plan,<sup>59</sup> they should consider the escalation risks of various conventional military operations in a conventional war with North Korea.

It is also important for leaders of both states to consider the possibility that the alliance's conventional campaigns, even without North Korea's major military defeat, may create significant pressure for nuclear use on North Korea. Therefore, if North Korea takes steps to prepare the employment of its nuclear forces, such as warheads release, right after the alliance's conventional kinetic strikes against its ballistic missile units or operating bases, the alliance's leader should consider using tools for direct communications with North Korea, such as hotlines, to reveal its intentions to keep the conflict conventional and probe the underlying motivations behind North Korea's behavior.

Relatedly, civilian policymakers should be ready to require military leaders to reconsider the value of implementing certain preplanned conventional operations if available information suggests that implementing those operations involves substantial risks of nuclear escalation. For instance, if newly collected information hints that the degree of conventional-nuclear entanglement in the missile operating bases that a given conventional strike plans to destroy is extremely high, then a careful re-assessment of the importance of political and military objectives the operation intends to achieve may be appropriate, even if it may mean the loss of military initiatives. Of course, this does not mean that the alliance should take no military actions that involve any level of nuclear escalation. If North Korea is taking preparatory steps towards nuclear use without any major conventional engagement, then the alliance should contemplate all measures to preempt North Korea's nuclear use with thoughtful consideration of the anticipated benefits and associated risks of those actions.

Lastly, leaders of the alliance must be aware of the possibility that their rhetorical signaling in peacetime or during a crisis could amplify North Korea's fear of counterforce preemption. Although the intended purpose of those signals is likely to deter North Korea from instigating a crisis or further escalating the ongoing crisis, official statements insinuating potential preemption against North Korea's nuclear capabilities could inadvertently lower North Korea's

nuclear threshold. This may also significantly narrow the range of conventional military campaigns that the South Korea-U.S. alliance can conduct without generating significant risks of inadvertent nuclear escalation. Consequently, the alliance's civilian and military leaders must carefully weigh the escalation risks and deterrent benefits of verbal signals against North Korea.

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<sup>59</sup> Oren Liebermann, "US and South Korea to Develop New War Plan to Address North Korean Military Advancements," CNN, December 1, 2021,

accessed October 29, 2022, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/01/politics/us-south-korea-war-plan/index.html>.



# 3

## **Indo-Pacific-Focused ROK-US Maritime Exercises: Strengthening Operational Readiness to Safeguard the Indo-Pacific**

*Jaeun Ha*



## Introduction

The Republic of Korea and the United States alliance started back in 1953 with the Korean Navy acquiring its first warship from the United States in 1949. Since then, the Korean Navy has become extremely formidable and is one of the top 10 most powerful Navies in the world. The US Navy has been cooperating with like-minded partners in the world including the ROK. The two Navies have been conducting a number of naval exercises together to establish a combat readiness posture to fight against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and other threats in international waters including the Indo-Pacific. Korea has been facing various security challenges due to DPRK including incidents such as the Battle of Yeongpyeong and sinking of the ROK ship Cheonan, Korea's greatest concerns were DPRK and land warfare for a long period of time due to such reasons. However, Korea and its Navy have recognized Korea's economic growth is highly dependent on international waters and the Navy's ambition to construct a blue-water navy which drew people's attention to waters beyond the territorial sea; the Indo-Pacific region in particular.

As the world is becoming one enormous entity connected and intertwined with one another, one nation's attempt to protect its water is certainly not enough. Therefore, countries, especially Pacific nations are paying more attention to the regional security in the Indo-Pacific and acknowledge cooperation is key to peace and prosperity in the region. In addition, the ROK Navy recognizes the importance of bilateral and multinational naval exercises in order to build a stronger military and safeguard its ocean and the Indo-Pacific. Korea's focus on protecting national interests has resulted in more participation in combined naval exercises such as Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), in which ROK Navy deployed ships with a flag officer for the first time<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, port visits and high officials reciprocal visits in support of enhancement of international engagement have been key in developing international relationships. Many expect the ROK Navy and its nation to play a bigger role in the Indo-Pacific as South Korea's presence and support are vital for areas of the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, resolving problems a number of

nations encounter in a vast ocean, especially the Indo-Pacific cannot be done by one single country. Therefore, building a strong alliance based on mutual trust and understanding is imperative in order to defeat enemies in any form. By the same token, it is crucial to create bilateral exercises focused on the Indo-Pacific region that the Republic of Korea and the United States can consistently conduct together. This special relationship between both nations has led to a deeper understanding of one another's capability and fosters interoperability. Thereby, in this Research paper, I will highlight the importance of bilateral naval exercises with the US Navy which bolsters the alliance's ability to preserve peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific.

This research aims to answer two questions:

1. What are the challenges in the Indo-Pacific?
2. What are the positive effects of bilateral naval exercises and a Dialogue on the ROK-US alliance?

## Indo-Pacific Strategy

2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy Report was released on June 1, 2019 by the US Department of Defense<sup>2</sup>. In the DoD document, it states the first Indo-Pacific Strategy Report is a comprehensive articulation of DoD's role within a whole-of-governemnt strategy for the Indo-Pacific region and it provides clarity on the U.S. National Defense Strategy which highlights the role of allies and partners in promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. When analyzing America's history in Indo-Pacific relations there is a pattern of partnership that shapes diplomatic policy throughout the world. Additionally, when we examine the economic, geographical and historical background we get a picture that shows a quarter of U.S. exports go to the Indo-Pacific. America's historic ties to the Indo-Pacific, date back more than two centuries. This long history leaves two things we need to examine; (1) The United States is a Pacific Nation. (2) The United States is asking for free and democratic people to take ownership of the region.

The very first DoD's official Indo-Pacific Strategy report, establishes the legitimacy and connectivity of the Indo-Pacific Strategy based on various factors including economy, history and geographical

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<sup>1</sup> Jung Da-min 2022, 'What's behind S.Korea's deployment of largest-ever Navy fleet to RIMPAC?', The Korea Times, 10 Jul 2022

<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense. Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. 2019, p.10.

importance. As quoted in the 2019 strategy document, “The American people and the whole world have a stake in the Indo-Pacific’s peace and prosperity.” and “the prosperity of everyday Americans is linked to the Indo-Pacific.”<sup>3</sup> These reports explain why we need to pay attention to the Indo-Pacific, due to the interconnected nature of the 21st Century. In the Free and open Indo-Pacific vision President Trump announced in 2017, he highlights several key points of American diplomacy (1) Respect for sovereignty and independence of all nations (2) Peaceful resolution of disputes (3) Free, fair, and reciprocal trade based on open investment, transparent agreements, and connectivity; and, (4) Adherence to international rules and norms, including those of freedom of navigation and overflight. Trump and America ask for allies and partners to share these principles. The 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy that was later released under President Biden may have a different method in implementing its strategy<sup>4</sup>. However, both documents emphasize the importance of the region, the 2022 strategy says ‘*The United States has long recognized the Indo-Pacific as vital to our security and prosperity.*’ and has similar objectives (1) Deterrence capability (2) Bilateral Partnerships (3) Multilateral Engagements (4) Ensuring Peace and Stability. Furthermore, Indo-Pacific Strategy 2022 emphasizes “collective efforts”. It encourages like-minded partners to build collective capability to tackle security challenges while abiding by international law and rules-based order.

South Korea, on the other hand, despite its geopolitical importance in the Indo-Pacific, has not released any official Indo-Pacific strategy related document just yet. In the past, some countries’ IR experts and public outside of Korea criticized South Korea for not releasing key strategy, nor actively participating in fully supporting its ally, the U.S., in the Indo-Pacific. Indeed, some condemn Korea for not taking a more proactive stance rebuking Korea’s strategic ambiguity. Ultimately, the reason South Korea has not been in a place where it can openly and fully support the Indo-Pacific is mostly economical. As stated in the introduction, South Korea’s long time adversary remains North Korea. Although the South needs to play a bigger role in the Indo-Pacific, due to North Korean aggression, the need for diplomacy remains, conflict with the North seems imminent based on recent provocations by North Korea. Ultimately, this is the big question the South needs to

contemplate - how do we tackle issues of North Korea and the Indo-Pacific together with our allies across the world.

Lastly, on November 11th, 2022, South Korean President Yoon announced some of the contents of the country’s new Indo-Pacific Strategy. Yoon stated that the Korean government will conduct its Indo-Pacific strategy based on 3 visions (1) Freedom (2) Peace (3) Prosperity<sup>5</sup>. The president made similar comments that President Biden and Trump mentioned - first, Peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific is directly connected to our survival and prosperity. Second, ASEAN is the key cooperation partner in pursuit of Korea’s Indo-Pacific strategy. Based on the president’s statement, Korea in the future with its strategy will reinforce rules-based order and its partnerships with allies and like-minded states. Furthermore, Korea will now take a more active role to contribute and meet the demands of the international community.

## **Security Environment of Indo-Pacific: Alliance and Challenges**

There are two things the alliance must focus on; North Korea and the Indo-Pacific. In the 21st century, North Korea is not only a threat to Korea, but the world. When asked “What is a biggest security threat to Korea?” Many will say it is “North Korea”, many nations already acknowledge well enough North Korea has been a longstanding threat against South Korea and due to North Korea’s geographical closeness to the South, the North has been directly and indirectly threatening South Korea and its people for decades. This regional provocation includes missile tests, and battles started by the North. On June 15, 1999 and June 29, 2002, called Yeonpyeong Battle 1 and 2 respectively, a North Korean patrol boat invaded Northern Limit Line (NLL) and threatened South Korean Warships. 7 sailors were injured from the 1st Yeonpyeong Battle and 18 injured and 6 sailors sacrificed their lives during the 2nd Battle. Unfortunately, it is not the most recent engagement the South had with the North. Pohang-class corvette ROKS Cheonan (PCC-722) was attacked and sunk by North Korea’s torpedo and the ROK lost 46 sailors’ lives. Furthermore, North Korea tested its missiles 8 different times in 2021, and is still continuing in 2022. Submarine Launched Ballistic

<sup>3</sup> Department of Defense, Indo-Pacific Strategy Report. 2019, p.14.

<sup>4</sup> The White House, 2022 Indo-Pacific Strategy, 7-12. 2022.

<sup>5</sup> ‘Yoon unveils S.Korea’s strategy for free, peaceful, prosperous Indo-Pacific.’ Yonhap News Agency, November 11, 2022.

Missile (SLBM) tests on May 7 this year, and a total number of 8 Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM) at 4 different locations for 35 minutes were launched by North Korea on June 5. The June missile test occurred right after ROK-US Navy exercise which involved an aircraft carrier USS Ronald Reagan. North Korea conducted 5 missile tests in 2020, 8 in 2021, and 32 times as of November 3<sup>rd</sup> this year and a majority of the tests violated UN resolutions. The North's intention behind these tests is of course, unpredictable and complex. However, many media and studies show (1) the North desires to threaten and pressure the ROK-US alliance (2) to flaunt its strategic weapons (3) North Korea is threatened by bilateral exercises between the ROK and U.S. alliance, regarding "war games" as "war practice," South Korea and United States Forces have been conducting various types of bilateral and multilateral exercises and this is a formidable threat to North Korea. North has historically condemned the U.S.-ROK alliance for conducting combined exercises often responding with weapons tests.

As security threats keep evolving, there are traditional and non-traditional challenges in not just Korea, but around the world. Some of the challenges are as follows; Illicit drug use and production, human trafficking, natural disaster, climate change, illegal fishing and migration, and piracy and robbery in particular. These are the main factors hindering efforts to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific. As explained in the beginning of this paper, the world is paying much more attention to the Indo-Pacific region because of its inherent instability as countries' interests are directly intertwined in the region. About 70% of the world's surface is covered by water, and according to the OECD, around 90% of traded goods are carried over the waves<sup>6</sup>. This clearly indicates that countless people as well as nations are strongly dependent on our oceans. According to 2022 US Indo-Pacific strategy, the region takes over half the world's people, including 58% of youth and it accounts for 60% of global GDP. Geographical importance highlights the regions tactical significance as 65% of the world's oceans and 25% of its land exists within the Indo-Pacific theater<sup>7</sup>. However, the seas are still facing a number of problems including traditional and non-traditional security threats, climate change, and pandemic issues.

## Bilateral Exercises

### The importance and benefits of Bilateral Naval Exercises

The very first combined training "Focus Lens" took place in 1954<sup>8</sup>. It was a command post training led by United States Forces Korea and United Nations Command, while acquiring many names over the years such as Ulchi Focus Lense (UFL), Key Resolve (KR), Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG), Dong Maeng Exercise and this year under the name of Ulchi Freedom Shield (UFS). Such Exercises have served as a great tool to enhance the bilateral relationship, interoperability and combat readiness of the Korean Navy. Moreover, it serves as a barometer for war or future conflict. Some military leaders proclaim "Prevent a war, but if that fails, then win the war." Combat readiness, so called "Fight Tonight" spirit is extremely imperative for militaries in the Indo - Pacific region. All branches of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces conduct bilateral exercises to strengthen the ROK-US combined Operations Execution capability and enhance combined readiness posture. These exercises teach service members to trust their weapons, equipment, and tactics.

Maritime security is national security. For Korea, 99.7% of trade volume happens at sea<sup>9</sup>. Maritime security is directly connected to national interest. The Indo-Pacific is a relatively new and vast battlespace, yet one we must safeguard. The role of the Republic of Korea Navy is as follows<sup>10</sup>; (1) Deter war and possess strong naval powers to deter enemy's war provocation (2) Sea Control to deny enemy's use in the area of sea to guarantee the ROK forces' use of the area (3) Protection of Sea Lane of Communication. To safely protect the routes where ROK merchant vessels transit (4) Projection of Power. Insert military power into land from sea, using landing forces, aircrafts, guided missiles and naval guns (5) Support Korean foreign policy and raise national prestige. Maintain international peace, ships' visit to foreign countries, salvage activities, prevent marine pollution, block maritime terrorism and piracy. The United States Navy has a similar definition of its role, the webpage states that "the U.S. Navy protects

<sup>6</sup> Official OECD website. 2022. <https://www.oecd.org/ocean/topics/ocean-shipment>.

<sup>7</sup> The White House, *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*, 2022. p.5.

<sup>8</sup> Yoo Kang-moon, 'S.Korea and US to reduce another joint exercise in summer.', Hankyoreh, March 7, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> John Yum, 'Korea's green shipping pathways' 2022. p.2.

<sup>10</sup> Official Republic of Korea Navy website 2022. Mission and Function, [http://www.navy.mil.kr/mbshome/mbs/eng/subview.do?id=eng\\_010300000](http://www.navy.mil.kr/mbshome/mbs/eng/subview.do?id=eng_010300000) 000.

America at sea. Alongside our allies and partners, we defend freedom, preserve economic prosperity, and keep the seas open and free...to defend American interests around the globe, the U.S. Navy must remain prepared to execute our timeless role..."<sup>11</sup>. Naval cooperation is the key to the peace in the Indo-Pacific region because the sea is their battlespace as well as the main object to protect. International communities including governments of countries require navies in the world to work together.

The benefits of bilateral exercises are first, it is a measure which does not involve direct military conflicts and is a best way to project force in support of war deterrence. United States Forces Korea (USFK)'s mission is stated on their webpage<sup>12</sup>; "our mission is to deter aggression and if necessary, defend the Republic of Korea to maintain stability in Northeast Asia." By conducting continued bilateral exercises, it will send adversaries a strategic message. Here I quote the former Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Arleigh Bruke, "For in this modern world, the instruments of warfare are not solely for waging a war...Far more importantly, they are the means for controlling peace. Naval officers must therefore understand not only how to fight a war, but how to use the tremendous power which they operate to sustain a world of liberty and justice, without unleashing the powerful instruments of destruction and chaos that they have at their command." What the CNO is trying to explain is that putting a rifle directly to the enemy is not the only way that we can show our war capability. Instead, we can show our troops' combat readiness and unity through combined exercises in and outside the peninsula to project power and presence during peacetime. By doing so, we can deter our enemy's further provocation.

When conducting joint training, most of it starts by simple passing exercise (PASSEX) including maneuvering. This is mostly because we simply do not know one another's capability and interoperability, we cannot share certain information due to lack of trust. It is extremely imperative to have mutual understanding of each other to operate together, and it is crucial that you work with like-minded partners to practice interoperability. This is when our "An alliance forged in blood" receives

significant advantages. We have already built a mutual understanding, and we have fought together. One of the good examples-the MCSOF exercise has been conducted by the Republic of Korea Navy and the United States Navy. The Exercise is a highly advanced operation that involves all three branches of the ROK and US forces, where both militaries have been practicing for many years to destroy any enemies infiltration attempts to the sea at the early stage. Our alliance possess highly modernized military and has a solid foundation which will allow us to openly share valuable information and it has decades of experiences in military cooperation which allows us to conduct high-level exercises. Ultimately, Koreans and Americans work side by side at three big commands; U.S. Forces Korea, the Combined Forces Command and the United Nations Command. We have highly trained people that have experience in working with foreign personnel which enables well-organized joint training and in case of any contingency, the other will be there to provide assistance. All of this begins with a mutual foundation of trust.

Furthermore, it is easier to tackle challenges when we are together. According to the 2019 Indo-Pacific Strategy, the United States holds 90 named military exercises in the Indo-Pacific each year and most of these are joint and combined exercise with the United States' allies and partners. Military cooperation is not just to deter aggression, it is beneficial for each nation if humanitarian assistance and disaster relief is needed. In Paul Baker's Indo-Pacific Defense Forum paper, he quoted a United Nations report detailing that more than 2 million people were killed by natural disasters in the Indo-Pacific from 1970 to 2016. Moreover, the region's residents are five times more likely to be hit by a natural disaster than someone anywhere else in the world. Natural disasters are hard to predict, but we can at least prepare.

## **Establishment of the ROK-US Indo-Pacific Exercises**

Specifics and major events of the Exercise can vary and be subject to change depending on what incidents and crisis occur the most during a combined exercise period. However, for the basic framework of the "Indo-Pacific Exercise", I would

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<sup>11</sup>Official US Navy website 2022. Mission Statement, <https://www.navy.mil/About/Mission>.

<sup>12</sup> Official United States Forces Korea website. 2022. About USFK, <https://www.usfk.mil/About/USFK>.

like to suggest a few things. First, the exercise should involve considerable Navy resources, assets, and personnel. Indo-Pacific is a vast battle space and the alliance must practice a wide range of capabilities. Second, the exercise should not just focus on one aspect of war. ROK-US Navies have been conducting training such as mine, amphibious, cyber, communications, live-fire, search and rescue, etc. However, the training has to be a 'full-blown warfare exercise', meaning the exercise should include every possible aspect of war while considering the most recent and emerging technologies including AI. 'Cobra Gold', one of the biggest multinational exercise in the world held by the Royal Thai Armed Forces and U.S. INDOPACOM<sup>13</sup>. People gather in Thailand or meet through Video Tele-Conference for planning and working with multinational military partners. Participating personnel conduct events such as Field Training Exercise (FTX), Staff Exercise, Live-fire, Cyber Warfare, Senior official engagement, Humanitarian Assistance (HA) and Disaster Relief (DR). As security threats evolve, it is crucial to create a complex network of exercises that simulates a real-world practice with the assumption that conflict may occur in many areas simultaneously.

Another good example is "ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus". It is a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners including Australia, Republic of Korea and the United States. It is a multinational security entity where high defense officials participate to have a dialogue and iron out differences building cooperation amongst nations to jointly respond to transnational threats. ADMM-Plus also held their last exercise in Korean and Singapore waters, 16 ships and 6 aircrafts from 12 nations participated in support of upholding international rules-based maritime order. The exercise was comprised of 2 phases with events including international maritime response, information-sharing and WMD VBSS and MCM Exercises.

## Conclusions and Recommendation

The longstanding ROK-US Alliance, forged in blood, is built upon mutual understanding and trust which helps us to counter imminent threats. However, as the world is facing relatively new challenges in the Indo-Pacific region where economic, diplomatic and security interests are intimately intertwined. Our

Alliance needs to enhanced flexibility and the ability look far ahead to prepare ourselves in a rapidly changing maritime environment. This preparation will ensure we can continue to contribute to global trade, peace and prosperity while maintaining our readiness at sea to defeat enemies in any form. Ultimately, to help resolve issues in the Indo-Pacific, it is imperative to create a bilateral and official exercises. The Republic of Korea and the United States alliance is a special one where bilateral training is consistently conducted, through which, Korea and the United States work together to gain understanding of one another's capability. Naval cooperation is extremely imperative in the Indo-Pacific region as the Navy is the key combined arms factor at sea. The international community is calling for a unity of efforts in the Indo-Pacific, which requires navies and the world to work together. There are adversaries in the region who fight against our interest as well as safety, and to secure a free and open Indo-Pacific, there is a need to combine our forces to cover the area of the region. Ultimately, to resolve any issues at sea, we should continue to train and operate together in the Indo-Pacific region, so we can be prepared to defeat enemies in any form of complex circumstances while deterring our enemies' attempts to deteriorate blue economy, and ensure safe passage of allies so we can contribute to global trade, peace and prosperity.

## Discussion

Despite all the advantages of holding strong bilateral naval exercises in the region, recent North Korean missile tests raise many concerns amongst experts and the public. As conducting sophisticated military exercises gives our adversaries pause, it is also a great way to show our capability as the ROK-US alliance's premier military power. However, enemies of state, including North Korea, are consistent with their actions and take gray zone tactics to avoid blame, while threatening peace in the region. With regional tensions high it is imperative we ask ourselves is how much bilateral exercises do we actually need. Ideally, more training breeds more competency, but there is a possibility combined training may provoke a stronger response by our enemies, leading to full on conflict. Therefore, it is imperative we strike a balance within the region, with our allies, and against our enemies. Lastly, countries such as Australia, France,

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<sup>13</sup> *Royal Thai and US Armed Forces complete 40<sup>th</sup> Exercise Cobra Gold*, MilitaryLeak, Aug 24, 2021, <https://militaryleak.com/2021/08/24/royal-thai-and-us-armed-forces-complete-40th-exercise-cobra-gold>.

Japan and even EU have their own Indo-Pacific concept and Korea is on the verge of founding its own national policy. However, as Korea continues to develop regional policy, it must also contend with intricate political and economic realities in a global and interconnected world. Convincing Korean citizens the importance of military training is key. Government and policy experts will need to ensure the people of Korea pursue appropriate strategies of the Indo-Pacific region without risking the delicate balance of the region.



# 4

## **Legitimate Containment: How the ROK-US Reciprocal Defense Procurement can legitimately balance China's military influence in the South China Sea**

*Yaechan Lee*



The South China Sea has become a central stage of contest between the US and China. Increased Chinese assertiveness in claiming sovereignty over islands in the sea, home to the busiest maritime trade route in the world, has led to grave concerns from the US and other economies that rely on the route on the potential disruptions that such claims may cause to the freedom of navigation in the sea. While such claims indeed pose a potential threat to those that rely on the sea for trade and navigation, these claims pose the most immediate threat to Southeast Asian (SEA) countries that also have overlapping claims on the islands. The monopolization of the sea by China would significantly limit the use of their maritime territories, and potentially disrupt their trade with major economic partners in Northeast Asia, such as South Korea or Japan

Yet, SEA countries have been stuck in a chronic dilemma in effectively countering China's claims over the islands in the sea due to their asymmetric economic dependence on China. A move away from the strategic objectives of China may lead to economic retaliation. China is the largest trading partner for every SEA economy and is also a major financial investor in critical infrastructural projects of the region. Furthermore, China has proven by previous practices that it is willing and capable of using such relational asymmetries as effective tools for economic statecraft.<sup>1</sup>

The SEA countries' dilemma is also a challenge to the US and its allies. For Chinese claims to be effectively countered, the directly involved countries in the claims over the islands in the sea should step up, as they carry political legitimacy in their involvement in the issue. Nevertheless, the dilemma faced by the relevant countries undermines this potential. Enhanced military and economic partnership between the SEA countries and the US is a potential solution to this dilemma, given their common interests in the sea and the US's capacity. Yet even if the US and the SEA countries reach a common understanding of China's increasing assertiveness in the sea, the potential for Chinese retaliation may make transferring such understanding to action costly for SEA countries. Hence, demonstrating a closer alignment with the US for SEA countries may be too costly. Unilateral intervention from the US in

the dispute also lacks legitimacy, as the US is technically not a directly involved party in the South China Sea disputes.

In this respect, directly strengthening the military and economic capacities of the Southeast Asian countries should be in the interests of the US and its allies, as they are the directly involved parties in the disputes in the South China Sea and their proactive participation in the issue, which may contain the unchecked expansion of China in the sea, carries stronger political legitimacy. To that end, this paper focuses on how the US and its allies can cooperate and contribute to strengthening the military capacities of the SEA countries.

I emphasize allied cooperation since there are clear challenges in achieving this through direct engagement by the US alone, such as arms transfers or increasing joint military exercises with the SEA countries, as China has been cautious against increasing military involvement by the US in the region, as witnessed in the THAAD disputes in the mid-2010s. Chinese sensitiveness against US involvement, therefore, will make direct cooperation with the US politically costly for Southeast Asian countries.

How, then can the US and its allies effectively enhance the capacities of the SEA countries while minimizing the political costs involved in the process? This paper argues that a stronger interdependence between the Korean and US arms industry production chain through the signing of a Reciprocal Defense Procurement (RDP) agreement can significantly contribute to achieving this objective. This is because, as aforementioned, purchasing US arms comes with stronger political strings attached. The political cost of purchasing US arms is higher than purchasing Korean arms, for instance, as arms transactions implicate years of technical and military cooperation in training the buyer's military and providing maintenance services.<sup>2</sup> In other words, US arms sales imply the expansion of US influence, and the purchasing country may have to face retaliation from China, which has been constantly voicing discomfort against US military presence in the region.

<sup>1</sup> Xiaotong, Z., & Keith, J. (2017). From wealth to power: China's New Economic Statecraft. *The Washington Quarterly*, 40(1), 185–203. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2017.1302746>

<sup>2</sup> Snider, L. W. (1979). Arms transfer and recipient cooperation with supplier policy references: The case of the middle east. *International Interactions*, 5(2-3), 241–266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050627808434512>

Purchasing Korean arms, however, is comparatively free from such concerns as although it is a US ally, South Korea (hereinafter, Korea) does not directly challenge China's rising influence in the region. A close tracking the arms purchase trends of SEA countries involved in the South China Sea disputes over the past 20 years also demonstrates the SEA countries' reluctance against over-relying on US arms for strengthening their military capacities. And in fact, data shows that Korean arms have been increasingly serving as their alternative option. This observation carries important theoretical and policy implications. Theoretically, it implies that the SEA countries have been hedging between the US and China when purchasing arms and relying on a more neutral partner to shirk the political risk of demonstrating alignment with either side.

From a policy perspective, it demonstrates that such behavior from the SEA countries can offer a convenient breakthrough for the US in legitimately strengthening the military capacities of the SEA countries against Chinese expansion in the sea. By strengthening arms production network ties with Korea, the US could potentially channel its arms productions through Korea to SEA countries, allowing SEA countries to reduce the political cost of demonstrating alignment with the US. Furthermore, indirectly reducing the political costs of purchasing US arms through Korea can also contain the expansion of China's arms exports in the region. This is an important policy objective, especially given that SEA countries that are not US allies have been noticeably reluctant in relying on a single country for purchasing arms.<sup>3</sup>

Hence, I argue that a tighter interknitting between the US and Korean arms industry value chains through an RDP agreement, which the US has already signed with most of its major allies, could help the US achieve these policy objectives as it would increase the channeling of US arms to SEA countries 'through'

Korea, which will serve as the final producer of arms to be sold to SEA countries. Through this, the SEA countries can significantly shirk the political risks involved in upscaling their military capacities, more 'legitimately' containing China's increasing assertiveness in the region compared to direct intervention from the US in the region's disputes.

This article proceeds in the following order. First, it conducts a brief literature review of existing studies on the hedging behavior of SEA countries, identifies the theoretical implications of this article's findings, and explains why the suggested approach of this article in strengthening the SEA countries' capacities may serve as an effective strategy. Second, it lays out the theoretical framework and justifies the paper's case selection. Third, it presents evidence of the SEA countries' hedging behavior in purchasing arms and Korea's rising influence in the region's arms sales market and argues that the signing of an RDP agreement between Korea and the US could be a strategic choice for the US. Lastly, it ends with policy recommendations on how to move the RDP agreement forward and ends with concluding remarks.

## Dual dependence and Hedging by Southeast Asian countries

Hedging has become the dominant strategy for SEA countries facing a dual dependence on the US for security goods and China for economic benefits.<sup>4</sup> While the concept of hedging has been befuddled by numerous attempts at defining the behavior, hedging has come to generally refer to the strategic choice of weaker states to purposely make their alignment with relevant great powers ambiguous to maximize their gains from their relationship with them.<sup>5</sup> Goh, for instance, argues that hedging refers to deferring policy choices on potentially politically costly

<sup>3</sup> See Fig. 1-2

<sup>4</sup> Haacke, J. (2019). The concept of hedging and its application to Southeast Asia: A Critique and a proposal for a modified conceptual and methodological framework. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 19(3), 375-417. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcz010>; Jones, D. M., & Jenne, N. (2021). Hedging and grand strategy in Southeast Asian foreign policy. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 22(2), 205-235. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcab003>; Koga, K. (2018). ASEAN's evolving institutional strategy: Managing great power politics in South China Sea disputes. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11(1), 49-80. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pox016>; Lee, Y. (2021). Riding the tide: assessing South Korea's hedging strategy through regional security initiatives. *The Pacific Review*. 10.1080/09512748.2021.1977685; Roy, D.

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<sup>5</sup> Lee, "Riding the tide"; Liff, A. P. (2019). Unambivalent alignment: Japan's china strategy, the US alliance, and the 'hedging' fallacy. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 19(3), 453-491.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcz015>; Kuik, C.-C. (2016). How do weaker states hedge? unpacking ASEAN states' alignment behavior towards China. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 25(100), 500-514.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2015.1132714>; Wu, C. C.-H. (2019). Why do states hedge in East Asia? an empirical study on hedging. *Asian Perspective*, 43(3), 557-584. <https://doi.org/10.1353/apr.2019.0017>; Goh, E.

(2008). Great Powers and Hierarchical Order in Southeast Asia: Analyzing Regional Security Strategies. *International Security*, 32(3), 113-157. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2008.32.3.113>

choices.<sup>6</sup> Lim and Cooper, on the other hand, argue that such non-actions should not be considered hedging and that proactive policy choices that make the alignment position of the agent state more ambiguous pertain to hedging.<sup>7</sup> Yet both studies commonly assume that hedging involves the strategic choice of the weaker state to shirk the political cost of alignment choices with relevant great powers.

Given such a definition of hedging, SEA countries are well-placed in a position to practice such strategies. The SEA countries are markedly smaller in capacity compared to China and the US, the great powers of the region, and are mutually dependent on the two powers in terms of economy for the former and security for the latter. Studies have therefore repeatedly pointed to the unique hedging behavior of SEA countries in protecting their interests against China and the US. Koga, for instance, examines how the SEA countries have been collectivizing their bargaining power through utilizing ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) as an institutional platform. Through promoting discourse between the great powers in multilateral settings, SEA countries have been able to maintain their strategic ambiguity and maximize their bargaining power through taking collective action.<sup>8</sup>

This article also finds additional evidence for the hedging behavior of the SEA countries in their arms purchase preferences between 2000-2022. It finds that the SEA countries involved in the South China Sea disputes have noticeably maintained a diverse arms purchase portfolio, in some cases even purchasing arms from China to maintain strategic ambiguity. Through this, this article finds bolstering evidence for the SEA countries' strategic preference for hedging between the US and China.

Such reaffirmation of hedging behavior by the SEA countries is significant because strong evidence for the willingness and necessity to hedge by the SEA countries can clarify the boundaries of cooperation between the US and the SEA countries, and identify the required policy response in recognition of such limitations to effectively strengthen the military capacities of the SEA countries against Chinese expansion. This is the key contribution of this article.

While existing studies have repeatedly identified the hedging behavior of SEA countries, they have not fully examined how such behaviors affect the strategic choices of the US or China. How should the US, or more generally, outer-region powers respond to the policy choices of SEA countries to maximize their interests?

This article focuses on assessing the strategic choices the US could make in consideration of the behavioral preferences of SEA countries. The preference for strategic ambiguity by the SEA countries implies that direct engagement in the South China Sea disputes from the US would not necessarily be outright welcomed by the SEA countries. Aiding or cooperating with the SEA countries should therefore involve reducing the political risks involved in the process. The most straightforward way to achieve this would be to reduce the region's economic dependence on China, but such state-driven market transformation is an extremely difficult task to achieve in the short run as economic interdependence is sticky and strongly path dependent.<sup>9</sup> In this respect, strengthening the military capacities of the SEA countries is a more immediate course of action the US could take. Doing so could help these countries prepare against potential clashes with Chinese fishing or battleships and help them establish a secure maritime surveillance system against increased Chinese activity in the sea.

As aforementioned, however, direct US engagement for this objective may accompany heavy political risk for the SEA countries. Hence, this article suggests that indirectly channeling security assistance from the US to the target countries through US allies that have a more neutral stance against Chinese assertiveness could significantly reduce the political risks involved in aligning with the US for the SEA countries. And I argue that Korea could be an excellent candidate for this purpose given that the SEA countries have already been relying on arms transfers from Korea and that the Korean government has shown immense interest and motivation for supporting the arms exports industries through its development finance banks. In this respect, the signing of an RDP agreement between Korea and the US, which has already been signed between the US and its major allies, could contribute to a more tightly

<sup>6</sup> Goh, "Great powers and hierarchical order in Southeast Asia"

<sup>7</sup> Lim, D. J., & Cooper, Z. (2015). Reassessing hedging: The logic of alignment in East Asia. *Security Studies*, 24(4), 696-727. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2015.1103130>

<sup>8</sup> Koga, K. (2018). ASEAN's evolving institutional strategy: Managing great power politics in South China Sea disputes. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11(1), 49-80. <https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/pox016>

<sup>9</sup> Copeland, D. (2015). *Economic Interdependence and War*. Princeton University Press.

interconnected arms production chain between the two countries, offer new opportunities for growth for the Korean arms industry, increase the indirect transfer of US military devices to SEA countries and finally, strengthen the SEA countries' military capacity against Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea. The following section describes in further detail the framework of this argument.

## **The Logic of Legitimate Containment**

What constitutes a politically legitimate action in international relations? The discussion on legitimacy has been most fervently discussed in assessing the legitimacy of foreign intervention for the protection of human rights. Existing studies focus on largely two factors that contribute to legitimacy: legal and public conformity.<sup>10</sup> Another perspective suggested by the literature focuses on the effectiveness of the intervening agent or the act of intervention itself as an important determinant of legitimacy, since if interventions do not produce ends or perhaps even aggravate the existing situation, then the intervention would be illegitimate.<sup>11</sup>

This article employs both perspectives to define political legitimacy. In terms of legal conformity, China is tacitly infringing the sovereignty of neighboring states and refusing compliance to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), but this does not serve as a sufficient pretext for unilateral intervention from an external state (the US) that has no claims on the sea. The US has concerns about the freedom of navigation in the sea, given its importance to trade, but China has not taken any significant action that would disturb the smooth flow of trade in the region. The effectiveness of the US's response to Chinese assertiveness, such as the Freedom of Navigation Patrols (FONOPs) has also been questionable.

The lack of political legitimacy of the US in directly interfering with the South China Sea disputes, therefore, has been a constant point of criticism from China. An official statement announced by the Chinese embassy in the US had even directly touched on this point in 2020 when tensions in the sea were escalating, arguing that "the United States is not a

country directly involved in the disputes. However, it has kept interfering in the issue."<sup>12</sup> The US had its own criticisms to make, but as an inherent external power with no claims on the islands of the South China Sea, its criticisms of China's expansionary policies and violations of international law lose weight.

Therefore, to 'legitimately' contain China's assertiveness in the sea, the US needs to intervene, but in a more convoluted manner. SEA countries need to remain central to the issue and this should be in the interest of the US as well, given that the countries that are most directly impacted by Chinese assertiveness are the mutual claimants of the islands of the South China Sea. Maintaining, or reinforcing the centrality of these countries would require the strengthening of their capacities so that they *themselves* could contain China's expansion in the sea based on their claims on the islands. As aforementioned, however, reducing the economic dependence of the SEA countries on China would be extremely difficult to achieve in the short term. Direct intervention from the US in strengthening the military capacities of the SEA countries also accompanies heavy political costs for the latter. In this respect, to legitimately contain China, transferring US arms *through* trusted allies in the region that have a more neutral stance against Chinese assertiveness could serve as an effective solution to strengthening the capacities of the SEA countries and drawing them closer to the US and its allies given the countries' strategic demand for hedging. Through this, the US can legitimately contain China and also draw the its allies closer together. This is the logic of legitimate containment. The following section finds evidence for the feasibility of this argument by first identifying quantitative evidence for the hedging behavior of SEA countries.

## **Evidence of Hedging by Southeast Asian Countries in Purchasing Arms**

Existing studies have found convincing evidence for the hedging behavior of SEA countries either

<sup>10</sup> Matlary, J. H. (2004). The legitimacy of military intervention: How important is a UN mandate? *Journal of Military Ethics*, 3(2), 129–141. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15027570410006138>

<sup>11</sup> Pattison, J. (2008). Legitimacy and Humanitarian Intervention: Who should intervene? *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 12(3), 395–413. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642980802069658>

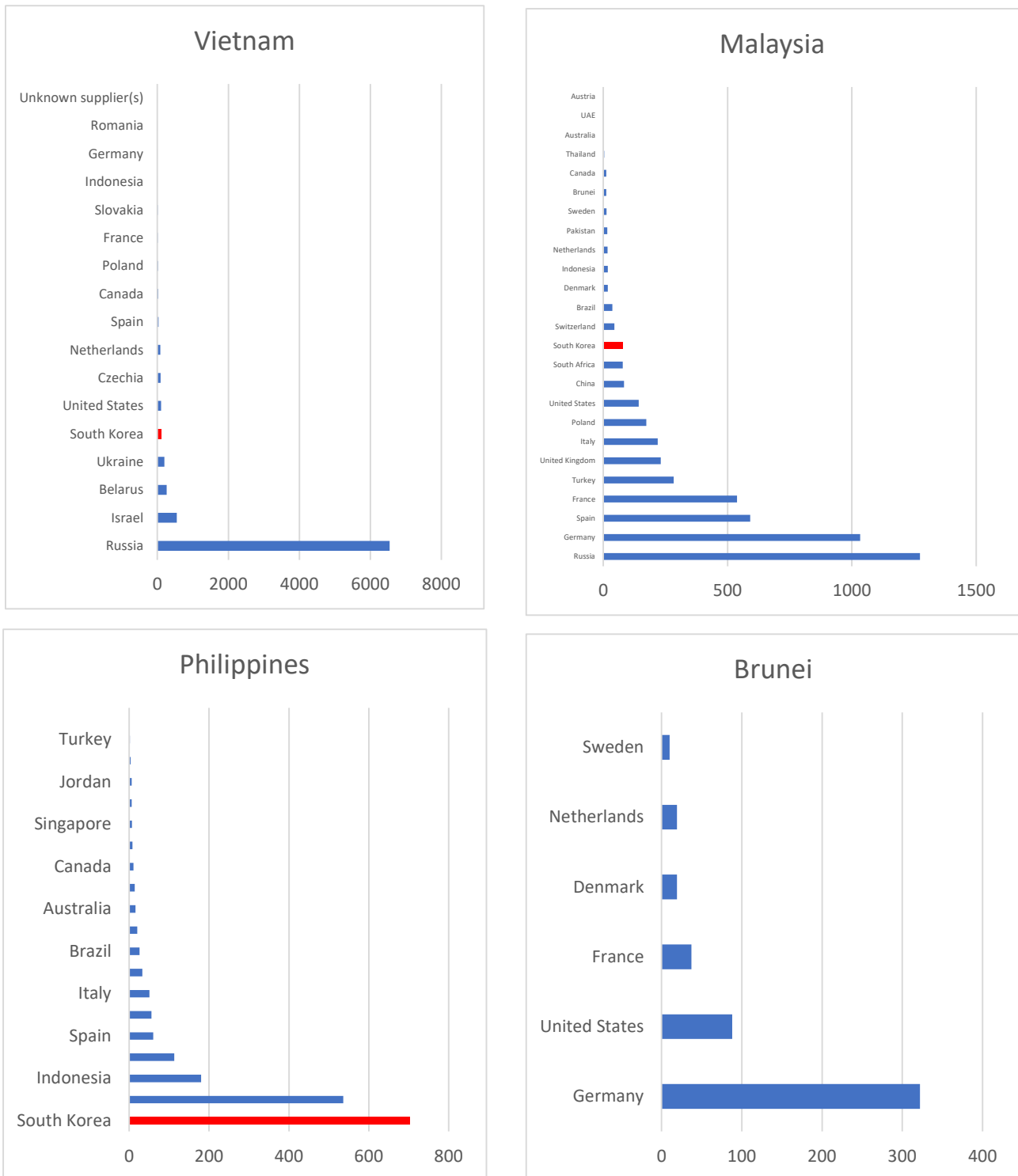
<sup>12</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America (2020). *Remarks by Spokesperson of the Chinese Embassy on the Statement of the US Department of State on the South China Sea*.

[http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zmgxs/202007/t20200714\\_4371647.htm](http://us.china-embassy.gov.cn/eng/zmgxs/202007/t20200714_4371647.htm)

bilaterally,<sup>13</sup> or through multilateral platforms<sup>14</sup> and the variety of hedging strategies employed by them. This article does not seek to make a new theoretical contribution to what is already known on the varieties of hedging behavior of SEA countries but

rather aims to find reinforcing evidence for such behavior in choosing who to import arms from. This serves as evidence for the usefulness of utilizing Korea by the US, as a country that holds a more neutral stance against China, to strengthen the

Figure 1 SIPRI Trend Indicator Values (TIV) (in millions) of arms exporters to directly relevant countries in the South China Sea disputes 2000–2021



<sup>13</sup> Haacke, "The concept of hedging"

<sup>14</sup> Kuik, C.-C., Idris, N. A., & Md Nor, A. R. (2012). The China factor in the U.S. "reengagement" with Southeast Asia: Drivers and limits of converged hedging. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 4(3), 315–344. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1943-0787.2012.01361.x>

Tan, S. S. (2020). Consigned to hedge: South-East Asia and America's 'free and open Indo-Pacific' strategy. *International Affairs*, 96(1), 131–148. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iiz227>; Jones & Jenne, "Hedging and grand strategy"

military capacities of the SEA countries while simultaneously preventing the potential expansion of arms exports by non-allied countries in the region such as Russia or China.

Figure 1 tracks the total arms purchases made by the four countries in SEA that have overlapping claims on the islands in the South China Sea from 2000 to 2021. Data demonstrates that these countries have imported arms from a wider range of exporters compared to major US allies in the region, as figure 3 shows. Furthermore, given that the US is the largest arms exporter in the world, occupying roughly 39% of the market,<sup>15</sup> the arms import trends of these four countries do not reflect such market bias, importing arms from a more balanced range of countries. While other controls such as price constraints, legacies of the Cold War, and more need to be taken into consideration, the figure clearly demonstrates a more balanced reliance on a wider range of countries of SEA countries compared to the US's major allies in the region as Figure 3 shows. Korea's prominence as an arms exporter for the SEA countries is also notable, as it occupies the position of a major exporter of arms in the countries except for Brunei, with it being the top exporter for Philippines. This demonstrates that Korea, along with other major exporters in the region has been playing a crucial role, especially recently, in responding to the regional need for a more balanced arms import portfolio.

Figure 2 reaffirms this tendency by widening the scope of observation to ASEAN member states. While the figure below demonstrates a bias on Russian and US arms, this is due to Vietnam and Singapore's asymmetric reliance on Russia and the US respectively for arms purchases. Excluding these outliers demonstrates a more balanced reliance on the US and its allies, most notably South Korea, against Chinese and Russian exports.

The implication of this finding becomes clearer when compared with the asymmetric reliance of major US allies in the region on US arms as the figure below demonstrates. This demonstrates that while these countries have also been charged with hedging behavior,<sup>16</sup> as Lee<sup>17</sup> finds, such strategic maneuvering remains limited to non-traditional security issues. In other words, observing the behavioral trends of US allies in the traditional security dimension, such as joint military exercises and arms transfers, and contrasting their behavior to non-allies can identify their alignment direction. In this respect, the SEA countries are indeed hedging their alignment position between China and the US.

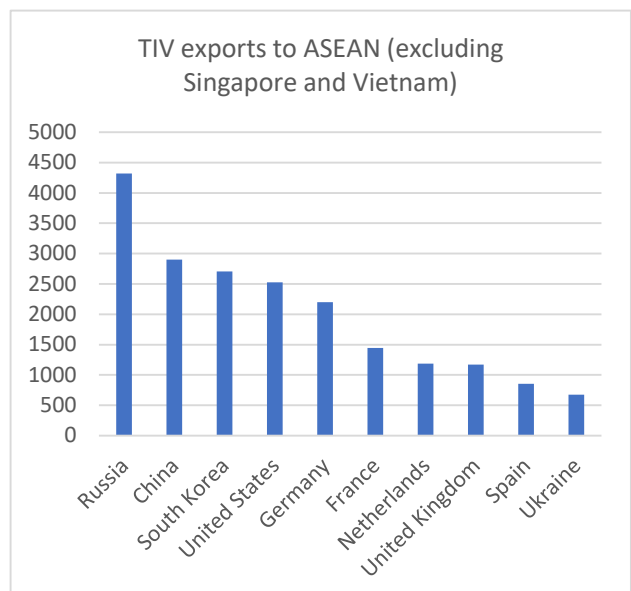
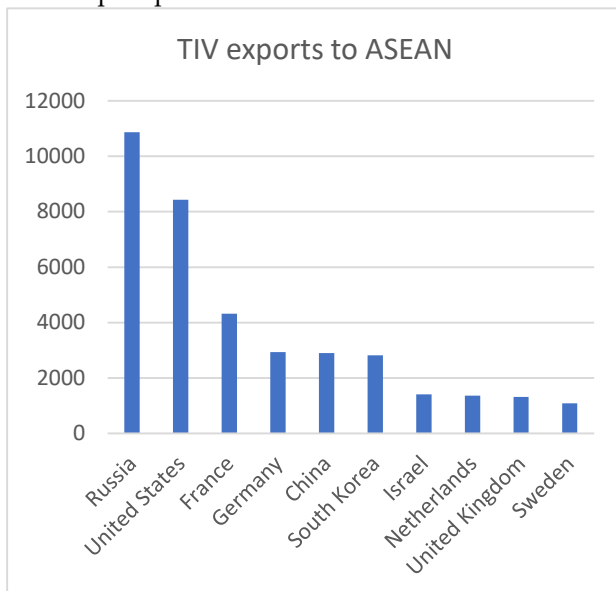


Figure 2 SIPRI TIV (in millions) of arms exports to ASEAN member states 2000~2021.

Source: SIPRI<sup>1</sup>, author compilation

<sup>15</sup> Statista (2022). Market share of the leading exporters of major weapons between 2017 and 2021, by country. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267131/market-share-of-the-leading-exporters-of-conventional-weapons/>

<sup>16</sup> Lee, "Riding the tide"; Koga, "The concept of hedging"; Wilkins, T. (2021). Middle power hedging in the era of Security/Economic Disconnect: Australia, Japan, and the 'Special Strategic Partnership.' *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/irap/lcab023>

<sup>17</sup> Lee, "Riding the tide"



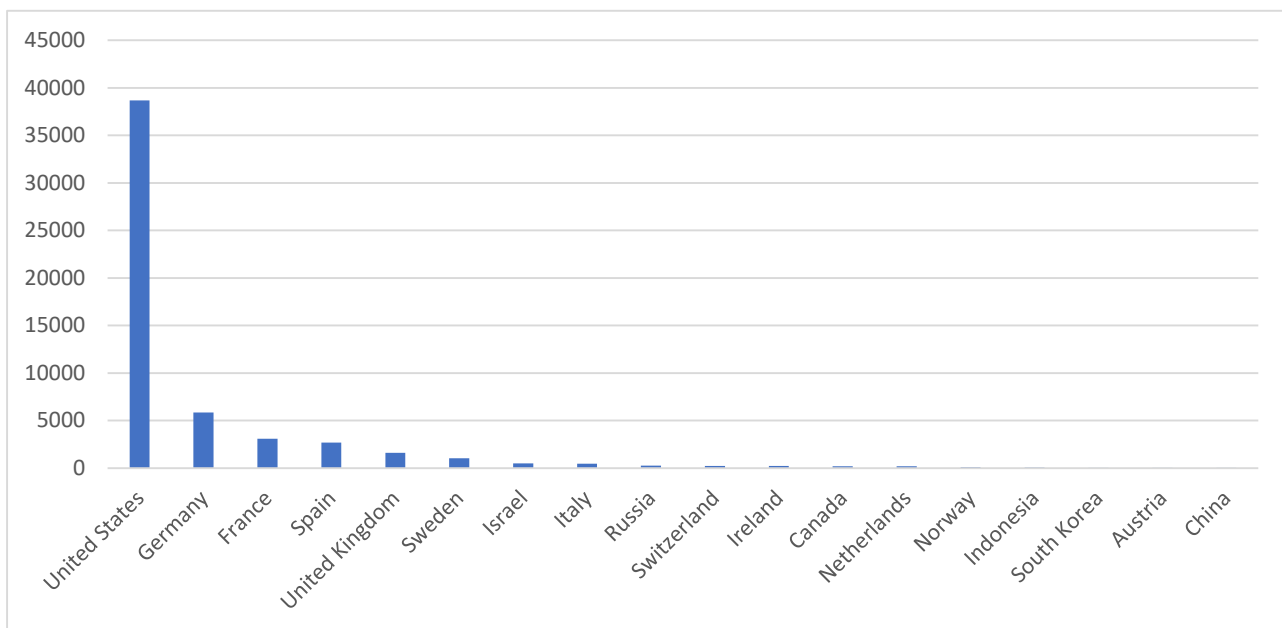


Figure 3. SIPRI TIV (in millions) of arms exports to major US allies in the Asia Pacific (South Korea, Japan, and Korea) 2000~2021. Source: SIPRI, author compilation.

### Why an RDP between the US and Korea can allow for legitimate containment

An RDP agreement aims to promote the joint “research, development, or production of defense equipment, or the reciprocal procurement of defense items” for the purpose of “promoting rationalization, standardization, and interoperability of defense equipment with Allies and friendly governments.”<sup>18</sup> More specifically, the agreement seeks to achieve a higher level of technical cooperation between the US and its allies by lifting the domestic source restrictions placed on foreign arms exports to the US. As part of the Buy American Act, arms that do not have 55% of their parts manufactured from US-oriented sources that are imported to the US face a 50% extra charge on the original price of export. The US has already signed an RDP agreement with 28 allies such as the UK, Australia, Germany, Japan, and more.<sup>19</sup> The agreement therefore not only reciprocally opens the military arms market for both sides but also increases the potential for technical cooperation and co-development of military equipment and eventually, the tighter interknitting of the arms production network between the US and allies.

This is why an RDP agreement between the US and Korea is needed. Such an agreement would lower the bar for US arms transfers to Korea at a lower cost and will also allow for stronger technical cooperation in developing new military equipment that fit the needs of both countries and also for the SEA countries. Korea’s unique position in the region and as an arms exporter makes such an enhanced partnership between the two countries even more desirable.

I point to three reasons to why Korea can be the most suitable regional partner for facilitating the indirect transfer of US arms to SEA countries and therefore contribute to strengthening their military capacity. First, Korea already has an established export network in the region. Japan has only recently begun easing export bans on its arms and the legal constraints are still in place.<sup>20</sup> Australia has not been a major arms exporter in the region, and as figure 2 demonstrates, it was Korea that has served as the US’s most significant partner in responding to the SEA countries’ demand for a balanced arms import portfolio. Second, Korea’s legacy of public sector-driven growth, and the state’s proactive support for the domestic arms industry development through providing export credit support to importers can significantly contribute to easing the financial

<sup>18</sup> US Chamber of Commerce (2021). *Reciprocal Defense Procurement Memoranda of Understanding and the Buy American Act*. [https://www.uschamber.com/assets/archived/images/reciprocal\\_defense\\_procurement\\_agreements\\_and\\_the\\_buy\\_american\\_act\\_-\\_6oct2021.pdf](https://www.uschamber.com/assets/archived/images/reciprocal_defense_procurement_agreements_and_the_buy_american_act_-_6oct2021.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> KITA (2022). *ROKUS decides to commence negotiations on RDP agreement, an ‘FTA’ for the arms industry (hanmi, ‘bangsan FTA’*

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<sup>20</sup> MOFAJ (2022). *Japan’s Policies on the Control of Arms Exports*. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/un/disarmament/policy/index.html>

constraints faced by SEA countries that are still categorized as low-to-middle income countries.

Lastly, Korea has maintained the most neutral stance against China's increasing assertiveness in the region among US allies. Korea has not participated in the Quad and has noticeably been cautious in its language against Chinese assertiveness in the region, or even against itself. While such passivity is due to the inherent security and economic constraints of Korea, such as the military risk Korea faces from hostile forces up north and China's strong influence over the North Korean regime, and Korea's economic reliance on China's market, the resulting relative neutral stance of Korea indicates that the political risk attached to Korean arms from the SEA countries' perspective is significantly lower than other that of other countries. Promoting the exports of Korean arms, therefore, can indirectly contain the expansion of the Chinese arms industry in the region.

The first reason is already articulated in the section above. On the second point, although most major arms exporters support arms exports by providing export credit,<sup>21</sup> Korea's export credit activity has been especially prominent. Korea's total official export credit support between 2009 and 2019 was the third largest among OECD countries, just behind the United States and Germany.<sup>22</sup> Given the relative economic size of Korea, it is clear that the proactive use of public resources for export support is disproportionately prominent in Korea compared to other countries. In this respect, Korea is a suitable partner in both effectively channeling US arms to SEA countries and also in reducing the financial burden of purchasing arms for them.

## Conclusion

This article highlights the need for policy responses that take the hedging behavior of SEA countries into consideration against China's increasing assertiveness in the South China Sea. In this respect, unilateral intervention from the US in the South China Sea disputes would not be outright welcomed by the SEA countries as the lack of political legitimacy of such action would make accommodating US intervention costly for SEA countries in case of Chinese retaliation. Hence, the least costly option would be to directly strengthen the military and economic capacities of the countries

while containing the expansion of the Chinese arms industry in the region. Nonetheless, this paper finds that there are clear challenges in achieving this by the US alone, as China has responded sensitively to military involvement by the US in its neighboring countries. This will again make direct cooperation with the US politically costly for SEA countries.

Given the SEA countries' constraints and inevitable preference for hedging, therefore, I argue that the US should aid in strengthening the capacities of the countries but through an indirect channel to minimize the potential political costs involved in the process. To that end, I argue that a freer exchange and cooperation in arms production and development between Korea and the US through an RDP agreement can serve as a useful solution. This is because purchasing US arms comes with stronger political strings attached, but channeling US arms in the form of parts in manufactured arms or modified arms equipment through a trusted US ally that has a more neutral stance against Chinese assertiveness can significantly reduce the political cost of purchasing US arms. The further expansion of the Korean arms exports that use parts produced by the US through the RDP agreement would not only strengthen the military capacities of SEA countries but also help contain the expansion of the Chinese arms exports in the region.

To justify this argument, I first identify reinforcing evidence on the hedging behavior of SEA countries in purchasing arms, where Korea has been playing a crucial role in serving as an alternative exporter for SEA countries that wish to maintain a more balanced import portfolio. Then I point to the unique qualities that Korea possesses as opposed to other major US allies in the region that could make Korea an effective partner in indirectly strengthening the military capacities of SEA countries. This finding makes contributions on two fronts. First, it empirically identifies the hedging behavior of SEA countries even in their arms purchase patterns. Second, it emphasizes the need to formulate policy strategies that consider the strategic limits of SEA countries when aiming to contain Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea.

<sup>21</sup> See table 2 in KERI (2022). *2022 Issue Report*.  
<https://keri.koreaexim.go.kr/HPHF0E054M01/101523?curPage=1#none>

<sup>22</sup> OECD (2020). *Export Credit Statistics*.  
<https://www.oecd.org/trade/topics/export-credits/statistics/>





# 5

## **The Five Eyes (FVEY) Intelligence Alliance: Should the Republic of Korea (ROK) be Included as a Permanent Member Under President Yoon Suk Yeol's Term?**

*Jung Seob Kim*

The genesis of COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 rapidly changed the surface of cyber threat landscape as corporations allowed employees to work remotely. The South Korean government introduced the “Digital New Deal” in 2020 composed of 12 goals in 4 sectors. Within the 12 goals, the deal promises to “provide remote working infrastructure and consulting services to businesses”.<sup>1</sup> Cyber risks arose as corporations used teleconference capability providers like Zoom to conduct virtual meetings, vaccination started to roll out, and federal government provided economic relief to their citizens. This resulted in state-sponsored cyber actors leveraging the coronavirus-themed phishing messages. The intelligence agencies from the Western countries collaborated and provided plethora of cyber defense recommendations to the public. For example, the United Kingdom’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and the United States’ Cybersecurity Infrastructure of Security Agency (CISA) issued a security advisory on the increase of malicious cyber actors’ activities on exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> The COVID-19 renders most of the traditional security assumptions upon which the national security community stands.

The Five Eyes (FVEY) Intelligence Alliance is intelligence-sharing partnership between Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Their primary objectives have focused on sharing signal intelligence (SIGINT) but over the years the cyber intelligence component have been integrated in response to advanced technologies and sophisticated cyber adversary operations. The Five Eyes partners’ collective response acknowledges in using offensive cyber capabilities (OCCs) in cyberspace as long as it complies with the United Nations (UN) cyber stability framework (Gold, 2020). The demand for Republic of Korea (ROK)’s role in cyber threat intelligence sharing increased exponentially. The U.S. President Joe Biden and former South Korean President Moon Jae In created a cyber security working group to prevent

and mitigate ransomware attacks and joint working group focused on cyber exploitation to “end the abuse of women online” (Carmack, Dustin and Pane, 2022). In May 2022, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) signed a Project Arrangement (PA) and Joint Statement of Intent (JSOI) for collaborative research, development, and foreign technical exchanges in cybersecurity and public safety solutions with the Republic of Korea’s Ministry of Science and Information Communication Technology (MSIT).<sup>3</sup> Shortly after South Korean President Yoon took office in May 2022, Republic of Korea officially joined North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s Cooperative Cyber Defense Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE) as the first Asian country.

This leads to the hypothetical question to see if Republic of Korea will possibly join the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance in the near future specifically under President Yoon’s term and what impacts can South Korea make as a permanent member. The paper will be written as an exploratory paper and will provide policy recommendations from a cyber-threat intelligence practitioner’s perspective.

## The Unsolved Cold War’s Complicated Legacy

The origin of the Five Eyes initiated during World War II (WWII) after the United Kingdom’s intelligence agency broken the German Enigma cipher system known as ULTRA and shared their signals intelligence (SIGINT) with the United States. In March 1946, the United Kingdom and the United States signed the UKUSA Agreement (*formerly known as BRUSA*) to share “continuously, currently, without request” both “raw intelligence in addition to end product”.<sup>4</sup> Other partners like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand joined the intelligence network where they shared SIGINT to better coordinate their strategies during the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway. Today, the National Security Agency (USA), GCHQ (UK), Australian

<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Science and ICT. (2021). The Digital New Deal Is to Lead Digital Transition in the World After COVID-19 (July 15). Ministry of Science and ICT.

<sup>2</sup> Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) & United Kingdom’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC). (2020). Joint CISA and UK TIP: COVID-19 Cyber Threat Exploitation. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. <https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/joint-cisa-and-uk-tip-covid-19-cyber-threat-exploitation>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (2022). DHS Signs Agreement for Cybersecurity and Public Safety with South Korea. U.S. Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology. <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology/news/2022/05/10/dhs-signs-agreement-cybersecurity-and-public-safety-south-korea>

<sup>4</sup> National Security Agency (NSA). (n.d.). UKUSA Agreement and Related Documents. National Security Agency/Central Security Service. <https://www.nsa.gov/Helpful-Links/NSA-FOIA/Declassification-Transparency-Initiatives/Historical-Releases/UKUSA/>

Signals Directorate (Australia), Government Communications Security Bureau (New Zealand), and Communications Security Establishment Canada (Canada) make up the agencies in the Five Eyes.

The Rhyolites program, the first of the Pine Gap signals intelligence satellites, enlarged Five Eyes' mission scope by expanding to support military missions like SALT 1 and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. With its mission expanding, the political interests for each country impacted the international relations between the Allied forces. In 1972, Gough Whitlam won the election for the Prime Minister of Australia and created a new vision yearning for Australia's true independence. Prime Minister Whitlam developed diplomatic relations with People's Republic of China breaking off relations with Taiwan. Historians and scholars view the Whitlam's visit to China damaged the alliance with the United States as this was the first Western leaders in a high-level political contact with the communist country during the Cold War.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, Gough Whitlam publicly criticized America's bombings in Vietnam as "corrupt and barbaric" and threatened to close foreign military facilities including the Pine Gap. These actions raised a red flag for other Five Eyes alliance especially for the United States. In 1975, Whitlam was shown a top-secret telex message from Theodore Shackley, Head of the CIA's East Asia Division, noting that Whitlam was a security risk for his own country.<sup>6</sup>

## Controversies, Criticisms, and China

The Five Eyes intelligence sharing activities have been criticized by various countries, organizations, and entities. In some cases, the intelligence itself shared by its partners led to mistrust and subject to scrutiny. For example, Canadian government produced inaccurate intelligence which was shared with the U.S. government that led to detaining Syrian citizen, Maher Arar, where he

was tortured for 12 days. The Canadian government settled Mr. Arar's civil case by paying him nearly \$10 million.<sup>7</sup>

When intelligence agency shares any inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information with other agency, this could jeopardize the confidentiality, integrity, and availability (CIA triads) of data. The key success of intelligence sharing is built with trust and confidence. When agencies share a raw or finished intelligence, the receiving agencies must be able to assess the credibility of the intelligence by analyzing the sources and methods. With the limitation to independently assess the credibility of intelligence and repeated operational mistakes can lead to mistrust.

In 2017, Privacy International and Yale Law School's Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic filed a lawsuit against several U.S. federal government agencies including the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) to access sensitive documents related to the Five Eyes under the Freedom of Information Act.<sup>8</sup> In the report, the language contains the 1961 General Security Agreement providing an understanding of the "third party rule" which prohibits of disclosing information shared between agencies to third parties. The third-party includes legal oversight bodies as well. This means that any oversight committees will need to get an approval from a foreign agency to access intelligence shared with a domestic agency limiting the oversight powers. The third-party rule contained within an annex to the Agreements is in gray area where the statement is terse compared to the one contained within the letter exchange from the U.S. to the U.K. For example, the third-party rule as expressed in the Annex states as follows: "The recipient government will not use such information for other than the purposes for which it was furnished and will not disclose such information to a third Government without the prior consent of the Government which furnished the information". This allows room for interpretation as it is more stringent than the original language.

<sup>5</sup> Whitlam Institute. (n.d.). (2021) 1971: Gough Whitlam Visits China. Whitlam Institute within Western Sydney University.

<https://www.whitlam.org/publications/1971-visit-to-china>

<sup>6</sup> Pilger, J. (2014). The British-American Coup that Ended Australian Independence. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/oct/23/gough-whitlam-1975-coup-ended-australian-independence>

<sup>7</sup> Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR). (2013). The Story of Maher Ara Rendition to Torture PDF.

<https://ccrjustice.org/files/rendition%20to%20torture%20report.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Kim, S., Lee, D., Lubin, A., & Perlin, P. (2018). Newly Disclosed Documents on the Five Eyes Alliance and What They Tell Us about Intelligence-Sharing Agreements. Yale Law School: Media Freedom and Information Access Clinic. <https://law.yale.edu/mfia/case-disclosed/newly-disclosed-documents-five-eyes-alliance-and-what-they-tell-us-about-intelligence-sharing>

New Zealand's recent comments on China from the high-political figures like Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Foreign Minister Nanaia Mahuta disclose that different political views and economic interests exist. New Zealand is not the only country who have different views on China. For example, U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) banned number of Chinese telecommunications and video surveillance equipment deemed to pose a national security. Specifically, all equipment produced by Huawei and ZTE and its subsidiaries and affiliates pursuant to the Secure Networks Act and section 889(f)(3) of the 2019 NDAA.<sup>9</sup> Canada also joined the United States by planning to ban Huawei and ZTE from 5G public networks. While the UK concurs with the U.S. and Canada, they extended the date by having the Huawei technology removed from the UK's 5G public networks by the end of 2027.

## Growing Concern of Cyber Threats and the Five Eyes' Role

Despite the controversies and the criticism, the Five Eyes play a significant role when it comes to cyber threats and information security. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the precondition of criminal activities in cyberspace. Not only did the ransomware activities of targeting businesses and hospitals for financial gains increased but online child sexual exploitation increased when students relied on the Internet to resume school classes. The Five Eyes expressed the importance of collaboration between governments and the digital industry to address end-to-end encryption concerns.<sup>10</sup>

In April 2021, the Five Eyes met via video conference to discuss the common security challenges like ransomware threats and using partnerships to counter malicious cyber activity that impacts the society and national security. They

agreed to 1) work collaboratively to address ransomware by actively sharing lessons learned and aligning policies, activities, public messaging, and industry engagement, 2) share information on the evolving ransomware threat landscape to enhance collective understanding of and response to ransomware activity, and 3) reduce the public's risk of exposure of ransomware.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance met in September 2022 to discuss variety of topics including exchange best practices on cybersecurity. The Five Eyes reaffirmed their commitment to prioritize joint efforts by combatting cybercrime activity originating within their own jurisdictions and cooperate when it involves multi-jurisdictional and transnational.<sup>12</sup> They also continue to publish a joint Cybersecurity Advisory (CSA) to develop mitigations. One of the latest joint advisories indicate an increase in malicious cyber activity targeting managed service providers (MSPs) and how threat actors can use a vulnerable MSP as an initial access vector to multiple victim networks.<sup>13</sup> The collaboration between agencies provides a range of recommendation to protect from cyber-attacks. Each agencies' input in analysis, data, and intelligence resulted in various recommendations.

## Similar Intelligence Sharing Cooperation

The Five Eyes also cooperate with many third party countries like Denmark, France, Norway, and the Netherlands. They also work with Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Sweden. They coined the fourteen countries as SIGINT Seniors Europe (SSEUR) and its prominent objective is to coordinate military SIGINT amongst its members.<sup>14</sup> Similar to the Five Eyes, SSEUR is not well known to the public due to its closely guarded government secret. The SSEUR was formed in 1982 during the Cold War with focus on sharing

<sup>9</sup> Federal Communications Commission (FCC). (2020). FCC Bans Authorizations for Devices That Pose National Security Threat. Federal Communications Commission. <https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-bans-authorizations-devices-pose-national-security-threat>

<sup>10</sup> UK Government. (2020). Virtual Five Country Ministerial Communique. UK Home Office. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/virtual-five-country-ministerial-communique/virtual-five-country-ministerial-communique>

<sup>11</sup> New Zealand Government. (2021). Five Country Ministerial Statement Regarding the Threat of Ransomware PDF. <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021->

[04/Five%20Country%20Ministerial%20Statement%20Regarding%20the%20Threat%20of%20Ransomware.pdf](https://www.fcc.gov/document/fcc-bans-authorizations-devices-pose-national-security-threat)

<sup>12</sup> Department of Homeland Security (DHS). (2022). Five Country Ministerial Communique. Homeland Security. <https://www.dhs.gov/publication/communique>

<sup>13</sup> Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA). (2022). AA22-131A: Protecting Against Cyber Threats to Managed Service Providers and their Customers. Cybersecurity & Infrastructure Security Agency. <https://www.cisa.gov/uscert/ncas/alerts/aa22-131a>

<sup>14</sup> Tossini, J. V. (2020). The Five Eyes: The Intelligence Alliance of the Anglosphere. UK Defence Journal. <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/the-five-eyes-the-intelligence-alliance-of-the-anglosphere/>

information about the Soviet Union's military. The Pacific division of SSEUR was formed in 2015 with the aim to establish a collaborative effort to fight terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region and South Korea was involved in the Pacific alliance. The Pacific group used a system called Crushed Ice to share information. Crushed Ice is a secure network that enables sharing of secret intelligence collected from intercepted communications.<sup>15</sup> According to NSA document, Japan refused to sign up to the Pacific group expressing a high risk of unintended disclosure of its participation.

Contrary to SSEUR, there are also a smaller number of nations sharing intelligence. In 2016, the representatives of the U.S. Department of Defense, Australian Department of Defense, and Japan Ministry of Defense signed a trilateral information sharing agreement (TISA) to further strengthen military defense cooperation and share critical intelligence on North Korean activities. The purpose for TISA is further enhance the strategic trilateral relationship, and support stability in the Asia-Pacific region by sharing critical intelligence to enable higher capability defense operations among the three nations.

### The Quad and ROK's Position

South Korea's position on the Quad has been strongly influenced by its need to balance its security relationship with the United States and its

economic reliance on China. Over time, South Korea has become increasingly concerned about China's assertive behavior, particularly after being targeted by Beijing's economic coercion in the aftermath of Seoul's decision in 2016 to deploy a US Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system. In April 2021, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official said that it was willing to cooperate with the Quad countries on an issue-by-issue basis. While the Moon administration emphasized that the Quad was just one of the multiple regional points for South Korea, the Yoon administration emphasized that "South Korea should actively promote a free, open, and inclusive order in the Indo-Pacific...and willingly participate in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue working groups." The Quad is not a formal institution so countries such as South Korea may select the appropriate level and pathway for engagement depending on the specific goals that they have in mind.

### Continuous Efforts to Add More Members to the Five Eyes

The expansion of the Five Eyes membership has been tried for years. On 2021, U.S Congressman Ruben Gallego (D-AZ) spoke about inviting other democratic countries like South Korea, Japan, India, and Germany to be part of the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance. He has also introduced an

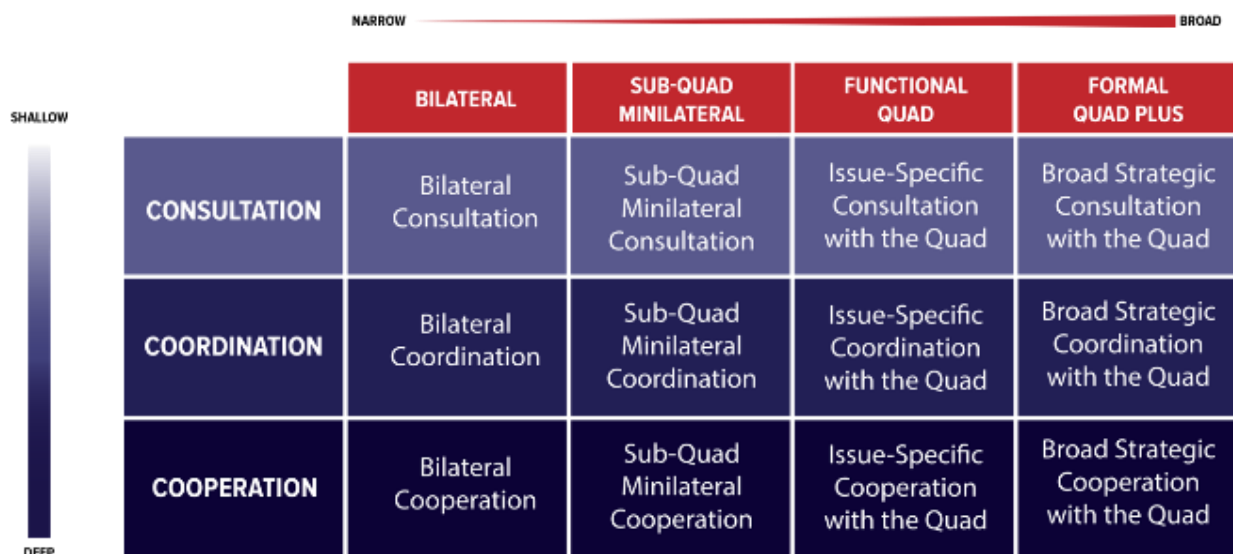


Figure 1 Diverse Pathways to Engagement with the Quad Countries<sup>1</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Gallagher, R. (2018). The Powerful Global Spy Alliance You Never Knew Existed. The Intercept. <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/01/nsa-global-surveillance-sigint-seniors/>

amendment in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for the year 2022 to formalize the U.S. House Armed Services Committee's proposal.<sup>16</sup> Kyou Hyun Kim, the Director of National Intelligence Service (NIS), has expressed to join the Five Eyes during the National Assembly Intelligence Committee confirmation. The White House also emphasized to "establish a cyber-working group focused on enhancing cooperation among law enforcement and homeland security agencies, to learn from past cybercrime events and combat ransomware attacks against our two countries".<sup>17</sup>

## The Conflict in International Agreements

Formally developing an intelligence relationship by narrowing legal aspects and the highly technical discussions and diplomatically sharing their expertise with cyber issues.

## Military Intelligence and Communications

The Joint Worldwide Intelligence Communications System, or JWICS, is a top-secret sensitive and compartmented information network designed to conduct intelligence operations. A key issue for military is the lack of low-latency communications capacity.

## Increasing Cyber Threats from Chinese State-Sponsored Cyber Actors

One of the Chinese government's longest-standing political priorities is the desire to maintain territorial integrity including maritime regions. China has continued its efforts to increase global influence through government plans like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Made in China 2025. The 14<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan outline some of the strategic goals of the Chinese government and

stating its priorities such as development in telecommunications and energy sectors which can be correlated with cyber threat activity. China's cyber threat campaigns focuses on the Asia Pacific region and North America but have been observed globally especially with their distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks. Chinese government's intelligence structure between 2017 and 2020 reveal that Chinese Advanced Persistent Threat (APT) groups align with the five new People's Liberation Army (PLA) Theater Commands and Ministry of State Security (MSS) units. In terms of tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs), they shifted their tactics such as increased use of public tools and fileless malware.

Historically, Chinese APT groups like APT1 disappeared entirely after being indicted by the U.S. government but continuous operations from the Chinese APT groups like APT5, APT10, and APT41 have been observed even though they have been indicted.<sup>18</sup>

Chinese APT groups like APT5 have demonstrated capabilities to target vulnerable applications bypassing normal authentication controls. Popular applications like Citrix have been consistently abused by malicious actors. Citrix are usually internet-facing applications offering cybercriminals easy access to organizational networks. Exploiting public-facing applications is one of the most observed techniques used by APT groups to gain initial access to corporate networks as well as phishing. In response to the release of CVE-2022-27518, the NSA released a Cybersecurity Advisory (CSA) "APT5: Citrix ADC Threat Hunting Guidance" due to APT5 demonstrating capabilities to target and exploit Citrix.<sup>19</sup>

In mid-2021, a focus for pro-China information operations campaigns was promoting narratives related to the COVID-19 pandemic including the criticism of U.S. There were also attempts to mobilize physical protests in the U.S. that appear to have been unsuccessful.

<sup>16</sup> Nigam, A. (2022). US Committee Mulling To Expand 'Five Eyes' To Include India, Japan, South Korea: Report. Republic World. <https://www.republicworld.com/world-news/us-news/us-committee-mulling-to-expand-five-eyes-to-include-india-japan-south-korea-report.html>

<sup>17</sup> The White House. (2021). Fact Sheet: United States-Republic of Korea Partnership. The White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/21/fact-sheet-united-states-republic-of-korea-partnership/>

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Department of Justice. (2020). Seven International Cyber Defendants, Including "APT41" Actors, Charged in Connection with Computer Intrusion Campaigns Against More Than 100 Victims Globally. Justice News. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/seven-international-cyber-defendants-including-apt41-actors-charged-connection-computer>

<sup>19</sup> Department of Defense Cyber Crime Center. (2022). APT5: Citrix ADC Threat Hunting Guidance. National Security Agency. <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Dec/13/2003131586/-1/-1/0/CSA-APT5-CITRIXADC-V1.PDF>



South Korea's (potential) role in combatting Chinese threat actor group may be sharing malware samples with the Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance. For example, China's Winnti Group targeted South Korean video game company, Gravity Co., Ltd. and the following indicators of compromise (IOCs) observed in network were publicly shared.<sup>20</sup>

An indicator of compromise (IOC) is a piece of digital forensic that suggests that an endpoint or network may have been breached. Analysts are able to collect IOCs manually after investigating suspicious activity and help mitigate an attack. IOCs can improve detection accuracy and provide some insights into their security tools. Sharing high-confidence IOCs with Five Eyes can help in several ways. First, IOCs identified in the later malware or investigation lifecycle can be valuable for strategic threat analysis, cyber threat hunting, and investment decisions. Second, IOCs identified in the early stage can be useful for other organization to utilize in their environment.

### **Increasing Cyber Threats from Russian State-Sponsored Cyber Actors**

In April 2022, the Five Eyes cybersecurity authorities from the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom released the joint Cybersecurity Advisory to warn organizations that Russia's invasion of Ukraine

could expose organizations both within and beyond the region to increased malicious cyber activity. Russian state-sponsored cyber actors have demonstrated capabilities to compromise IT networks disrupting critical industrial control systems (ICS)/OT functions by deploying lethal malware. Recent Russian cyber operations have included distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks against Ukraine organizations.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) is known to task criminal hackers for espionage-focused cyber activity. One of the known state-sponsored cyber actors known as Berserk Bear (*also known as Dragonfly and Energetic Bear*).

Russian is also conducting cyber-espionage operations against South Korea and Turla Team is attributable to some attacks. Turla Team is a Russia-based cyber espionage actor that has been active since at least 2006. Turla Team has targeted diplomatic, government, and defense entities across Europe, Asia, and the United States. They are known to compromise victims using advanced methods including watering holes.

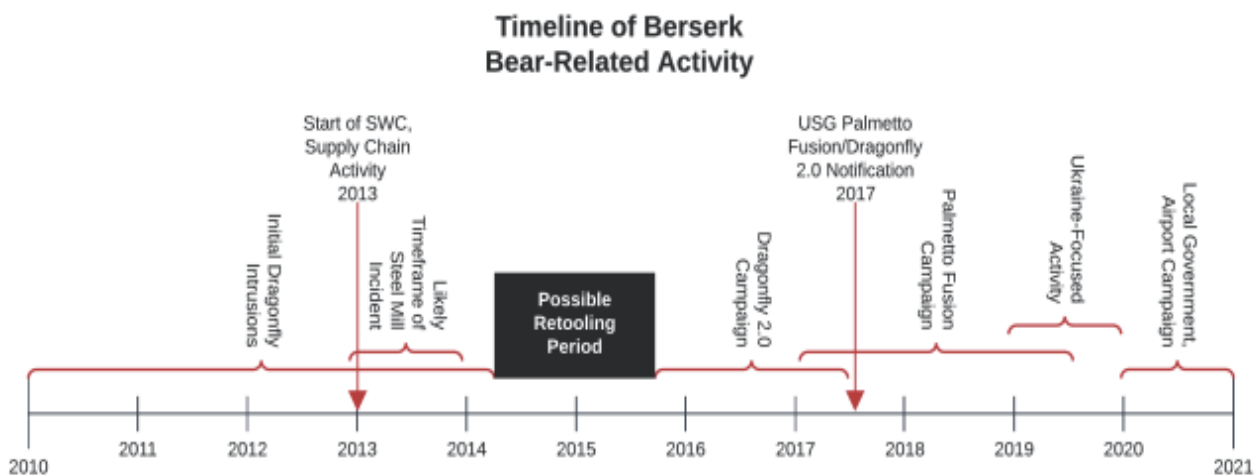


Figure 2: Berserk Bear Timeline<sup>1</sup>

<sup>20</sup> QuoIntelligence. (2020). Newly Uncovered DNS Tunnelling Technique, and New Campaign Against South Korean Gaming

Company. Winnti Group – Insights from the Past. <https://quointelligence.eu/2020/04/winnti-group-insights-from-the-past/>



## Increasing Cyber Threats from North Korea (DPRK) State-Sponsored Cyber Actors

The Reconnaissance General Bureau (RGB) is the DPRK's primary foreign intelligence service responsible for intelligence collection and clandestine operations. Based on the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Criminal Complaints, it is likely that 3rd Bureau and 5th Bureau lead the North Korea's cyber program efforts.<sup>21</sup>

APT38 is a financially motivated group that is known for significant financial compromises and its use of destructive malware against financial institutions. APT38 (also known as Lazarus Group) is responsible for the infamous 2014 Sony Pictures Entertainment incident and 2017 WannaCry ransomware attacks.

Kimsuky primarily conducts targeted campaigns to collect strategic intelligence on geopolitical events and negotiations affecting the North Korea's interests. The actor has been targeting primarily United States and South Korea.

### Recommendations

- Before South Korea participates in the Five Eyes, it is recommended to restore ROK-Japan information sharing during President Yoon's term. Coordinating with Japan will enhance South Korea's detection capabilities.
- South Korea needs a robust national cybersecurity risk management system to strengthen cybersecurity resilience in national public institutions. South Korea's current network separation policy

### ASSESSED STRUCTURE OF DPRK CYBER PROGRAMS

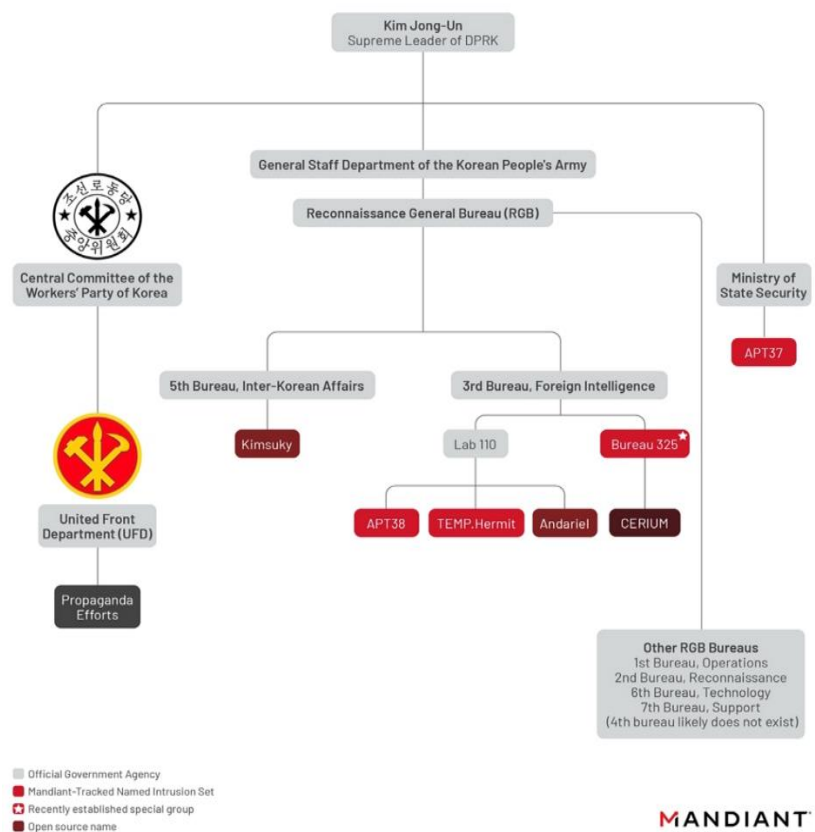


Figure 3 Assessed Cyber Structure of DPRK Cyber Programs<sup>1</sup>

conflicts with the 4th Industrial Revolution policies.<sup>22</sup>

- U.S. – ROK bilateral relationship like the Joint Statement of Intent (JSOI) for collaborative research, development, and foreign technical exchanges in cybersecurity with the Republic of Korea's Ministry of Science and Information Communication Technology should be continued with sufficient budget.
- If South Korea does not join the Five Eyes Alliance, the U.S. – South Korea can develop cyber intelligence sharing organization similar to the model of Information Sharing and Analysis Organizations (ISAOs).
- Encourage public-private-partnership like Cybersecurity Collaboration Center

<sup>21</sup> Department of Justice. (2018). Criminal Complaint against Park Jin Hyok PDF. <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1092091/download>

<sup>22</sup> DuBois, E. (2020). Building Resilience to the North Korean Cyber Threat: Experts Discuss. Brookings Institution.

<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2020/12/23/building-resilience-to-the-north-korean-cyber-threat-experts-discuss/>

“국가사이버안보협력센터” to promote information sharing between the private and the public sector concerning cyber threats on a national level.

- Develop more programs like McCain Institute National Security Fellowship where they seek mid-career national security professionals from the Five Eyes intelligence partnership nations<sup>23</sup>
- If South Korea does join the Five Eyes Alliance, National Intelligence Service should be the leading agency for South Korea.

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<sup>23</sup> McCain Institute. (2022). McCain Institute National Security Fellowship Seeks “Five Eyes” Applicants.

<https://www.mccaininstitute.org/resources/in-the-news/mccain-institute-national-security-fellowship-seeks-five-eyes-applicants/>



# 6

## **The Role of Local Governments**

### **Alliances: Improving Military Morale & Readiness of the ROK-US Joint Force**

*Gyeonga Kang*

## Introduction

On July 25, 2022, a group of angry villagers barged in to stop the MOU Signing and Opening Ceremony of the Civilian, Government, and Military Cooperation Center in Pocheon, South Korea. The Cooperation Center was intended to be a house of healing and reconciliation for Pocheon because it has a long history of suffering damage from Rodriguez Live Fire Complex (RLFC). However, the scuffles and shouting among the villagers, ROK Army soldiers, and Korean government officials made the place a house of conflict. A furious villager, the former head of the Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee, yelled, "Stop the MOU Signing Ceremony! We've never agreed to this [the establishment of the Cooperation Center]!"<sup>1</sup> Another villager kicked the MOU paper out of the room. The honorable guests of the event, Mayor of Pocheon City, Commanding General of Eighth Army, Deputy Commanding General of ROK V Corps, and Director General of Policy Planning at the Ministry of National Defense, looked in shock at the sudden intrusion.

The ceremony was temporarily halted, and Mayor of Pocheon tried to engage in dialogue with the irate crowd. He acknowledged that it was an oversight on his part to not have discussions with the locals because he assumed office only two weeks ago.<sup>2</sup> The city officials suggested having a signboard-hanging ceremony instead, but the angry mob did not allow any types of festivity to take place. Despite the attempt by the Mayor's efforts to resume the event, the opening of the Cooperation Center was postponed. The incident not only demonstrated the conflicts in the village but also showed how the Korean government has difficulty serving the needs of the local community.

## Problems

### Villagers: Years of Pain and Suffering

The confrontation near RLFC (also known as Multi-Purpose Range Complex) is more than a simple protest from the villagers. Since its establishment in 1954, the tension has been mounting for years. As the largest U.S. training field in Asia with an area of 5.1 square miles, RLFC has been a tactical training area for almost 70 years.<sup>3</sup> It is located less than an hour away from the North Korean border and has a part of Bulmu Mountain (2,188 feet above sea level) in the perimeter, making it the perfect spot for aerial gunnery exercises and joint explosive ordnance disposal training. In a single year, Eighth Army (commanding unit of all U.S. army forces in Korea) and ROK military conduct joint military training exercises days and nights for 275 days.<sup>4</sup> When there are night exercises, the villagers have to cope with the noise of shooting guns, missiles, and bombs, causing them to spend many sleepless nights in stress, anxiety, and fear.

The villagers have been living in constant fear of stray rounds and bombs for many years. As of 2020, there were over 16,000 people residing in three main counties near the range.<sup>5</sup> Within these counties, about 4,150 people living in 16 villages are directly impacted by shooting noise, stray bullets, ricochets, wildfire, water contamination, dust emission, and low-flying aircrafts.<sup>6</sup> In 2015, during a radio interview, Mr. Kyungwoo Park, the former head of Rodriguez and Seungjin Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee, said that his village is only 164 feet away from RLFC and that he personally buried 30 to 40 people who died from unexploded bombs.<sup>7</sup> Because the main source of income is mostly agriculture and livestock farming, many of the people own farms and barns close to the range. Mr. Park also mentioned that the shooting noise and stray bombs resulted in stillborn calves.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Daeryong Kim, who recovered bodies of his fellow villagers

<sup>1</sup> Knewshop, "협약식 못한다," July 25, 2022, News Video, 0:39 to 1:20, <https://youtu.be/94VrtYTozow>.

<sup>2</sup> Knewshop, "협약식 체결 직전," July 25, 2022, News Video, 1:35 to 1:56, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=av29m83iARc&ab\\_channel=%EA%B3%B5%EB%93%9C%EB%A6%B0TV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=av29m83iARc&ab_channel=%EA%B3%B5%EB%93%9C%EB%A6%B0TV)

<sup>3</sup> Seok-min Oh, "Residents up in arms against U.S. live-fire complex," *Yonhap News*, April 29, 2015, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20150429008500315>.

<sup>4</sup> Jaehoon Choi and Sungbae Son, "[평화롭게 살 권리 '끝나지 않은 포성' (2)] 주한미군 최대 훈련장 '영평사격장' 주민들," *Kyungin Ilbo*, February 2, 2021, <http://m.kyeongin.com/view.php?key=20210131010005786>.

<sup>5</sup> "Household and Population" Korean Statistical Information Service, accessed July 29, 2022, [https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=639&tblId=DT\\_63901\\_B000017&vw\\_cd=&list\\_id=00000168&scrId=&seqNo=&lang\\_mode=ko&obj\\_var\\_id=&itm\\_id=&conn\\_path=R1&path=](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=639&tblId=DT_63901_B000017&vw_cd=&list_id=00000168&scrId=&seqNo=&lang_mode=ko&obj_var_id=&itm_id=&conn_path=R1&path=)

<sup>6</sup> Yonghwan Choi, Taekyung Kim, and Soyeon Kim, *영평사격장 주변 주민지원대책 연구 Problems and Countermeasures of the Rodrigues Live Fire Complex* (Suwon: Gyeonggi Research Institute, 2016), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Kyungwoo Park, Interview by Yul Shin, *YTN Radio*, Audio Transcript, March 31, 2015, [https://radio.ytn.co.kr/program/index.php?f=2&id=35123&page=446&scd=0214&sc\\_hcd=01](https://radio.ytn.co.kr/program/index.php?f=2&id=35123&page=446&scd=0214&sc_hcd=01).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

from bomb explosions, attested that he recovered 72 bodies since the range opened in 1954, and most of them were given small consolation money by the Korean government to cover up the incidents.<sup>9</sup> Despite the pain and suffering that they had to endure, they never left their hometown.

2014, a group of hardcore villagers founded the Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee. The Committee organized countless protests, demanding the relocation of RLFC and suspension of shooting drills. In January 2018, a ricochet incident eventually led to the suspension of aerial gunnery training in July, creating growing concerns over the combat

County	Changsoo-myeon	Yongjoong-myeon	Yongbuk-myeon
Village	Oga 1-ri, Oga 2-ri, Oga 3-ri, Woonsan-ri	Yongsong-ri, Yongpyeong 1-ri, Yongpyeong 2-ri, Seongdong 1-ri, Seongdong 2-ri, Seongdong 5-ri, Yangmoon 1-ri, Yangmoon 2-ri	Daehoesan-ri, Sohoesan-ri, Yami 1-ri, Yami 2-ri
Resident	742	2,455	953

Table 1: Number of Residents near Rodriguez Live Fire Complex (2015)<sup>10</sup>

In addition to unexploded bombs and stray bullets, low-flying aircrafts were another safety concern. Less than 1.9 miles away from RLFC, there used to be three elementary schools; one of the schools was only 1,540 feet away from the main entrance of the range. The schools are now closed, but up until early 2022, students aged 8 to 13 years old were exposed to loud noise and gusty wind from helicopters. Due to the range's close proximity to residential areas, aircrafts flew close to people's houses, schools, and farms, destroying rooftops and blowing off crops.<sup>11</sup>

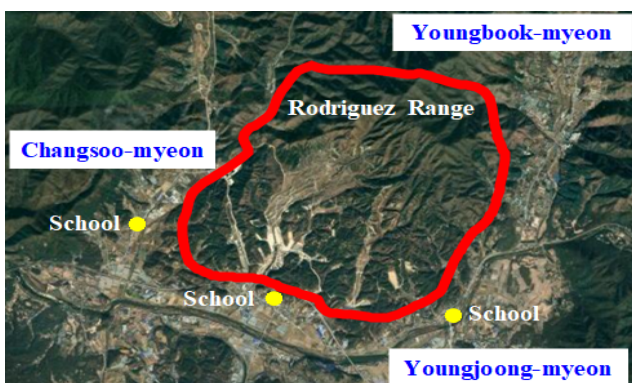


Figure 1 Satellite View of Rodriguez Live Fire Complex (RLFC)<sup>12</sup> The image edited for clarity.

Instead of waiting for the government to take action, the villagers took matters into their own hands. In

readiness of Apache helicopters.<sup>13</sup> Whenever stray bullets come through rooftops or the U.S. military continues to carry on training at night times, the Committee members block the main road to the range and fiercely protest, forcing United States Forces Korea (USFK) to cease its military training.

**USFK: Threat to Military Readiness**

The recurrent suspension and restriction of exercises at RLFC have become serious issues to the ROK-US Joint Force. The current and former Commanders of the United Nations Command (UNC) / U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) / U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) have outspokenly expressed their concerns over the training disruption and suspension. In September 2020, General Robert Abrams, former Commander of USFK, said during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing that the U.S. military is sending their troops overseas to maintain live-fire qualifications because they cannot conduct necessary drills for Apache helicopters on the Korean Peninsula due to local complaints.<sup>14</sup> In March 2022, General Paul LaCamera, current Commander of USFK, also mentioned during a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing that the local encroachment (protesters climbing Bulmu Mountain in protest and blocking the range gate) "have become hindrances and challenges to training execution" and that the

<sup>9</sup> Seungwan Ha, "사격장 생긴 후 72 명 폭발사고 주검 처리했다," *Pocheon World People*, January 28, 2015, <http://www.pcb21.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=84>.

<sup>10</sup> Choi, Kim, and Kim, *영평사격장 주변 주민지원대책 연구 Problems and Countermeasures of the Rodrigues Live Fire Complex*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Map of Pocheon, digital image, Google Maps, accessed July 30, 2022, <https://www.google.com/maps/>.

<sup>13</sup> Young-sik Woo, "포천 영평사격장 '헬기사격 중단' 야간사격 축소," *Yonhap News*, August 28, 2018, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180828045800060>.

<sup>14</sup> Seung-woo Kang, "USFK struggles to conduct Apache live-fire training," *The KoreaTimes*, November 16, 2020, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/11/205\\_299393.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2020/11/205_299393.html).



USFK has “opened the door to include ROK forces in off-Peninsula training opportunities” to maintain the combat readiness of the ROK-US Joint Force.<sup>15</sup> The conflict in Pocheon City has become serious security threats to both the ROK and U.S. military; it undermines the Joint Force’s defense readiness and its deterrence capabilities against North Korean provocation.

### **ROK Government: Caught in Dilemma**

The Korean government is a target of criticism from its own people and the U.S. government. The members of the Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee condemn Ministry of National Defense for not protecting its citizens while the U.S. government criticizes the ministry for not doing enough to resolve the training disruption. In 2020, the U.S. Secretary of Defense emphasized that “continuous training opportunities for USFK are critical to maintaining a strong combined defense posture,” pressuring the defense ministry to find a solution to the issue.<sup>16</sup>

The defense ministry tried to negotiate the terms of an agreement with the villagers and U.S. military. In September 2016, it signed a memorandum of understanding with Eighth Army to install new safety measures inside the range. In 2019, the Ministry conducted internal research to estimate the cost and implications of relocating Rodriguez Live Fire Complex. It also attempted to find an alternative range for Apache helicopters by moving the training area from Pocheon to Pohang, the southeastern corner of the Korean Peninsula, but this backfired. In January 2019, the U.S. military moved its aerial gunnery training site to Pohang. After receiving an official letter from General Robert Abrams worrying about the combat readiness of Apache helicopters, the defense ministry approved to conduct Apache helicopter exercises in the Suseong Fire Range.<sup>17</sup> However, the defense ministry did not notify the villagers in Pohang beforehand, making the villagers outraged. The training went on for almost a year from April 2019 to February 2020, but it was later

suspended after enraged villagers held protests to shut down the range. In January 2021, the villagers submitted a public appeal to the Anti-Corruption and Civil Rights Committee (ACRC), which intervened to protect the rights of the villagers and conduct an ambient noise assessment.<sup>18</sup>

The defense ministry publicly apologized to the villagers in Pohang and announced that it would look for a different shooting range. Although it tried to solve the range issues by tossing the ball from Pocheon to Pohang, it only stirred up more public outrage. Simply, the range problems are too deeply rooted and cannot be easily resolved.



Figure 2 Location of Rodriguez Live Fire Complex and Suseong Range<sup>19</sup> The image edited for clarity.

Thitinan Pongsudhirak examines the re-emergence of the securitization of national economies of major states after nearly three decades of globalization and economic interdependence. He argues that the emerging struggle between the US-led and Western-based alliance system and the China-centric global network of nations represents a return to the ideological fight that the Soviet Union put up against the West and lost. China as its logical successor and Russia as its residual state are now challenging the West. What has changed is China's economic ascendancy. The outcome will depend on how China exercises its newfound power and how the US-led alliance system responds. Meanwhile, ASEAN states have become more divided as well and have increasingly relied on bilateral and unilateral solutions to regional problems. As the global order continues to unravel, Pongsudhirak

<sup>15</sup> Paul LaCamera, “GEN LaCamera Statement - Senate Armed Services Committee,” transcript of speech delivered at the Senate Armed Services, Washington, DC, March 10, 2022, <https://www.usfk.mil/Media/Speeches-Transcripts/Article/2963327/gen-lacamera-statement-senate-armed-services-committee/>.

<sup>16</sup> “Joint Communique of the 52nd U.S.-Republic of Korea Security Consultative Meeting,” United States Forces Korea, October 14, 2020. <https://www.usfk.mil/Media/Newsroom/News/Article/2382466/joint-communicue-of-the-52nd-us-republic-of-korea-security-consultative-meeting/>.

<sup>17</sup> Kwi Keun Kim, “국방부, 주한미군 훈련 불만에 ‘대규모 훈련장 확보 추진,’” *Yonhap News*, April 28, 2021, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20210428102451504>.

<sup>18</sup> Sung-ah Park, “‘미국 헬기’ 기준치 넘는 사격 소음...권익위가 ‘중재,’” *MBC News*, June 8, 2021, [https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2021/nwdesk/article/6254898\\_34936.html](https://imnews.imbc.com/replay/2021/nwdesk/article/6254898_34936.html).

<sup>19</sup> Training Areas in South Korea, digital image, Disaster-wise Blogspot, accessed August 29, 2022, <https://disaster-wise.blogspot.com/>.

anticipates a more bifurcated future and a growing risk of geoeconomic and geopolitical conflict.

Staying on the theme of economic aspects of security, Brad Glosserman outlines the evolution of economic security and the framing of economic activity as a form of national security. He argues that the current focus on economic resilience and indispensability has led to a new emphasis on protecting markets, ensuring supply chain resilience, and seeking technological dominance. The major implication of this expanded view of economic security, which he refers to as the “new national security economy,” is that protection of economic goods and technologies will extend beyond military applications to include a wide range of economic assets.

## Background

The range in Pocheon has been open for almost 70 years; there was plenty of time for agreements and settlements to be reached. However, why is it that the range is still a growing concern? To answer the question, it is important to understand the relations between the Korean public and U.S. military have transformed throughout the years.

### Change in USFK Demographics

To deter North Korean provocation, South Korea has welcomed a great deal of U.S. troops to the country. Although the number of the U.S. military members has fluctuated over the years, there are now 28,500 American troops in the country, making South Korea the third largest U.S. military host in the world.<sup>20</sup> However, following Korea’s economic development in recent years, the government realized that it needed to reclaim the lands that were granted to the U.S. military because the U.S. granted districts were in good real estate locations.

To start the reclaiming process, the ROK and U.S. governments signed the Yongsan Relocation Program (YRP) and Land Partnership Plan (LPP) in 2004 stating that the two governments plan to reduce the footprints of the U.S. military in the country. The agreements aimed to consolidate U.S. forces that were scattered around the nation and improve the

operation efficiency of U.S. army garrisons.<sup>21</sup> The USFK Transformation Plan focused on reorganizing its areas from six to four – Area 1 (north of Seoul), Area 2 (Seoul), Area 3 (south of Seoul), and Area 4 (Daegu) – and moving the main units’ headquarters to Area 3, creating a large military hub in the southern part of Gyeonggi-do.

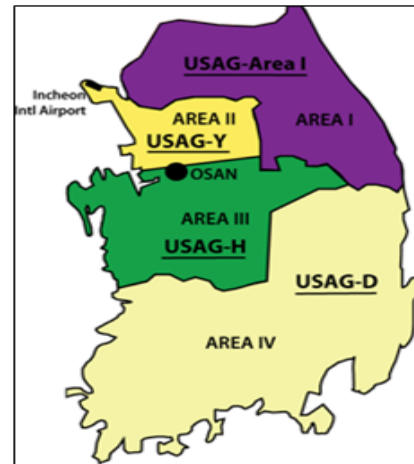


Figure 3 Map of USFK Areas and U.S. Army Garrison<sup>22</sup>

### Public Reaction

The response from the Korean population varied. Because the people near the U.S. military installations benefited greatly from American dollars, they had mixed feelings when the USFK Transformation Plan began. After the Korean War, the Korean government requisitioned people’s houses and lands to build military installations. In return, people received either no compensation or requisitioned indemnity bonds.<sup>23</sup> During years of hardships, Koreans relied heavily on U.S. Aid to survive. Thus, the government had to turn a blind eye to the problems they had with American soldiers and military installations. However, as the country underwent drastic economic development and democratization, people gradually became less dependent on the U.S. government for survival, making them more vocal about their issues with the Korean government and U.S. military.

<sup>20</sup> Yeonggyo Chung, “주한미군 대북 맞불전력 아파치 헬기, 포병대 본부 상시 주둔한다,” *The JoongAng*, November 30, 2021, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/25028252#home>.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Satkowski, “New ‘footprint’ emerging in Korea for U.S. military,” US Army Corps of Engineers, September 19, 2014, <https://www.pof.usace.army.mil/Media/News/Article/499855/new-footprint-emerging-in-korea-for-us-military/>

<sup>22</sup> Eighth Army, *Korea Online One-Stop*, digital image, Eighth Army, accessed July 31, 2022, <https://8tharmy.korea.army.mil/site/newcomers/online-one-stop.asp>.

<sup>23</sup> Huh, Hoon, Seokchan Kang, and Yoongi Cho. *주한미군 이전에 따른 경기도의 정책 방향*. Pocheon: Daejin University, 2011.



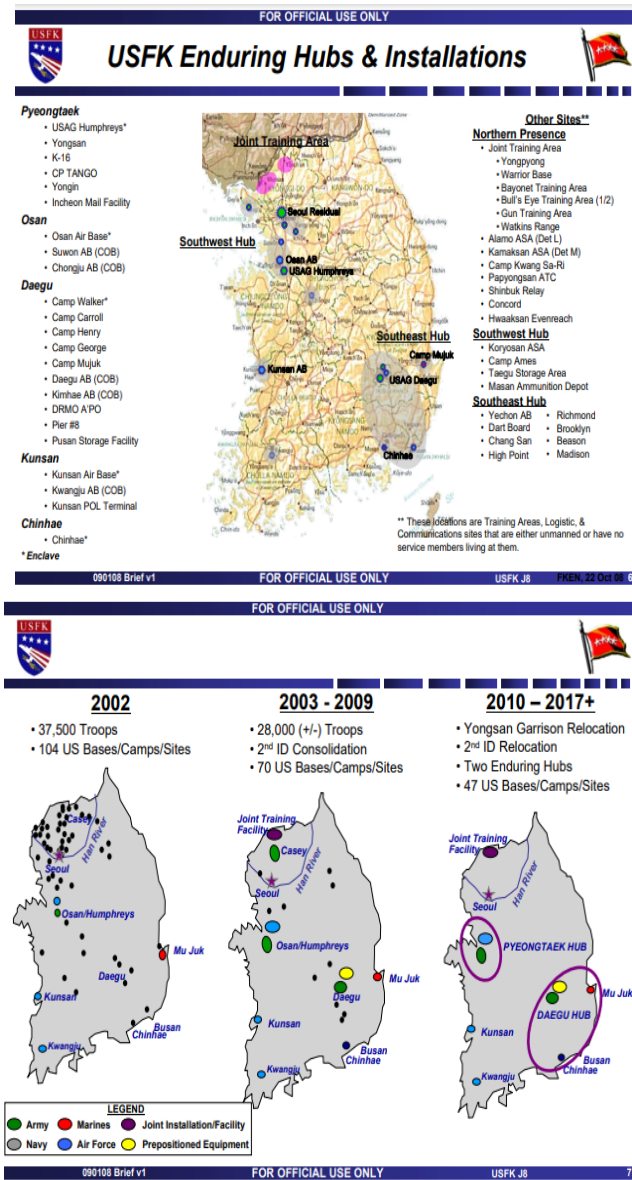


Figure 4 USFK Transformation Plan (Hubs and Installations)<sup>24</sup>

**Return of Local Autonomy**

In May 1995, the country's local government election was held for the first time since its termination after the military coup-d'etat in 1961. The resurrection of local autonomy signified the decentralization of finance and governing power, improvement of resident autonomy, and policy customization. At the macro-level, there are Seoul Special City, 6 Metropolitan Cities, Sejong Special Autonomous City, 8 Dos and

<sup>24</sup> USFK J8, 2009 Peninsula Engineer Conference, digital image, Wikileaks, February 4, 2009, <https://wikileaks.cash/korcom-transformation-2009.pdf>.

Jeju Special Self-governing Province. At the micro-level, there are Si (city), Gun (county), and Gu (district) that work more closely with people on a daily basis.

After the restoration of local autonomy, people did not hesitate to complain about the unpleasant experiences they had with American soldiers. After many of the U.S. military granted districts were returned to Korea, only a few areas still had to cope with the presence of the foreign forces in their neighborhood, creating a sense of unfairness and inequality among the residents. Thus, the residents of Pocheon began filing official complaints about the damages incurred by the incidents of stray bombs and ricochets starting in the late 1990s. To let the world know how much sacrifice they had to make and to protect the lives of their families, they began fighting against the once-the-closest neighbor and the democratic government for which they voted.

**Causes**

The fact that people are organizing themselves and making their voices heard is not the cause of the ongoing issue in Pocheon. To understand what is driving villagers more furious than ever and why the problem does not seem to have an ending, one needs to take a closer look at different layers of root causes and types of government actors that play a role. There are three major government actors that play vital roles: Ministry of National Defense, Gyeonggi Provincial Government, and Pocheon City. Ministry of National Defense, the central government department, is responsible for deterring a war and protecting national security; on the other hand,

**Administrative District System**

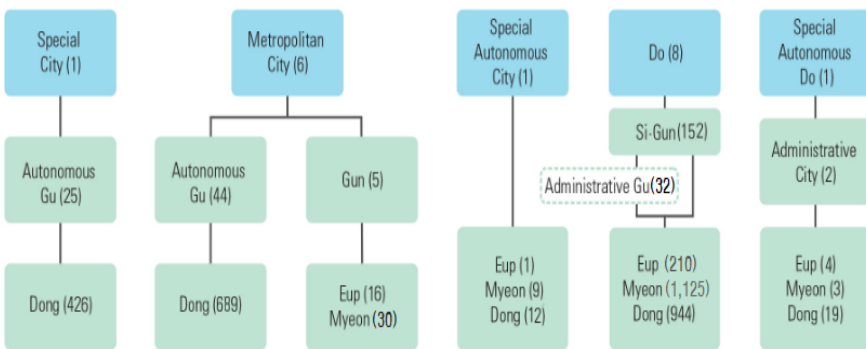


Figure 5 Administrative District System in South Korea (2022)<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Ministry of Land Infrastructure and Transport, National Geography Information Institute, The National Atlas of Korea, accessed December 9, 2022, [http://nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr/pages/page\\_586.php](http://nationalatlas.ngii.go.kr/pages/page_586.php).

Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon City are the local autonomous entities that oversee administrative affairs related to the welfare of their residents. The defense ministry negotiates details of military operations with USFK, and local governments provide financial and administrative support to the local community. As demonstrated in the episode of the defense ministry failing to appease people of Pohang, the three government bodies must cooperate in order to promptly help the villagers and improve defense readiness. Particularly, the local government should play more influential roles. However, the following problems make it difficult for the three government bodies to collaborate.

### **Frequent Staff Rotation in the Government**

Every one to three years, government officials rotate positions. Some officials rotate within the same office, but others switch positions with people from different organizations. When the rotation announcements are made, the officials have to pack their stuff and move to a new office the next day; thus, there is not enough time to provide successors with sufficient job training. In some cases, the predecessors who are in the same office will be able to brief the successors on the tasks for a day or answer work-related questions via phone. However, because the predecessors also have to catch up with the new assignments, the successors have to learn everything by themselves. Thus, it is difficult to expect the same level of performance from the new officials, especially when they are faced with compensation claims from the angry villagers.

The villagers are faced with life or death problems; ricochets and stray bullets come through their rooftops and windows. Although the villagers claim compensation for the loss and damage that were caused by shooting drills, they are faced with delayed responses from the officials and slow administrative processes. According to the internal research report issued by the defense ministry in 2019, the villagers residing near RLFC pointed out the frequent job rotation leads to the lack of work continuity and delayed compensation settlements.<sup>26</sup> They expressed their strong distrust and disapproval toward the government's civil administrative service.

The frequent change in personnel also changes government policy direction. Governors and city mayors are elected every 4 years. Their characters and political orientation significantly influences the direction of government policy. For instance, Jaemyung Lee, the former Governor of Gyeonggi-do, showed little interest in Pocheon. During his term from July 2018 to October 2021, he never visited Pocheon to meet the villagers or participated in the RLFC Conflict Resolution Trilateral Meetings, which were held by Deputy Minister of National Defense. In contrast, his predecessor Kyungpil Nam had numerous meetings with Pocheon residents and sent an official letter to Commanding General of Eighth Army urging the U.S. military to implement stronger safety measures inside the range.<sup>27</sup> Every 4 years, the atmosphere within the governments and policy directions take a dramatic turn, creating confusion and distrust among the villagers that the government policy is only valid for a certain period.

### **Information Barrier between Governments**

In addition to frequent job rotation in the government, the information barrier among government officials is an issue. The defense ministry is the central government organization while Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon City are local governments. Because Pocheon is one of 31 administrative districts of Gyeonggi-do, the transfer of information between Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon is fairly easy. Yet, information from the defense ministry is classified as confidential under the Military Secret Protection Act, and the ministry officials are prohibited from sharing confidential information about military status, meeting minutes, research results, and other internally-produced documents with other government bodies. For instance, in 2018 and 2019, the defense ministry conducted two critical research projects on the relocation of RLFC. Although the research thoroughly examined the current problems and provided detailed policy recommendations, the reports were classified as confidential. Even though sharing the research outcome and discussing the future policy options would be beneficial to the government at large, the information barrier makes it difficult to do so.

<sup>26</sup> Soh, Sungkyu et al. *영평사격장 주변지역 주민이주 방안 연구: 인식조사와 비용추정을 중심으로*. Pocheon: Daejinn University Industry-Academic Cooperation Foundation, 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Kim, Do-yoon, "남경필 경기지사 미군사격장 잇단 오발사고 대책 촉구," *Yonhap News*, March 31, 2015, <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20150331115900060?input=1195m>.

The fact that the three government bodies have intertwined relationships with different U.S. military units makes the problem even more complicated. In 2019, the Governor of Gyeonggi-do and Commanding General of Eighth Army signed a memorandum of understanding in 2019 to promote bilateral relations, making the two organizations counterparts. Since Pocheon City is a subordinate organization, it should be working with the Second Infantry Division, but the issues with RLFC makes Pocheon City an active counterpart of Eighth Army. Considering that RLFC is located in Gyeonggi-do, it seems rational for the provincial government to be included in the discussion, but it was not. Because there is no regular meeting between the central and local governments, the officials are not fully aware of what each organization is doing. They have to contact each other via phone or email to inform one another. If one of the three channels fails, the entire link gets disconnected. During the discussion on the establishment of the Cooperation Center, Gyeonggi Provincial Government was completely left out of the conversation.

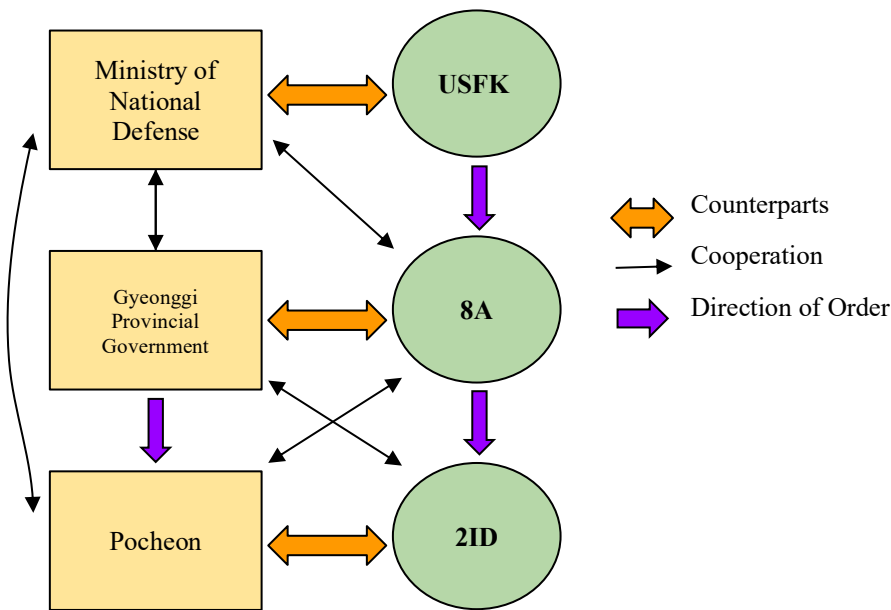


Figure 6 ROK Gov-US Military Relationship

**Insufficient Government Budget**

For over 50 years, commercial development was restricted around the U.S. military installations throughout the country. To acknowledge and make up for the loss of opportunity for people, the central

government passed ‘Special Act on Support for Areas Adjacent to Districts Granted to the United States Armed Forces in Korea’ in March 2006. The law provided a legal basis for Ministry of the Internal and Safety (MOIS) to draft ‘the Comprehensive Development Plan for Areas Adjacent to Districts Granted to the United States Armed Forces,’ which planned to spend over KRW 47 trillion (Central Gov 4.25 trillion / Local Gov 5.87 trillion / Private Investment 37 trillion) from 2008 to 2026 to promote economic prosperity and resident welfare in the underdeveloped areas near the U.S. granted lands.<sup>28</sup> Although a large sum of the subsidy helped build infrastructure, such as freeways, public housing, parks, and industrial complexes, in 325 small towns, it was not meant for noise-induced damage compensation.

Local governments demanded the central government to pass a law to provide a legal basis for noise compensation. In 2019, the National Assembly finally passed a law, ‘Military Airfields and Military Firing Ranges Noise Prevention and Compensation Act.’ Local governments welcomed the law because

they can finally provide necessary financial assistance to their residents. Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon City had been preparing for this moment for a long time. In 2015, they created matching funds to assess noise levels for the first time ever. The villagers and governments wanted to use the data to demonstrate how serious things are in Pocheon. Unfortunately, no compensation was made until 2020 (when the law was actually enforced). However, thanks to the Noise

Prevention and Compensation Act, every five years, the defense ministry must develop a master plan to prevent noise and provide compensation.

The villagers were expecting a happy ending, but the reality was harsh. According to the law, the compensation is made based on noise levels; thus it is

<sup>28</sup> “주한미군 공여구역 주변지역 등 지원,” Ministry of the Interior and Safety, accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.mois.go.kr/frt/sub/a06/b06/provisionSpt/screen.do>.

significant to have accurate information. In August 2022, KRW 140,178,000 was provided as compensation for 819 villagers of Pocheon.<sup>29</sup> However, the members of the Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee argue that the noise assessment results cannot be trusted. They assert that the data was downsized purposefully and noise levels vary every time they are assessed.<sup>30</sup> In 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2022, the defense ministry, Gyeonggi Provincial Government, and Pocheon City have conducted separate noise assessments, but the results differ too much, creating widespread disbelief. Pocheon City, City Council, and the residents petition that it is more important to have a special law enacted to protect the rights and livelihoods of the people.

Despite the continuous petitions from the local governments and villagers, the central government is not planning to introduce a special law anytime soon. Because special acts preempt general laws, having a special act for a specific city can be a tremendous advantage. In 2004, the Pyeongtaek Special Act was enacted to compensate for the relocation of residents and to subsidize development plans in the city. By 2024, Pyeongtaek will receive over KRW 18.9 trillion (Central Gov 4.49 trillion / Local Gov 749 billion / Private Investment 13.7 trillion).<sup>31</sup> For the national government, it has to be careful not to set a precedent by passing a special law for Pocheon because there are over thousands of shooting ranges around the country (owned by ROK and U.S.). Relocating residents out of Pyeongtaek was a one-time event, but relocating Pocheon residents can create a domino effect.

### Policy Recommendations

Since relocating villagers is not a realistic option, local governments should take more active roles than waiting on the national government to resolve the issue. Under the Local Autonomy Act, local governments including Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon City are responsible for resident welfare. Although they have no authority over national defense, within the boundary of the

national law, they can legislate local autonomous regulations and ordinances to defend the residents' lives. Because they collect tax revenues, they are capable of funding their own programs. Thus, to prevent situations in Pocheon from worsening, Gyeonggi Provincial Government should allocate a separate budget to supplement the noise compensation paid by the national government and Pocheon City should hire more military-experienced experts who do not rotate frequently to better serve the villagers.

### Gyeonggi Provincial Government – Budget Increase

Gyeonggi-do is a nest of the biggest U.S. military presence in the country. Following the completion of USFK Transformation, Gyeonggi-do has become the hub of the U.S. forces. UNC/USFK/CFC, Eighth Army (8A), and Second Infantry Division (2ID) left their bases for USAG Humphreys in Pyeongtaek. In 2010, U.S. Army projected that the number of troops, families, local employees, and contractors on USAG Humphreys would grow from 10,000 to 44,000 after the relocation.<sup>32</sup> In 2014, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimated that about 12,000 U.S. service members would move from Seoul to Pyeongtaek.<sup>33</sup> As of now, a large number of U.S. military personnel is living in the province, making the province an important intermediary for the U.S. military and local community.

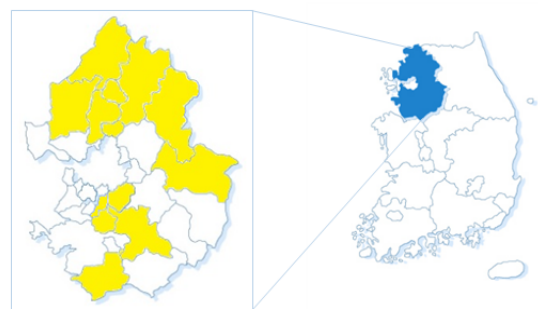


Figure 8 U.S. Military Presence in Gyeonggi-do<sup>34</sup> The image is edited for clarity.

<sup>29</sup> Pocheon City Council, Special Committee on Administrative Affairs Audit, 제 166 회 포천시의회(1 차 정례회) 행정사무감사 행정사무감사특별위원회 제 4 차, September 20, 2022, [https://council.pocheon.go.kr/main/minutes/html/MinutesView.do?MINTS\\_SN=7451&KEYWORD=819%EB%AA%85](https://council.pocheon.go.kr/main/minutes/html/MinutesView.do?MINTS_SN=7451&KEYWORD=819%EB%AA%85).

<sup>30</sup> Choi, Jaehoon, “영평사격장 들쭉날쭉 소음측정... '귀막힌 주민들,’” *Kyungin Ilbo*, August 10, 2022, <http://www.kyeongin.com/main/view.php?key=20220810010001881>.

<sup>31</sup> “주한미군기지 이전에 따른 평택 지원,” Ministry of the Interior and Safety, accessed December 11, 2022, <https://www.mois.go.kr/frt/sub/a06/b06/pyeongtaekSpt/screen.do>.

<sup>32</sup> R. Slade Walters, “U.S. Forces Korea Transformation Update,” U.S. Army, January 12, 2010, [https://www.army.mil/article/32794/u\\_s\\_forces\\_korea\\_transformation\\_update](https://www.army.mil/article/32794/u_s_forces_korea_transformation_update).

<sup>33</sup> Satkowski, “New 'footprint' emerging in Korea for U.S. military.”

<sup>34</sup> Map of Gyeonggi-do and Anyang City, digital image, Anyang City Webpage, accessed July 30, 2022, <https://www.anyang.go.kr/main/contents.do?key=708>.



To promote the ROK-U.S. alliance and amicable relationships between the locals and the U.S. military, Gyeonggi Provincial Government provides a portion of its budget to support areas where military installations are located. Every year, Gyeonggi Provincial Government and its cities (Pyeongtaek City and Dongducheon City) create 5:5 matching funds to organize community events, concerts, gatherings, and local festivals.<sup>35</sup>

	2020	2021 (reduced due to COVID)
<b>Pyeongtaek</b>	KRW 660,000,000	KRW 330,000,000
<b>Dongducheon</b>	KRW 330,000,000	KRW 165,000,000

Table 2 Budget for ROK-US Alliance and Exchange Cooperation Programs<sup>36</sup>

However, things are different with Pocheon City. Gyeonggi Provincial Government and Pocheon City have agreed to form 5:5 matching funds to install noise and vibration monitors till 2023. Also, in 2019, they decided to provide matching funds (KRW 130 million) every year to support the organization of peaceful community events and the operation of the Shooting Range Countermeasure Committee.<sup>37</sup> Compared to other cities, Pocheon receives significantly less monetary support from the local governments.

The lack of support for Pocheon residents was repeatedly criticized by members of Gyeonggi-do Assembly. Because it is important to have a legal basis for a budget increase, the Assembly members decided to pass ‘Gyeonggi-do’s Ordinance on Noise-induced Damage Caused by Military Installations and Facilities’ in 2018. With new amendments that were approved in 2022, the responsibilities of Gyeonggi Provincial Government became more specific; it shall allocate its budget to monitor the status of noise damage yearly, report the status to the defense ministry and request specific relief plans and noise prevention methods, provide complimentary legal consultation, support medical treatment (for hearing problems), and enhance the livelihood of the

residents. Gyeonggi Provincial Government is obliged to prepare a budget for Pocheon City, and its fiscal performance demonstrates it can well increase the amount. Gyeonggi Provincial Government has the biggest budget among 17 local autonomous bodies. Combined with Gyeonggi Provincial Office of Education, it has an annual budget (KRW 56 trillion) bigger than Seoul Special City. Nevertheless, the budget is mostly spent on improving the local economy to benefit a majority, not a small group of villagers in Pocheon.

In order to increase a government budget, it is essential for the members of Gyeonggi-do Assembly to approve a supplementary budget and annual fiscal plan. They must understand that the budget increase will not only benefit Pocheon residents, but it will also calm a wave of public discontent in other cities. There are air force bases and an airport in Gimpo, Suwon, and Seongnam with a population of around 2.6 million. They also complain continuously about the noise of low-flying aircrafts. Thus, if the budget is increased to compensate the residents who suffer from noise-induced damage, the residents of Gimpo, Suwon, and Seongnam will also benefit from the increased budget. Because the members of Gyeonggi-do Assembly are elected officials whose jobs are to serve their constituents, approving a budget plan for a bigger crowd will not be a challenge.

Every year, Gyeonggi-do Assembly conducts administrative audits for government-funded programs. During the audits, this year’s existing program budgets can either be reduced or increased for next year, and supplementary budgets are approved to support newly-created or existing projects that need more monetary support. Thus, in order to allocate a budget for residents of Pocheon and other cities, local government officials have to begin drafting reports and compiling data at the beginning of the year. The support of the public and reports submitted in a timely manner can lead to a successful budget increase.

<sup>35</sup> Gyeonggi-do Assembly, Committee on Budget and Accounts, 제 340 회 제 4 차 예산결산특별위원회, December 5, 2019, <https://kms.ggc.go.kr/cms/mntsKeywordViewer.do?#pos1>.

<sup>36</sup> Gyeonggi-do Assembly, Safety and Administration Committee, 2021 년도 제 3 회 경기도 추가경정 예산안, September 3, 2021, <https://kms.ggc.go.kr/cms/mntsViewer.do?mntsId=13380#>.

<sup>37</sup> Gyeonggi-do Assembly, Planning and Finance Committee, 2017 년도 기획재정위원회 행정사무감사, November 13, 2017, <https://kms.ggc.go.kr/cms/mntsKeywordViewer.do?#pos1>.

## **Pocheon City – New Staff Hire**

In addition to a budget increase at the provincial level, Pocheon City should consider hiring contract-based civil-military experts who do not rotate frequently. In South Korea, the government employs contract-based government workers who have expertise in various fields, including law, translation, public relations, military relations, climate change, international trade, international development, etc. Unlike the regular government officials, their terms last from a year to 10 years – or longer if their contracts are renewed continuously until retirement. Because regular government officials have to rotate positions every 1 to 3 years, having permanent employees with civil-military experience can be beneficial.

Within the defense ministry and Gyeonggi Provincial Government, there are already many contract-based officials who are retired military service members. Office of Balanced Development Planning in Gyeonggi Provincial Government has two divisions – Military and Government Cooperation Division and Emergency Planning Division – that hire a number of contract-based officials whose jobs are to promote ROK-US relations and prepare for civil defense training. Because they stay in the same office for longer than their colleagues, they know the history of the situation better than anyone and understand the military culture, language, and internal issues. Their expertise and experience allow the local governments to better serve the residents in times of conflict. If Pocheon City hires the retired military workforce, it can take advantage of the knowledge and network of the ROK military. The experience and expertise of the retired soldiers would be as valuable as the defense ministry's confidential information.

The contract-based officials can also directly engage with the local community and U.S. military. When protests break out, officials act as mediators between the people and the U.S. military. Currently, there are only four regular government officials in the Balanced Development Team, Local Development Division, Pocheon City, to deal with complaints from 9 shooting ranges (4 owned by U.S. military and 5 owned by ROK government). However, due to the limited budget, only one official is in charge of dealing with noise damage compensation. If the person leaves for a new assignment, it will be difficult to sustain work continuity. To improve the administrative system and take prompt action to

issues in RLFC, Pocheon City should consider hiring contract-based officials immediately.

## **Conclusion**

Maintaining the combat readiness of the ROK-US joint forces relies heavily on the circumstances to carry out military exercises and drills regularly. The challenges at Rodriguez Live Fire Complex not only weaken the joint forces' deterrence capabilities against North Korean provocations but also threaten our allies in the Indo-Pacific region. As the government bodies that can directly influence the daily lives of the residents, the local governments serve important roles for the people, national government, and ROK-U.S. alliance. Therefore, to create an ideal environment for a free and open Indo-Pacific, it is important to pay attention to the role of local governments in South Korea.

The confrontation in Pocheon has been going on for nearly 70 years. It is now the time to make a consensus with the local community and bring back peace in the city. To create safer and harmonious villages, the role of local governments is more crucial than ever. When an irate crowd protests in front of the U.S. military shooting range in Pocheon, the local government officials are the first ones dispatched to the scene. As the first channel of communication, they interact with locals, assess the situation, and work closely with the central government to resolve the issue.

The limited budget, frequent staff rotation, and information barrier have hindered the local government officials from serving the residents well. As a solution to these internal problems, Gyeonggi Provincial Government should make efforts to increase a budget for noise-induced damage compensation and Pocheon City should hire contract-based workers with expertise. With an increased budget, the provincial government will be able to implement new programs to provide necessary assistance to the local community. Pocheon City's new contract-based government officials will have extensive years of experience in civil-military relations to improve work continuity within the organization.

The local governments not only listen to the voices of the residents but also support the nation's security commitment. They contribute to strengthening the ROK-US alliance and ensuring a free and open Indo-

Pacific. With an active engagement and support from the local governments, the villagers may finally see the end of instability and the beginning of peace. Improving the issues of mistrust, lack of communication, and work discontinuity will restore the broken relationships with the villagers, paving the way for the resumption of military drills and exercises at RLFC. When the domestic situation is stabilized and trust is established, an open and free Indo-Pacific will finally be realized.



# 7

## **South Korea's Second Sight: Risks and Rewards for the ROK-US Alliance with Russia**

*Julian Gluck*

## Introduction

The erosion of US primacy in the Indo-Pacific and the growing geostrategic bipolarity between substantive democracies and more authoritarian states have elevated the importance of the vital Republic of Korea-United States (ROK-US) alliance from a military arrangement between guarantors of peace on the peninsula to strategic allies championing their shared value for human rights and regional stability. The Republic of Korea is in a distinct situation as a vibrant democracy and treaty ally of the United States that also shares a unique relationship historically with Russia, built upon primarily trade and economic cooperation since the fall of the Soviet Union. After decades of adversarial relations between Moscow and Seoul due to the former's support of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) during the Korean War and Cold War, South Korean president Roh Tae-woo's *Nordpolitik*—characterized by normalizing relations with North Korea's allies in the late 1980s—served as an avenue for indirectly confronting Pyongyang and as a commercially beneficial arrangement with Moscow: raw materials and natural resources exchanged for financial investments and consumer goods.<sup>1</sup>

Due to its unique past, policy, and position, South Korea could be said to have a sort of 'second sight' with the ability to look not only toward the United States but simultaneously at Russia and into different futures.<sup>2</sup> These two dyads present unique advantages to Seoul by way of Washington and Moscow, but if the Yoon administration increasingly draws the Kremlin's ire through sanctions or sending supplies in support of Ukraine, long-term risks to the ROK-US alliance could result including expanded economic or military support from Russia to an

increasingly bellicose North Korea.<sup>3</sup> Despite challenges, the bidirectional focus of the Republic of Korea may enable the Asian power to benefit economically and strategically or even serve as a mediator for improving relations between global adversaries and the ROK-US alliance, the linchpin for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

This analysis will center around South Korea's dyadic relationships with the United States and Russia, commencing with historical primers prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. The author will then introduce considerations from the Russo-Ukrainian War as of December 2022. The assessment will be concluded by presenting risks and rewards for the ROK-US alliance if Seoul's engagement with Russia increases in a theoretical post-bellum period. The Republic of Korea potentially rebuilding stronger ties with Russia offers opportunities for economic advancement, diplomatic mediation, and nonproliferation on the peninsula both for itself and the ROK-US alliance but is predicated upon the Kremlin's movement in a meaningful direction following the war and an international system wherein Seoul's cooperation with Moscow would not be seen as anathema in the eyes of its democratic allies.

## ROK-US Relations into 2022

Over the course of seven decades, the relationship between the Republic of Korea and the United States of America has evolved from a defense alliance focused on the omnipresent military threat of South Korea's northern neighbor to a more comprehensive arrangement with broader national security interests beyond the peninsula, stronger economic cooperation, and mutual ideological underpinnings

<sup>0</sup> The views expressed in this piece are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the United States Air Force, the Department of Defense, or the United States Government.

<sup>1</sup> The country names Republic of Korea and South Korea will be used interchangeably throughout this piece, as well Democratic People's Republic of Korea and North Korea, for stylistic reasons. Tae Dong Chung, "Korea's Nordpolitik: Achievements and Prospects," *Asian Perspective* 15, no. 2 (1991): pp. 149-178, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42703974>, 150; Byung-joon Ahn, "South Korean-Soviet Relations: Contemporary Issues and Prospects," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 9 (September 1991): pp. 816-825, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645297>, 821.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Chisholm, ed., "Encyclopædia Britannica," in *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Cambridge University Press, 1911), pp. 570-571, [https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911\\_Encyclop%C3%A6dia\\_Britannica/Seco](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Seco) and [nd\\_Sight](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Seco).

<sup>3</sup> If South Korea were to provide Russian-made or indigenously produced weapons for use in Ukraine, this could be viewed as breaching the letter or spirit of UN treaty number 36749. Yong-Chool Ha and Beom-Shik Shin, "The Impact of the Ukraine War on Russian-North Korean Relations,"

*Asian Survey* 62, no. 5-6 (2022): pp. 893-919, <https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2022.1800092>, 902; Ji Da-gyum, "S. Korean Military Commits to Stepping up Ukraine Support at US-Led Dialogue," *Korea Herald*, May 24, 2022, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20220524000676>; Soo-hyang Choi, "South Korea Has Not Supplied Lethal Weapons to Ukraine, President Says," ed. Christopher Cushing and Gerry Doyle, Reuters, Oct. 28, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/south-korea-has-not-supplied-lethal-weapons-ukraine-president-says-yonhap-2022-10-28/>; Lolita C. Baldor and Tara Copp, "Us to Buy South Korean Howitzer Rounds to Send to Ukraine," Associated Press, Nov. 11, 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-europe-business-south-korea-government-and-politics-15569a7bfd6c53404cfce5f0df1c28f>; "Agreement on cooperation in the military-technical sphere, defense industry and logistics between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the Russian Federation," Nov. 20, 1997, *United Nations Treaty Series* 2113, no. 36749 (2003): pp. 453-478, <https://doi.org/10.18356/074f5c4f-en-fr>.

derived from democratic values.<sup>4</sup> Following the Second World War, formal relations and stronger engagement between the United States and the separated succeeding southern state began after the establishment of the two distinct nations divided by the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel.<sup>5</sup> Spurred from the invasion of the south by Kim Il-sung, the United Nations Command (UNC)—comprising 22 international allies including the United States—contributed combat forces or medical support in defense of the South Korean people and their territoriality against communist encroachment during the Korean War.<sup>6</sup> After the armistice signed at Panmunjom between the north (with China) and the UNC, the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty laid the groundwork for the ROK-US alliance.<sup>7</sup>

The ceasefire and cessation of armed conflict between the two Koreas was short-lived, as the relationship became enduringly fraught with swells of hostility and violent border incidents amidst uneasy undulations of appeasement or diplomatic overture.<sup>8</sup> However, the leadership and continual support by the United States of its ally weathered challenges and domestic turmoil within the Republic of Korea, as the state—beleaguered by autocrats—transformed through civil engagement into the substantive democracy that validates the vibrant titular republic, in contrast to its dictatorial northern neighbor's nominal assertion of democracy.<sup>9</sup>

Nearly 30,000 military personnel with additional numbers of contractors and dependents are presently stationed in South Korea to defend the peninsula and maintain the armistice.<sup>10</sup> US vehicles and equipment

based within the Republic of Korea have been reported to include “90 combat planes, 40 attack helicopters, 50 tanks and some 60 Patriot missile launchers” spread across multiple bases with robust and historic facilities.<sup>11</sup> This defense against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is still the cornerstone and most visible arm of the alliance, but the military arrangement between the United States and South Korea has also manifested outside the US deployment of personnel and equipment to the peninsula or deterrence against North Korean aggression.<sup>12</sup>

South Korea has supported the United States and its allies in military conflicts, force projection, and peacekeeping from the Vietnam War to Iraq, South Sudan, Lebanon, and Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> Bolstered by the Republic of Korea's backing an “open, rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific as a foundation for regional peace and stability,” the United States receives significant soft power benefits with respect to security challenges: South Korea “carries the flag of democracy on the Asian continent,” visible to its neighbors as an economic success story for democratization.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, cooperation with the COVID-19 pandemic response, in maritime security, and within the space and cyberspace domains indicate a breadth for strategic partnership beyond armed conflict.<sup>15</sup> The influence of US culture and education on South Korean society is evident as a measure of influence from its modernization, but cultural exchange between South Korea and the United States has grown more recently through television, film, and popular music.<sup>16</sup> Interchange

<sup>4</sup> Barry Pavel et al., “Report Release: The Future of the US-ROK Alliance,” Atlantic Council, May 25, 2021, <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/report/the-future-of-the-us-rok-security-alliance/>, 1-5; “Excerpt: The US-South Korea Alliance,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed Jan. 8, 2023, <https://www.cfr.org/excerpt-us-south-korea-alliance>, 19.

<sup>5</sup> “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea,” US Department of State, Sep. 20, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-the-republic-of-korea/>.

<sup>6</sup> “Korean War,” Eisenhower Presidential Library, accessed Aug. 6, 2022, <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/research/online-documents/korean-war>; United Nations, *Security Council Resolution* 83, June 27, 1950, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/112026>; “International Contributions,” United Nations Command, accessed Jan. 1, 2023, <https://www.unc.mil/Organization/Contributors/>; “History of the Korean War,” United Nations Command, accessed Jan. 5, 2023, <https://www.unc.mil/History/1950-1953-Korean-War-Active-Conflict/>.

<sup>7</sup> John Farquhar, *Contrails*, ed. Brian Zubek and Forrest Underwood, vol. 54 (Colorado Springs, CO: United States Air Force Academy, 2008), 133-134; “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea.”

<sup>8</sup> Moira Lavelle, “A Brief History of Border Conflict between North and South Korea,” *The World* (PRX and WGBH, Aug. 20, 2015), <https://theworld.org/stories/2015-08-20/brief-history-border-conflict-between-north-and-south-korea>.

<sup>9</sup> “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea.”

<sup>10</sup> “U.S. Security Cooperation with Korea,” U.S. Department of State, Jan. 20, 2021, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-korea/>.

<sup>11</sup> Hyonhee Shin and Joyce Lee, “Factbox: U.S. and South Korea's Security Arrangement, Cost of Troops,” Reuters, March 7, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-alliance/factbox-u-s-and-south-koreas-security-arrangement-cost-of-troops-idUSKBN2AZ0S0>.

<sup>12</sup> Pavel et al., “Report Release,” 11.

<sup>13</sup> Glenn Baek, “A Perspective on Korea's Participation in the Vietnam War,” *Issue Brief*, no. 53 (April 10, 2013), <http://en.asaninst.org/wp-content/themes/twentythirteen/action/dl.php?id=4141>, 1; Balbina Hwang, “South Korean Troops to Iraq: A Boost for U.S.-ROK Relations,” Heritage Foundation, Feb. 13, 2004, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/south-korean-troops-iraq-boost-us-rok-relations>; “Overview: UN,” Republic of Korea Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed Aug. 6, 2022, [https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m\\_5460/contents.do](https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/wpge/m_5460/contents.do); Chi-dong Lee, “U.S. Official Honors Korean Soldier Killed in Afghanistan,” Yonhap News Agency, June 15, 2017, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20170615007400315>.

<sup>14</sup> John J. Hamre, Joseph S. Nye, and Victor D. Cha, “The Foundations and Future of the Alliance,” *CSIS Commission on the Korean Peninsula: Recommendations for the U.S.-Korea Alliance*, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep30036.5>.

<sup>15</sup> “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea.”

<sup>16</sup> Hamre, Nye, and Cha, “Foundations and Future,” 5; Valerie Adams, review of *Big Brother, Little Brother: The American Influence on Korean Culture in the Lyndon B. Johnson Years*, by Sang-Dawn Lee, June 1, 2003, <https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=7678>, 3; Jenna Ryu, “This Is America: ‘Squid Game,’ K-Beauty and BTS - What's so Special about Korean Pop Culture?,” *USA Today*, Oct. 21, 2021,

exists at a military level with reserve-augmented exercises and short tours through the formation of personal bonds—a mutually beneficial way to strengthen connections among service members, senior leaders, and local base communities.<sup>17</sup>

A vital aspect of the relationship between South Korea and the United States is commerce and investment with the two major partners party to a free trade agreement and senior economic dialogues.<sup>18</sup> In 2020 South Korea was the United States' seventh largest exporter of goods and its seventh largest supplier of imported goods.<sup>19</sup> Mineral fuels, machinery, agricultural products (e.g. beef), medical instruments, and vehicles were the largest imports to South Korea from the United States, and Washington received a far larger number of vehicles, machinery, and plastics from Seoul.<sup>20</sup>

Military sales are a significant element of the trade relationship between the nations with more than \$30 billion in active government sales to the Republic of Korea including “the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, P-8A Patrol Aircraft, Patriot Advanced Capability-3 missile systems, Global Hawk Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, KF-16 aircraft upgrades, Aegis Combat Systems, Harpoon Missiles, and AH-64E Attack Helicopters,” as well as advanced weapons and turbine engines.<sup>21</sup> Recent arms sales approved by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency to “help South Korea address threats on the Korean peninsula and progress the transfer of wartime operational control to the country” include precision-guided and Global Positioning System-aided munitions.<sup>22</sup> Although military imports to the United States from South Korea over the years have been slight with only \$95 million in 2021, the US Air Force considered the Korean Aerospace Industries T-50 Golden Eagle jet—developed in conjunction with Lockheed Martin—as

a finalist for their T-X advanced trainer acquisition program.<sup>23</sup>

The 2021 joint statement by Presidents Biden and Moon focused on sharing a “vision for a region governed by democratic norms, human rights, and the rule of law at home and abroad”; promoting “peace and prosperity for our peoples, while serving as a linchpin for the regional and global order”; and expanding developmental cooperation and human rights efforts to counter generalized threats.<sup>24</sup> One year later with President Yoon, extended deterrence emerged front and center with the emphasis on the promotion of democratic values abroad. Financial sanctions and condemnation made clear the South Korean perspective of the exigent threat that Russian hostility has to the “rules-based international order”—illuminating the Republic of Korea’s shift from the shadows of strategic ambiguity to a presently rock-solid commitment to values-based leadership as alleged Russian violations come to light.<sup>25</sup> Although there are present-day issues of divergence within the ROK-US security alliance, overall support between the two nations remains strong with their commitment for going together, or “*katchi kapshida* (같이 갑시다!)”<sup>26</sup>

## ROK-Russian Relations into 2022

In the decades following the Korean War, relations between Moscow and Seoul were generally contentious due to the Soviet Union’s support for their ideological partner north of the demilitarized zone, but structural changes and policies instrumented by Mikhail Gorbachev with his economic pairing-focused “New Political Thinking” shifted perceptions positively toward potential partnership.<sup>27</sup> Complementary views held in the

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2021/10/21/squid-game-bts-k-beauty-why-korean-pop-culture-making-waves/8437852002/>.

<sup>17</sup> Julian Gluck and Byron Muhlenberg, “Opening the Door to Cultural Understanding and Mutual Cooperation: Multinational Military Partnerships and Educational Outreach,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 4, no. 4 (June 1, 2021): pp. 39-47,

<https://media.defense.gov/2021/May/31/2002731734/-1/-1/0/AFCLC.PDF>, 46; “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea.”

<sup>18</sup> “U.S. Relations with the Republic of Korea.”

<sup>19</sup> “Korea,” Office of US Trade Representative, accessed Aug. 6, 2022, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/japan-korea-apec/korea#:~:text=U.S.-Korea%20Trade%20Facts,was%20%2416.8%20billion%20in%202020>.

<sup>20</sup> “Korea.”

<sup>21</sup> “U.S. Security Cooperation with Korea.”

<sup>22</sup> Chris Martin, “US Approves \$258 Million Arms Sale to South Korea,” *Defense News*, Aug. 25, 2021, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/asia-pacific/2021/08/25/us-approves-258-million-arms-sale-to-south-korea/>.

<sup>23</sup> Brad Lendon, Gawon Bae, and Paula Hancocks, “Speeding Tanks, Booming Howitzers, Shaking Bones: This Is How South Korea Sells

Weapons,” *CNN*, Nov. 25, 2022,

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/11/25/asia/south-korea-defense-industry-weapons-intl-hnk-dst-ml/index.html>, 14; Tamir Eshel, “K-50 T-X, Seoul’s Contender for the USAF Future Trainer Competition,” *Defense Update*, Dec. 18, 2015, [https://defense-update.com/20151218\\_t-x.html](https://defense-update.com/20151218_t-x.html); Jeff Jeong, “South Korea Unveils Trainer Jet for USAF’s T-X Contest,” *Defense News*, Dec. 18, 2015, <https://www.defensenews.com/industry/2015/12/19/south-korea-unveils-trainer-jet-for-usaf-s-t-x-contest/>.

<sup>24</sup> “U.S.-ROK Leaders’ Joint Statement,” White House, May 22, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/21/u-s-rok-leaders-joint-statement/>.

<sup>25</sup> “United States-Republic of Korea Leaders’ Joint Statement,” White House, May 21, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/21/united-states-republic-of-korea-leaders-joint-statement/>.

<sup>26</sup> Hamre, Nye, and Cha, “Foundations and Future,” 6-7.

<sup>27</sup> Se Hyun Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia: The Politics of Security in Russia and Korea* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 4-5.

same period by ROK President Roh Tae-woo on bridging economic ties to previously closed markets in communist countries helped effect rapprochement and the closer trade relationship that has since existed between the two nations.<sup>28</sup> Early fruits of the then-burgeoning Soviet Union-ROK dyad include South Korea's admittance into the United Nations after receiving Moscow's crucial vote in the Security Council, to the consternation of North Korea.<sup>29</sup> Moscow divested support from Pyongyang, and Seoul received "a great deal of prestige in the eyes of the international community" with legitimacy derived from the global recognition gained after Soviet rapprochement.<sup>30</sup>

After relative stagnation within the bilateral relationship during Boris Yeltsin's presidency, Vladimir Putin's renewed emphasis on economic security with Northeast Asia brought engagement with the peninsula back into the forefront.<sup>31</sup> From the dissolution of the Soviet Union to 2007, annual trade between the two nations grew from less than \$1 billion to more than \$15 billion.<sup>32</sup> With Russia's Far Eastern shift in the 2010s, improved relations between the states, and a greater flow of commercial investment and commodities, trade rose to over \$27 billion by 2021.<sup>33</sup>

Moscow's shift from communism to a free-market economy was propped up early on by South Korean support and repaid through trade for defense technologies. The Brown Bear Project began as a series of agreements to transfer military arms from Moscow to Seoul to pay off debts from earlier loans to the Soviet Union that supported its transition to a market economy, and then the project became a foreign military sales program; over the decades, technologies that have been transferred include "T-80U tanks, METIS-M anti-tank missiles, Ka-32

transport helicopters, portable anti-aircraft missiles," and hovercrafts.<sup>34</sup> For example, South Korea's Cheolmae-2 medium-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system was developed from technologies adapted by the Russian arms corporation Almaz-Antey used in their S-350 Vityaz SAM system.<sup>35</sup> However, a shift to domestically developed military technologies within South Korea from advanced fighters to a counter-rocket, artillery, and mortar system have reduced the importance of Russian-produced systems that had been a strategically important trade segment.<sup>36</sup>

As distrust between South Korea and Russia thawed—or as the desire for prosperity and security eclipsed contrasting ideologies and other qualms—the commercial opportunities offered by Russia for South Korean business leaders grew: from *chaebols* to investment banks, as well as an idea for an intergovernmental economic development focused on the Tumen River, despite the frosty at best relations between Seoul's closest ally in Washington with Moscow.<sup>37</sup> This "clear upward trajectory" between South Korea and Russia—with six consulates spread throughout Russian territory and with ethnic Koreans comprising one of the most sizable ethnic populations in the country—has been in great part due to the nations' understanding of their complementary economic models: "South Korea offering economic investment and advanced technology, and Russia providing natural resources and raw materials."<sup>38</sup>

Top exports of high-tech goods to Russia have included electronics, automobiles, and semiconductors in South Korea's trade relationship.<sup>39</sup> Factories for Hyundai Motor Company, Samsung, and LG, along with stores and products from major chains like Lotte, are emblematic of the major South

<sup>28</sup> Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia*, 5-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia*, 6-7.

<sup>30</sup> Eugene Bazhanov and Natasha Bazhanov, "The Evolution of Russian-Korean Relations: External and Internal Factors," *Asian Survey* 34, no. 9 (September 1994): pp. 789-798, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2645165>, 793-794; Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia*, 6-7.

<sup>31</sup> Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia*, 8-13.

<sup>32</sup> Liudmila Zakharova, "Economic Relations between Russia and South Korea in the New Northern Policy," *On Korea: Academic Paper Series*, Dec. 10, 2019, [https://keia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/kei\\_aps\\_zakharova\\_191206.pdf](https://keia.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/kei_aps_zakharova_191206.pdf), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Zakharova, "Economic Relations," 1-2; Stephen Haggard, "South Korea, Ukraine and Russia Part II: The Economic Dimension," Korea Economic Institute of America, May 18, 2022, <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/south-korea-ukraine-and-russia-part-ii-the-economic-dimension/>.

<sup>34</sup> Jung Sung-ki, "Seoul Seeks to Get Moscow's Arms Technology," *Korea Times*, Feb. 9, 2010, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/06/113\\_60599.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2010/06/113_60599.html).

<sup>35</sup> "Analysis Russian Army S-350 Air Defense Missile System Enjoys Broad Export Prospects," *Army Recognition*, June 11, 2020,

[https://www.armyrecognition.com/analysis\\_focus\\_army\\_defence\\_military\\_industry\\_army/analysis\\_russian\\_army\\_s-350\\_air\\_defense\\_missile\\_system\\_enjoys\\_broad\\_export\\_prospects.html](https://www.armyrecognition.com/analysis_focus_army_defence_military_industry_army/analysis_russian_army_s-350_air_defense_missile_system_enjoys_broad_export_prospects.html).

<sup>36</sup> Sarah Jeong, "South Korea's Defense Capabilities and Acquisition Programs," *Wilson Center*, Aug. 31, 2021,

<https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/south-koreas-defense-capabilities-and-acquisition-programs>; Alessandra Giovanzanti, "South Korea Approves Development of Indigenous C-Ram System," *Janes*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/south-korea-approves-development-of-indigenous-c-ram-system>.

<sup>37</sup> Timothy Stanley, "The Growing Russia-South Korea Partnership," *The Diplomat*, May 24, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/05/the-growing-russia-south-korea-partnership/>.

<sup>38</sup> Stanley, "Growing Russia-South Korea Partnership."

<sup>39</sup> Eunice Kim, "South Korea to Join Russia Sanctions, But Won't Lodge Its Own," *VOA*, Feb. 25, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/south-korea-to-join-russia-sanctions-but-won-t-lodge-its-own/6459138.html>.

Korean commercial interests in Russia.<sup>40</sup> Many of these brands rose in prominence and became the preferred choice by Russian citizens when Western companies pulled their products from the Russian market following Moscow's 1998 moratorium on external debt and South Korean corporations stayed.<sup>41</sup> Hyundai's purchase in 2020 of an automotive plant with the capacity to build up to 100 thousand cars per year added to the already flourishing production market in Russia for South Korean cars.<sup>42</sup> Other South Korean exports that have become part of the cultural landscape in Russia include the Paldo Doshirak *ramyeon*—an instant noodles product brought from Busan in the early 1990s and now manufactured with local varieties for the Russian market—and the ubiquitous Choco Pie confectionary that have both been impacted by the current economic situation caused by the SWIFT sanctions against Russia.<sup>43</sup>

South Korea has imported “energy sources and raw materials such as naphtha, crude oil, bituminous coal, and natural gas,” which have been critical for its energy needs and supply chains.<sup>44</sup> Former president Moon Jae-in's New Northern Policy and “Nine Bridges” program outlined focus areas for cooperation between the two countries—“gas, rail, seaports, electricity, Arctic shipping, shipbuilding, job creation, agriculture, and fisheries”; while these special bilateral efforts made tangible diplomatic gains, there were fewer economic results as inter-Korean dialogues waned and COVID-19 emerged.<sup>45</sup> One consular benefit that South Korea began offering to Russian citizens in 2013 is a visa waiver for stays up to sixty days.<sup>46</sup> South Korea is one of the few democratic countries whose citizens are allowed to

travel visa-free to Russia, also for up to sixty days.<sup>47</sup> On the commercial side, sanctions from the United States and its allies on a recalcitrant Russia and from the United Nations on a nettlesome North Korea have been strong obstacles to economic advisory groups that lack the agency or political stability to carry out complex joint projects in the region.<sup>48</sup> With the presiding Yoon administration, present instability in Eastern Europe, and problematic hostility between Russia and the democratic world, the future of these currently gestational partnerships is yet to be written.

## The Ongoing Invasion of Ukraine

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation launched an unprovoked, premeditated attack and invasion of the sovereign Ukrainian People's Republic, spending the successive several months gaining control of the eastern and southern territories of Ukraine through aggressive troop advancement and shelling major cities including Kyiv.<sup>49</sup> The United States government immediately acknowledged the unjustified attack with a presidential statement and announcement of sanctions—the first of many that would be imposed by the United States, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, and other nations.<sup>50</sup> While observing the responses of other countries, South Korea's then-President Moon Jae-in promulgated a tepid statement of support for respecting territorial sovereignty and declaration of humanitarian assistance; this action was formulated with consideration to potential economic impacts and denuclearization efforts with the peninsular peace and security situation, in addition to the transition of the ROK government.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Lee Je-hun, “Why S. Korea Is Being Cautious When It Comes to Sanctioning Russia,” *Hankyoreh*, Feb. 24, 2022, [https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_international/1032480.html](https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/1032480.html).

<sup>41</sup> Lee Jae-Young, “The New Northern Policy and Korean-Russian Cooperation,” *Russia in Global Affairs*, Nov. 15, 2017, <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/the-new-northern-policy-and-korean-russian-cooperation/>, 9.

<sup>42</sup> Gleb Stolyarov, “Hyundai Buys GM's Car Plant in Russia's St. Petersburg,” *Reuters*, Dec. 22, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-hyundai-gm-idUSKBN28W1YO>.

<sup>43</sup> Ham Jong-sun, “Russians Go Crazy for Paldo Doshirak Ramyeon,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, Aug. 9, 2018, <https://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/2018/08/09/industry/Russians-go-crazy-for-Paldo-Doshirak-ramyeon/3051718.html>; Kan Hyeong-woo, “Choco-Pie Makers on Alert as Russian Isolation Deepens,” *Korea Herald*, March 9, 2022, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20220309000226>.

<sup>44</sup> Lee Je-hun, “Why S. Korea Is Being Cautious.”

<sup>45</sup> Stanley, “Growing Russia-South Korea Partnership”; Zakharova, “Economic Relations,” 6.

<sup>46</sup> “S. Korea to Reinstate Visa-Free Entry for Russians from April 1,” *Interfax*, March 23, 2022, <https://interfax.com/newsroom/top-stories/77279/>.

<sup>47</sup> “On the Entry into Force of the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Korea on the Mutual Abolition of Visa Requirements,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, accessed Jan. 1, 2023, [http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign\\_policy/news/-/asset\\_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/84682](http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/84682).

<sup>48</sup> Zakharova, “Economic Relations,” 6-7.

<sup>49</sup> Steven Pifer, “The Russia-Ukraine War and Its Ramifications for Russia,” *Brookings*, Dec. 8, 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-russia-ukraine-war-and-its-ramifications-for-russia/>, 2; Dan Baer, “Six Reflections on the First Day of Russia's War in Ukraine,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Feb. 24, 2022,

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/six-reflections-on-first-day-of-russia-s-war-in-ukraine-pub-86524>; Visual Journalism Team, “Ukraine War in Maps: Tracking the Russian Invasion,” *BBC News*, July 28, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682>.

<sup>50</sup> Joseph Biden, “Remarks by President Biden on Russia's Unprovoked and Unjustified Attack on Ukraine,” *White House*, Feb. 24, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/02/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-russias-unprovoked-and-unjustified-attack-on-ukraine/>.

<sup>51</sup> Lee Je-hun, “Why S. Korea Is Being Cautious.”



In contrast to the Park administration's 2014 declination of support for sanctions during the annexation of Crimea, South Korea in 2022 soon joined the Euro-US sanctions on Russian exports, acting "as a responsible member of the international community ... to curb [Russia's] armed invasion and resolve the situation peacefully."<sup>52</sup> Although South Korea levied no independent sanctions of its own, many cryptocurrency exchanges within the country separately selected to stop Russian users from accessing exchanges.<sup>53</sup> The suspension of transactions with the Russian central bank and other major banking institutions and the imposition of multilateral sanctions to include the control of exports and removal from the SWIFT global payment system resulted in the Republic of Korea receiving the designation of "unfriendly state" by the Kremlin.<sup>54</sup>

From February to June of 2022, the economic sanctions and policy shift against Russia manifested in a reduction by two thirds of South Korean exports to Russia and by one half of imports from Russia.<sup>55</sup> Beyond export controlled items like semiconductors, South Korean vehicle exports dropped by 63% over the year, and Seoul slowed many of its energy imports from Russia including 70% of refined petroleum, choosing instead to shift its interests to the Middle East and Australia.<sup>56</sup> This decrease in exports to Russia caused a worsening trade imbalance to the tune of billions—particularly within the automotive and steel sectors—and generated detrimental ripple effects across the Commonwealth of Independent States that may have lasting impacts to South Korean imports and exports within the region amidst mounting uncertainty with prolonged conflict.<sup>57</sup>

Despite a historical preference for non-interventionism to limit further Russian support to North Korea and to incentivize Moscow to play a positive role in nuclear talks with Pyongyang, South Korea changed course to meet the democratic world's expectations for a high-profile global leader during the Ukraine conflict through its stated support and subsequent actions in favor of global governance based on rules and norms for international order and sovereignty.<sup>58</sup> By April 2022, South Korea had provided millions of dollars in humanitarian aid, medical supplies, and bulletproof gear to Ukraine; however, it had rejected requests from President Zelensky for sending weapons (e.g. the KM-SAM system) to the war-torn region—not without consideration of worsening relations with Moscow or, more purposely, further Russian support of North Korea.<sup>59</sup> Within the defense industry elsewhere, ROK arms exporters had increased sales to NATO countries with higher demand in Eastern Europe, including South Korea's largest weapons export contract ever—\$15 billion from Poland for weapon systems including F/A-50 aircraft, tanks, and technologies.<sup>60</sup> The \$7.25 billion increase in ROK arms exports from 2021 to November 2022 illustrate how South Korea has supported allies who are engaged more in supplying for the Ukrainian war effort and are in need of replenishment.<sup>61</sup>

Impacts from the invasion of Ukraine with respect to Korean security concerns notably include the "task of ensuring that the revisionist Russian challenge to the status quo in which a nuclear-armed state desires to revise or erase an existing national border does not set a precedent for" the Kim regime.<sup>62</sup> Early North Korean recognition of the separatist states of Luhansk and Donetsk indicated their own cognizance of this portend as an opportunity for Pyongyang; a greater level of support from North Korea to the Russian

<sup>52</sup> Eunice Kim, "South Korea to Join Russia Sanctions."

<sup>53</sup> Troy Stangarone, "The Effects of Russia's Invasion of Ukraine on the Korean Peninsula," *The Diplomat*, Jan. 2023, [https://magazine.thediplomat.com/#/issues-/NjtPBCYHR5Q8VND\\_KLY\\_2-3](https://magazine.thediplomat.com/#/issues-/NjtPBCYHR5Q8VND_KLY_2-3).

<sup>54</sup> Kim Sooyeon, "S. Korea Joins Global Move to Suspend Transactions with Russia's Central Bank," *Yonhap News Agency*, March 7, 2022, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220307004800320>; Kim Eun-jung, "Russia Designates S. Korea as an 'Unfriendly' Nation," *Yonhap News Agency*, March 7, 2022, <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20220307010100325>.

<sup>55</sup> Mark van Loon, "Comment: Does Russia Have Any Friends Left in Southeast Asia?," *BNE IntelliNews*, Aug. 4, 2022, <https://www.intellinews.com/comment-does-russia-have-any-friends-left-in-southeast-asia-252541/>.

<sup>56</sup> Stangarone, "Effects of Russia's Invasion," 3-4.

<sup>57</sup> Kim Yon-se, "Trade Balance Worsens from China, Russia Factors," *Korea Herald*, May 2, 2022, <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20220502000671>.

<sup>58</sup> Scott A. Snyder, "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine and Implications for the Korean Peninsula," *Council on Foreign Relations*, March 8, 2022, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/russias-invasion-ukraine-and-implications-korean-peninsula>.

<sup>59</sup> Josh Smith and Soo-Hyang Choi, "Ukraine's Zelenskiy Seeks Military Aid from South Korea," *Reuters*, April 11, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraines-zelenskiy-says-tens-thousands-killed-mariupol-seeks-military-aid-skorea-2022-04-11/>; Nam Hyun-woo, "South Korean President Dismisses Putin's Warning," *Korea Times*, Oct. 30, 2022, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/10/120\\_338773.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/10/120_338773.html).

<sup>60</sup> Loon, "Comment"; Gareth Jennings, "Poland Signs for FA-50 Combat Aircraft," *Janes*, Sep. 16, 2022, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/poland-signs-for-fa-50-combat-aircraft>.

<sup>61</sup> Stangarone, "Effects of Russia's Invasion," 4.

<sup>62</sup> Snyder, "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine."



Federation—a permanent member of the UN Security Council—allows “an opening for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to push forward his weapons development as he tries to cement the North’s status as a nuclear power and negotiate a removal of crippling US-led sanctions from a position of strength.”<sup>63</sup>

In the fall of 2022, a “rebirth” of closer relations between North Korea and Russia occurred, leading to an influx of cash and greater military trade between the two nations based on their similar weapons platforms; at the onset, rail traffic returned for purported weapons sales and other materiel, and both deals for labor sharing and new North Korean trade offices in Russia emerged with the renewed relations.<sup>64</sup> Similar to the aforementioned Brown Bear Project, the covert supply of artillery shells to Russia from North Korea may tighten relations between these internationally isolated states and be executed in exchange for “debt forgiveness for the arms transfers” as a productive business deal for the Kim regime.<sup>65</sup> With trade between Iran and Russia as well, this continued illegal procurement by embargoed states to evade sanctions and the weaponization of dual-use technologies will form new challenges for democratic nations.<sup>66</sup>

While the Ukraine conflict is on-going, there is much speculation about which direction the war will turn in 2023 and what will happen to Russia’s long-term position in the international order. Discussions will certainly involve the dubious sovereignty of the claimed Russian territories and include a call for investigation into claimed human rights violations and war crimes.<sup>67</sup> Statements by the leadership of the United States, South Korea, and Japan at the 2022 East Asia Summit confirmed a strong stance against Russian aggression or attempts to modify the rules-based Indo-Pacific order, and the nations pledged to

greater economic cooperation among the democracies in the region, in defiance of near-peer adversaries.<sup>68</sup> While this article is being written in the midst of this armed engagement, there is an uncertain outcome as to what the future geopolitical and economic landscape globally and in Northeast Asia will resemble, but South Korea with its alliance with the United States will assuredly have a line of action.

## Risks for the ROK-US Alliance with Russia

Particularly prescient for the summer of 2021, Professor Fyodor Tertitskiy of Seoul’s Kookmin University noted,

The only scenario in which a deterioration of Russia-South Korea relations seems at all likely is an escalation of the standoff between Moscow and Washington to a state in which the fight against the Kremlin becomes the number one priority for the White House. In that case, Seoul really would be forced to show solidarity with Washington, and the Russia-South Korea friendship would become a thing of the past.<sup>69</sup>

Although risks to greater engagement with Russia for the ROK-US alliance during this conflict are abundant, there are also challenges foreseeable after the invasion’s resolution due to the damage to Russia’s position on the international stage—despite a potential long-term interest in South Korea reviving its relationship. This analysis of risks and rewards is predicated on a future scenario after the current conflict settles similarly to a status quo ante bellum where the international community has largely decided to begin reengagement with Russia. Sans strategic soothsaying, this schema supposes South Korea seeks stability and economic exchange with a

<sup>63</sup> Kim Tong-hyung, “N. Korea Backs Independence of Breakaway Regions in Ukraine” (Associated Press, July 13, 2022), <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-united-states-south-korea-north-pyongyang-0243498518d43df4e8e464a8c7bbb3ec>.

<sup>64</sup> Artyom Lukin, “The Rebirth of the Russia–North Korea Alliance,” East Asia Forum, Oct. 27, 2022, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2022/10/27/the-rebirth-of-the-russia-north-korea-alliance/>; Martyn Williams and Peter Makowsky, “First Traffic Observed on North Korea–Russia Railway Link in Several Years,” 38 North (Stimson Center, Nov. 4, 2022), <https://www.38north.org/2022/11/first-traffic-observed-on-north-korea-russia-railway-link-in-several-years/>; Seulkee Jang, “North Korea Begins Preparations to Open New Trade Offices Throughout Russia,” The Diplomat, Oct. 28, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/10/north-korea-begins-preparations-to-open-new-trade-offices-throughout-russia/>.

<sup>65</sup> Victor Cha, “North Korea Sends Ammunitions to Russia,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, Nov. 7, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/north-korea-sends-ammunitions-russia>.

<sup>66</sup> Darya Dolzikova and Daniel Salisbury, “Triple Threat: Russia, Iran, and North Korea Trade Arms to Get around Sanctions,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Dec. 28, 2022, <https://thebulletin.org/2022/12/triple-threat-russia-iran-and-north-korea-trade-arms-to-get-around-sanctions/>.

<sup>67</sup> Emma Farge, “Investigation Chief Says Russia Committed War Crimes in Ukraine,” Reuters, Sep. 23, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/un-mandated-inquiry-concludes-war-crimes-were-committed-ukraine-2022-09-23/>; Lauri Mälksoo, “Ukraine Symposium – Illegality of Russia’s Annexations in Ukraine,” Lieber Institute for Law & Warfare at West Point, Oct. 3, 2022, <https://lieber.westpoint.edu/illegality-russias-annexation-ukraine/>.

<sup>68</sup> “Phnom Penh Statement on Trilateral Partnership for the Indo-Pacific,” White House, Nov. 13, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/13/phnom-penh-statement-on-trilateral-partnership-for-the-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>69</sup> Fyodor Tertitskiy, “Double Ally: How Seoul Stays Friendly with Both Washington and Moscow,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, July 15, 2021, <https://carnegie Moscow.org/commentary/84969>.

Russia that has been sidelined after a potentially protracted war of attrition, rather than fully isolated as a pariah state. After a period of time—perhaps shortened by a shift in policy, global consensus, or regime—the democratic world in this projection has decided collectively that Russia has to be somewhat a part of the international system and not completely alienated. Without precognition of how the war in Ukraine will end or how Russia will fare in courts of public opinion or law, this presumption paints the Republic of Korea as weighing options with Russia and balancing the repercussions that could unfold where involvement with Moscow would be deleterious for its dealings with Washington.

Sanctions and shaming from democratic countries in response to the Russo-Ukraine War and Russia's avowed annexation appear to have reduced the viability of hedging as a future foreign policy option for South Korea.<sup>70</sup> To prevent being “out of step” with the international community—according to former CEO of the Korea Society and foreign service veteran, Evans J.R. Revere—Seoul had to yield to US pressure to sanction; this was a move from the strategic ambiguity that has allowed the Republic of Korea to maintain relations with Russia, which still may have some sway in the hermit kingdom.<sup>71</sup> However, the placation of Moscow through hedging was found during the Moon administration to feature “no tangible results or progress on inter-Korean peace or denuclearization,” only chipping away at the credibility of South Korea in allies' eyes with “maintaining the rules-based order and upholding international law.”<sup>72</sup>

Economically, South Korea's overtures to Russia also contributed to exclusion from the US Commerce Department's Foreign Direct Product Rule, greatly compromising the export market of technologies and goods from South Korea to Russia.<sup>73</sup> Further closeness of Seoul to Washington for regional stability and inclusion in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework “that aims to strengthen trade,

investment, and economic ties between the United States and its partner countries in the region” may make the economic opportunities with Russia less advantageous with forgoing the risk of losing international credibility or constancy.<sup>74</sup> The South Korean people overwhelmingly support a Washington-Seoul alignment in the center of their foreign policy network, particularly as partnerships with Russia become less appealing as its purported violations of international law are front and center on the global stage.<sup>75</sup>

To soften the economic disruption caused by the reduction of trade between South Korea and Russia, “friend-shoring” of supply chains in partner countries to mitigate soaring inflation and shortages of key goods” has been a proposed counter by the United States to assure allies like South Korea of US commitments and motivate maneuvering from “unreliable countries.”<sup>76</sup> Richard Baldwin, an economist and professor at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva, has argued that interdependence with allies and friend-shoring should be encouraged to reduce the localized impact of global supply chain issues and offset challenges through increased global investment.<sup>77</sup> However, this encouragement or direction of “trade through regional allies could also further inflame competition with China,” while the ROK-US alliance battles low growth and inflation within their own respective borders.<sup>78</sup>

Further aligning with a Russian government that regularly acts outside of existing global security norms may not be an advantageous move for the Republic of Korea—despite the economic or regional security doors it opens—due to the stress placed on partners like the United States and the sacrifice of values to collaborate with a “revitalized malign actor.”<sup>79</sup> Through aggressive and provocative online activity—including cyber attacks like Olympic Destroyer at the Pyeongchang Opening Ceremony in 2018—and disinformation campaigns waged by its

<sup>70</sup> Sooyoung Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side,” *Foreign Policy*, April 6, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/04/06/south-korea-ukraine-war-russia-economy-trade-moon-yoon/>.

<sup>71</sup> Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side.”

<sup>72</sup> Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side.”

<sup>73</sup> Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side.”

<sup>74</sup> Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side.”

<sup>75</sup> Oh, “South Korea Must Pick a Side.”

<sup>76</sup> US Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen did not name specific “unreliable countries” but has warned of “geopolitical coercion” from Russia and China. Steven Borowiec, “US Promotes 'Friend-Shoring' of Trade with Eye on China, Russia,” *Al Jazeera*, July 19, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/7/19/yellen-friend-shoring->

[supply-chains-with-eye-on-china-russia](https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/7/19/yellen-friend-shoring-supply-chains-with-eye-on-china-russia); Andrea Shalal and David Lawder, “Yellen Warns of 'Geopolitical Coercion' by Russia, China,” *Reuters*, Oct. 12, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/markets/asia/treasurys-yellen-says-global-economy-faces-headwinds-warns-geopolitical-coercion-2022-10-12/>.

<sup>77</sup> Kyung-Min Kang, “Intensify 'Friend-Shoring' to Boost Foreign Direct Investment: Baldwin,” *KED Global*, Nov. 7, 2022, <https://www.kedglobal.com/economy/newsView/ked202211070020>.

<sup>78</sup> Borowiec, “US Promotes 'Friend-Shoring.'”

<sup>79</sup> Anthony V. Rinna, “Russia-South Korea Relations and the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy,” *National Bureau of Asian Research*, Oct. 28, 2020, <https://www.nbr.org/publication/russia-south-korea-relations-and-the-u-s-indo-pacific-strategy/>.

Internet Research Agency, the present Russian government has continuously demonstrated to the international community that it is a nefarious actor that disrupts civic processes when it can get away with it.<sup>80</sup> As Russia deepens into disrepute as an actively revisionist state, South Korea could face division from needed allies like those in the Quadrilateral Dialogue, weakening cooperation with those vital nations in favor of a rules and norms-based Indo-Pacific and risking fractures in the ROK-US alliance.<sup>81</sup>

## Rewards for the ROK-US Alliance with Russia

Seoul's geopolitical position centered between states that have vied for regional dominance has historically made "active hedging and strategic ambiguity ... vital to South Korea's sovereignty and security"—seeking to maintain amicable relations with powerful nations often at odds with each other, such as with the United States and Russia.<sup>82</sup> Adroitly balancing positive relations with both Washington and Moscow over the past few decades including during periods of international strife, Seoul has been able to look toward both nations for cooperation in different sectors, including commerce and defense, to its benefit.<sup>83</sup> Although there is uncertainty after the present conflict in Ukraine as to the conditions and timeline for Russia's return to a more acceptable position in the international order, there are potential economic, operational, and strategic benefits for South Korea and the United States for Seoul engaging with—rather than isolating—Moscow.

South Korea's nimble yet measured cooperation with both the United States and Russia while tensions were high between the two countries is not unprecedented, prior to or during this current conflict. The placement of the US-designed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) missile defense system within South Korea caused some

strain for the ROK-Russia strategic partnership—and famously with China—but ultimately was subordinated to their focus on economic cooperation, as the dispute did not strike Moscow as having an overtly anti-Russian disposition.<sup>84</sup> The criticism that Russia voiced over the deployment of the THAAD had been primarily symbolic without "affect[ing] the overall positive tenor of relations between Moscow and Seoul," showing how the two countries can continue to work together despite the nature of their different relations with the United States.<sup>85</sup> South Korea's subdued reaction to the earlier 2014 annexation of Crimea also showed how Seoul could manage to keep the two dyads in balance during that crisis and may provide insight into how again to poise its foreign policy with both countries, if desired.<sup>86</sup>

Russian high-ranking officials visited South Korea throughout 2021, signing a bilateral defense cooperation deal and agreeing to collaborate on pathways for peninsular denuclearization.<sup>87</sup> Seoul's position of economic cooperation with Russia as a potential pathway to peace with the north has been challenging, with avoiding discordant foreign policy, but not unfeasible to employ again.<sup>88</sup> South Korea has been able to participate economically with Russian firms while balancing security agreements and allied perception; even during the conflict in Ukraine, Seoul closed a \$2.25 billion deal with a Russian state-run nuclear energy company in support of Egypt's first nuclear power plant—after prior consultation with the US government, according to South Korean officials, to ensure the sale did not clash with sanctions.<sup>89</sup>

Although untenable and injudicious during the present conflict, a renewed creation of commercial infrastructure enterprises between Russia and South Korea in the future could have positive political implications for peninsular security in addition to economic ones for South Korea with positive downstream ramifications for the ROK-US alliance:

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<sup>80</sup> Jeffrey Baptist and Julian Gluck, "The Gray Legion: Information Warfare Within Our Gates," *Journal of Strategic Security* 14, no. 4 (2021): pp. 37–55, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48633487>, 38; Andy Greenberg, "The Untold Story of the 2018 Olympics Cyberattack, the Most Deceptive Hack in History," *Wired*, Oct. 17, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/untold-story-2018-olympics-destroyer-cyberattack/>, 31.

<sup>81</sup> Kristi Govella, Garima Mohan, and Bonnie S. Glaser, "Expanding Engagement among South Korea and the Quad Countries in the Indo-Pacific," *GMFUS*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.gmfus.org/news/expanding-engagement-among-south-korea-and-quad-countries-indo-pacific>.

<sup>82</sup> Oh, "South Korea Must Pick a Side."

<sup>83</sup> Tertitskiy, "Double Ally."

<sup>84</sup> Anthony V. Rinna, "Russia's Strategic Partnerships with China and South Korea: The Impact of THAAD," *Asia Policy* 13, no. 3 (July 2018): pp. 79–100, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26497790>, 89–90, 98.

<sup>85</sup> Tertitskiy, "Double Ally."

<sup>86</sup> Oh, "South Korea Must Pick a Side."

<sup>87</sup> Anthony V. Rinna, "South Korea's Diplomatic Balancing Act with Russia," *East Asia Forum*, May 5, 2021, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2021/05/05/south-koreas-diplomatic-balancing-act-with-russia/>.

<sup>88</sup> Rinna, "South Korea's Diplomatic Balancing Act with Russia."

<sup>89</sup> Kim Tong-hyung, "South Korea Signs \$2.25 Billion Deal With Russian Nuclear Company," *The Diplomat*, Aug. 25, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/08/south-korea-signs-2-25-billion-deal-with-russian-nuclear-company/>.

Key among these, and of greatest strategic interest to the South Koreans, is the development of rail links to connect the isolated "island" of South Korea to the greater Eurasian landmass. Prior to partition, there were two rail links connecting the southern half of the peninsula to the larger landmass: on the western side of the peninsula, the Seoul-Sinuiju link leading to the Korean/Chinese border, and on the eastern side the Busan-Wonsan link. It is this latter rail link, the Donghae Line, which is the real prize as it would be easy to extend onto Vladivostok. It would therefore link the world's fifth largest port by cargo volume, Busan, to the world's longest rail route, the Trans-Siberian, reducing transport time to key markets and lowering logistics and travel costs.<sup>90</sup>

The development of a modern rail system connecting South Korea with Europe could enable transportation of freight three times faster than via ocean travel and could as a cooperative initiative "derive ripple effects in economics and security" to include "the diversification of political diplomacy and the denuclearization of North Korea."<sup>91</sup> The boons that would come from logistics projects to include railways with North Korea at the center could also serve as a bargaining chip for progress with Pyongyang.<sup>92</sup>

A free trade agreement between the Republic of Korea and the Eurasian Economic Union was in its planning stages in 2018 and could be developed again in the future—if South Korea is not indefinitely suspended due to its current designation as an "unfriendly country" by Russia and if the economic project's relevance outlasts the war or Putin's presidency.<sup>93</sup> This free trade agreement would create

economic opportunities to which former president Moon opined "the combination of vast resources in the Russian Far East and Korea's advanced technologies ... [make] the region a land of opportunity for the prosperity of Korea and Russia."<sup>94</sup> A possible "Asian Super Grid" for electricity bringing together advanced energies from Mongolian wind and solar to Russia's hydropower could accelerate renewable energy networks in Northeast Asia.<sup>95</sup> A theorized industrial complex in Primorsky Krai built on Russian land with South Korean investment and North Korean labor could be a lucrative deal and fruitful for both economic investment and gradual Korean unification.<sup>96</sup> Trade between Russia and South Korea was on track to exceed \$30 billion by 2022 prior to the pandemic and invasion of Ukraine, and the number would certainly increase substantially with just a few of the "Nine Bridges" erected.<sup>97</sup>

Greater interchange with Russia through trade or tourism may provide leverage for pressure by Moscow on Pyongyang on the path to de-escalation or nuclear disarmament, helping curb conflict in the region with benefit to the Kremlin for peacebuilding and prestige.<sup>98</sup> A stable Korean peninsula absent nuclear coercion from the north would progress talks of disarmament and allow Washington to refocus personnel and equipment on other pressing security challenges. However, Moscow's return to being a legitimate state actor worth dealing with would be necessary since participation economically with South Korea must carry "a favorable cost-benefit ratio for Seoul."<sup>99</sup>

Supporting the Russian invasion and annexation of territory in Ukraine and then escalating to cooperation, North Korea is benefiting economically

<sup>90</sup> Sohn Kee-chung—the first Korean to win an Olympic medal—took the train from Korea to Germany, as did other Koreans who traveled to Europe via rail through Russia. Andy Bull, "The Forgotten Story of Sohn Kee-Chung, Korea's Olympic Hero," *Guardian*, Aug. 27, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2011/aug/27/sohn-kee-chung-olympics-korea>, 4; Stanley, "Growing Russia-South Korea Partnership."

<sup>91</sup> Kim Hana, "Peace in Korea Brings Expectation to Expanded Logistics Opportunities by Railway," *Allyn International*, 2018, <https://www.allynintl.com/en/news-publications/entry/peace-in-korea-brings-expectation-to-expanded-logistics-opportunities-by-ra>; Jiwon Yun, "An Analysis of the Trans-Korean Railway (TKR) and Trans-Siberian Railway (TSR) Linkage: International Cooperation and Constraints," *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies* 29, no. 2 (2020): pp. 175-199, <https://doi.org/10.33728/ijkus.2020.29.2.006>, 175.

<sup>92</sup> Valentin Voloshchak, "A Closer Look at South Korea's Plan for Cooperation with Russia," *The Diplomat*, Jan. 9, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/a-closer-look-at-south-koreas-plan-for-cooperation-with-russia/>.

<sup>93</sup> "Russia Publishes List of 'Unfriendly Countries' - Has Foreign Remittance Implications," *Russia Briefing* (Dezan Shira & Associates,

March 7, 2022), <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/russia-publishes-list-of-unfriendly-countries-has-foreign-remittance-implications.html/>; Catherine Putz, "Can the Eurasian Economic Union Survive Putin?," *The Diplomat*, May 26, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/05/can-the-eurasian-economic-union-survive-putin/>.

<sup>94</sup> Chris Devonshire-Ellis, "2023 Trade Prospects As Russia Chairs The Eurasian Economic Union," *Russia Briefing News*, Jan. 3, 2023, <https://www.russia-briefing.com/news/2023-trade-prospects-as-russia-chairs-the-eurasian-economic-union.html/>, 7; Stanley, "Growing Russia-South Korea Partnership."

<sup>95</sup> Voloshchak, "Closer Look at South Korea's Plan."

<sup>96</sup> Voloshchak, "Closer Look at South Korea's Plan."

<sup>97</sup> Zakharova, "Economic Relations," 1-2

<sup>98</sup> Tertitskiy, "Double Ally."

<sup>99</sup> Anthony V. Rinna, "Moscow's 'Turn to the East' and Challenges to Russia-South Korea Economic Collaboration under the New Northern Policy," *Journal of Eurasian Studies* 10, no. 2 (2019): pp. 159-168, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1879366519851984>, 166.

and ideologically from the conflict and the widening separation between South Korea (with other democratic nations) and Russia.<sup>100</sup> A tangential beneficiary of the war, Pyongyang has embraced resurgent economic, military, and diplomatic ties with Moscow.<sup>101</sup> The invasion of Ukraine gave North Korea the opportunity to vote in support of Russia in the UN General Assembly, currying favor that has led to commercial exchange, the export of North Korean services through migrant workers, and securing a veto against new sanctions on Pyongyang.<sup>102</sup> Returning to greater economic activity with Russia—whether post-conflict resolution or post-Putin—may set the balance back in favor of Seoul over Pyongyang à la new *Nordpolitik*, reducing economic interchange between Russia-DPRK, which is antithetical to the ROK-US alliance's aims.

Northeast Asia needs a persuasive peacemaker—particularly with proliferation on the peninsula—and South Korea may be well positioned presently among its neighbors for the task. In seeking a greater role in diplomatic affairs near its borders, Russia has, in the past, desired to be a mediator on the peninsula with some measures of success in influencing North Korea; however, despite the possible gains, Moscow will surely be seen by the West in particular as an inadequate arbiter—a revanchist reprobate with reputational damage and squandered soft power.<sup>103</sup> With its shifting foreign policy stances under different presidential administrations, the United States, by comparison, also faces difficulties in currying favor with an emerging ersatz Eastern Bloc already weary of greater US influence or swagger in Asia.<sup>104</sup> A nation with amiable bilateral relations with these and other countries, that understands the conflicting parties' attitudes and cultures, and “can

think creatively to produce proposals attractive to many other delegations” may be more effective at negotiating amenable solutions to ruptures in the region.<sup>105</sup> If mutually accepted to ameliorate or assuage international tensions and support the resolution of disputes, a flexible and bidirectional Seoul could champion the role of mediator in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>106</sup>

South Korea has previously demonstrated innovative negotiating strategies with DPRK diplomats and has offered to mediate between North Korea and the United States.<sup>107</sup> Having had close relations with both the United States and Russia prior to the Ukrainian conflict, South Korea could also arise as a potential mediator for US-Russian relations. A similar shuttle diplomacy, as to what had been used with Pyongyang, may be actionable by Seoul between Moscow and Washington under the right conditions and on specific issues as a “balancer.”<sup>108</sup> Advocates for stability on the peninsula and nuclear nonproliferation will have their work cut out for them as “denuclearization will become more difficult and complicated,” and the ramifications of the war in Ukraine involve “volatility in and around the Korean peninsula” into the foreseeable future.<sup>109</sup> This means that in order for South Korea to serve as a functioning mediator between those two superpowers, Seoul must, in practice, demonstrate its capability of persuading both parties to cooperate and commit to exploring common ground; only then, may Seoul serve as a bridge between the United States and Russia.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Ha and Shin, “Impact of the Ukraine War”; Ethan Jewell and Ifang Bremer, “North Korea Voices Support for Russia's Annexation of Ukrainian Territory,” ed. Bryan Betts, NK News, Oct. 4, 2022, <https://www.nknews.org/2022/10/north-korea-voices-support-for-russia-annexation-of-ukrainian-territory/>.

<sup>101</sup> Dasl Yoon, “Ukraine War Gives North Korea Reasons to Draw Closer to Russia,” Wall Street Journal, Aug. 28, 2022, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-war-gives-north-korea-reasons-to-draw-closer-to-russia-11661695201>.

<sup>102</sup> Hiroshi Minegishi, “North Korea's Shift Closer to China and Russia Comes at Hefty Cost” (Nikkei Asia, June 6, 2022), <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Comment/North-Korea-s-shift-closer-to-China-and-Russia-comes-at-hefty-cost>.

<sup>103</sup> Ahn, *Policing Northeast Asia*, 15-16; Lucian Kim, “Russia Isolated in Its Postimperial Phantasm,” Wilson Center, May 11, 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/russia-isolated-its-postimperial-phantasm>, 4.

<sup>104</sup> Kang Seung-woo, “Seoul's Mediator Role to Become More Important,” Korea Times, Nov. 8, 2020, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/06/120\\_298880.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/06/120_298880.html); Josh Rogin, “Opinion | Putin Is Trying to Build a New Axis of Autocrats,” The Washington Post, September 8, 2022,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/09/08/russia-china-iran-alliance-dictators/>.

<sup>105</sup> “Fundamentals of Negotiation,” United Nations, accessed January 14, 2023, <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/fundamentals-negotiation>, 4-5.

<sup>106</sup> “How Mediation Works in International Conflicts,” Norwich University Online, September 30, 2020, <https://online.norwich.edu/academic-programs/resources/how-mediation-works-international-conflicts>.

<sup>107</sup> Katie Shonk, “South Korea's Innovative Long-Term Negotiation Strategy with North Korea,” Program on Negotiation Daily Blog (Harvard Law School, October 6, 2020), <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/business-negotiations/south-korea-shows-off-savvy-negotiation-skills/>; S. Kang, “Seoul's Mediator Role.”

<sup>108</sup> Rinna, “Russia-South Korea Relations”; Kim Yoo-chul, “ANALYSIS | Evolving from Mediator to Balancer,” The Korea Times, June 28, 2022, [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/06/356\\_331698.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/06/356_331698.html).

<sup>109</sup> Ha and Shin, “Impact of the Ukraine War,” 910-911.

<sup>110</sup> Ban Ki-moon, “United Nations Guidance for Effective Mediation” (United Nations, September 2012), [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation\\_UNDPA2012%28english%29\\_0.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/GuidanceEffectiveMediation_UNDPA2012%28english%29_0.pdf), 23.



## Conclusion

In the decades preceding the Russian invasion of Ukraine, diplomatic relations between South Korea and Russia had been mostly benign, avoiding “major trigger points for conflict” in their respective areas of influence and sans “major historical or ideological irritants in their bilateral relations.”<sup>111</sup> Though trade and tourism, the “relatively passive, but cooperative and pragmatic relations” between the countries continued into 2022, despite the Republic of Korea’s close strategic alliance with the United States; however, transnational merchandising has been muffled, and good will has waned in the wake of Russian aggression in Ukraine.<sup>112</sup> The bifurcated middle power foreign policy exhibited by different South Korean presidential administrations in the past could one day emerge again through cooperation with Russia, but it is unlikely in the near future to be without compromise or conflict such as disaffection from the Republic of Korea’s closest ally, the United States.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, the war in Ukraine has opened up new considerations for logistics in protracted war and with the usage of drones in future tactics on the peninsula.<sup>114</sup> Progress with nuclear nonproliferation negotiations have also been neutralized during this conflict as North Korea notes the Russian playbook and South Korea navigates its own considerations for the necessity of developing nuclear arms.<sup>115</sup> Sanctions against Russian enterprises that support the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea may erode a lifeline that “Russia provide[s] to North Korea [that] sustains the country’s nuclear ambitions and prevents any peaceful resolution of the ongoing crisis sparked by [North Korea’s] nuclear program.”<sup>116</sup>

The South Korean people have exhibited an enduring interest in continuing commerce with Russia as well, despite political challenges: imports to South Korea from Russia increased from 2021 to 2022—particularly with natural resources—while South Korea has experienced consecutive months of trade deficit subsequent to the rising energy prices from the sanctions.<sup>117</sup> Seoul continues to balance between conflicting interests when it has obvious treaty and defense commitments, desires closer association with the Quad, and shows a strong commitment to democracy and human rights. Relations with Russia like those prior to the Ukrainian conflict may be much more difficult to regain without significant understanding by South Korea’s partners of specific, mutually beneficial, successive effects for the other nations.

There is also a significant impact that an ascendant China has on the Indo-Pacific and, in particular, with peninsular affairs. As North Korea and Russia move closer to China through their collaboration on various instruments of power during the current conflict, wider-ranging implications for the region present Seoul challenges with more than just minor economic interchange, as Moscow continues to build broader bridges with Beijing and Pyongyang.<sup>118</sup> The present conflict in Ukraine has exacerbated divisions between nations and neighbors in Northeast Asia based on opposing perspectives on the global order and spurred renewed alliance-building among the fissured states.<sup>119</sup> Within this fractious environment, there may still be maneuvering space for Seoul to move toward a future that “threads the needle” with opportunities with its diverging neighbors; another outcome is that it may further entrench itself with liberal order-leaning partners like the member states within NATO and the Quad.<sup>120</sup> Regardless of position, the impact of Seoul’s primary trading

<sup>111</sup> Tertitskiy, “Double Ally.”

<sup>112</sup> Tertitskiy, “Double Ally.”

<sup>113</sup> Jeffrey Robertson, “An End to South Korea’s Middle Power Moment?,” East Asia Forum, Dec. 29, 2016, <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2016/12/30/an-end-to-south-koreas-middle-power-moment/>; Stangarone, “Effects of Russia’s Invasion,” 5-6.

<sup>114</sup> Stephen Haggard, “Korea, Ukraine and Russia III: The End of Illusions?,” Korea Economic Institute of America, July 8, 2022, <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/korea-ukraine-and-russia-iii-the-end-of-illusions/>, 3.

<sup>115</sup> Stangarone, “Effects of Russia’s Invasion,” 5; Mitch Shin, “Nearly Three-Quarters of South Koreans Support Nuclear Weapons Development,” The Diplomat, Feb. 22, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/nearly-three-quarters-of-south-koreans-support-nuclear-weapons-development/>.

<sup>116</sup> Aaron Arnold, “To Sanction North Korea, Sanction Those That Won’t—Russia and China,” Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, July 14, 2022, <https://thebulletin.org/2022/07/to-sanction-north-korea-sanction-those-that-wont-russia-and-china/>.

<sup>117</sup> “South Korea Still Interested.”

<sup>118</sup> The instruments of national power are tools of influence often condensed into the following terms: Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME). Benjamin Tze Ern Ho, “A Finely Fractured Consensus: American Motivations for Rules-Based Order,” *Washington Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Dec. 16, 2022): pp. 61-76, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2022.2148506>, 62; Kevin D. Scott, *Joint Doctrine Note: Strategy*, JDN 1-18, April 25, 2018, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn\\_jg/jdn1\\_18.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/jdn_jg/jdn1_18.pdf), vii-viii.

<sup>119</sup> Rogin, “Opinion | Putin Is Trying”; Haggard, “Korea, Ukraine and Russia III.”

<sup>120</sup> Haggard, “Korea, Ukraine and Russia III”; Ramon Pacheco Pardo, “Korea Falls in Love with NATO,” EURACTIV, November 8, 2022, <https://www.euractiv.com/section/defence-and-security/opinion/korea-falls-in-love-with-nato/>; Jason Li, “South Korea’s Formal Membership in the Quad Plus: A Bridge Too Far?,” Stimson Center, October 4, 2022, <https://www.stimson.org/2021/south-koreas-formal-membership-in-the-quad-plus-a-bridge-too-far/>.

partner (i.e. Beijing) will continue to play a major role with South Korea's strategic calculus and could develop to include competition for economic impact and influence in the region.<sup>121</sup>

As the balance of power in Northeast Asia becomes more precarious, South Korea's strong alignment with the United States against Russia may have put the kibosh on the "Northern Strategy" with potential impairment of nonproliferation processes for the ROK-US alliance.<sup>122</sup> However, this stand "against a blatant violation of international norms" is a strong signal in the Indo-Pacific against a looming Sino-Russian axis.<sup>123</sup> Absent of clairvoyance that would provide extrasensory insight into the future of the Russian Federation's status in the global order, South Korea will choose which future it will enact: to look toward the United States more exclusively or to again keep the second site of Russia in its sights, as the world's gaze shifts from Ukraine to an uncertain time ahead on the peninsula and in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Haggard, "Korea, Ukraine and Russia III."

<sup>122</sup> Lukin, "Rebirth of the Russia-North Korea Alliance"; Haggard, "South Korea, Ukraine and Russia Part II," 1.

<sup>123</sup> Stephen Haggard, "South Korea, Ukraine and Russia Part I: Motives and Initial Response," Korea Economic Institute of America, May 17, 2022, <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/south-korea-ukraine-and-russia-part-i-motives-and-initial-response/>; 1; Haggard, "Korea, Ukraine and Russia III," 3; Lyle Goldstein and Vitaly Kozyrev, "The Russo-Chinese 'Strategic

Partnership' Enters a New and Dynamic Phase," *Journal of Peace and War Studies* 4 (October 2022): pp. 95-129,

[https://www.norwich.edu/pdfs/pawcjournal/PAWC\\_Journal\\_2022\\_Lyle%20Goldstein%20and%20Vitaly%20Kozyrev.pdf](https://www.norwich.edu/pdfs/pawcjournal/PAWC_Journal_2022_Lyle%20Goldstein%20and%20Vitaly%20Kozyrev.pdf), 116-118.

<sup>124</sup> Special thanks to Kee Hyun "Andy" Kim, Dr. Bradley Murg, Saf Benaskar, the Pacific Forum staff, and the members of the ROK-US Next-Generation Leaders Initiative.



# 8

## **ROK and a Hard Place: Improving Republic of Korea and Japan Relations in Support of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific**

*Chloe Clougher*

## Introduction

On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morgan Stanley Research published a report arguing that geopolitical problems will hasten the trends that are slowing the globalization process. In an international system characterized by a complex network of interacting countries vying for influence and domestic security, various economic power bases diverge resulting in a multipolar economic world. As middle and emerging powers begin to flex their economic muscles and growing stature, globalization tends to slow because the fiscal advantages of nearshoring become evident and economic imbalances prompt geopolitical strain. This concept was termed “snowbalization” by Dutch trendwatcher Adjiedj Bakas, and it is likely to dictate a continuing trend toward multipolarity with persistent friction between the two great powers of the United States and China, while emerging powers and middle powers like the Republic of Korea and Japan are caught in between and must make concessions to both.<sup>1</sup> Asian markets especially are caught in this dilemma, as the reality of their geography sets in and China’s grip on commerce tightens. The shift away from rapid globalization towards multipolarity and inter-state competition motivates inward-looking politics and isolated business sectors that potentially degrade participation in multilateral organizations that serve to prevent countries acting as islands guided by strategic opportunism, and to unite like-minded nations pragmatically against common mutual security threats.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, it is imperative to understand the interplay between the business sector and the political, and how one may be used to influence the other in maintaining strategic balance in an

increasingly multipolar world. The Republic of Korea, which is an emerging power with global ambitions and a robust economy, can potentially be a key to counterpoise an overpowered China in the Indo-Pacific region and global market.<sup>3</sup> To accomplish this balancing act, middle powers and emerging economies need to consolidate efforts in a bloc to prevent themselves and their neighbors from being pulled too close into the orbit of one great power, unable to pursue their own geopolitical objectives without economic coercion from China attempting to achieve its own diplomatic ambitions. Specifically, China’s eventual influence over the Republic of Korea’s economy may grow to such an extent that in the event of a hot conflict in the South China Sea or Taiwan invasion contingency, the Republic of Korea may be compelled—despite being a staunch United States military ally—to remain neutral. This neutrality may occur despite the current Republic of Korea presidential administration under Yoon Suk-yeol, who is openly and staunchly anti-China,<sup>4</sup> because of the concerns of the Republic of Korea’s internationally oriented businesses. The overriding international and domestic concerns of South Korean businesses are that the Chinese Communist Party may impose economic costs on them should the Republic of Korea abandon its strategic semi-ambiguity in dealing with China and join an Indo-Pacific security architecture designed to reduce reliance on Beijing.<sup>5</sup> However, it may be possible to align the political and business interests of the Republic of Korea since the framework of the Quad may also enable heightened business relations between the ROK and Japan, bolstering the high-tech sector in the former especially and reducing reliance on and fear of reprisal from China—which aligns with the domestic political and national security goals of the Yoon administration.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Morgan Stanley Research. “Slowbalization: Rethinking Global Supply Chain.” Morgan Stanley, May 18, 2022. <https://www.morganstanley.com/ideas/slowbalization-global-supply-chain>.

<sup>2</sup> Goodman, Matthew P. “Predatory Economics and the China Challenge.” *Predatory Economics and the China Challenge* | Center for Strategic and International Studies. CSIS, November 21, 2017.

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/predatory-economics-and-china-challenge>.

<sup>3</sup> Lee, Jeung-eun. “Why South Korea Needs to Be a Global Player - How South Korea Is Honing a Competitive Edge.” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, November 22, 2022. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/11/22/why-south-korea-needs-to-be-global-player-pub-88421>.

<sup>4</sup> Onchi, Yosuke. “South Korea’s Yoon Draws Closer to ASEAN, Keeping Distance from China.” *Nikkei Asia*. Nikkei Asia, December 5, 2022. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/South-Korea-s-Yoon-draws-closer-to-ASEAN-keeping-distance-from-China>.

<sup>5</sup> Roy, Denny. “China-South Korea Relations: Elder Brother Wins Over Younger Brother.” *Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*. DKI APCSS, August 16, 2021.

<https://dkiapcss.edu/college/publications/>.

<sup>6</sup> Pardo, Ramon Pacheco. “South Korea Would Benefit from Joining a Quad+.” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. CSIS, February 26, 2021. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/south-korea-would-benefit-joining-quad>.

Importantly, a key issue stagnating the progress of Japanese and ROK trade is the lack of the ROK's current inclusion in a security architecture incorporating the two nations with a mutually valued third-party arbiter—like the United States—to mitigate and navigate the soured business, legal, and social relationship between the two countries. A third-party arbiter enables Japan and the ROK to save face politically and not appear to their respective publics to be engaging directly and bilaterally; the inclusion of a third-party arbiter also allows the two nations to refocus on mutual benefits from their good trade relations, countering China as a bloc, and the shared and potentially unifiable interests of the ROK business and political institutions.<sup>7</sup> While there are several barriers to improved ROK-Japan relations on a social and legal front, the most expedient and basic problem to immediately address is improvement of trade and business relations. The two key obstacles in this matter are South Korean orders against Japanese companies to compensate Koreans for wartime labor under Japanese occupation, and the ROK's push for self-reliance in high-tech chip material production following Japanese controls on exports to South Korea.<sup>8</sup> This paper therefore seeks to establish a way forward for the Republic of Korea to overcome the barriers to engagement with Japan from a trade angle, by analyzing firstly the impact of ROK internationally-oriented businesses and their pragmatic concerns on shaping internal ROK policy under the Yoon administration; secondly, detailing the key barriers to ROK-Japan bilateral engagement and resultant security concerns; thirdly, outlining the importance of Japan and the ROK engaging in exchanges and trade within a regional comprehensive framework such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad); and fourthly, exploring what a revitalized ROK-Japan economic and potentially security relationship means for the foundation of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

## **ROK Business Lobby Impact on Diplomatic and Security Relations**

Chalmers Johnson argued in his book *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism* that political institutions influence the economic sector, and the economy in turn places pressures on the government in East Asian high-growth systems, such as South Korea. Johnson delineates the historic relationship between government actors in shaping market economies, and vice versa in the cases of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. These East Asian so-called high-growth systems are defined by stable rule of a political elite that prioritize economic growth, cooperation between public and private sectors as overall guidance of a pilot planning agency, equitable distribution of wealth, and governments that understand the need to utilize methods of economic intervention based on price mechanism. According to Johnson, who cites Parvez Hasan, the Korean economy historically operated under the direction of a highly centralized government system, and the economy influenced policy indirectly through market forces; this made the business sector an active participant in, and even the determining influence behind, government decisions. The argument that pragmatic national interests and widespread public-private agreement on economic goals eclipsed other influences on the government suggests that private sector business forces are perhaps the single largest impact on South Korea's political decision-making bodies. Likewise, the chapter posits that Japan operates similarly via the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, and the Japanese government-business relationship is closely intertwined. The developmental elite create political stability and set national goals and standards that are international oriented. Additionally, due to the importance of long-term industrial policy in Korea, politicians may be incentivized to depoliticize key economic decisions and entrust decisions to the non-political elite of the business sector.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Aum, Frank, Sang-ok Park, and Joseph Yun. "South Korea and Japan Need to Reset Relations. Can the United States Help?" United States Institute of Peace. USIP, May 19, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/south-korea-and-japan-need-reset-relations-can-united-states-help>.

<sup>8</sup> Shin, Sangho, and Edward J Balistreri. "The Other Trade War: Quantifying the Korea-Japan Trade Dispute." *Journal of Asian Economics* 79 (April 2022). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asieco.2022.101442>.

<sup>9</sup> Johnson, Chalmers. "4. Political Institutions and Economic Performance: The Government-Business Relationship in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan". *The Political Economy of the New Asian Industrialism*, Ithaca,

In *The Practice of Industrial Policy: Government – Business Coordination in Africa and East Asia*, Kim Eun Mee dissects the state-business relationship in the economic and social development of South Korea, focusing on the period in South Korea between the 1960s and 1980s during the country's authoritarian to democratic developmental state, and how the private sector was integral to government development, leading to modern-day state-business relations, called SBRs. The legacy of Japan and Korea's relationship, defined by Japan's occupation of the Korean Peninsula during WWII, initially devastated the South Korean economy; however, the economy quickly turned around and business growth followed an upward trend throughout the following decades. While this is often assessed to be due to foreign direct investment from the United States, the main engine of such rapid development in South Korea was private businesses, which to the present day wield enormous power in the Republic of Korea due to their past integration into state developmental progression. By 1961, South Korean President Park Jung-hee and his administration sought to transform the SBRs to make the state dominant, and arrested corrupt politicians overly influenced by personal connections and rent-seeking profits. The SBR relationship subsequently evolved to become a more productive and balanced partnership to aid the developmental state. The South Korean government then focused on bolstering large private domestic businesses to sustain economic development, and controlled corruption with a carrot and stick approach. But, by the 1970s, larger private businesses had started to consolidate into massive conglomerates, which came to be called *chaebols*. Kim asserts that the growth of the *chaebols* in the 1970s can be viewed as a partnership between the authoritarian state and private businesses, and that compared to the 1960s, by the following decades the relationship between private and public sector had evolved into a state of symbiosis in which both exerted control over the other, and eventually the *chaebols* were effectively in

the driver's seat of South Korean politics. As South Korea democratized, opened to foreign investments, and exports rose, the *chaebol*, which were distinctively internationally oriented due to promulgation of global brands, became more and more successful in government lobbying to influence domestic and foreign policy decision making. The conglomerates became a form of corporate governance, whose crony capitalism was exposed in the fallout of the 1997-1998 Asian Financial Crisis. The ROK government attempted to implement broad reforms to limit the *chaebol's* corrupt practices, but according to You Jong-sung's analysis in the *Review of International Political Economy*, these attempts failed to end bribery and corruption by ROK businesses in South Korean government positions, or the high degree of influence of ROK business conglomerates on the policy-making process overall.<sup>10</sup> Despite the pitfalls of the *chaebol*, David Murillo and Sung Yun-dal writing for the Center for Global Economy and Geopolitics debate the position that the large, consolidated businesses have no virtues, and advance the proposition that the political lobbying success and development of social capital that the *chaebol* system has achieved could be useful as a precedent for the business sector to help steer South Korean policy in a more long-term strategic direction with more agile decision-making.<sup>11</sup>

With the current instability in global financial markets, driven by a combination of high inflation and economic stagnation as well as the Russia-Ukraine crisis, one of the top agendas for the Republic of Korea's President Yoon Suk-yeol following his post-election meeting in May 2022 with United States President Joe Biden is economic stability for the Republic of Korea.<sup>12</sup> According to South Korean analysts, including Peter S. Kim, managing director at KB Financial Group, economic stability to President Yoon means creating more stable supply chains free of China's predatory economic influence. This desire is not simply driven by Yoon's anti-China stance on security matters broadly but is additionally influenced by his right-wing government's tie to internationally oriented

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NY: Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 136-164.

<https://doi.org/10.7591/9781501723766-007>.

<sup>10</sup> Page, John, and Finn Tarp (eds), *The Practice of Industrial Policy: Government – Business Coordination in Africa and East Asia* (Oxford, 2017; online edn, Oxford Academic, 20 Apr. 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198796954.001.0001>

<sup>11</sup> Murillo, David, and Yun-dal Sung. "Understanding Korean Capitalism - Chaebols and Their Corporate Governance." ESADE Center for Global

Economics and Geopolitics. ESADEgeo, September 2013.

[https://itemsweb.esade.edu/research/esadegeo/201309Chaebols\\_Murillo\\_Sung\\_EN.pdf](https://itemsweb.esade.edu/research/esadegeo/201309Chaebols_Murillo_Sung_EN.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Stangarone, Troy. "President Yoon's Economic Policies." Korea Economic Institute of America, May 25, 2022. <https://keia.org/the-peninsula/president-yoons-economic-policies/>.

business leaders.<sup>13</sup> The U.S.-South Korea summit between Yoon and Biden featured returning leaders from key *chaebols* who had been facing crackdowns for the previous few years under the previous Moon Jae-in administration. Significantly, the first stop President Biden made with the advice of the Yoon government during his trip to meet the new 2022 ROK President-elect, was at Samsung Electronics—a prominent Korean *chaebol* seeking to collaborate with the U.S. on global supply chain management.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, during the Moon administration, *chaebol* leaders had not overtly expressed such a leaning to one side towards the United States for fear of angering China, indicating a shift in business mentality among some of the larger companies in correlation with the security priorities of the current administration.<sup>15</sup> Several days previously, the ROK also entered the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which was promoted by the Biden administration to balance China's economic influence in East Asia.<sup>16</sup> The shift in South Korean business pragmatic interests away from Chinese partnerships signals that despite the fear of retribution from China and continued heavy reliance on Chinese markets, ROK internationally oriented businesses are seeking to protect themselves against reduced market shares in an increasingly unfriendly Chinese business environment by cooperating and competing with U.S.-aligned partners.

In May of 2022, despite the fraught history of wartime issues between the neighboring countries, South Korean business leaders pledged to expand bilateral economic cooperation with Japan specifically after President Yoon took office, with Mikio Sasaki, chief of the Japan-Korea Economic Association stated that during crisis times such as the economic fallout from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is important for economic and cultural exchanges to increase.<sup>17</sup> Following these business sector overtures, President

Yoon showed himself to be a leader capitalizing on business-driven policies: by November of 2022, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida, President Yoon, and U.S. President Joe Biden released a joint statement on trilateral partnership for the Indo-Pacific during a summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The statement cited security concerns over Chinese-driven conflicts alongside concerns over economic security challenges to the region.<sup>18</sup> The statement was made in the historical light of the 2016 U.S. Terminal High Altitude Defense (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile defense system deployment to South Korea, which led to economic pressure from China and resulted in frayed U.S.-ROK relations, since the ROK had no mechanisms and support framework to support itself against economic coercion.<sup>19</sup> As a result, it is a top priority for the Yoon administration, guided by input from business leaders, to bolster cooperation with geostrategic economic powers like Japan who can aid in countering China's pressure, and insulate critical supply chains with the help of the United States.

## **Republic of Korea-Japan Historic Tensions and Trade War**

As China rises to become a great power, foreign policy analysts assumed the United States, Japan, and the Republic of Korea would draw closer together and eliminate differences,<sup>20</sup> but the case study of relations among the three as they stood in 2014, detailed in *Asia's Alliance Triangle: US-Japan-South Korea Relations at a Tumultuous Time*, reveals the potential for a breakdown in relationships and the importance of an institutionalized alliance triangle. The ROK and Japan respectively have deep historical

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<sup>13</sup> Kim, Peter S. "New Generation of Chaebol Chiefs Can Lead Way on Governance." *Nikkei Asia*. Nikkei Asia, September 1, 2022. <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/New-generation-of-chaebol-chiefs-can-lead-way-on-governance>.

<sup>14</sup> Kim, Peter S. "President Yoon's pro-Business Promise." *koreatimes*. The Korea Times, June 5, 2022. [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2023/01/805\\_330357.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/opinion/2023/01/805_330357.html).

<sup>15</sup> Lim, Darren J and Victor A. Ferguson. "Informal economic sanctions: the political economy of Chinese coercion during the THAAD dispute." *Review of International Political Economy*, 29:5 (May 2021), pp. 1525-1548. DOI: 10.1080/09692290.2021.1918746.

<sup>16</sup> "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF)." United States Trade Representative, May 2022. <https://ustr.gov/trade-agreements/agreements-under-negotiation/indo-pacific-economic-framework-prosperity-ipef>.

<sup>17</sup> "Japan, South Korea Business Leaders Vow to Expand Cooperation." *Kyodo News+*. KYODO NEWS+, May 30, 2022. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/05/3ee96f072a5a-japan-s-korea-business-leaders-vow-to-expand-economic-cooperation.html>.

<sup>18</sup> "Phnom Penh Statement on US – Japan – Republic of Korea Trilateral Partnership for the Indo-Pacific." The White House. The United States Government, November 17, 2022. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/11/13/phnom-penh-statement-on-trilateral-partnership-for-the-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>19</sup> Lim, Darren J and Victor A. Ferguson. "Informal economic sanctions: the political economy of Chinese coercion during the THAAD dispute." *Review of International Political Economy*, 29:5 (May 2021), pp. 1525-1548. DOI: 10.1080/09692290.2021.1918746.

<sup>20</sup> Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jan 1978), pp. 167-214.

differences and conflicts, that had and continue to have an impact on international relations between the two. In 2013-2014, the trilateral relationship experienced more uncertainty than it had ever before faced in over 60 years, triggered by differing approaches at the time to China and different understanding of challenges from North Korea and Russia. This uncertainty was in part due to the lack of an institutionalized bilateral or trilateral framework and demonstrates the rockiness of relations that can occur due to administration changes or specific policies in any one of the three nations, but particularly in either the ROK or Japan. The most significant differences between the nations arose over security differences as well as historical memory, showing that business and trade may be the clearest path forward for forging stable relations with an impact on foreign policy.<sup>21</sup>

In April 2022, a South Korean delegation from President Yoon met with Japanese Prime Ministry Fumio Kishida in Tokyo to reset bilateral ties. An analytical paper published by the United States Institute of Peace asserts that while many analysts discuss South Korea and Japan's issues as souring more recently, the issue goes back to the 1965 Claims Agreement and the foundation of post-war Japan and South Korea ties.<sup>22</sup> The most sensitive issues revolve around forced labor laws implemented by Japan on South Korea before and during World War II, and current lawsuits pending in South Korea against Japanese companies to provide restitution to victimized Koreans. In 1997, South Korean plaintiffs filed a lawsuit against Japan's Nippon Steel Corporation for forced wartime labor; the case was dismissed by Japan's lower courts in 2001 and its Supreme Court in 2003, citing a statute of limitation regarding the cases outlined in the ROK's final appeal. According to the 1965 Claims Agreement Article I, Japan was only required to provide the

Republic of Korea up to 300 million USD in grants and 200 million USD in loans and that anything over and above concerning "rights and interests" to include worker compensation had already been completely settled. In 2005, the records regarding the Claims Agreement negotiation were released by the Roh Moo-hyun administration in the ROK, which opened further debate; the documents showed that the agreement was meant simply to settle financial credit claims and debt between the two nations, and not to address reparations for Japanese colonial rule or determine if the Japanese colonization of Korea has been legal or illegal. The Japanese government had, in negotiations with the ROK, never admitted fully to any transgressions or crimes, opening the door for the Korean government to push for additional compensation for historical wrongdoing.<sup>23</sup> By May 2012, the South Korean Supreme Court reassessed the claims against Japan's Nippon Steel Corporation and other Japanese companies and decided that the 1965 Claims Agreement and subsequent payments by Japan had not settled the matter. The Court asserted the illegality of Japan's occupation and put forward that Japan's court rejection of the Nippon Steel case in 2001 may not be recognized. The ROK Supreme Court denied that the case should fall under a statute of limitations, asserting that plaintiffs would have raised the case for review earlier had there not been obstruction of justice and legal barriers.<sup>24</sup> By 2018, the case was re-affirmed by the South Korean Supreme Court and expanded to incorporate further need for reparations to South Korean plaintiffs based on emotional damages.

In retaliation for the lawsuit and South Korean court decisions regarding historical compensation, Japan implemented export controls on ROK semiconductor businesses in July 2019 and removed the country from its approved export list.<sup>25</sup> South Koreans countered by boycotting Japanese goods and

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<sup>21</sup> Rozman, Gilbert. "A National Identity Approach to Japan's Late 2013 Foreign Policy Thinking." in Gilbert Rozman, ed., *Asia's Alliance Triangle: US-Japan-South Korea Relations at a Tumultuous Time* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 219-32.

<sup>22</sup> Aum, Frank, Sang-ok Park, and Joseph Yun. "South Korea and Japan Need to Reset Relations. Can the United States Help?" United States Institute of Peace, May 19, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/south-korea-and-japan-need-reset-relations-can-united-states-help>.

<sup>23</sup> Jo, Eun A. "Japan and South Korea Are Still Haunted by the Past." *Foreign Affairs*, November 28, 2022.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/japan/japan-and-south-korea-are-still-haunted-past>.

<sup>24</sup> Aum, Frank, Sang-ok Park, and Joseph Yun. "South Korea and Japan Need to Reset Relations. Can the United States Help?" United States Institute of Peace, May 19, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/south-korea-and-japan-need-reset-relations-can-united-states-help>.

<sup>25</sup> Park, June. "Semiconductor Tech War Underlies the Japan-South Korea Trade Dispute." *East Asia Forum*, March 26, 2020. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/09/24/semiconductor-tech-war-underlies-the-japan-south-korea-trade-dispute/>.

removing Japan from the ROK's list of preferred trading partners. To add to the difficulty in resolving the issues, Japan views South Korea as responsible for repairing the frayed relationship between the nations, and the ROK views the situation inversely.<sup>26</sup> This amalgamation of concerns between the ROK and Japan precipitated an ongoing trade war with substantial economic impact, but also security ramifications; namely, the ROK's lack of a secure relationship with a regional U.S.-aligned power and increased reliance on China in areas like support for the ROK's semiconductor industry. This industry is crucially linked to national security, not simply because it underpins a significant portion of South Korea's economic security, but also because semiconductors are essential to artificial intelligence, advanced military systems, and surveillance technology.<sup>27</sup> Barriers to semiconductor trade between Japan and Korea opens the door for Seoul to engage more closely with China, as Beijing actively seeks to advance its own semiconductor industry. Of additional concern, the two powers' economic and legal disputes created military cooperation barriers between the two in the event of a regional security contingency. In 2019, as a direct result of the trade war, the South Korean government did not formally renew the Japan-ROK General Security of Military Information Agreement—a legal document promoting sharing military intelligence between Japan and South Korea—until a significant push for renewal from the U.S. prompted its last-minute continuation.<sup>28</sup>

The all-out trade war between Japan and the ROK escalated in late 2019, placing the ROK in a more deeply compromised economic position. According to research published in the *Journal of Asian Economics* in 2022, the trade dispute created a more significant welfare loss for the Republic of Korea of 0.144% (1 billion USD) compared to 0.013% (346 million USD) for Japan. To compensate for this welfare loss, ROK businesses had to offset by increasing imports from other countries.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, the current resolutions the two countries seek now will be essential for shaping future relations, even under different administrations.<sup>30</sup> Any misstep could be disastrous. The reframing of Japan and South Korea's relationship requires a dramatic shift in position from either Tokyo or Seoul—or both in tandem. It is therefore up to third-party arbiters, including Washington D.C., to nudge the two countries towards a resolution, no matter how slow, and make sure that no mistakes happen along the way.<sup>31</sup> The U.S. must focus on preventing the relationship it shares with one being seen as much more important than the other, to the detriment of one nation's agenda.<sup>32</sup> One proposed solution suggested in 2019 by then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in's administration was to establish a joint fund managed by both the Republic of Korea and Japan, into which South Korean and Japanese companies could voluntarily contribute to compensate victims of forced wartime labor. Japan rejected this proposal once again under the rationale that Japan had fully settled all wartime claims with South Korea.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ezell, Stephen. "Understanding the South Korea-Japan Trade Dispute and Its Impacts on U.S. Foreign Policy." Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, January 16, 2020. <https://itif.org/publications/2020/01/16/understanding-south-korea-japan-trade-dispute-and-its-impacts-us-foreign/>.

<sup>27</sup> Shivakumar, Sujai, and Charles Wessner. "Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes?" Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes? | Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 8, 2022. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/semiconductors-and-national-defense-what-are-stakes#:~:text=All%20major%20U.S.%20defense%20systems,defend%20its%20and%20its%20allies.>

<sup>28</sup> Kim, Tong-hyung. "South Korea Will Keeps Its Military Intelligence Pact with Japan – for Now." – The Diplomat. The Diplomat, November 23, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/south-korea-will-keeps-its-military-intelligence-pact-with-japan-for-now/>.

<sup>29</sup> Shin, Sangho, and Edward J Balistreri. "The Other Trade War: Quantifying the Korea-Japan Trade Dispute." *Journal of Asian Economics* 79 (April 2022). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asieco.2022.101442>.

<sup>30</sup> Aum, Frank. "Mended Ties between Japan and South Korea Would Boost Regional Security." United States Institute of Peace, July 28, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/07/mended-ties-between-japan-and-south-korea-would-boost-regional-security.>

<sup>31</sup> Lee, Sook Jong. "Rebuilding the US-South Korea-Japan Trilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific Region." Wilson Center, May 23, 2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/rebuilding-us-south-korea-japan-trilateral-relations-indo-pacific-region.>

<sup>32</sup> Smith, Sheila A. "The US-Japan-ROK Trilateral: Rebuilding Confidence, Deepening Cooperation." Wilson Center, May 23, 2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/us-japan-rok-trilateral-rebuilding-confidence-deepening-cooperation.>

<sup>33</sup> Shin, Hyonhee. "S.Korea Proposes Joint Fund with Japan to Compensate Forced Wartime Labour." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, June 19, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/southkorea-japan-forcedlabour-idUSL4N23Q23V.>



Relations took a sharp turn in a more positive direction with the start of the Yoon administration, as the South Korean leader and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed in March of 2022 to begin the process of improving bilateral ties, spoke on the phone, and agreed to meet in person and discuss mutual security concerns, including the rapid increase in ballistic missile test firing from North Korea into the Sea of Japan. President Yoon highlighted shared tasks on improving economic prosperity with his Japanese counterpart, the need for bilateral ties, and his desire for strengthened trilateral cooperation among Japan, South Korea, and the United States.<sup>34</sup> In early 2022, both Japan and the ROK were also early signatories to U.S. President Joe Biden's Indo-Pacific Economy Framework (IPEF), which aimed to create a new free trade agreement in place of the Trans-Pacific Partnership connecting economies across the region.<sup>35</sup> President Yoon also expressed his desire just months into his office to build a coalition of like-minded democratic peer nations in the Asia-Pacific, expand defense cooperation, and have a greater presence in international organizations broadly.<sup>36</sup> He became the first South Korean leader to attend the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's annual summit,<sup>37</sup> and openly espoused committing to membership in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, currently comprised of the United States, Australia, India, and Japan.<sup>38</sup> By November of 2022, the Yoon administration introduced South Korea's first comprehensive Indo-Pacific Strategy at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit in Cambodia. The strategy mirrored the security strategy of the United States and Japan's respective strategies, specifically calling out China by advocating for freedom of navigation in the South

China Sea, and for the first time embracing the concept of the Indo-Pacific region. The term "Indo-Pacific" is a strategic term employed by Tokyo and Washington D.C. to tie together India and the remainder of the Pacific region in a coalition centered around countering China's rising threat.<sup>39</sup> The implication of President Yoon's push for regional and global inclusion is expanded institutional memberships enabling South Korea to advance multilateral initiatives. Currently, the ROK is hampered in these efforts by its exclusion from geostrategic coalitions like the G7 and the Quad.

### Way Ahead for Japan-ROK Cooperation

South Korea and Japan need to revitalize relations to counteract the rise of China, and this is supported by the statements of a Seoul top trade official, Trade Minister Yeo Han-koo. The Minister stated in 2022 that that politics must be separated from economic matters, conveying an important statement about how business officials in South Korea may view the impact of business on government matters. However, the official simultaneously stated that good diplomatic relations are needed for good economic relations, showcasing a potential avenue by which business leaders may indirectly show support for certain policies that relate to foreign affairs and, by extension, political body decisions in the ROK.<sup>40</sup> Economic relations between the Republic of Korea and Japan have transformed from 1965 to the present to a highly interdependent relationship: most economic growth historically in the ROK has been driven by goods imported from Japan, as well as technical cooperation and joint ventures, pointing to the importance of re-balancing economic ties for better diplomatic relations between the nations.<sup>41</sup> The

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<sup>34</sup> Lee, Ji-Young, and Andy Lim. "South Korea's New President and a Seoul-Tokyo Reset?" *Comparative Connections: A Triannual E-Journal of Bilateral Relations in the Indo-Pacific* 24, no. No. 1 (May 2022): 137–46. <https://cc.pacforum.org/2022/05/south-koreas-new-president-and-a-seoul-tokyo-reset/>.

<sup>35</sup> King, Kaitlyn. "The Potential for Japan-South Korea-US Trilateral Cooperation through IPEF." *The Diplomat*. *The Diplomat*, September 7, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/09/the-potential-for-japan-south-korea-us-trilateral-cooperation-through-ipef/>.

<sup>36</sup> Park, Cheol Hee. "Stronger and Broader: President Yoon's New Foreign-Policy Initiatives." *Global Asia* 17, no. No. 2 (June 2022): 102–7.

<sup>37</sup> Terry, Sue Mi, and Kayla Orta. "South Korea's Important Achievement at the NATO Summit." *Wilson Center*, June 30, 2022. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/south-koreas-important-achievement-nato-summit>.

<sup>38</sup> Grossman, Derek. "Yoon Suk-Yeol Is Biden's Perfect South Korea Partner." *RAND Corporation*, July 5, 2022.

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2022/07/yoonsuk-yeol-is-bidens-perfect-south-korea-partner.html>.

<sup>39</sup> Mobrand, Erik. "What's Korean about South Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy?" *RAND Corporation*, January 11, 2023.

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2023/01/whats-korean-about-south-koreas-indo-pacific-strategy.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Kim, Sam. "South Korean Trade Minister Calls for 'Fresh Look' at Japan Ties." *The Japan Times*, March 11, 2022.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/03/11/business/south-korea-trade-chief-tokyo-ties/>.

<sup>41</sup> Zang, Wenyu, and Mark Baimbridge. "Exports, Imports and Economic Growth in South Korea and Japan: a Tale of Two Economies." *Applied Economics* 44 (2012): 361–72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2010.508722>.

area where joint ventures may be most successful is in the technology sector, as Japan now relies heavily on Korea, much as Korea once relied upon Japan in that area. Despite Korea's economic globalization following the Asian Currency Crisis in 1997, Korea's trade imbalance with Japan is a barrier to Korea and Japan Free Trade Agreement negotiations and Korea's involvement in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Strong ties in the business sector and growing joint ventures in tech between Korea and Japan are needed to facilitate Korea's regional economic interests as well as security interests.<sup>42</sup>

President Yoon has been more proactive in seeking to engage Japan on an economic as well as political front compared to his predecessor, Moon Jae-in, indicating a fundamental pivot point for the two nations' relations.<sup>43</sup> A staunchly anti-China and populist platform brought Yoon Suk-yeol to power in the Republic of Korea, and Yoon's victory gives him the political capital to have closer ties with both the U.S. and Japan, specifically to counter China's growing influence. One of Yoon's key electoral foreign policy platforms was a move to join the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and increase partnership with regional allies countering China. President Yoon echoes U.S. President Joe Biden's rhetoric to promote a "free and open order in the Indo-Pacific."<sup>44</sup> In April 2022, President Yoon sent a delegation to Japan to talk with Japanese officials amid expectations that bilateral ties between the two nations will be improved under his administration despite recently worsening due to wartime issues. The delegation head and Korea's deputy speaker of the National Assembly stated that relations may be difficult and slow to turn around simply via bilateral diplomatic talks, and that business relationships are at a low due to wartime labor compensation demands. Despite

these challenges, strategic cooperation is needed for Japan and Korea's shared security due to ramping up of North Korean nuclear issues and the growing threat of China in the East and South China Seas. The Japanese government, according to the delegation discussions, seeks close communication to foster a healthy relationship with ROK officials, but lawmakers in Japan's ruling Liberal Party were split about broadcasting overly close relations between the ROK and Japan to the public—even questioning whether the delegation warranted a meeting with Japan's Prime Minister Kishida.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, Japan's Liberal Democratic Party supports revisionist histories of Imperial Japan to minimize wartime crimes and bolster positive views of Japan and its influence on the world stage.<sup>46</sup>

Japan and South Korea have struggled to engage in direct bilateral relations, exacerbated by both sides unwillingness to abide by each other's legal decisions and inability to construct a mutual joint fund to compensate wartime labor victims. Neither side will uphold the position of the other, as South Korea would undermine its own Supreme Court rulings by upholding Japan's position, and Japan must admit illegal colonization and unfulfilled reparations upheld by its own courts should the Japanese government acquiesce to the ROK position. The key mechanism left by which both sides could repair relations is under third party arbitration under Article III of the 1965 Claims Agreement, justifying a need for the U.S. to arbitrate a South Korea-Japan dialogue in a formal setting like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.<sup>47</sup> President Yoon has specifically advocated for the ROK, which currently acts as an observer nation to the Quad in Quad+ meetings, to "willingly participate in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue working groups and consider joining

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<sup>42</sup> Stangarone, Troy. "Why Tech Cooperation Will Reshape South Korea-U.S. Relations." *The Diplomat*. The Diplomat, January 28, 2022. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/01/why-tech-cooperation-will-reshape-south-korea-u-s-relations/>.

<sup>43</sup> Cooper, Zack. "Three Tensions Facing the Yoon Administration." *American Enterprise Institute*. Sejong Institute, May 16, 2022. <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/three-tensions-facing-the-yoon-administration/>.

<sup>44</sup> Terry, Sue Mi. "Yoon's Strong Start in Foreign Policy." *Foreign Policy*, August 18, 2022. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/18/yoon-suk-yeol-south-korea-foreign-policy-china-united-states-japan-100-days/>.

<sup>45</sup> Aum, Frank, Sang-ok Park, and Joseph Yun. "South Korea and Japan Need to Reset Relations. Can the United States Help?" *United States*

*Institute of Peace*. USIP, May 19, 2022.

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/05/south-korea-and-japan-need-reset-relations-can-united-states-help>.

<sup>46</sup> Takashi, Yoshida. "Historiography of the Asia-Pacific War in Japan." *Portail Sciences Po*, June 3, 2008. <https://www.sciencespo.fr/mass-violence-war-massacre-resistance/fr/document/historiography-asia-pacific-war-japan.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Republic of Korea, and Japan. "No. 8473 Japan Republic of Korea - United Nations." *United Nations Treaty Series*. United Nations, 2018.

<https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20583/volume-583-I-8473-English.pdf>.

multilateral regional cooperative initiatives in phases.”<sup>48</sup> However, this move necessitates Japan and South Korea repairing relations to a level required for fully formalized engagement in a shared security organization; this repair may be initiated by both sides engaging in economic cooperation in mutually important areas such as the high-tech business sector. Strengthened economic cooperation between Japan and the ROK can precipitate more robust security ties and is the most expedient way ahead for repairing ongoing tensions since resolution of historical differences appears in many ways to be a non-starter for each side. While this solution is imperfect and does not address historic grievances, both sides may be able to pragmatically overcome their differences and work together to advance regional security in the Indo-Pacific. Additionally, ROK businesses have proved themselves successful in lobbying for government policy and exerting a great deal of influence over the current administration of the ROK.

The first step for Japan and South Korea to mend ties may include joint efforts within the Quad’s Working Group on Critical and Emerging Technologies. The high-tech business sector in South Korea, dominated by Samsung, LG, and Hyundai, face shortages of skilled engineers and critical materials due to supply chain issues, and stand to benefit by working in collaboration with individual Quad member nations such as Japan. *Chaebol* leaders, who already exert more influence under the Yoon administration, may be able to lobby the Blue House’s secretary to the president for emerging and critical technologies and cybersecurity—a position established recently in late 2021—to re-engage with Japan’s leading institutes in global technology innovation.<sup>49</sup> To this end, South Korean business leaders can promote resolution of the key dispute underlying the ROK-Japan trade war: the semiconductor tech war.<sup>50</sup> Japan must lift export

controls on shipments of fluorinated polyimides, photoresists, and hydrogen fluoride to the Republic of Korea and instead aid the ROK in manufacture of semiconductors and smartphones. If Japan lifts its export controls on the ROK, Seoul can also withdraw its dispute against Tokyo submitted to the World Trade Organization and move ahead on more bilateral economic exchanges with Japan.<sup>51</sup>

Japan and the ROK can advance joint efforts in government-sponsored research and development and create mutually beneficial policies aimed at promoting such efforts. One avenue for South Korea to begin building resilient supply chains and cooperating with Japan is to join the so-called “Chip 4 Alliance” advanced by President Biden to integrate the ROK’s supply chains for semiconductor production with the United States, Japan, and Taiwan. The alliance seeks to enhance technological advancement by like-minded democratic nations, as well as eliminate bottlenecks in semiconductor supply chains. However, this alliance is unlikely to promote supply chain restructuring or reshoring, due to companies’ competitive worries that their proprietary information may be leaked to rivals. The private sector diverges from the government on this front regarding the creation of a wholly integrated transpacific semiconductor supply chain network.<sup>52</sup> Cooperation on semiconductors and the high-tech sector more broadly may thus be best pursued on a bilateral or trilateral level and approached as one component of an overarching security framework, like the Quad, that promises greater security for the ROK should China economically retaliate.<sup>53</sup> The ROK did not realize the importance of promoting industries such as the high-tech sector until almost 30 years after Japan, and the South Korean model for research and development promotion that eventually developed was protective and did not promote cooperation like Japan’s model did. The Korean

<sup>48</sup> Mohan, Garima, Bonnie S Glaser, and Kristi Govella. “Expanding Engagement among South Korea and the Quad Countries in the Indo-Pacific.” The German Marshall Fund of the United States. GMFUS, June 6, 2022. <https://www.gmfus.org/news/expanding-engagement-among-south-korea-and-quad-countries-indo-pacific>.

<sup>49</sup> Thompson, Adrienne. “From Maritime Quad to Tech Quintet.” Center for Security and Emerging Technology, June 29, 2022. <https://cset.georgetown.edu/article/from-maritime-quad-to-tech-quintet/>.

<sup>50</sup> Park, June. “Semiconductor Tech War Underlies the Japan–South Korea Trade Dispute.” East Asia Forum, September 24, 2019. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2019/09/24/semiconductor-tech-war-underlies-the-japan-south-korea-trade-dispute/>.

<sup>51</sup> WTO Secretariat. “Dispute Settlement - DS590: Japan – Measures Related to the Exportation of Products and Technology to Korea.” WTO. World Trade Organization, September 7, 2020. [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/dispu\\_e/cases\\_e/ds590\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/dispu_e/cases_e/ds590_e.htm).

<sup>52</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit. “The Chip 4 Alliance Will Struggle to Find Cohesion in 2023.” EIU, December 8, 2022. [https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1222633905&Country=South%2BKorea&topic=Politics&subt\\_1](https://country.eiu.com/article.aspx?articleid=1222633905&Country=South%2BKorea&topic=Politics&subt_1).

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, Adrienne. “From Maritime Quad to Tech Quintet.” Center for Security and Emerging Technology, June 29, 2022. <https://cset.georgetown.edu/article/from-maritime-quad-to-tech-quintet/>.

model thus was a much less effective structure for effective implementation of cooperative research and development with foreign partners; the ROK's semiconductor industry consequently has little redundancy and security. Japan and Korea can collaborate further on research and development models, with Japan lending instruction to South Korean businesses in the technology sector regarding information sharing and proficiency.<sup>54</sup>

One of the main impediments to the ROK joining the Quad, despite its active role in Quad+ working groups, is reluctance from Japan and the United States to include South Korea in the organization due to South Korea's continued close ties with China in the high-tech sector and subsequent security risks.<sup>55</sup> However, this rationale fails to recognize that a key reason the ROK has been pushed to be so reliant on Chinese customers is a lack of a diversified supply chain and consumer base. Sidelining the ROK from the Quad for security concerns becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy driving South Korea right into Beijing's orbit. By excluding the ROK from formal multilateral institutions like the Quad, the ROK has less capability to make pragmatic overtures to collaborate on trade and high-tech development with Japan and other members of the proposed Chip 4 Alliance.

Joining the Quad enables the Republic of Korea to expand its footprint on the global stage and continue to expand Yoon's multilateral foreign policy; to respond to regional contingencies within a consolidated security architecture; and to have an even greater vested interest in supporting key U.S. allies to counter the growing threat of Chinese economic coercion. Quad membership for the Republic of Korea specifically leans the ROK closer to Washington than to Beijing and streamlines Japan and ROK capabilities to interact closely within a multilateral, mediated setting. Consequently, the United States must recognize that expansion of the Quad to a Quad+ including the ROK facilitates and expands a free and open Indo-Pacific. The U.S. can take steps to advocate for ROK inclusion into the

Quad, or in the interim, more actively promote ROK inclusion as an observer to Quad meetings, activities, and working groups. These steps begin with U.S. promotion of ROK-Japan cooperation on semiconductors and in the high-tech sector broadly, mediating legal and business disputes between Japan and the ROK, and, most importantly, aligning Quad members and the ROK's threat perceptions. If the U.S. can succeed in focusing the Quad/Quad+ nations on shared goals and national security concerns, it can enable reparation of Japan-Republic of Korea relations on a faster timeline.

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<sup>54</sup> Sakakibara, Mariko, and Dong-Sung Cho. "Cooperative R&D in Japan and Korea: a Comparison of Industrial Policy." *Research Policy* 31, no. 5 (July 2002): 673–92. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333\(01\)00150-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0048-7333(01)00150-0).

<sup>55</sup> Chung, Kuyoun. "South Korea's Perspective on Quad Plus and Evolving Indo-Pacific Security Architecture." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2020. <https://doi.org/https://media.defense.gov/2021/Mar/12/2002599866/-1/1/0/8-CHUNG.PDF/TOC.pdf>.



# 9

## **A Strengthened US-ROK Partnership to Bolster Resilient Development in the Asia-Pacific Region**

*Lindsay Horikoshi*

## Introduction

The Republic of Korea (ROK) represents one of the best examples of a country formerly reliant on development aid that has now become a growing donor for development and humanitarian assistance globally. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and its larger US counterpart, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are independent bilateral development agencies that have longstanding presences in the Indo-Pacific Region. The pillars of national security are often summarized as the “Three D’s”—defense, diplomacy, and development—with the latter the least funded and acknowledged for its critical role in maintaining and strengthening national security and security cooperation. The Indo-Pacific region faces multiple security challenges, including the increasing threat of Chinese military action, extremist insurgencies and authoritarianism, and the climate emergency. This paper reviews the history of ROK’s development, characteristics of ROK’s development strategy, and compares KOICA’s portfolio to USAID and other peers. The second half of the paper identifies some of the linkages in US and ROK development strategy and the opportunity for expanding US-ROK development cooperation to support mutual regional interests.

## The US and ROK support bilateral over multilateral engagement in development strategies

In 2018, the Moon administration published the New Southern Policy (NSP), a hallmark strategy with three pillars—people, prosperity, and peace—for engaging with southern countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The NSP was updated in 2020 to the NSP Plus, which reflected ROK’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and also strengthens ROK’s green and digital infrastructure initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Under the Yoon administration, the forthcoming ROK Indo-Pacific

Strategy will continue many of the priorities laid out by the NSP in establishing ROK as a “global pivotal state,” continuing to project middle-power influence in the region.<sup>2</sup> Yoon is also increasingly mimicking the language of the US; during a recent speech at the ASEAN Summit, he envisioned a “free, prosperous, and peaceful Indo-Pacific region” through inclusivity, trust, and reciprocity, which pushes ROK closer to adopting the “free and open Indo-Pacific” narrative of prevailing US strategy.<sup>3</sup> With the to-be-released ROK Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Yoon administration signals interest in strengthening cooperation in nuclear nonproliferation, anti-terrorism, and maritime, cyber, and health security, as well as strengthening economic security and supply chain resilience; each of these themes ties to the US Indo-Pacific Strategies under the Trump and Biden Administrations.<sup>4</sup> The Biden administration will likely release a joint statement with the ROK to promote the linkages between their strategies, similar to when the NSP was released.

In 2021 Biden administration highlighted multiple shared objectives between the NSP and the US Indo-Pacific Strategy:<sup>5</sup>

- Prosperity: Enhancing economic prosperity (infrastructure, digital economy, smart cities, natural resource management)
- People: Championing good governance (human resources development and anti-corruption) and investing in human capital (women’s empowerment, health and climate change in the Pacific Islands)
- Peace: Ensuring peace and security (counter transnational crimes, cybersecurity, maritime security, marine environmental protection, disaster response and preparedness)

There are development challenges woven into each of the three pillars. The NSP pillars complement the Midterm Strategy for Development Cooperation currently in effect from 2021-2025 which lays out

<sup>1</sup> Thuzar, “The New Southern Policy Plus.”, Hoo, “What’s in the New Southern Policy Plus? An ASEAN Perspective on Building Niche-Based Pragmatic Cooperation with South Korea.”

<sup>2</sup> Choi, “ASEAN-ROK Partnership.”

<sup>3</sup> Yoon unveils S. Korea’s strategy for free, peaceful, prosperous Indo-Pacific, Yeo, “South Korea’s New Southern Policy and the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy: Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance.”

<sup>4</sup> “U.S. -South Korea Relations.”

<sup>5</sup> “The United States of America and The Republic of Korea on Working Together to Promote Cooperation between the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the New Southern Policy.”



three strategic priorities for ROK: 1) doubling official development assistance (ODA) from 2019 to 2030, 2) focusing on bilateral ODA by providing 70 percent of ODA to 27 partner countries, and 3) targeting a grant/loan ratio of 60:40.<sup>6</sup> These strategies represent a few opportunities and risks for ROK; the strategy calls for dramatically expanding foreign development funding flows, while narrowing focus on supporting specific sectors and geographic regions. ROK is also increasing the proportion of grants historically disbursed, while more than doubling the budget by 2030. Therefore, it is prudent to examine ROK's opportunities for expanding its ODA portfolio and how to use multiplier effect of existing bilateral programs in the priority geographies.

ROK, like the US, heavily invests in bilateral development assistance which can be more easily tied to broader foreign policy and national security objectives. At the same time, the US, and to a lesser extent ROK support multilateral development cooperation through institutions such as the World Bank, UNICEF, and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Multilateralism in development takes on a different structure than in diplomatic, economic, or defense-based organizations. Rather than engaging deeply to promote regional interests, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), multilateral development organizations are almost exclusively based in the US or Western Europe, many of which are linked to the United Nations. The US and ROK do heavily fund these Western-based institutions but in funding these organizations they delink development goals from their own foreign policy objectives and regional strategic priorities. There are some efforts to shift the center of gravity of multilateral development away from the US and Western Europe, including the recently announced Global Health Security Coordination Office, which will be housed in ROK; but the funding and agenda are likely to still be largely driven by the US-led

Global Health Security Agenda.<sup>7</sup> While the US does wield significant influence in tying multilateral institutions to its national security postures through its purse strings – bolstering budgets or threatening sanctions – the bulk of its foreign funding flows are still through bilateral assistance, like ROK. For this reason, bilateral aid remains the backbone of development strategy for both nations.

If multilateralism in development promotes consensus-driven, rules-based world order initiatives in low-and middle-income countries, then what role does bilateralism play for countries? Both USAID and KOICA, the US and ROK's primary institutions for bilateral grants and technical assistance to developing countries, leverage bilateralism to promote interests linked to regional strategic priorities, using development as an instrument to achieve greater influence.<sup>8</sup> USAID publishes Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS) for each Mission which lay out the Development Objectives that the USAID Mission and its implementers aim to address in the five-year strategy period.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, ROK publishes a Country Partnership Strategy (CPS) which lays out priority cooperation areas and partnership plans for working alongside beneficiary governments and civil society. ROK's CPS highlight the value-added to countries' development agendas through ROK's first-hand experience with rural economic development, advancements in technical and vocational education, and expertise in information and communications technology.<sup>10</sup>

When the US and ROK first signed a memorandum of understanding for international development cooperation in 2011, it marked the first time the US sought to partner with a former recipient of US assistance that is now a donor country.<sup>11</sup> In the subsequent 10 years, USAID and KOICA have continued to renew their partnership and cooperate in a range of sectors and geographies, pulling on both the vast resources and relationships of USAID and the experience of ROK's success with developing the

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<sup>6</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>7</sup> House, "FACT SHEET"; "Korea, US Agree to Establish Global Health Security Office in Seoul."

<sup>8</sup> Snyder and Choi, "From Aid to Development Partnership: Strengthening U.S.-Republic of Korea Cooperation in International Development."

<sup>9</sup> "Country Development Cooperation Strategies (CDCS)."

<sup>10</sup> "Country Partnership Strategy."

<sup>11</sup> Snyder and Choi, "From Aid to Development Partnership: Strengthening U.S.-Republic of Korea Cooperation in International Development."

economy, democratic institutions, and a healthy and educated population.

The US–ROK, and specifically, the USAID–KOICA relationship has an opportunity to reap benefits of both the influence levied through bilateral development and the network effects of multilateral engagement, in addition to serving as a model for development cooperation and strategy that is linked to regional strategic priorities, rather than global consensus-driven programming.

Beyond shared interests in pursuing strong bilateral partnerships for development with recipient countries, and in partnering with each other, the US and ROK share numerous priorities and concerns, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. Concerns about the People’s Republic of China’s (PRC) influence, rising authoritarianism and anti-democratic movements, and interest in supporting resilient and sustainable societies across the region are just a few examples. Recognizing the complex global ties, economically and politically of countries in the Asia-Pacific, the US and ROK should position themselves as ranked choice partners, working in alignment to bolster each other’s interests while supporting countries in their economic diversification and cooperation goals. Currently in ASEAN, opinions are mixed; while Samsung is the top developer of choice for 5G, ROK ranks low as a strategic partner, including in perceptions of its ability to lead and maintain a rules-based order.<sup>12</sup>

There are also risks to a lack of cooperation between the US and ROK in their bilateral development initiatives; some of the common pitfalls of bilateral engagement, including duplicative efforts and inefficient or unsustainable programs can be mitigated through stronger coordination in priority recipient countries.

#### Milestones in USAID-KOICA development cooperation

- 2011: First memorandum of understanding signed between US and ROK for development cooperation
- 2015: Memorandum of understanding signed focused on science, technology, innovation, and partnership in Southeast Asia, with the objective of reducing poverty and promoting sustainable development.<sup>1</sup>
- 2015: Partnership with Samsung to support digitization of Ghana’s district health information management system.<sup>1</sup>
- 2019: Memorandum of understanding signed to “articulate the commonalities between the Participants’ objectives and approaches.”<sup>1</sup>

### **ROK succeeded in transitioning from an aid recipient to donor of development and humanitarian assistance**

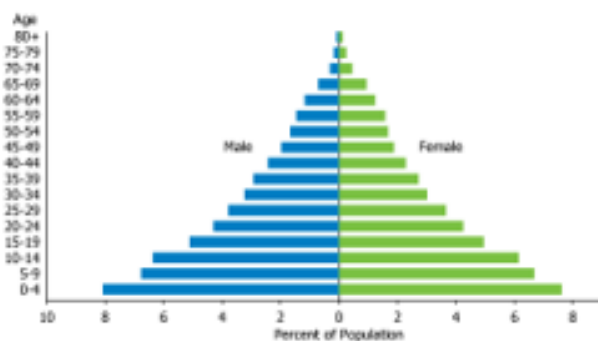
ROK was a recipient of development assistance until 1995, and due to its success in leveraging development funding and technical assistance to power its economic growth and demographic transition, and ROK prioritizes sharing its development experience as a part of its current development strategy.<sup>13</sup> Following World War II, ROK was one of the least economically developed countries in the world with a largely agricultural economy. Yet from 1945 to 1995, ROK transformed from a rural, agricultural-based economy to a modern industrial nation, helped in this process by USD\$13 billion in aid.<sup>14</sup> During this period, also dubbed the “Miracle on the Han River,” ROK channeled development loans and grants into infrastructure, transportation, and other engines of economic growth, while investing in health, education, and other social sector systems. These investments paid off within decades – from 1960 to 2020, ROK had sustained an average growth rate of GDP of 7 percent and saw its industrial base grow to support conglomerates that achieved USD\$531 billion in product exports in 2020, the fifth highest in the world.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Thuzar, “The New Southern Policy Plus.”

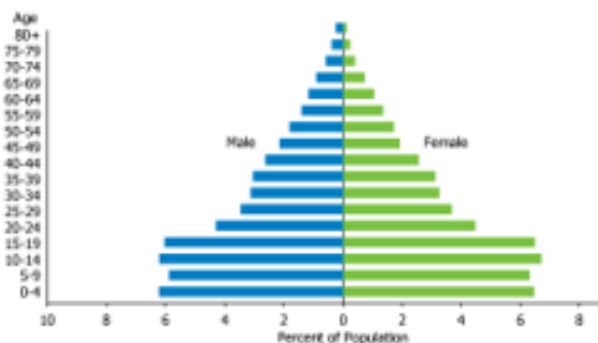
<sup>13</sup> “Donor Tracker: South Korea.”

<sup>14</sup> Egan and Persaud, “From Emerging Donor to Global Development Partner.”

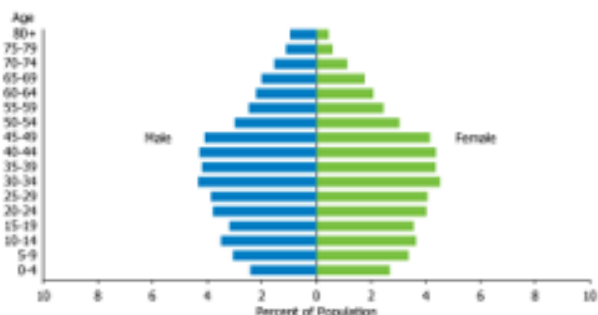
<sup>15</sup> Mark and Soares, “South Korea’s Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea’s Development Cooperation Policy.”



**South Korea's Age Structure in 1950**



**South Korea's Age Structure in 1975**



*Figure 1 South Korea's Age Structure in 2005*

Additionally, ROK's population underwent the demographic transition, following in lock step with other developed countries, reducing the total fertility rate from 6.1 births per woman in 1960 to 0.8 births per woman in 2020, well below the replacement rate of 2.1 births per woman.<sup>16</sup> The rapid decline in fertility resulted in a shift in the population structure known as the demographic dividend. This is an

economic growth opportunity that countries can reap when a larger proportion of the population is of working age with strong health, education, and employment opportunities than the non-working populations (children and elderly), sees a case example of success in ROK's experience. See Figure 1 for population pyramids depicting ROK's change in age structure post-World War II. By 2005, birth rates had dropped to the extent that the working-age population exceeded the non-working population. The demographic dividend, powered by investment in health services, including family planning, "production oriented" education, and infrastructure-focused industrial development, ROK transformed societal and economic conditions and transitioned ROK from an agricultural to an industrial to a services-based economy in half a century.

In the 1970s ROK started supporting other developing countries by providing training and technical assistance, including through the Korea Development Institute, which received support from USAID.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980 to 1990s it started providing concessional loans and grants. In early 1990s even as it continued to receive development loans, ROK's net ODA flows turned negative, indicating that it was repaying loans at a faster rate than it was receiving new development funds.<sup>18</sup> KOICA, founded in 1991, was structured in the mold of other bilateral agencies, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and USAID.<sup>19</sup> In 2000, it graduated from ODA eligibility from multilateral development banks.<sup>20</sup> By 2010 when ROK joined the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC), it gained the distinction of the first formerly least-developed country to join the DAC, a forum now made up of 30 countries that promotes development cooperation and policies to achieve shared objectives among its members.<sup>21</sup> In the 1990s, ROK primarily disbursed its ODA through

<sup>16</sup> "Fertility Rate, Total (Births per Woman) - Korea, Rep. | Data."

<sup>17</sup> Calleja and Prizzon, "Moving Away from Aid: The Experience of the Republic of Korea."

<sup>18</sup> Egan and Persaud, "From Emerging Donor to Global Development Partner." Mark and Soares, "South Korea's Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea's Development Cooperation Policy.", "South Korea (KOR) Exports, Imports, and Trade Partners."

<sup>19</sup> Calleja and Prizzon, "Moving Away from Aid: The Experience of the Republic of Korea."

<sup>20</sup> Calleja and Prizzon.

<sup>21</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

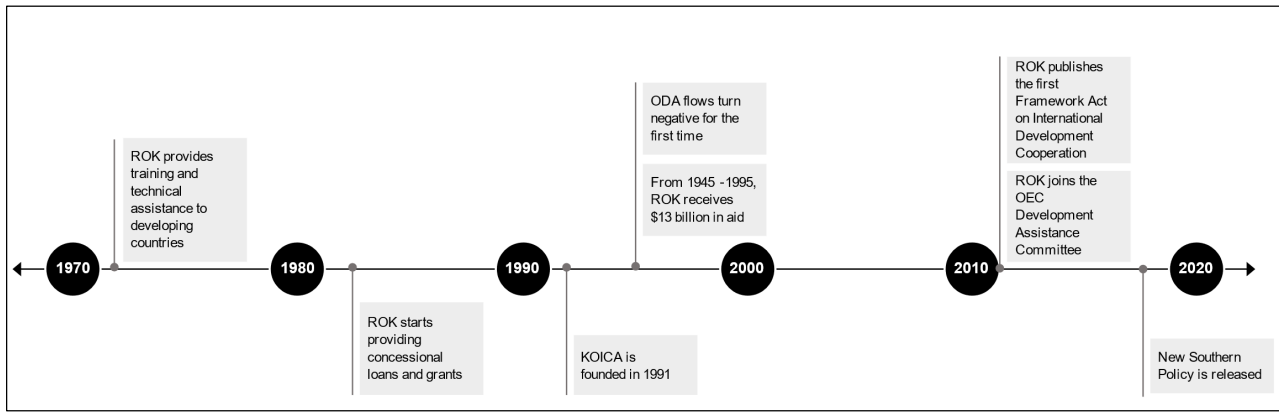


Figure 2 Timeline of ROK Development Assistance

multilateral organizations.<sup>22</sup> Since 2000, ODA disbursement by ROK increased rapidly, and under the Lee administration (2008-2013), ROK started to view development cooperation as a major instrument for engaging with developing countries, based on its soft power influence through the tech industry and its own successful development experience.<sup>23</sup> Figure 2 is a timeline that demonstrates that ROK had been providing technical assistance through development cooperation for 30 years prior to joining the DAC.

### ROK development funding is increasing from current levels

Today, ROK allocates 0.14 percent of its gross national income (GNI) to ODA spending, amounting to USD\$2.2 billion in 2020.<sup>24</sup> ODA contributions remained stable at 0.14 percent of GNI from 2017 to 2020, having failed to reach its commitment of 0.2 percent of GNI by 2020 due to the public finances and disruptions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>25</sup> The commitment still falls below the ODA DAC average of 0.3 percent but nevertheless represents a strong and stable commitment to funding development activities.<sup>26</sup> ROK is the 16<sup>th</sup> largest donor country among the OECD countries.<sup>27</sup> In 2022, the National Assembly of ROK approved an ODA budget 19 percent higher than in 2021, increasing from KRW3.7 trillion (USD\$3.1 billion) to KRW4.4 trillion (USD\$3.7

billion), marking the first time ODA exceeded KRW4 trillion, and indicates ROK's increased commitment to expanding multilateral approaches to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>28</sup> ROK aspires to double the ODA budget from 2019 to 2030, and is already making measurable progress toward this goal.<sup>29</sup>

ROK contributes ODA both bilaterally and multilaterally, and through concessional loans and grants. In 2019, ROK disbursed USD\$2 billion in bilateral ODA, or 76 percent of the total, with the remaining reserved for core funding to multilateral organizations. In 2019, 43 percent of bilateral ODA was disbursed as loans or equity investments, compared to the OECD DAC average of only 8 percent.<sup>30</sup> ROK's reliance on loans in its ODA portfolio, as opposed to grants stems from ROK's history of receiving development assistance in the form of loans and perceptions by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) that loans promote fiscal discipline in recipient countries.<sup>31</sup> Some experts also cite the strong influence of MOEF on ROK's ODA policy framework as the high proportion of loans in the ODA portfolio.<sup>32</sup> 80 percent of bilateral grants and loans funded by ROK are channeled through KOICA, overseen by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the Export-Import Bank of Korea (Korea Eximbank), overseen by MOEF.<sup>33</sup> KOICA provides bilateral grants and technical

<sup>22</sup> Mark and Soares, "South Korea's Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea's Development Cooperation Policy."

<sup>23</sup> Mark and Soares, Choe, "New Southern Policy", Korea's Newfound Ambition in Search of Strategic Autonomy."

<sup>24</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>25</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>26</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>27</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>28</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>29</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>30</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

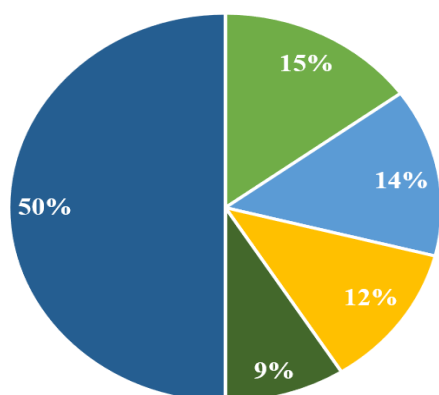
<sup>31</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>32</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>33</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

assistance, while the Korea Eximbank facilitates loans.<sup>34</sup>

### 2019 Bilateral ODA by Sector



### 2021 Bilateral ODA by Sector

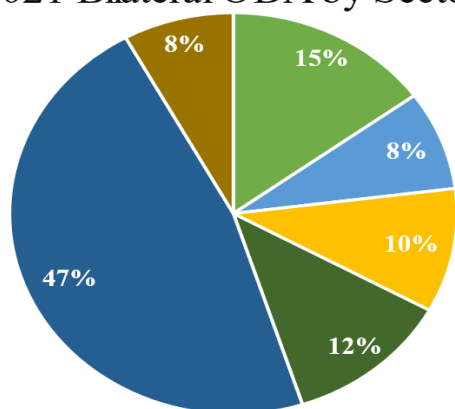


Figure 3 Bilateral ODA by Sector in 2019 and 2021

### ROK's development strategy has sectoral, geographic, and other priorities

Since 2018, ROK's strategies for strengthening ties with partner countries have been directed by its New Northern Policy and New Southern Policy, including the Country Partnership Strategies.<sup>35</sup> The New Southern Policy was updated in 2020 to further prioritize cooperation in health and medicine in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as 2)

human resource development and sharing of ROK's education model; 3) mutual cultural exchange; 4) mutually beneficial and sustainable investment in trade; 5) infrastructure development of rural and urban areas; 6) future industries for mutual prosperity; and 7) non-traditional security sectors.<sup>36</sup>

The foundation for ROK's development strategy is the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation which was first published in 2010 and was amended in 2018 to establish six pillars for development: 1) poverty reduction; 2) the human rights of women, children, adolescents, and people with disabilities; 3) gender equality; 4) sustainable development and humanitarianism; 5) economic cooperation; and 6) peace and prosperity in the international community.<sup>37</sup> The Framework Act in 2020 describes the objectives in achieving the six pillars as: 1) reducing poverty and improving quality of life in developing countries; 2) development and improvement of the system and conditions for development; 3) promoting amicable and cooperative relations and mutual exchanges; 4) contributing to resolving global problems; 5) contributing to achieving internationally agreed goals related to SDGs.<sup>38</sup>

ROK also is in the process of implementing the Third Midterm Strategy for Development Cooperation (2021-2025).<sup>39</sup> In addition to sectoral priorities including global health threats, green transition, and strengthening civil society, the strategy lays out three overarching priorities: 1) doubling ODA from 2019 to 2030, 2) focusing on bilateral ODA by providing 70 percent of ODA to 27 partner countries, and 3) targeting a grant/loan ratio of 60:40.<sup>40</sup>

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ROK pledged USD\$200 million to the Gavi COVAX Advance Market Commitment in June 2021, an innovative financing facility to procure and deliver donor-funded COVID-19 vaccines to 92 priority low and middle income countries.<sup>41</sup> ROK is also expanding its commitment to global health assistance

<sup>34</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>35</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea," "Policies and Strategies."

<sup>36</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>37</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>38</sup> "Framework Act on International Development Cooperation."

<sup>39</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>40</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>41</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."



by also supporting the Global Health Security Agenda and the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership, leveraging its industrial production capacity to expand access to vaccines, diagnostics, and other health commodities, while promoting research and development into future therapeutics and other infectious disease response technology.<sup>42,43</sup>

## ROK's development strategy differs from the US approach in key areas

### 1. Sector Priorities

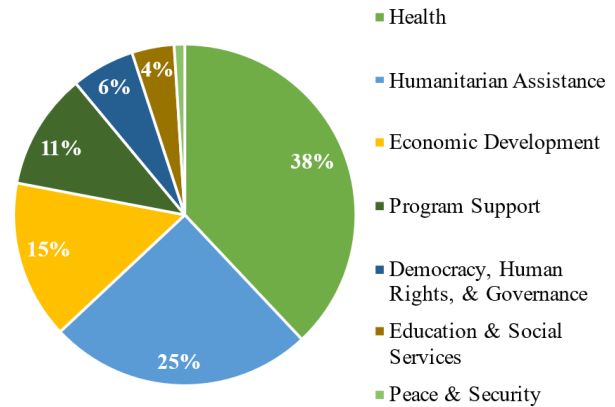
ROK's top three sectoral priorities for ODA disbursement are education, health, and transport and storage. Transport and storage, as well as the next largest sectors—energy and ICT—are levers of economic growth that may be tied to ROK's continued interest in provision of development loans based on its own development experience. The transport and energy initiatives are the primary focus of concessional, bilateral loans.<sup>44</sup> Within KOICA's budget, which focuses on disbursements of project grants and technical assistance, education and health are the largest priorities by budget size, followed by public administration and technology, environment, and energy. Only 2.6 percent of KOICA's budget was allocated for emergency relief in 2020; while ROK support reconstruction and relief efforts globally, it allocates only 1 percent of ODA to humanitarian assistance.<sup>45</sup>

In the US meanwhile, of the USD\$51 billion obligated toward foreign assistance in 2020, the top sectors were peace and security, health, humanitarian assistance, and economic development.<sup>46</sup> Focusing on USAID's sectoral priorities, over one-third of its USD\$26 billion budget in 2020 was allocated to global health, followed by humanitarian assistance.<sup>47</sup>

### 2. Geographic Priorities

ROK's New Southern Policy seeks to prioritize India and Southeast Asia.<sup>48</sup> Early indications of the ROK Indo-Pacific Strategy suggest a similar focus, with

USAID aid by Sector (2020)



KOICA aid by Sector (2020)

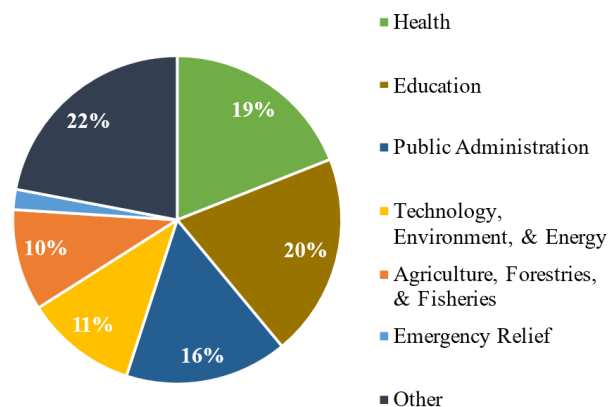


Figure 4 USAID and KOICA Aid by Sector

additional interest in the connectivity and partnership with Pacific Island nations.<sup>49</sup> A strong geographic bias is evident in its ODA disbursements; ROK sent 47 percent of bilateral ODA to Asian countries, versus an OECD DAC average of 14 percent, matched by the US which disbursed 14 percent of foreign assistance to South, Central, and East Asia, plus Oceania in 2020.<sup>50</sup> Within KOICA's portfolio, a smaller but still notable bias toward the Asia-Pacific exists, with 36.5 percent of aid focused on the region in 2020.<sup>51</sup>

Of ROK's 27 priority countries for ODA, 12 are in Asia-Pacific, 7 in Sub-Saharan Africa, 4 in Latin America, and 4 in Central Asia. The largest recipient

<sup>42</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>43</sup> "Fact Sheet: United States - Republic of Korea Partnership."

<sup>44</sup> Mark and Soares, "South Korea's Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea's Development Cooperation Policy," "Development Cooperation Profiles: Korea."

<sup>45</sup> Mark and Soares, "South Korea's Transition from Recipient to DAC Donor: Assessing Korea's Development Cooperation Policy." Hyuk-Sang, "2020 KOICA Annual Report."

<sup>46</sup> "ForeignAssistance.Gov- Dashboard."

<sup>47</sup> "ForeignAssistance.Gov- Dashboard."

<sup>48</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>49</sup> He-rim, "What Will Korean Version of Indo-Pacific Strategy Look Like?"

<sup>50</sup> Hyuk-Sang, "2020 KOICA Annual Report," "ForeignAssistance.Gov- Dashboard."

<sup>51</sup> Hyuk-Sang, "2020 KOICA Annual Report."

in 2019 was Bangladesh.<sup>52</sup> ROK has a strong preference for funding middle-income countries, despite indicating that low-income countries should receive more attention moving forward. In 2020, 82 percent of bilateral ODA went to middle-income countries, while the OECD DAC average is 41 percent.<sup>53</sup> ROK provided 12 percent of grants to upper middle-income countries, 70 percent to lower middle-income countries, and 17 percent to least developed countries in 2020.<sup>54</sup> In contrast, the US allocates over 42 percent of its ODA to low income countries. The US' regional priorities for ODA differ substantially from ROK, with the largest regional budget allocated to low-income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly with funding through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and the President's Malaria Initiative.<sup>55</sup> The second largest regional focus is the Middle East and North Africa, primarily with military foreign assistance to bolster peace and security in partner and allied nations.<sup>56</sup>

### 3. *Use of Grants and Loans*

In the US, the government tracks net grant obligations and net loan authorizations by Economic Assistance, Military Assistance, and Other USG international flows. As of 2019, the total outstanding amount of loans for economic assistance totaled USD\$5.3 billion, or 16 percent of 2019 obligations, whereas the total value of outstanding loans for military assistance was higher at USD\$5.8 billion, or 41 percent of 2019 obligations. The US reported an additional USD\$18.7 billion of outstanding loans issued by the Export-Import Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and other entities as of 2019.<sup>57</sup> In 2019 the United States Development Finance Corporation (DFC) launched, replacing OPIC and the Development Credit Authority that was previously housed within USAID, with the mission to finance investments in development in emerging markets.<sup>58</sup> In fiscal year 2021, DFC

committed nearly USD\$6.7 billion to new investments.<sup>59</sup>

While the US has historically lent over USD\$261 billion since 1945 to foreign nations, including ROK, this pales into comparison to the over USD\$1.31 trillion in foreign assistance provided over the same period.<sup>60</sup> The US strategy continues to emphasize direct foreign assistance through the use of grants to achieve development priorities; the vast majority of current, outstanding loans for foreign assistance are for the purpose of foreign military financing.<sup>61</sup> The USG employs development loans primarily to support economic growth in middle-income countries and development grants primarily to lower income countries. However, ROK uses both grants and loans in a similar proportion across beneficiary country income strata.

ROK's Third Midterm Strategy for Development Cooperation targets a grant-to-loan ratio of 60:40, thereby continuing the status quo of significant shaping of its ODA strategy through the provision of loans through MOEF.<sup>62,63</sup> As of 2020, ROK was the only country in the DAC with two different ministries managing grants and loans (MOFA and MOEF, respectively).<sup>64</sup> However it is common for countries, including the US to employ multiple independent agencies, disbursing grants, technical assistance, and loans across USAID, DFC, The US Trade and Development Agency, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, Inter-American Foundation, and US African Development Foundation.

### 4. *Bilateral versus Multilateral engagement*

ROK allocates over 76 percent of ODA to bilateral assistance, with 24 percent reserved for contributions to multilateral organizations.<sup>65</sup> Of bilateral ODA, 87 percent is channeled through MOFA and allocated for grants delivered through KOICA, which represents KRW1.3 trillion or USD\$1.0 billion.<sup>66</sup> ROK

<sup>52</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>53</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>54</sup> "Total Bilateral Aid To All Sectors."

<sup>55</sup> "Total Bilateral Aid To All Sectors."

<sup>56</sup> "ForeignAssistance.Gov- Dashboard."

<sup>57</sup> "U.S. Overseas Loans and Grants (Greenbook) 2020 | Reports to Congress|."

<sup>58</sup> "Overview | DFC."

<sup>59</sup> "2021 Annual Report."

<sup>60</sup> "Overview | DFC."

<sup>61</sup> "Overview | DFC."

<sup>62</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>63</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>64</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>65</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>66</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."



allocates less ODA to multilaterals as compared to OECD DAC average of 41 percent.<sup>67</sup> ROK expanded its multilateral engagement during the pandemic. In addition to its historic donation to the Gavi AMC, ROK was the Global Fund's third-largest supplier of diagnostic tests and sixth largest supplier of essential health products.<sup>68</sup>

Additionally, ROK pursues bilateral development programs at the national and sub-national levels. The Framework Act of 2020 clearly states that State—referring to the national government, local governments, and implementing agencies conduct international development cooperation.<sup>69</sup> In contrast in the US, state and local governments typically do not participate in international development cooperation.

The US and ROK have also established regional development cooperation programs outside of their primary development agencies, such as the US-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership and the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation Fund; however, with budgets of just USD\$10 million and USD\$16 million, respectively, these programs have a relatively small impact.<sup>70</sup>

In the US, USD\$12.2 billion of USD\$51 billion in total foreign assistance was allocated toward multilateral organizations, including the Global Fund, the World Bank, GAVI, UNICEF, UNAIDS, among others.<sup>71</sup> The US is one of the largest supporters of multilateral institutions, contributing one-third of the budget for the Global Fund in the latest replenishment in 2022,<sup>72</sup> and remains the largest shareholder and exercises significant influence on the World Bank through its financial contributions.<sup>73</sup>

## Opportunities for greater US-ROK collaboration in development assistance

This section reviews some of the intersection points of US and ROK development strategy and offers recommendations to leverage the competitive advantages of each country's approaches.

1. **ROK should tie development objectives to national security and foreign policy strategy in the forthcoming ROK Indo-Pacific Strategy, with links to the Biden administration's Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Pacific Partnership Strategy. The Yoon administration can also take the opportunity to elevate its role from a medium-sized donor country and transform to serving as a model for other emerging development partners in the Asia-Pacific Region, with guidance from the US.**

South-South cooperation is on the rise, and ROK's history of assistance will enable it to fulfill a broker role in developing these relationships in a way that the US may not be able.<sup>74</sup> As a former beneficiary of development assistance, ROK is able to relate to the concerns of beneficiary countries and relay their needs to other donors and partners. ROK also serves as an example to emerging players in bilateral development cooperation, including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ROK is well-placed to advise these emerging development partners on how to most effectively implement their approaches to development, much in the vein of USAID's support to standing up KDI in the 1970s.<sup>75</sup> There are multiple examples of ROK sharing its development experience, including the Knowledge Sharing Program (ECDF), KDI, The Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency, and the Development Experience Exchange Partnership

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<sup>67</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>68</sup> "Donor Tracker: South Korea."

<sup>69</sup> "Framework Act on International Development Cooperation."

<sup>70</sup> "ASEAN, ROK to Continue Strengthening Cooperation.", Kim, "Creating Smarter and More Sustainable Cities in Southeast Asia.", "US-ASEAN Smart Cities Partnership."

<sup>71</sup> "ForeignAssistance.Gov- Dashboard."

<sup>72</sup> "President Biden Raises Record Level Funding for Global Health through Global Fund Seventh Replenishment."

<sup>73</sup> "The World Bank in United States."

<sup>74</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>75</sup> Egan and Persaud, "From Emerging Donor to Global Development Partner.", "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

(KOICA).<sup>76</sup> During the COVID-19 pandemic, ROK also disseminated best practices such as the K-Quarantine Model.<sup>77</sup> Despite strong national security interests in the Pacific Rim, further emphasized in the recent publication of the Pacific Partnership Strategy, the US's development budget does not match this priority.<sup>78</sup> The US should therefore encourage the emergence of more bilateral development partners in the Asia-Pacific region who support the development of resilient, free, and open societies, as its development budget continues to focus on Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. ROK can benefit from greater partnership with the US to elevate the awareness of its relatively small regional-based initiatives.

**2. The US should leverage ROK's narrative as a success story for development in the implementation of technical assistance and humanitarian response.**

As the largest bilateral international development program, USAID has strong brand recognition and influence through its network of Missions. USAID has world-class humanitarian response, stabilization, and reconstruction projects that work across disasters, fragile states, and post-conflict areas. In comparison, ROK allocates around 1 percent of its ODA toward humanitarian and emergency relief. As the greatest success story for US-led post-conflict development, ROK should leverage this narrative and reputation in partnership with US' humanitarian and reconstruction projects today. The benefits of a partnership can reap multiple network effects. For ROK, it will be able to play a greater role in humanitarian response without necessarily allocating greater budget or resources. Particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, ROK's partnership to US-led bilateral humanitarian response can elevate the brand and improve ROK's favorability among beneficiary

populations. Unlike the US, PRC, Japan, and other states, ROK's development relations with Asia-Pacific countries are not perceived as having secondary political and strategic influences, given its lack of history of colonialization and regional influence. As the PRC increases its humanitarian response capabilities, ROK should seek opportunities to demonstrably support effective reconstruction efforts that quickly stabilize countries and build strong democratic institutions and civil society, and lead by example. For the US, inclusion of ROK in humanitarian, stabilization, and reconstruction efforts can bolster trust among beneficiary populations by demonstrating the potential of what can be achieved. The US can also benefit from the transfer of knowledge from ROK's experience directly to countries working on stabilizing and rebuilding institutions; for example, ROK has earned reputation for having a strong education system and innovative private sector, two areas high in demand in stabilization strategies.

**3. ROK and the US should expand cooperation between USAID and KOICA at the strategic level, aligning country-specific strategies.**

USAID and KOICA both use country-specific strategy documents (CDCS and CPS, respectively) to map out the development objectives by country. However, the MOU promising cooperation over the past decade between the agencies has underdelivered. The 2019 MOU considers the ROK's New Southern Policy and the US' Indo-Pacific Strategy as the primary sources of broad strategic alignment, but this level of cooperation does not filter down to country-level strategies or implementation.<sup>79</sup> The countries identify mutual strategic goals in the MOU: advancing development in the Indo-Pacific Region, identifying private sector entities and NGOs in both countries to address

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<sup>76</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>77</sup> "The Transformation of the Republic of Korea's Development Cooperation: Reflections from the First Decade of OECD-DAC Membership."

<sup>78</sup> "Pacific Partnership Strategy of the United States September 2022."

<sup>79</sup> "Memorandum of Understanding for Development Cooperation between The United States Agency for International Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea."

development challenges, advance economic growth, and create jobs, and leveraging comparative advantages of each country in delivering development assistance.<sup>80</sup> These goals are sensible, given the two country's strong commitment to bilateral engagement to build capacity in local systems, the use of implementers for development activities, and interest in private sector engagement. ROK and the US have already laid out their strategic alignment and capabilities, now they should work with recipient countries to align their specific country-level objectives and technical assistance.

**4. ROK and the US should expand development cooperation in the broader Pacific Rim, including the Pacific Islands.**

Experts are increasingly raising alarm about the strategic importance of Pacific Island nations and their livelihood vulnerability due to climate change. From a strategic lens, the recent security pact between PRC and the Solomon Islands has elevated PRC's priorities for political, military, and economic influence among small island nations with outsized geographic significance. In terms of livelihoods, Pacific Islanders are among the populations most vulnerable to climate change, from sea levels rising to increased severity of natural disasters. Under the 2019 MOU, USAID and KOICA are supporting the Government of Indonesia in its anticorruption efforts to track complaints about public services and improve transparency, aligned with the "People" pillar of the NSP.<sup>81</sup> USAID and KOICA also both fund climate resilience programming in the Pacific Islands.<sup>82</sup> Under the "Peace" pillar, both the ROK and USAID supported disaster preparedness and resilience projects in the Pacific Islands, supporting prediction services, early warning systems, and response capacity.<sup>83</sup> However, this reporting does not assume that the

programming is aligned, coordinated, or reaping the network effects of collaboration. To ensure free and open societies in Pacific Island nations equipped with the ability to adapt to climate change, US and ROK must work together, along with other allies and partners, to provide solutions with a track record of success and reduce the appeal of partnering with PRC.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Inquiry**

This research serves to provide a broad overview of the ROK's growing ODA portfolio and development strategy and provides initial considerations and recommendations on greater US-ROK alignment and cooperation in international development. As the Yoon administration finalizes and releases the ROK Indo-Pacific Strategy, further inquiry is needed into the extent to which Yoon is comfortable echoing the language of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy regarding development cooperation, how this alignment of values at the high-level filters down to working-level cooperation, and what entities will be responsible for monitoring implementation progress. Researchers interested in this space may wish to examine specific areas in which US-ROK development cooperation in countries is aligned with other defense and foreign policy initiatives, such as trade deals and foreign weapons exports, and whether US-ROK development initiatives seek to counter PRC's influence more directly, such as in data and cybersecurity, or if development cooperation can more broadly uphold collective rules-based order, through democracy and governance, climate mitigation and adaptation, and infrastructure development. Finally, researchers may want to explore prospects for development cooperation in specific geographies, such as in Timor-Leste, the newest ASEAN member, and with Pacific Island nations, such as Fiji, where USAID is re-establishing a Mission.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> "Memorandum of Understanding for Development Cooperation between The United States Agency for International Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea."

<sup>81</sup> "The United States of America and The Republic of Korea on Working Together to Promote Cooperation between the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the New Southern Policy."

<sup>82</sup> "The United States of America and The Republic of Korea on Working Together to Promote Cooperation between the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the New Southern Policy."

<sup>83</sup> "The United States of America and The Republic of Korea on Working Together to Promote Cooperation between the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the New Southern Policy."

<sup>84</sup> "Pacific Partnership Strategy of the United States September 2022."

ROK has established a strong and internationally recognized international development reputation in just a few decades, building upon its own experience post-WWII. Its multilateral engagement and bilateral grants and loan portfolio support human and economic development globally, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific region. As the Yoon administration formalizes its Indo-Pacific Strategy, ROK has an opportunity to improve the linkages between development objectives and national security strategy, and alignment with US development initiatives. Previous attempts to improve US-ROK cooperation, such as through the MOU, have underachieved their ambitions. However, with mutual interests in sustainable economic and social development across the Indo-Pacific region, and increased competition from PRC, the US-ROK partnership should not wait any longer to align their bilateral development programs to diplomatic and defense strategies, as this will be key to building more stable, democratic and resilient societies.



# 10

## **Military Alliances, Environmental Degradation, and Status of Armed Forces Agreements**

*Kyle Wardwell*

## Introduction

With the onset of the Cold War, the United States created allies around the world and stationed US troops abroad. This has contributed to balancing the global order and peacekeeping, and to formalize and regulate the presence of the US military and its troops, Status of Forces Agreements have been signed between the US and many of its allies. Despite these agreements having many similarities, each treaty also differs to some degree in what obligations are required of the host country as well as the United States. Why are there these differences, and why did the US treat countries differently when crafting these agreements?

This paper focuses primarily on the Status of Forces Agreements as they relate to environmental issues. There is extensive history and literature on the criminal jurisdiction of US soldiers and officers stationed abroad, and whether crimes committed by them may be tried under US or host countries' laws and courts. However, recent environmental issues have been of greater importance in terms of pressures to change the Status of Forces Agreements in countries like South Korea.

By examining the US-Germany and US-South Korea cases, this paper seeks to address the following question: Why does the US-Germany Status of Forces Agreement explicitly obligate the United States to restore or compensate for the restoration of territory damaged by their military presence and operations, whereas the US-Korea agreement does not.

To answer this question, this paper focuses on the overall competence and capabilities of each countries' civil society and the level of democracy in each country during and after the Cold War Period. Put more simply: *to what degree does civic society strength and degree of democracy in US allied countries affect the level of environmental protections guaranteed in military agreements?* This question is critical to understanding negotiations and actor's decisions within the international political system, and remains an important consideration for anticipating future shifts within the increasingly globalized geopolitical sphere.

Non-traditional security threats are of growing concern and include climate change, terrorism, and infectious diseases such as COVID-19<sup>1</sup>. These threats to global public goods have increasingly far-reaching economic impacts as global supply chains diversify and expand. In regards to the environment, a significant concern in recent decades for South Korea has been the return of territory occupied by the US military and the environmental degradation associated with nearly 70 years of operation<sup>2</sup>.

The higher frequency of protests and reports issued by citizen groups and NGOs in South Korea indicates that awareness about environmental issues is becoming an issue with critical political implications.

Contextualization of environmental agreements is accomplished through the analysis of levels of democratization and civic society organization around environmental issues (civic society strength).

First, the initial negotiation and establishment of the SOFA is examined in the context of each countries' situation. Second, the strength and activity of civic society in each country is evaluated for their impact on the revision and renegotiation of the Status of Forces Agreements in German and South Korea respectively. Through this methodology this paper will demonstrate that domestic factors are critical in comparison to US strategic interests for the inclusion of environmental protection provisions in the Status of Forces Agreement.

The US-Germany and US-Korea cases are important to examine because they allow us to examine two countries that were separated into two sections at the beginning of the Cold War, but which still host US military installations after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Further, whereas East and West Germany were reunited after the Cold War, the two Koreas have not been allowing a contrasting case to be examined. Finally, the network of NATO which the US-Germany case negotiated in is in contrast to the relatively bilateral way in which the Status of Forces Agreements were negotiated in East Asia, allowing a contrast of these multilateral and bilateral environments.

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<sup>1</sup> Defense, Ministry of National. (2020). South Korea 2020 Defense White Paper.

<sup>2</sup> Kang Yeon Ju (강연주), Lee Hong Geun( 이홍근) "용산공원 인근 캠프킴, 지하 9m 까지 발암물질 범벅", May 16th, 2022.



## Contrasts: South Korea & Germany

This research explores why the Status of Forces Agreement between NATO and the Federal Republic of Germany includes clauses that require the United States and other NATO members to justify usage of land borrowed from Germany and to return it to, or compensate the return of the land to, the state it was in prior to being leased as an allied military installation. The US-South Korea SOFA and even the US-Japan SOFA have included no such obligations of the United States, despite many similarities in clauses and provisions of the US-Korea, US-Japan, and Germany's SOFAs, which all had their foundations built on the original 1951 NATO SOFA. Summarized in Table 1-1 are the country case conditions and selection:

		SOFA Environmental Damage Compensation Clause	
		(O)	(X)
Civil Society Strength (Democracy + Civil Society)	(+)	Federal Republic of Germany	
	(-)		Republic of Korea

Case Selection for SOFA Comparison

The level of political development of a receiving state will affect the institutionalization of stringent environmental provisions within the Status of Forces Agreement; Higher levels of political development should correlate with stronger environmental protections and accountability of sending states by receiving states.

The dependent variable is the level of institutionalized environmental protections within the Status of Forces Agreement. The independent variable is the level of political development, defined as 1) the level of environmental civic organization (civic society activity) within a country and 2) the degree of democratic rule (accountability of political leaders to their constituents by popular consent).

Civil Society as a term itself requires parameterization. By one account civil society can be defined in terms of 1) orientation "toward non-conflict, compromise, and understanding in [the] public" 2) stresses "individual independence and social self-organization" 3) "recognizes plurality, difference and tension" (4) is non-violent, and (5) is "oriented [...] actively for the common good [...] even if different actors in civil society might have very different conceptions of what constitutes the common good"<sup>3</sup>. The emphasis on free organization, the pursuit of the common good, in particular in the context of environmental issues will be the central definition used in this thesis.

Despite Germany being a wartime enemy and South Korea being a colonized entity exploited for labor by Japan during the war, the environmental clauses and protections under the SOFA agreements are disadvantageous for South Korea, while it is argued extensively in the literature that Germany has one of the most equitable SOFAs in existence.

Both countries experienced multiple renegotiations of their respective SOFAs alongside major environmental crises and growth of civic collective action and environmental organizations. Existing research on this topic has typically focused on each countries' environmental history separately, rather than through a comparative analysis. Stephen Milder notes that the "ecological revolution" that occurred in Germany's socio-political sphere occurred in the context of "technocratic invention" of environmental politics by government officials, alongside the "career of grassroots anti-nuclear activism"<sup>4</sup>. These two perspectives offer separate accounts of how policy was affected, but also feed into each other (the trends developed "in relationship with one another" in the sense that they differed on what environmental issues should be debated and "resolved".

Several large environmental disasters are noted to have "globalized" environmental protection efforts, in part because they affected many different countries or revealed the possibility of major environmental damage through similar operations in many different countries. Here the Torrey Canyon oil spill, Chernobyl, and other large-scale incidents can be tied to invigoration of the environmental

<sup>3</sup> Kocka, Jürgen. (2004). Civil Society from a Historical Perspective. <https://www.suz.uzh.ch/dam/jcr:d683ece8-4006-497d-a484-f90fdc0e484e/12%20Kocka%20Zivilgesellschaft.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Milder, Stephen. (2022). Re-Interpreting West Germany's Ecological Revolution: Environmental Politics, Grassroots Activism, and Democracy in the Long 1970s. *European history quarterly*, 52(3), 332-351.

movement. In particular, in Germany the anti-nuclear movement became important in the 1980s.

After World War 2, the US remained stationed in “Japan, the Philippines, and in Germany”, and that during the Cold War Period the Warsaw Pact increased US bases abroad, such that in 1982 there were 58 states with US forces present (“30 hosted US troops”) in comparison to 12 states hosting Soviet forces<sup>5</sup>. Another significant state that hosted forces was South Korea, and the “long-term development through changing sociopolitical and urban circumstances” South Korea experienced is a fundamental way to examine how grassroots groups affect politics, particularly in urban change (Kim 2017). This existing research outlines the transition from authoritarian “dark ages” of grassroots efforts to democratic transition in the late 80s and early 90s, followed by the solidification of democratic practices and institutions within South Korea.

Each SOFA has been modified by agreements of interpretations many times, and the official text of the agreements has changed in 1971, 1981, and 1993 for the German case and in 1991 and 2001 for the South Korea Case. In order to properly examine these changes, the next chapters outline what exactly Status of Forces Agreements entail, which countries the United States has formed them with, and how the texts themselves originated and were first negotiated.

## What Are Status of Forces Agreements?

Periodically the Congressional Research Service gathers and publishes a comprehensive list of all active Status of Forces Agreements that the US has signed and implemented into force<sup>6</sup>. There are no formal standards or requirements of Status of Forces Agreements, and no legislation requires them to include or not include specific items. SOFAs are flexible in their duration and scope, but are generally considered “stand-alone” documents concluded “via executive agreements”.

There are two major multilateral agreements concerned with Status of Forces Agreements: NATO and the Partnership for Peace. The NATO-SOFA currently has 26 member countries and is the only multilateral SOFA that was “concluded as part of a treaty” (negotiated and signed between 1950 and

1951). The Partnership for Peace consists of 24 countries who are not NATO members but have agreed to “bilateral cooperation” under the terms of the NATO SOFA to “increase stability, diminish threats to peace, and build strengthened security relationships”.

Of these members only the US-Japan and US-Korea SOFA agreements have come from the authority of ratified bilateral Mutual Defense Treaties (implemented into force in 1960 and 1967, respectively). A SOFA is **not** a Mutual Defense Treaty or Agreement, it is a supplementary agreement after such a treaty has been made or a stand-alone document. Due to this, SOFAs do not “authorize specific exercises, activities, or missions”, and are considered “peacetime” agreements. They merely outline the rights and privileges of personnel covered by the SOFA while in a “foreign jurisdiction” that detail how the host country’s domestic laws apply. Though the US exercises primary jurisdiction over most of its personnel for offenses committed while performing official duties, there have been cases of shared jurisdiction and many SOFAs outline the procedures upon which a country may waive its primary jurisdiction.

Bilateral SOFAs are constructed through the combined effort of the Department of State and the Department of Defense in the United States, culminating in an executive agreement when the need for a SOFA is determined, such as the case of Afghanistan in 2003.

It is important to note that many SOFA Agreements are relatively short, some as much as 1 page (and covering specific joint military exercises), whereas others such as the one with the Federal Republic of Germany exceed 200 pages. Among SOFAs, those that designate US personnel at the same status as administrative and technical staff of the US Embassy (defined by the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations: April 18th, 1961) virtually guarantee that in those countries, US personnel are “conferred immunity from criminal jurisdiction” while in the host country.

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<sup>5</sup> Hartov, Metter Prasse. (2003). NATO Status of Forces Agreement: Background and a Suggestion for the Scope of Application. *Baltic Defense Review* 10(2)

<sup>6</sup> Mason R. Chuck. (2012). Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA): What Is It, and How Has It Been Utilized? Congressional Research Service.

Below is a list of SOFA Agreements made shortly after the end of World War 2 and the related documents and timelines which are relevant to their creation:

administrative agreement”, bringing up legitimate questions as to the effectiveness of the framework. Significant to this research is Wennink’s citation of the ongoing uncovering of extensive pollution

Country	South Korea	Japan	The Philippines	Germany
SOFA Signing Date/Entry Into Force (EIC)	July 9th, 1966/February 9th, 1967; Amended in 1991, 2001 (Jan 18th/April 2nd)	January 19th, 1960/June 23rd, 1960	April 2nd, June 11th & 21st, 1993/June 21st, 1993; 1998 "Visiting" Agreement, Original SOFA Amended April 11th & 12th, 2006	August 3rd, 1959/July 1st, 1963
Related Agreements	Mutual Defense Treaty (Entry Into Force [EIC]: November 17th, 1954	Security Treaty & Administrative Agreement (EIF April 28th 1952), Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between the United States of America and Japan (EIF: June 23rd 1960, Amended December 26th, 1990). New Special Measures relating to cost signed 1991, 1995, 2000, 2006)	Agreement on Military Assistance (March 21st, 1947/March 21st, 1947), Exchange of notes at Manila (June 26th, 1953/July 5th, 1953), Mutual Defense Treaty (August 30, 1951/August 27th, 1952	Mutual Security Act (October 10th, 1951), Mutual Defense Assistance (June 30th, 1955/ December 27th, 1955)

Source: Library of Congress, Research Guide<sup>7</sup>

### Comparing NATO-Member Military Base Environmental Laws

Regulation of military bases and how they are complied with within each NATO member country depends on interpretation of clauses that have been subject to much debate and precedent since Status of Forces Agreements were implemented, and have been refined over time<sup>8</sup>. Published in 1990 this snapshot allows us a detailed view of how these regulations were prior to the 1993 revisions of the NATO-Germany SOFA and the 1991 US-Korea SOFA. The Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany had strict domestic environmental laws by 1990 that also applied to their military installations. In addition, these laws include NATO forces, but Wennink notes that these laws included many exemptions, and that despite the NATO-Germany SOFA having many environmental protections built in, the laws left “room for discretion and

related to military bases at that time and the political ramifications of increasing “public sensitivity and awareness” of the issue.

In 1990 over 300 contaminated sites were found in West Germany alone (25 requiring extensive, long-term operations for cleanup). This highlights that despite the 1963 Agreement to admit Germany to the NATO SOFA, the balance of interests from the perspective of environmental issues did not work out as hoped.

### Changes in Political Power, Activism, & the Environment: ROK

Critical data for analyzing trends in civil society participation can be found for both Germany and South Korea from Varieties of Democracy<sup>9</sup>, which has collected resources on the history of democracy globally and regularly consults experts to assess

<sup>7</sup> Library of Congress. Research Guides: Finding Government Documents: Treaties. Treaties - Finding Government Documents. Accessed December 2022. <https://guides.loc.gov/finding-government-documents/treaties>.

<sup>8</sup> Wennink, Karel. (1990) The application of environmental laws to NATO bases. [Washington, D.C.: Law Library of Congress, 1990] Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2019668858/>.

<sup>9</sup> Andersson, Frida, and Valeriya Mechkova. (2016). Varieties of Democracy - South Korea Country Brief [2016]. [https://v-dem.net/media/publications/country\\_brief\\_south\\_korea.pdf](https://v-dem.net/media/publications/country_brief_south_korea.pdf)

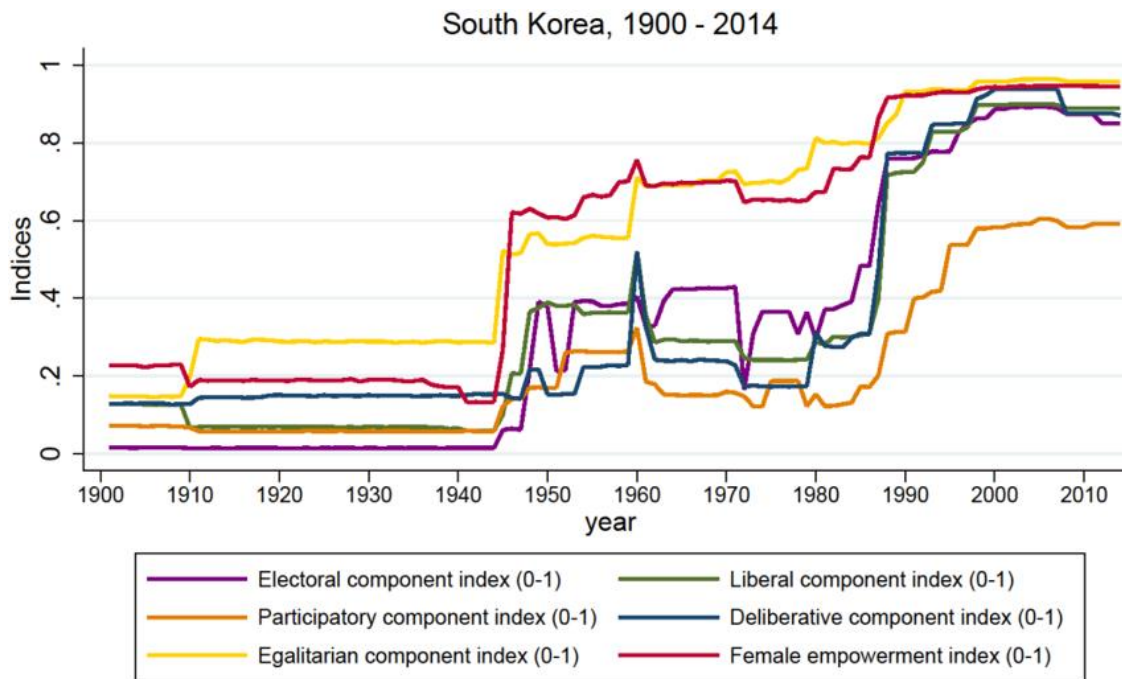


Figure 4-1 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

levels of democracy across the globe each year. In Figure 4-1 the trends in democratic participation, civil society participation, and political constraints, (among other variables) is shown:

one follows South Korea’s history to explain the relationships between civil society, democratization movements, and these trends over time.

Above is a clear timeline from the early years of Japanese occupation, the liberation at the end of World War 2, and then the decades prior to and after democratization in 1987. Figure 4-1 lists many variables, but of particular concern here are the orange and purple lines, participatory and electoral components respectively. Alongside this, Figure 4-2

Figure 4-2 shows electoral democracy components, and the authors describe the early period of South Korea democracy (the 1950s and 1960s) as “plagued by registration fraud, systematic irregularities, government intimidation of the opposition, vote buying, and election violence” and that “parties, including parties of the opposition, were allowed to organize and to participate in elections to a larger

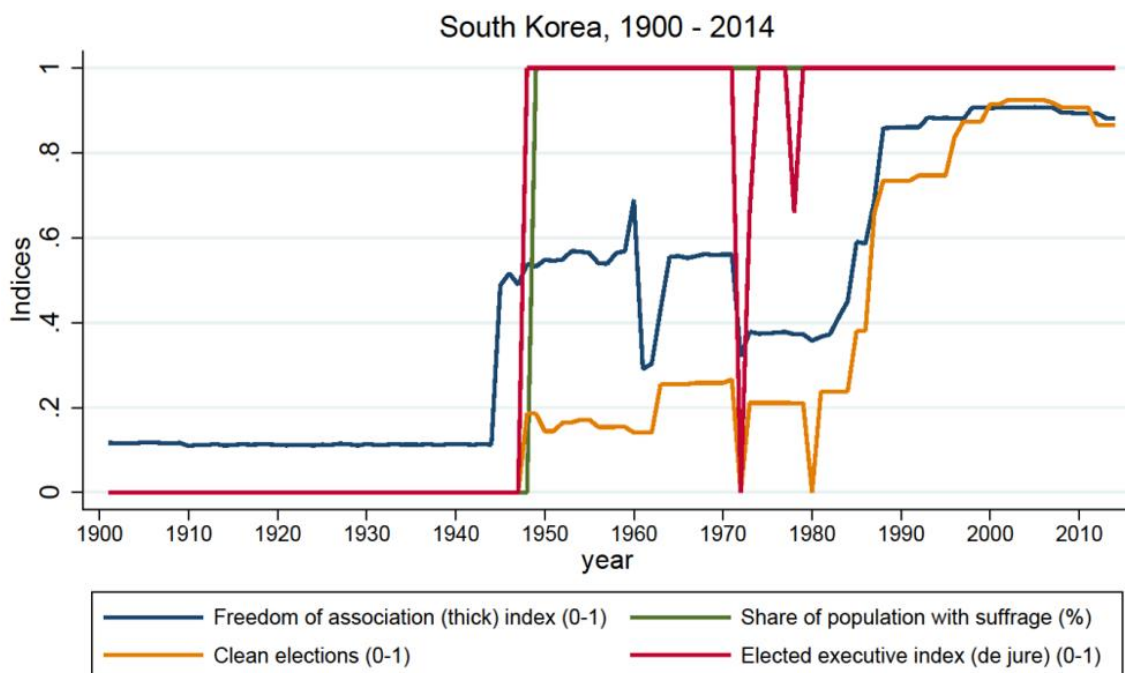


Figure 4-2 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

extent than before. This period between 1948 and 1960 saw a relative increase in the ability of civil society organizations to organize and operate more freely within South Korea (in particular, following the Korean War period of 1950 to 1953).

By 1960 claims of presidential election corruption led to protests and the April Revolution, which drove Syngman Rhee into exile and gave way to the Second Republic. This heavily delayed negotiations of the SOFA and a military coup on May 16th, 1961 saw military rule through 1963, when the Third Republic began under President Park. Park would go on to suspend the constitution and the National Assembly after losing seats in the 1971 election, beginning a very restrictive period in regards to political and civil rights and strong state involvement in the development of industry (and as a byproduct, pollution).

President Park would be in power through 1979, and introduced 5-year economic plans directed at exporting, with growth first, unification second as a tagline of policy. Rather than partner with civil society, Park engaged with what would later become Chaebol groups, for what could be deemed an older-style public private partnership. Loans from the US and Japan helped expedite this process alongside the 1965 Korean Normalization of relations with Japan (한국과 일본 양국의 일반적 국교관계 규정). The constitution was amended in 1969 to allow Park a third term despite protests, and he was elected over Kim Dae-Jung, but after his party lost the majority in the 1971 elections in Parliament, he declared martial law.

From 1972 to 1979 the Yushin Constitution controlled the judicial and legislative bodies, indirectly elected the president, and extended the presidential term to

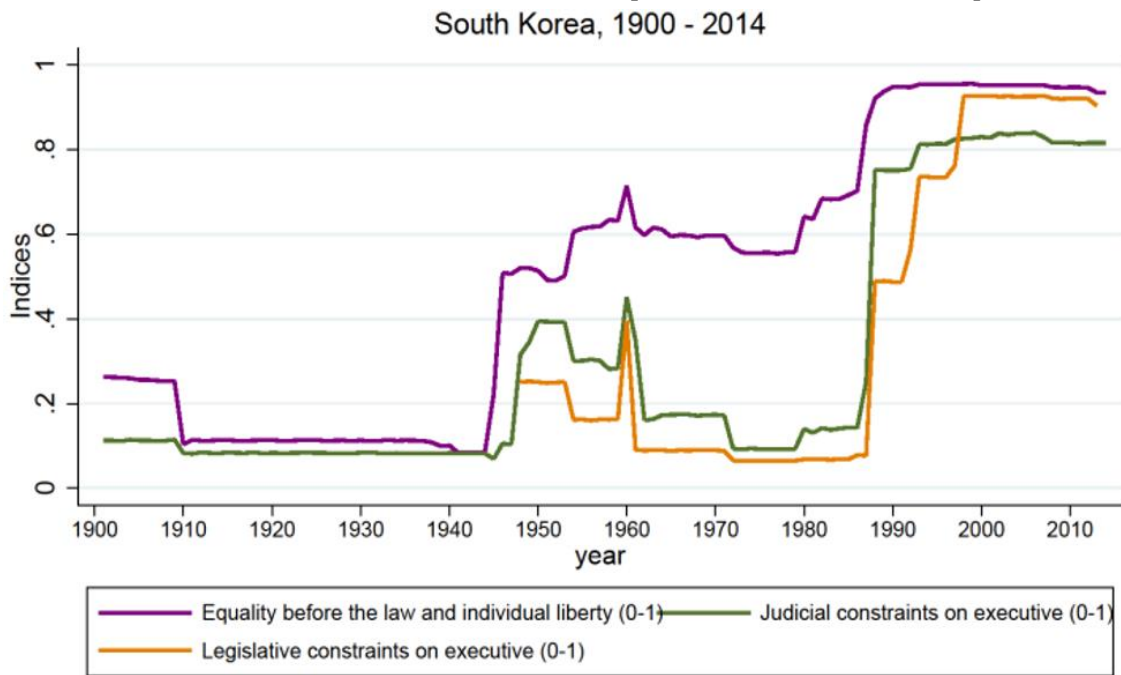


Figure 4-3 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

In Figure 4-3 Liberal Democracy is upheld through “equality before the law and individual liberty”, legislative constraints on the executive, and “judicial” constraints to the executive. Though these indicators showed growth in 1960, they were quickly diminished with the military rule imposed in 1961. It is also evident from these numbers that judicial constraint and accountability came at the advent of democracy in 1987, spurred by the June Democracy Movement and the building wave of protests during that decade.

6 years. Control of education came under direct state control, shifting the dynamic of the Ministry of Education. Heavy chemical industries developed in the 1970s and Park’s government arrested student protestors, particularly in 1974 and 1975. Park was assassinated in 1979, and after less than a week Chun Doo Hwan’s military coup occurred December 12th, 1979.

Under martial law the Chun regime suppressed the protests, including the incidents that became the Gwangju Massacre in 1980, with an estimated 200 casualties and in excess of 800 injuries resulting. The



5th Republic began during this time and changes included expanding the presidency to 7 years but limiting it to one term. The 1985 elections saw the military government losing seats and despite internationally improving relations and exchanges with North Korea, the death of a Seoul National University Student under police custody in January 1987 sparked public outrage.

President Chun attempted to protect the military government constitution, but this emboldened opposition. The June protests of 1987, similar to president Park's situation, led to deployment of troops that could have suppressed protests, but ultimately did not<sup>10</sup>. Three reasons are proposed.

First, the Seoul 1988 Olympics and resulting international attention South Korea would receive could be destroyed by violence one year before they occurred. Alongside this, Roh Tae Woo (who had campaigned for the IOC to award Seoul the Olympics) was a preferred and supportive successor who had a high likelihood of winning due to splintered support in opposition parties.

Second, the "unity" of various protesting groups was at a much higher level, with common organizations present in more cities. The economic growth also gave more room and time for organizers to work and establish deeper roots in more communities. They had also learned from organizing mistakes made during the 1979 protests.

Third, President Carter's administration was hesitant to promote democracy (focusing on anti-torture and unjust imprisonments instead), whereas Reagan era politics, though initially similar and choosing to simply support anti-communist regimes, later began to favor democratic transitions. President Chun during Reagan's early time had received support "without hesitation", and during 1987 also received word from Reagan seeking a peaceful resolution to the protests.

This time period is marked by notable student protests throughout. After the Gwangju Massacre, Chun's solidification of control did lead to further economic growth, but the 1980 suppression tactics, shutting down of universities, and the tens of thousands of student protesters did not suddenly

disappear from the public memory, though the state did exert control over the media as well.

In 1986 after more protests, a special committee was formed to advise on revisions to the constitution, and when Chun suspended this in favor of an electoral college vote for president in April of 1987, citizens became angry, and were incited by the aforementioned death of the Seoul National University student on May 18th (a day not insignificant, given it was the date of the 1980 Gwangju Massacre).

Finally, on June 10th, Roh Tae Woo was announced as the party's candidate, but mass protests around the country saw direct conflicts between police and citizens, and Roh announced their acceding to protestor demands on the 29th of June (10 days after receiving the communique from Reagan). Roh won the presidency with 35% of the votes (Kim Young Sam had 28 percent, Kim Dae Jung 27%), and though initially accusations of corruption were brought up, they were withdrawn.

Kim Young Sam teamed up with Roh to win the 1992 election, and in 1996 Chun and Roh were convicted of "treason and mutiny", though they were pardoned by Kim Dae Jung, who won the 1997 election. The 1990s saw the first signs of truly fair elections in South Korea. From the 1948 US-supervised elections to this point authoritarian rule had been a major issue.

By observing actions such as Park's banning of political parties in 1972, civil society participation trends can be seen in line with the following data (see Figure 4-4).

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<sup>10</sup> Adesnik A. David, Kim Sunhyuk. (2008). *If At First You Don't Succeed: The Puzzle of South Korea's Democratic Transition*. Center on Development and the Rule of Law.

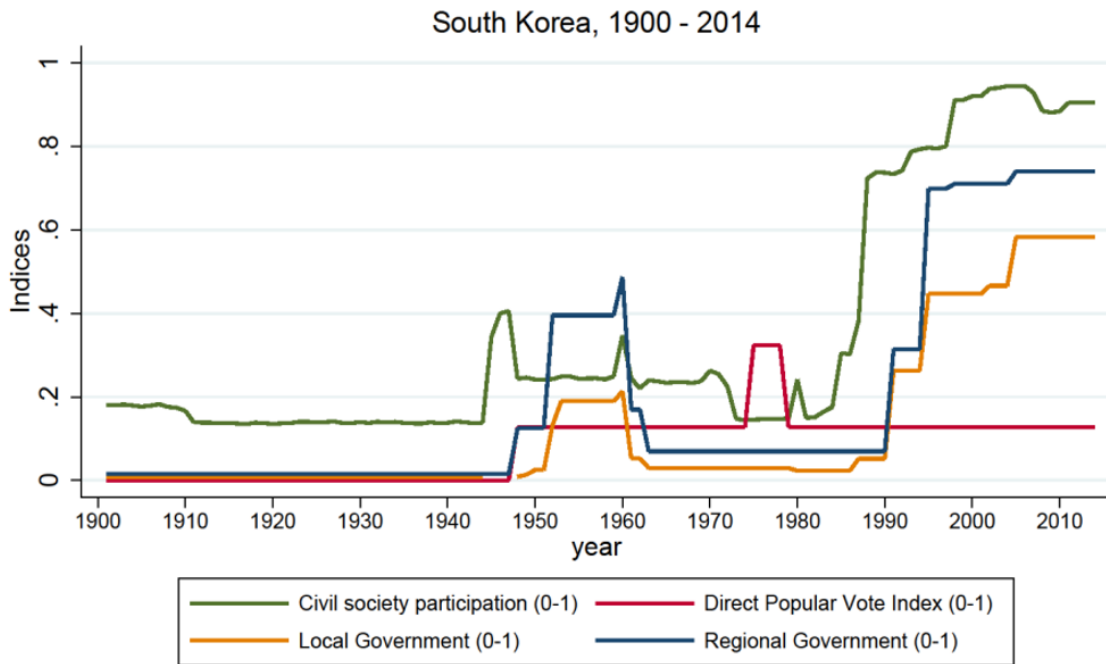


Figure 4-3 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

It is notable that civil society participation is relatively low through the Japanese colonial period, but then sees significant growth from the end of World War 2 until the Korean War, and then briefly after Rhee is ousted from the presidency, before nosediving in 1972. After Park's assassination, there is a brief uptick before Chun's solidification of power, but student protests and civil society groups formations in the 1980s show a continuous trend upwards in the 1980s, and civil liberties and civic participation really soar after democratization in 1987.

Adesnik and Kim note that it was South Korea's substantial economic growth through the 1960s and 1970s that led to a large middle class that became very committed to civil society participation and that had the education and capital to allow participation in protests over an extended period of a few decades. This meant that protests in the 1980s were at a considerable advantage to those in the 1970s or earlier as growth was relatively continuous.

In regards to the economy, they also note that recovery from the oil shock of 1979 saw Korean economic growth in the double digits again by 1983 (after having contracted 4.8 percent during Park's last year). Chun had enacted laws to limit "freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and labor rights", among others. However, as things cooled and the economy grew, Reagan visited in November of 1983, Chun

pardoned many political prisoners, allowed more political activity, and unbanned over 1000 students who had been expelled from their universities for protesting.

Still 1985 was important because Chun's party had designed the election in a way that was in name proportional representation, but in practice gave a large chunk of the seats to whichever party gained a "plurality", even if the overall percentage of victory was not high. Chun's DJP party gained 35 percent of the vote over the NKDP's 29 percent (Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung's party), and voter turnout was recorded at nearly 85 percent. To get the presidential election to be by popular vote, the NKDP acquired 10 million signatures (at a time when the electorate "consisted of only 20 million voters"), so Chun's regime responded with a "barrage of raids and arrests" to disrupt the process.

The situation prior to democratization, and the period of unification that followed of civil society and political society has been described as not "institutionalized" through channels or organizations, but held together by "individual connections and commitments"<sup>11</sup>. Student groups and labor unions did not have direct connections to the NDP or other political units. Churches did offer much support to these student and labor groups however, the lack of political integration led to limits

<sup>11</sup> Kim, SunHyuk. (2000). *The Politics Of Democratization In Korea*. University of Pittsburgh Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5hjt8k>.



in ability to coordinate opposition to Chun or Roh in the 1987 elections.

## The 1991 & 2001 Status of Forces Revision

The 2001 SOFA revision adjusted the criminal jurisdiction clauses of the original SOFA and also added in considerations for environmental provisions. These changes, however, do not amount to an obligation to return facilities to a restored state. Examining the “Return of Facilities” clause in Article 4, the agreement states that the US is not “obliged when it returns facilities and areas to the Government of the Republic of Korea on the expiration of this Agreement or at an earlier date, to restore the facilities and areas to the condition in which they were at the time they became available to the United States armed forces, or to compensate the Government of the Republic of Korea in lieu of such restoration<sup>12</sup>.

As of 2021 it is noted that South Korea had “at least \$190 million cleaning up 24 military sites Washington returned”<sup>13</sup> and that even into 2022 discussions were underway but “no meaningful progress has been made so far”<sup>14</sup>. Though cost estimates vary, some figures for total restoration range up to \$915 million USD<sup>15</sup>. Article 4 of the 2001 SOFA states that the “Government of the Republic of Korea is not obliged to make any compensation to the Government of the United States for any improvements made in facilities and areas or for the buildings and structures left thereon on the expiration of this Agreement or the earlier return of the facilities and areas”. Though it is difficult to assess the value of any improvements that have been made to the area, it is expected the cleanup costs will far exceed them, and that the development of the area into residential and Central-Park-like projects will require the clearing of most remaining buildings and infrastructure.

Additionally, any “facilities erected or constructed by or on behalf of the United States at its expense and all equipment, material and supplies brought into or procured in the Republic of Korea by or on behalf of the United States in connection with the construction, development, operation, maintenance, safeguarding and control of the facilities and areas will remain the

property of the United States Government and may be removed from the Republic of Korea”. This does not necessarily imply that South Korea will be left with nothing of value on returned military bases, but the US does reserve the right to remove valuable assets under this clause.

The United States under Article 5 bears the costs for expenditures “incident to the maintenance of the United States armed forces in the Republic of Korea, except [...] all facilities and areas and rights of way, including facilities and areas jointly used, such as those at airfields and ports as provided in Articles 2 and 3”.

The 2001 SOFA also includes Special Understandings on Environmental Protection, which states that “Recognizing the importance of environmental protection, including the prevention of pollution on facilities and areas granted to the United States Armed Forces in Korea under the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953 and the Republic of Korea-United States Status of Forces Agreement and in the communities adjacent to such facilities and areas, The Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States, consistent with their policies, have reached the following understandings on governing standards, information sharing and access, environmental performance, and environmental consultation”.

This quote, taken straight from the agreement, outlines a “periodic review and update of the Environmental Governing Standards (EGS)”, with reference to “more protective standards from relevant United States standards and policy and Republic of Korea laws and regulations as generally enforced and applied within the Republic of Korea, without prejudice to the United States Forces Korea, by undertaking biennial review of the EGS for the purpose of accommodating new rules and standards”.

This update further states that “if more protective rules and standards come into effect between reviews, the Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States will promptly discuss updating the EGS”. Importantly, the

<sup>12</sup> The latest US-South Korea Status of Forces Agreement was signed January 18th, but went into effect April 2nd, 2001.

<sup>13</sup> Choi Si-Young, “Clean-up cost dispute delays US base move”, March 28th, 2022. <https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210801000220>

<sup>14</sup> Kang Yeon-ju, Yi Hong-geun, “Camp Kim Near Yongsan Park Buried in Carcinogens up to 9 Meters Deep”, May 16th, 2022.

[http://english.khan.co.kr/khan\\_art\\_view.html?artid=202205161729407&code=940100](http://english.khan.co.kr/khan_art_view.html?artid=202205161729407&code=940100)

<sup>15</sup> Kang Seung-woo, “Environmental cleanup costs weigh on Korea”, December 14th, 2020.

[https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/07/205\\_300804.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/07/205_300804.html)

agreement states that “Appropriate access to facilities and areas will be provided in accordance with procedures to be established by the Joint Committee”, and that “Government of the Republic of Korea and the Government of the United States will continue to discuss, on a regular basis, environmental issues related to defense activities in the Republic of Korea under the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953” while granting Korean officials access to “facilities and areas, and joint surveys, monitoring, and post-incident evaluations”.

Finally, the 2001 SOFA covers environmental performance, wherein both governments will consult on “any risks posed by environmental contamination on United States Forces Korea facilities and areas, or in the communities adjacent to such facilities and areas”, where the US government will conduct “periodic environmental performance assessments that examine, identify, and evaluate the environmental aspects of United States Forces Korea operations in order to minimize adverse environmental effects; to plan, program, and budget for these requirements accordingly; to promptly undertake to remedy contamination caused by United States Armed Forces in Korea that poses a known, imminent and substantial endangerment to human health; and to consider additional remedial measures required to protect human health”.

The standard of “known, imminent and substantial endangerment to human health” is a point of contention in continued calls for revision of the SOFA, as imminent threats do not often cover health threats that are more long-term in nature, such as the buildup within the human body of chemicals that may increase cancer risks or other degenerative diseases. The SOFA renegotiation talks began as early as November 1995, and while the alliance was “never at serious risk” during the revisions, anti-American sentiment and protests did cause concern for continued support of US operations<sup>16</sup>.

The CSIS notes in their report that growing Korean civic group attention during the years after the 1991 revision was one driving force. Accusations of formaldehyde waste disposal in the Han River and aviation fuel leaks in Wonju tested civic group patience with the government’s response to the US forces. Here it is noted that the US diplomatic

channels during this negotiation were hesitant to set a precedent for other SOFAs worldwide.

Allegations of the Nogun-ri incident at the beginning of the Korean War, wherein US soldiers “deliberately massacred Korean civilians” drew anti-US sentiments in 1999 from various different groups within civil society and Korean politics. Some of these groups sought expulsion of the US from South Korea. These groups did not make any serious progress on that front, but did worry that US presence was a roadblock to better relations with North Korea in 2000, with polling finding “78 percent of Koreans” thought the SOFA required revisions. Still, roughly 73 percent still supported US presence in South Korea.

The negotiations in 2000 were substantial in that the US delegation extended their stay over 12 days beyond the original schedule and the South Korean government provided all “seven SOFA-concerned ministries at the subcommittee level” support to get a major revision passed. This occurred on December 28th, 2000, and was entered into force April 2nd, 2001. This final version included a provision stating that “U.S. forces in Korea will respect Korean environmental regulations” with the details “tasked to a SOFA subcommittee within the US-ROK Joint Committee”. This is the same committee as described in the next section.

## **Current Status of the US-Korea Joint Committee**

The USFK has published the current versus on the status of the Joint Committee, Special Joint Committee, Subcommittees, Ad Hoc Subcommittees, and Joint Working Groups under the US-Korea SOFA. The Special Subcommittee is responsible for “consulting on SOFA affairs, significant incidents of ROK public concern related to USFK”, and “Providing guidance for actions regarding environmental issues related to camp returns referred to it by the Environmental Subcommittee in accordance with the Joint Environmental Assessment Procedure (JEAP)”.

The Environmental Subcommittee is composed of a US Chairperson (USFK Command Engineer) and a Korean Chairperson (from the Ministry of Environment, Soil & Groundwater Management Division) and is responsible for “recommendations to

<sup>16</sup> CSIS. (2001). Path to an Agreement: The U.S.–Republic of Korea Status of Forces Agreement Revision Process. Center for Strategic and International

Studies. [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy\\_files/files/media/csis/pubs/pathtoanagreement.pdf](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/media/csis/pubs/pathtoanagreement.pdf).

the Joint Committee on matters of mutual environmental concern pertaining to public health and sanitation; to study issues and make recommendations to the Joint Committee concerning environmental matters involving the US armed forces in Korea”.

In 2011 the soon-to-be assistant secretary of defense Mark W. Lippert (later 2014 to 2017 Ambassador to South Korea) noted that Washington wanted “continued flexibility” and that “The U.S.-ROK SOFA is a “living document” that is constantly reviewed and kept current and fresh through the work of the Joint Committee, Special Joint Committee”, among some other 20 subcommittees<sup>17</sup>. At that time Korea’s Foreign Minister Kim Sung-Hwan also discussed pushing for revision primarily if it was difficult to resolve police custody, rather than in terms of any environmental provisions. Greater attention at the time was given to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and development by North Korea.

For reference, above Table 4-1 summarizes the events discussed so far in South Korea after World War 2 but prior to the end of the Cold War.

### Changes in Political Power, Activism, & The Environment in the Federal Republic of Germany

Gains in different dimensions of democracy after the end of World War 1 were short lived, as the Nazi rise to power and nullification of many civil liberties in

Table 4-1	
Year	Contemporary South Korean Society: A Critical Perspective
1949	Basic Education Law Passed
1960	Decades of Light Chemical Industries built and operated near cities/along coasts
1960	Male Literacy Rates hit 85% (Female Literacy rates follow in 1966)
1963	Medical Insurance Law and Pollution Prevention Law (lacking enforcement mechanism, company compensation to victims of pollution)
1969	Farmers begin to demand compensation for loss of production via industrial pollution
1970	Decades of Heavy Chemical Industries prevail (petrochemicals, shipbuilding, electronics, steel)
1971	Farmers establish pollution countermeasure committee
1973	Administrative Guidelines for a Minimum Wage (followed by 1974 Presidential Emergency Decree for unpaid wages)
1978	Heavy Chemical Industry starts in <u>Qnsan</u> (12 major factories)
1978	Pollution Prevention Law (requiring EIAs)
1979	Start of 7 years period with over 350 separate protests/demonstrations in Ulsan
1982	KRIPP Established (Split into the Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Association (KAPMA) in 1988, then in 1993 became the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM))
1985	First major reporting of Ulsan pollution in <u>Hankook Ilbo</u> (via groups like KRIPP - Korean Environmental Agency denies connection between chemical industry and citizen health)
1985	Relocation of Ulsan and <u>Qsan</u> pollution victims by government (13,000 people, 16 villages; first such case)
1986	Minimum Wage Law (stronger enforcement mechanism than previous efforts)
1987	Democratization; protests to state policy (rather than state power)
1988	Illegal Nuclear waste dump in Gori (citizen protests/sit in at KEPCO-Seoul)
1988	Seoul Summer Olympics
1988	Health/Medical Organizations and KAPMA protest nuclear sites
1989	<u>Yeongdeok, Yeonggwang</u> Anti-Nuclear movement ( <u>Anmyeon</u> in 1990)
1989	Mass participation and militant protests remove government plans for nuclear site in <u>Yeongdeok</u>

1933 can be clearly seen as an attempt to consolidate power. The mechanisms of democracy that were used to achieve party power were quickly discarded, and Figure 4-5 shows this dramatic transition.

Nearly every indicator drops off in 1933, and compilations of data from this time demonstrate the authoritarian nature of the regime. It is noted that there were no “autonomous institutions” in Germany during this time, so objectively assessing the data is difficult. Regardless, massive human rights violations and the well recorded genocide of this era do not require extensive elaboration in regards to environmental data.

<sup>17</sup>The Korea Times, “No need for revising SOFA with Korea: Lippert”, November 18th, 2011. [https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/03/113\\_99027.html](https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2022/03/113_99027.html)

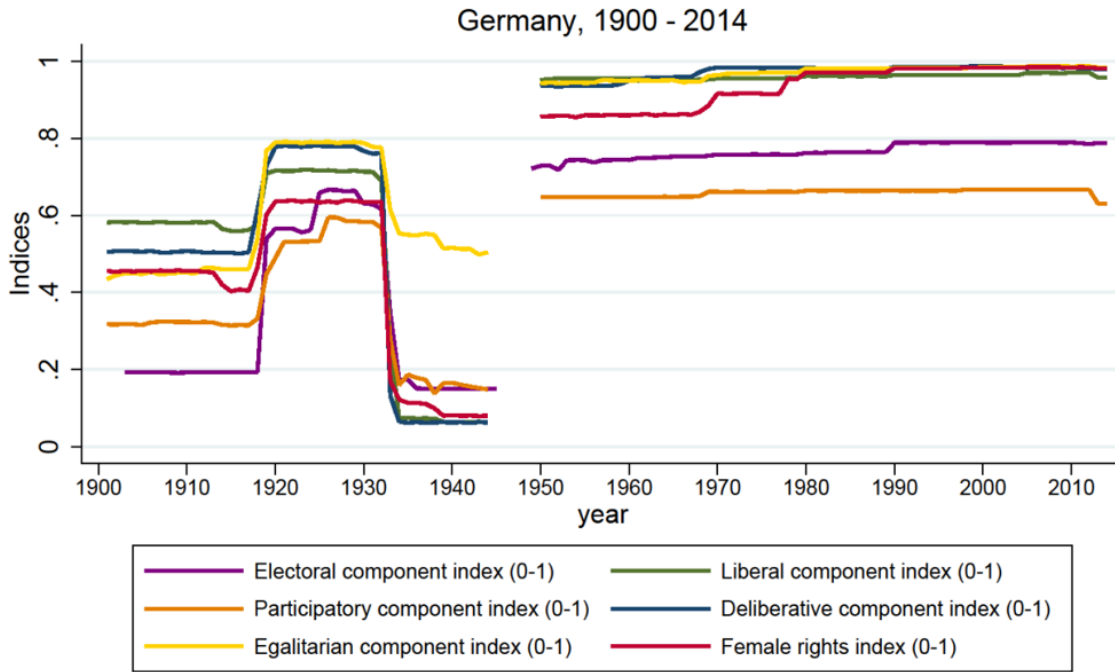


Figure 4-5 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

Scholarship exists on the development of environmental policy during the Nazi regime, but the totalitarian nature of the regime and lack of major capital invested in conservation efforts or anti-pollution efforts, in particular when Germany was making chemical weapons and burning large swaths of the Jewish population to death, indicate negative trends for the environment. Again, the commitment of the Federal Republic of Germany to suffrage and civic participation is immediately apparent. As the country was handed over from the interim military government, the trends for all measures are high and

either stay consistent or trend almost exclusively upwards from 1949 onwards, as shown in Figure 4-6:

The electoral democracy component demonstrates the role of the citizenry in freedom of association in particular. Relatively high levels before Nazi rule, and even higher levels after show an extremely open environment for collaboration within Germany in the post-World War 2 era. Of interest, the authors note that “unification of Eastern and Western Germany in 1990” barely affected the scoring of these aspects, with a slight increase in freedom of association after

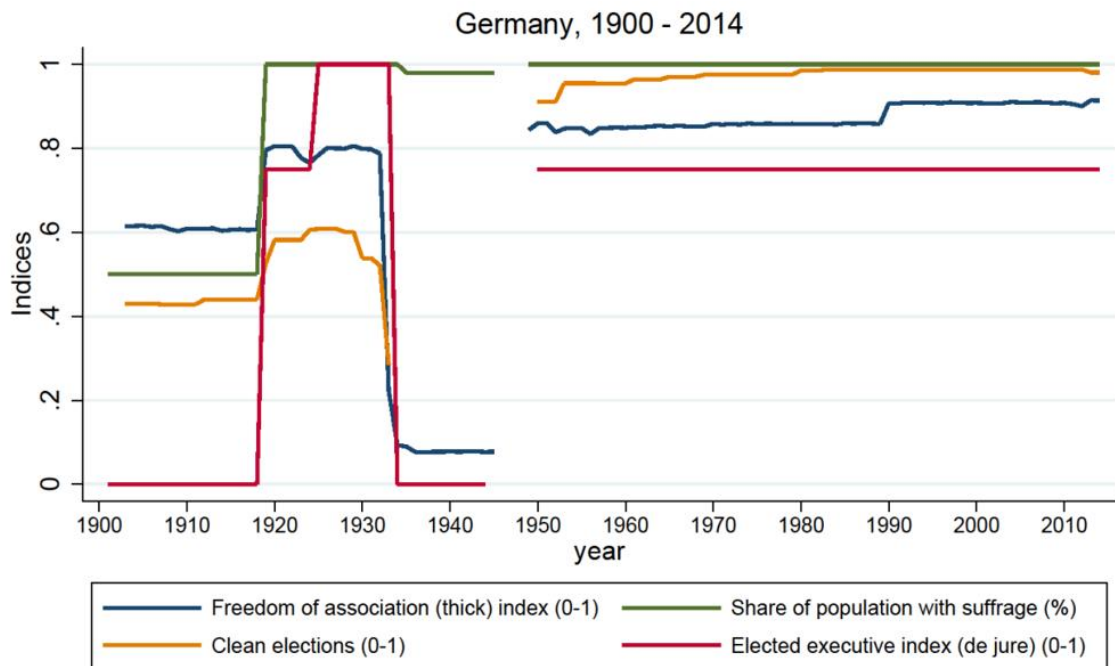


Figure 4-6 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

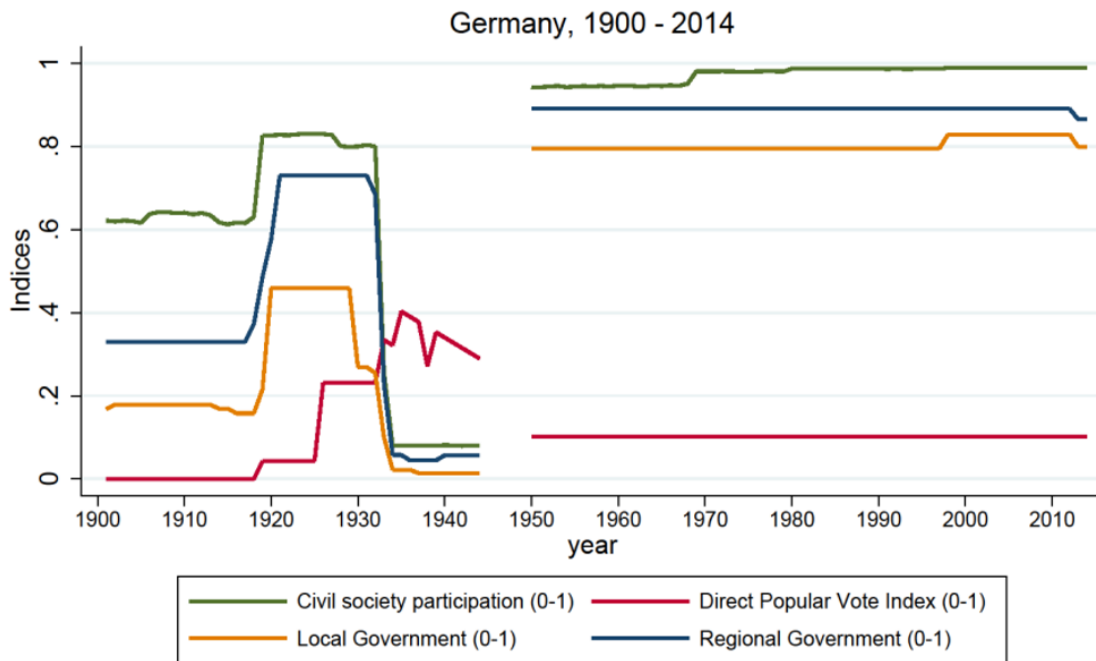


Figure 4-7 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

unification. As noted earlier, in 1933 “civil rights” were replaced by “totalitarian repression” via the Enabling Act of March 1933, but in 1949 the “Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany” was enacted, reestablishing democracy and civil society participation, as well as the building the structure of the federal government itself. In Figure 4-7 above, the trends in civil society participation show little change after World War 2.

The point that sticks out the most in this data is the incredibly consistent and high levels of civic society participation, particularly in local governance, but at

the same time the lack of any direct popular vote after World War 2. While it is true that the popular vote installed the Nazi regime in the first place, this is an interesting facet to note in this data. Beyond that, Figure 4-8 encapsulates the tolerance and acceptance of civil society protest by the government, shown below:

The “Range of consultation” saw major growth after democratization, whereas prior to this “consultation included only groups loyal to the ruling elite”. This trend was improved during periods of democratization, and “began to include a select range

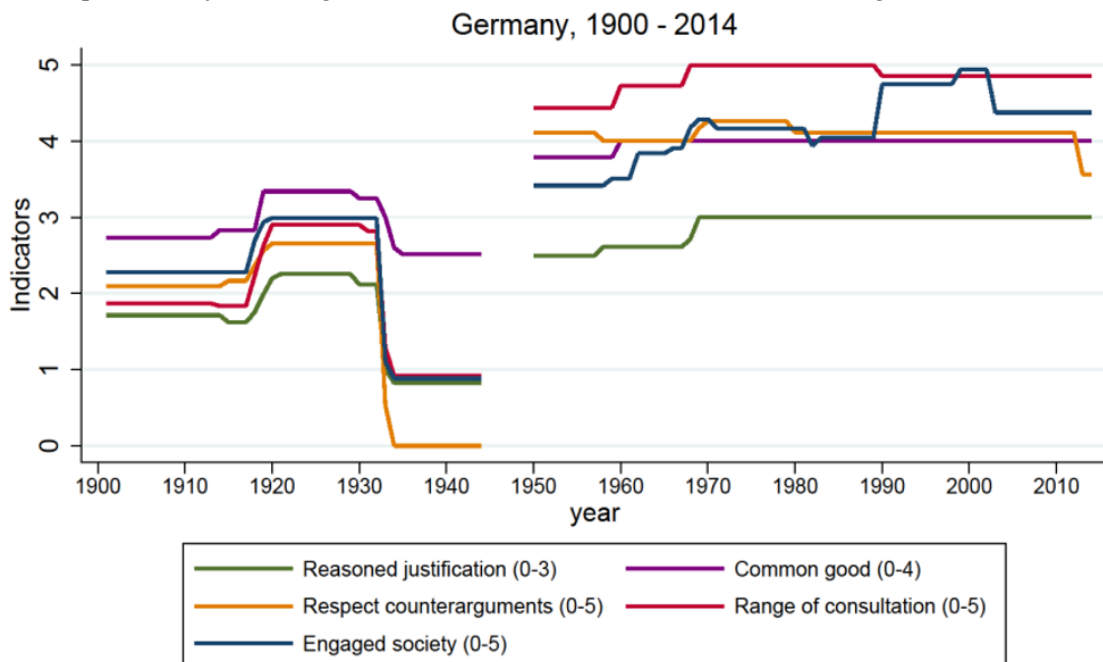


Figure 4-8 Source: *Varieties of Democracy* (2016) – South Korea Country Brief

of society, labor and business representatives". Engaged society as a metric also saw increases as the middle class grew and in particular around the time of Chernobyl and other anti-nuclear protests during the 1980s. With this in perspective, the Status of Forces agreements and their environmentally relevant section are noted and analyzed in the next section.

### **The 1971 US-Germany SOFA Revision**

Examination of the 1971 October 1st revision of the Status of Forces Agreement reveals exactly zero changes in terms of environmental provisions or even compensation clauses for unintentional damage to third parties. This is not unexpected, as civil society in Germany still was not fully developed, and the mid-1970s would see the first major domestic laws passed that began to regulate the environment more stringently.

### **The 1981 US-Germany SOFA Revision**

The May 18th, 1981 revision also contains virtually zero mention of environmental concerns or is only a few paragraphs long, covering the German civilian components of the armed forces. Though several environmental laws have been passed by 1981 and the movement is getting strong, the 1979 oil shock crisis and lowering support of the political party in power is still a few years away from the revival of the environmental movement by the new conservative government of the 1980s.

### **The 1993 US-Germany SOFA Revision**

The 1993 revision of the SOFA occurred after reunification with East Germany, which itself had a significant amount of environmental damage amassed since the beginning of the Cold War. This SOFA revision was the most significant, requiring continued justification for forces to occupy territory, and for these forces to use Environmental Impact Assessments consistent with German law, while also cleaning up or compensating for the cleanup of environmental damage caused by the normal operations of any occupied land, airspace, or bodies of water.

The specific clauses of the 1993 SOFA extend beyond 200 pages and can be analyzed for each component. While this may help one ascertain the agreement better, the above passages are the relevant ones for

the environmental analysis. Of direct reference are article 49 ("authorities of the force or of the civilian component shall respect German building and environmental regulations" – cooperation with German authorities and permission acquisition), article 53 ("environmental protection, including any identification and evaluation of sites rendered hazardous by soil contamination"), and article 54A ("sending States recognize and acknowledge the importance of environmental protection in the context of all the activities of their forces within the Federal Republic" and shall "examine as early as possible the environmental compatibility of all projects. In this context they shall identify, analyze and evaluate potential effects of environmentally significant projects on persons, animals, plants, soil, water, air, climate and landscape, including interactions among them, as well as on cultural and other property. The objective of the examination shall be to avoid environmental burdens and, where detrimental effects are unavoidable, to offset them by taking appropriate restorative or balancing measures. In this connection, the authorities of a force and of a civilian component may call upon the assistance of German civil and military authorities").

Article 54B states that "only fuels, lubricants and additives that are low-pollutant in accordance with German environmental regulations are used in the operation of aircraft, vessels and motor vehicles, insofar as such use is compatible with the technical requirements of such aircraft, vessels and motor vehicles", and article 63 states that a "force or a civilian component shall in accordance with this paragraph bear costs arising in connection with the assessment, evaluation and remedying of hazardous substance contamination caused by it and that exceeds then-applicable legal standards".

Last, but most importantly, Article 63 states "A force or a civilian component shall in accordance with this paragraph bear costs arising in connection with the assessment, evaluation and remedying of hazardous substance contamination caused by it and that exceeds then-applicable legal standards. These costs shall be determined pursuant to German law as applied in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 53 or, where applicable, in accordance with Articles 41 or 52. The authorities of the force or of the civilian component shall pay these costs as expeditiously as feasible consistent with the availability of funds and the fiscal procedures of the Government of the sending State", directly addressing the environmental degradation compensation issue,



One final note is that the 1993 revision adds Article 80A, which states that should differences arise “relating to the interpretation or application of the present Agreement”, that directly concerned parties should settle these differences by “consultations at the lowest appropriate level”.

## Connecting Activism to Policy Germany

### Germany

Germany’s environmental civil society development during the 70s and 80s was successful in integrating itself into local, regional, and national politics. It is noted that by the late 80s many believed that the institutionalization of Environmental Movement Organizations (EMOs) in Germany saw a shift from the activist nature of these groups towards less radical wide-spread, but more docile membership<sup>18</sup>. In Germany the states retain powers not explicitly granted to the federal government<sup>20</sup>. The early 1970s saw federal amendment of the constitution and law regulations become the dominant environmental regulating action, with state laws modeled after them.

In particular, the integration of the “militant environmental movement” that had developed in Germany was largely successful, diverting these efforts into “institutional dispute resolution channels” that created legal precedent but also vastly increased the number of cases going to the judiciary. As a result, cooperation between environmental organizations, the authorities, and enterprises evolved to avoid this slow and costly process.

In addition, the Green movement drew from the women’s movement, the anti-nuclear movement, New Left, and peace movements to channel these civic organizations into a political party with institutional power. As the more radical elements of the Green Party separated into other smaller groups, the Green Party grew in membership on the basis of people unsatisfied with “economic growth” which “systemically neglected non-monetary values and social minorities”. Private and public groups exposed

scandals repeatedly to the media, exhibiting the power freedom of civil society expression can have on public opinion and pressure on political systems.

Surveys in both West and East Germany in 1993 demonstrated that jobs, abuse of asylum laws, and environmental protection all ranked “very important” (with 53% of West Germans believing the environment was “bad or very bad”, though this number was 73% in East Germany). Environmental civil organizations by 1991 were already acting as consultants in commercial work (advising public authorities and private businesses).

Weidner notes that though environmental organizations were “often excluded” in the 1970s from parliamentary meetings, but starting from 1986 with the reorganization of environmental responsibilities there has been a greater effort at coordination between these groups and the government.

The 1960s to 1990s saw a significant rise in the number of protests, compositions of groups, and general levels of environmental activity from the anti-nuclear activists<sup>21</sup>. Figure 4-10 shows the dramatic increase of civil society membership for several prominent groups over time:

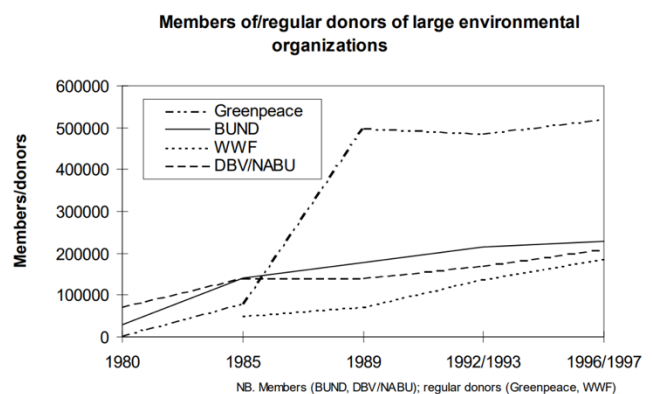


Figure 4-10 Source: *The German Environmental Movement at a Crossroads? Environmental Politics*

All group membership and donations increased to some degree over the 1980s, and in particular Greenpeace, which organized and funded many

<sup>18</sup> Rootes, Christopher A. (1999). The transformation of environmental activism: Activists, organizations and policy-making. *The European Journal of Social Science Research* 155-173.

<sup>19</sup> *The transformation of environmental activism*, and in particular the environment movement organizations has spurred some more radical activists to break from environmental civil society groups as the entrench and integrate into political and governmental systems.

<sup>20</sup> Weidner, Helmut. (1995). 25 years of modern environmental policy in Germany. *treading a well-worn path to the top of the international field.* <https://www.econstor.eu/obitstream/10419/48980/1/189347120.pdf>.

The difference between an individual’s “right” to a sound environment, versus a state goal or state duty to protect the environment is particularly important given the constitution’s lack of any mention of environmental protection during the developmental periods.

<sup>21</sup> Rucht, Dieter, and Jochen Roose. (1999). *The German Environmental Movement at a Crossroads? Environmental Politics* 8(1), 59–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09644019908414438>.



protests and educational movements during this time. The actions of civil society groups are further broken down in Table 4-4:

Types of action of environmental and ANTI-NUCLEAR PROTESTS IN DIFFERENT PERIODS (percentages)

	1970-79		1980-89		1990-94		1995-1997/1	
	Envir.	Anti-nuc.	Envir.	Anti-nuc.	Envir.	Anti-nuc.	Envir.	Anti-nuc.
Appeals/procedural	63.6	32.7	32.9	16.2	31.9	15.0	36.1	14.7
Demonstrative	29.5	47.9	44.9	51.6	49.7	45.0	34.3	43.7
Confrontational	6.8	17.0	17.4	20.6	18.1	36.3	16.6	24.9
Violent	0.0	2.4	4.8	11.5	0.9	3.8	13.0	16.7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Degree of radicalism (range 1-4)	1.43	1.90	1.94	2.27	1.88	2.29	2.07	2.44
N	44	165	207	339	116	80	169	245

Source: Same as Figure 4-10

The anti-nuclear movement was noted to have more informal groups, many of which received little if no state funding, and this is reflected in their organizing and actions. The anti-nuclear groups were more confrontational and more violent than their general environmental counterparts. Particularly, in the early to mid-1990s these group’s activities did not slow during reunification to the extent that other group’s demonstrations and protests did.

The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) published a comprehensive study on the state of the US returning military bases in Germany in 1995. In this report, Cunningham and Klemmer give detailed information about the financial value of returned bases as well as the costs of environmental cleanup and the viability of converting former military sites to civilian or German government use<sup>22</sup>.

**Military Personnel Reductions in Germany**  
Figures in thousands

Source: Grundman and Matthies, 1993, p. 24.  
Notes: Endstate is defined as the stable level following the completion of reductions (USAREUR/PA, 1993).

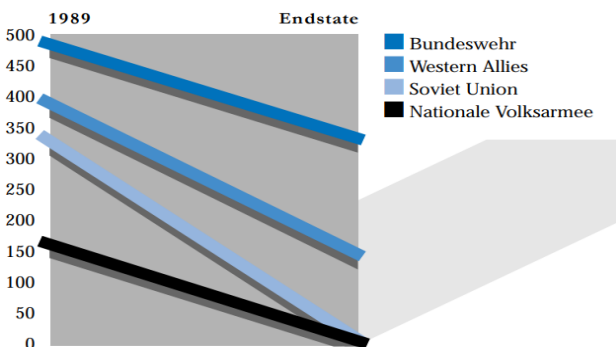


Figure 4-11 Source: Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities

The drastic drop in military personnel in Germany by all concerned parties after the Cold War was a major

driving force in base returns, and is reflected in Figure 4-11.

Additionally, Figure 4-12 shows the number of sites returned per year by the US military to Germany:

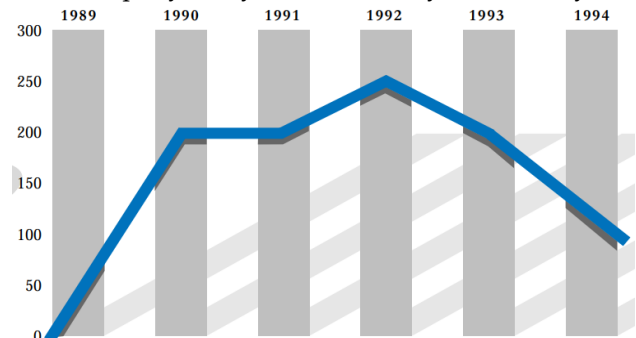


Figure 4-12 Source: Same as Figure 4-11

We see that many of the site returns occurred before the SOFA renegotiation, which would not even be implemented into force until 1998 (where the US forces in Germany would be vastly reduced and consolidated on fewer military installations). The compensation paid by the German government to the US by 1991 was roughly 3 million USD, with a complicated mechanism that involved calculating market value of buildings and improvements against the costs of environmental damage, among other factors.

Many of these calculations were done independently by the US military and the German government, rarely agreed, and were subject to delays as a result. The mechanisms for calculation of environmental cleanup costs existed prior to the formal revision of the SOFA in 1993 and serves as a model that resembles more closely the current US-Korea SOFA. Under this system the compensation amounts to a “payment-in-kind”, wherein the German government agrees to finance future “necessary military construction projects within Germany” in lieu of direct payment.

The concern over environmental disposal waste in Germany was evidenced by the House Armed Services Committee and the General Accounting Office, noting the potential harm that improper hazardous waste disposal and environmental

<sup>22</sup> Cunningham, Keith B., and Andreas Klemmer. (1995). Restructuring the US Military Bases in Germany: Scope, Impacts, and Opportunities. Bonn

International Center for Conversion.  
[https://www.bicc.de/uploads/tx\\_bicctools/report4.pdf](https://www.bicc.de/uploads/tx_bicctools/report4.pdf).

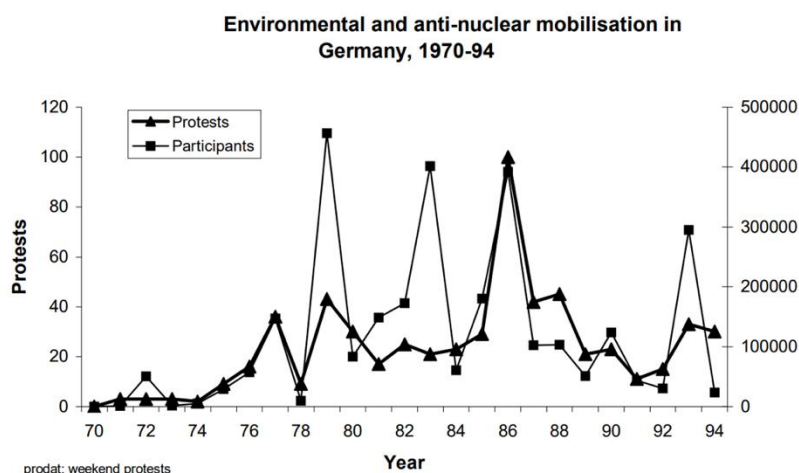


Figure 4-13 Source: Same as Figure 4-10

damage could do to the US-Germany relationship<sup>23,24</sup>. By 1992 over 350 contaminated sites had been identified and threatened both US and German personnel health and the sustained nature of the US military presence in Germany. Anti-nuclear and environmental demonstrations began to increase starting again from 1992 as Rucht and Roose noted, shown above in Figure 4-13.

In addition to the above figure, the data through 1997 reflects this trend as well. The short-lived lull in environmental protests after reunification in Germany was followed by a marked increase once again in not only civil society action, but also in civil society membership (reflected in their paper’s table 7, as seen above).

Finally, Weidner critically points out that the environmental department of the federal home affairs ministry “recognized from very early on” that environmental protection policy relied upon environmental protection groups, and to encourage their counterbalancing of lobbying power from employer’s organizations, created “financial encouragement to the establishment and maintenance of environmental groups”<sup>25</sup>.

The financial incentives were critical for institutionalization, and the 1979 failure of the Green Party to achieve the 5% vote necessary for representation did not falter the movement, as they received “reimbursement of 4.5 million marks for

campaign expenses”, aiding “consolidation” of the “temporary alliance” into a formal party<sup>26</sup>. Government funding and tax-free status of donations helped sustain civil society environmental groups against the direct lobbying power of special interests. Alongside this, the deficits in environmental protection incentives in Germany have been heavily offset by large subsidies that aid compliance with environmental protection law. With that a look at South Korea’s civil society is warranted.

### South Korea

Cognizance of environmental issues was noted in the Carter administration with the enactment of the Overseas Environmental Baseline Guidance Document (OEBGD) and the “final governing standards” in the 1990s<sup>27</sup>. These set criteria “based on US environmental laws” to be used by executive agreements to define the “final governing standards” to be used by the Department of Defense’s installations in host nations around the globe.

Here, civil society activism is noted to have played a major part, as the Green Korea United (GKU) NGO documented and received resources from Koreans and US civilian employees regarding environmental degradation. Particularly, the issue here was February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2000’s embalming fluid dump (480 475mL-bottles) by the US military into the Han River. The US military claimed no health hazards would result from the “diluted formaldehyde” dumped, but GKU and the National Campaign for the Eradication of Crimes by U.S. Troops organized protests in front of the 8<sup>th</sup> US Army Complex. The US apologized after pressure but this “did not quell the resentment” of the environmental groups.

GKU was also pursuing action against Camp Eagle “since 1991” when untreated oil was dumped in the Som River. Indeed, the CSIS report on the revision of the SOFA notes that “Korean civic groups” in the

<sup>23</sup> Wegman, Richard A., and Harold G. Bailey. (1994) The Challenge of Cleaning Up Military Wastes When U.S. Bases Are Closed. *Ecology Law Quarterly* 21(4), 865–945. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24113222>.

<sup>24</sup> This 1991 study on 10 military bases overseas in countries such as Japan, Germany, and the Philippines, notes that all 10 had violated host country environmental law and US environmental law without having done any major actions to remedy these situations. The details in this paper alone provide ample evidence to the complicated issue of base closures across various countries.

<sup>25</sup> Weidner, Helmut. (1997). Performance and Characteristics of German Environmental Policy. Overview and Expert Commentaries from 14 Countries. <https://www.econstor.eu/obitstream/10419/48971/1/231883439.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Uekötter, Frank. (2014). *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press Scholarship Online.

<sup>27</sup> Gannon, Jennifer. (2001). Renegotiation of the Status of Forces Agreement Between the United States and the Republic of Korea. *Colorado Journal of International Environmental Law and Policy* 12

intervening years between 1991 and 2001 raised public awareness of these issues through protests and petitions to the government. The allegations against the US military included diesel fuel leaks and construction waste, with over 10 cases accused in 2000. Polling during August of 2000 reflected this, with “73% supporting” the presence of the US, but 78% feeling that the SOFA needed revisions.

From 1988 to 1992, the transitional years following democratization saw only roughly 50 incidents of “resistance” (protests or other actions taken by environmental organizations) per year<sup>28</sup>. However, from roughly 1993 to 1999 there were 150 to 250 events annually dealing with environmental development and protection, nuclear issues, waste disposal, and water quality, among other issues. I translated the graph they constructed below in Figure 4-14:

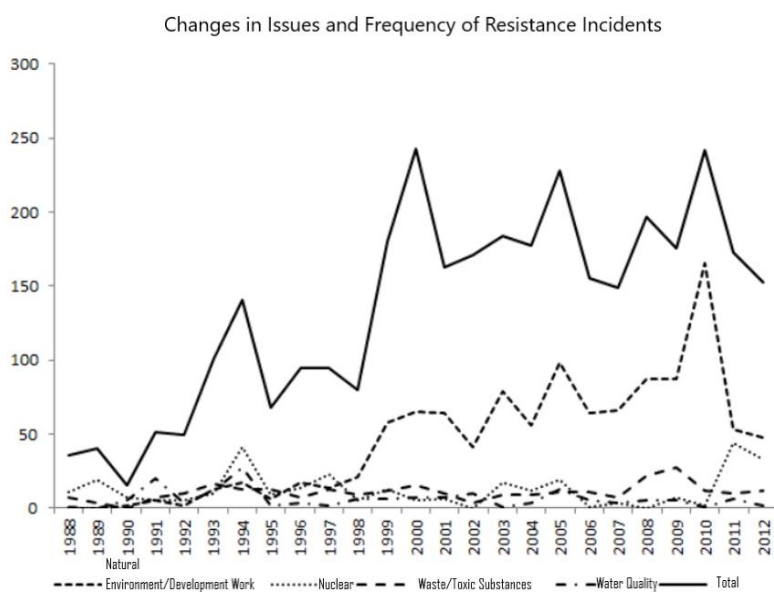


Figure 4-14 Source: Translated from Hong & Ku (2014)

The significant period to note for the SOFA revision is the surge in incidents around late 1998 to early 2001, and the sustained levels thereafter. Pollution incidents related to the US military bases were discovered even after the 2001 revision and this is reflected in environmental organization activity. The largest category here (자연환경/개발사업) is environmental protection and development, and includes damages to forests, mountains, rivers,

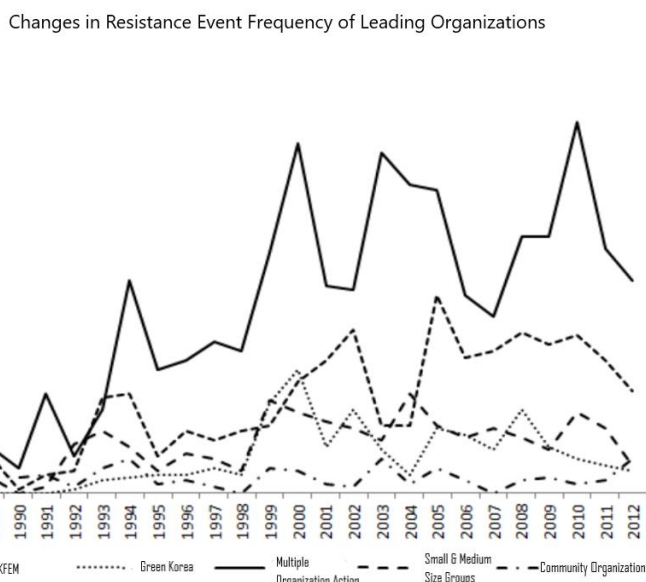


Figure 4-15 Source: Translated from Hong & Ku (2014)

wetlands, and species affected by development and land usage. The other categories in order from left to right are Nuclear (핵), Waste & Hazardous Substances (폐기물 / 유해물질), Water Quality (수질), and Total (for all categories: 전체).

Figure 4-15 above also shows significant activity in the period leading up to the SOFA revision.

All group types increase in activity leading up to the SOFA revision, reflecting urgency mentioned in the CSIS report. The report noted that in late 2000, Director General Song received assurance of full support from the Blue House, and that Fred Smith (head of the US negotiation delegation) was told by Secretary Cohen that he had his full support and that the SOFA revision was a “top priority”. Concerns about anti-American sentiment and the increasing rate of environmental protests groups reflected here align with the increased urgency of the negotiations.

The 복수/연대 figures in the original graph represent the actions between many different groups rather than one civic organization (‘multiple organization action’ in Figure 4-15) as civil society groups worked together to host events, protests, and awareness campaigns or calls on the government for action.

<sup>28</sup> Hong, Deok Hwa, Ku, Dowan. (2014). “Environmental Movement after Democratization in Korea: A Protest Event Analysis”. ECO 18(1), 151-186.

Looking to other sources, we see environmental attitudes of the Korean populace, as taken by the World Values Survey in 1990<sup>29</sup>, with one section noted below in Table 4-5:

*World Values Survey Measures of Support for EPI (in percentages)*

Country	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	EPI
South Korea	84	76	50	78	58
China	78	82	54	68	52
Japan	68	51	44	88	47
Canada	73	63	48	78	42
USA	74	63	46	71	40
Great Britain	67	68	42	78	41
West Germany	53	49	43	88	39
Italy	69	55	22	84	30
France	61	54	26	81	28

Source: (Kern, 2010)

The a) and b) subcategories here refer to willingness to give a portion of income for prevention of environmental pollution and “would agree to an increase in taxes if extra money were used to prevent environmental pollution”, respectively. The c) and d) categories are that the government should reduce pollution but not cost citizens any money & “protecting the environment and fighting pollution is less urgent than often suggested”, respectively. High scores in a) and b) lead to higher EPI scores, with the opposite true for c) and d).

Kern also cites the Ministries of Environment, Gender Equality, Labour Education and Administrative Reform to demonstrate the number of new Non-Profit Organizations leading up to the SOFA revision:

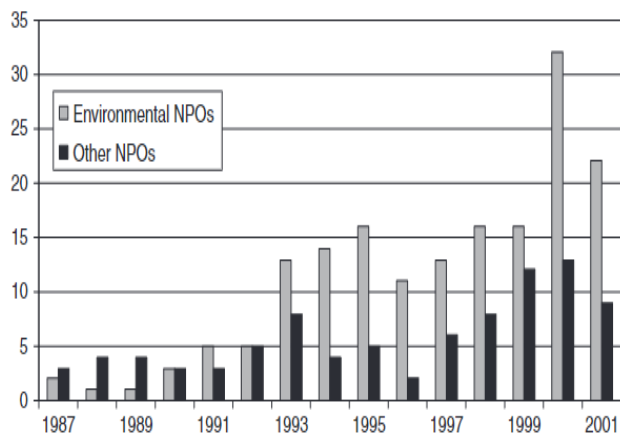


Figure 4-16 Source: Same as Figure 4-15

<sup>29</sup> Kern, Thomas. (2010). Translating Global Values into National Contexts The Rise of Environmentalism in South Korea. *International Sociology* 25, 869-896

<sup>30</sup> Robertson, Jeffrey S. (2002). Anti-Americanism in South Korea and the Future of the U.S. Presence. *Journal of International and Area Studies* 9(2), 87-103. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43107066>.

Alongside this, the frequency newspapers reported on “environmental movement” or “anti-pollution movement” is shown here as well:

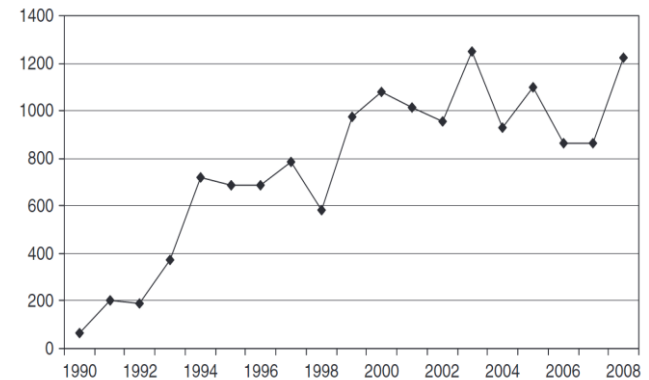


Figure 4-17 Source: Same as Figure 4-15

The formaldehyde dumping incident in February of 2000 is noted as having stirred further anti-American sentiment<sup>30</sup>. The incident led to “street demonstrations” and was based in part on the Ministry of Justice’s inability to pursue the matter under the SOFA. Kim Dae Jung was also noted to have urged a revision of the SOFA to remove any anti-American factions from using it to call for the complete removal of USFK from South Korea.

The June 2000 “Leaders Summit” with North Korea had also led to a decrease in perceived tensions, with a Dong-a Ilbo poll showing 59% of people believed that “the possibility of war had almost disappeared) after the meeting. Thus, the US and South Korea authorities were under pressure from civil society protests that capitalized on lower perceived need for the US military presence.

Finally, the relative nature of NGO work in South Korea and levels of participation can be attributed to a technological and fact-based way to ascertain why institutionalization has not occurred within the political structure of the government. The bureaucratic nature of environmental degradation measuring and funding has been seen as an issue. Yoo EunHye noted that a Ministry of the Environment survey showed nearly 90% of Koreans weighted environmental issues higher than economic development<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Broadbent, Jeffrey, Jin, Jun, Chien, Yu-Ju, Yoo, EunHye. (2006). Developmental States and Environmental Limits: Regime Response to Environmental Activism in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and China.



Despite this, civic organizations relied on government funding more and more between 1990 and 1998, where funding increased “47 times” and composed a majority of most group’s budgets. This funding did not embed any of the groups into political groups or activity. Further, many of these organizations were noted to behave more like local or central government offices in regards to collecting data rather than engaging citizens or increasing citizen participation. This lack of support or private funding places a fundamental amount of faith in the existing political structures and merely petitions the government for redress of policies rather than major political change or prioritization of environmental issues, even if citizens find them to be a priority.

Kim Ho-Ki contrasts European civil society with South Korea’s by noting 3 weaknesses: 1) a lack of basis in grassroots democratic principles (formal, hierarchical structure in Korea lead to phrase “civil movements without citizens” due to concentration of decision-making in media tactics and “bureaucratization”), 2) funding (membership fees and donations of major organizations like the KFEM and PSPD accounted for only roughly 50% in 1997-98), and 3) “department store tactics”, wherein organizations try to tackle too many issues at once and lack targeted sustained efforts<sup>32</sup>.

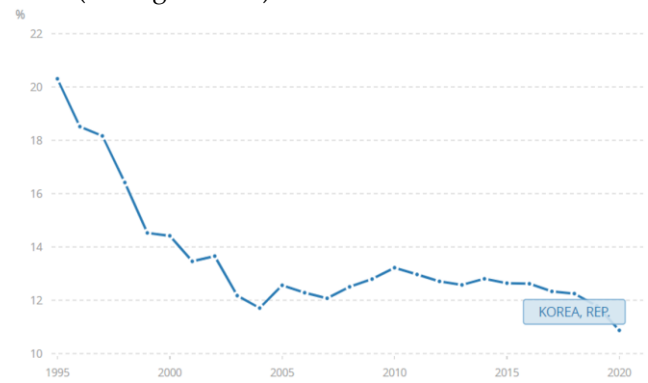
Overall, the history of protests, demonstrations, and other actions by SMOs is well demonstrated here, and it has been the continual, if at times inefficiently organized (or oftentimes repressed) efforts of civil society groups that has brought about pressure on politicians to address the grievances of the public.

### Strategic Interests (Military Spending & Economic Interdependence)

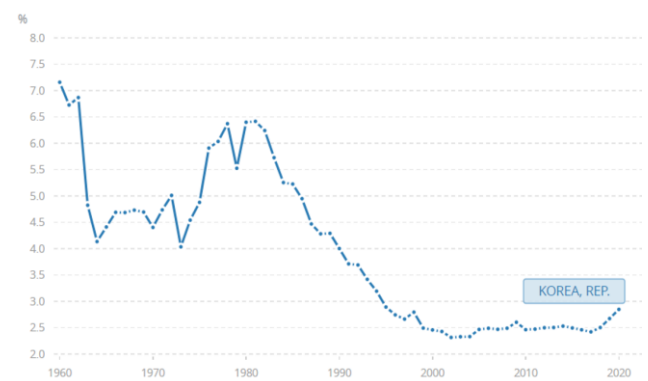
The scale of US involvement in the Korean peninsula has changed over time, from the initial war effort, to contemplating pulling out of the region, and finally to a firmly established military presence in South Korea. Actively stationed troops in South Korea, as of 2021, totaled roughly 28,500, noted as the third

largest US military presence after Japan and Germany<sup>33</sup>.

Though many parts of Yongsan and Uijeongbu (의정부) US military bases have been returned in recent years, the costs for these bases still amount to sizable percentages of the national GDP. Spending is shown below as a percentage of Government expenditure (see Figure 4-18) and as a percentage of GDP (see Figure 4-19) and over time:



Source: Military Expenditure (% of general government expenditure); (World Bank, 2022)<sup>34</sup>



Source: Military Expenditure (% of GDP); (World Bank, 2022)<sup>35</sup>

The cost sharing mechanics are not explicitly outlined in the SOFA; therefore, the US and South Korean have signed “Special Measures Agreements (SMAs)” 10 times since 1991, with each covering “multiple years”. For context, the 2019 agreement involved an 8.2% increase in funding from the South Korean government (\$921.5 million), however tensions during the Trump administration negotiations

<sup>32</sup> Kim, Ho-Ki. (2001). THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN SOUTH KOREA, 1987-1999: CIVIL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION. *Asian Perspective* 25(1), 229-48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42704305>.

<sup>33</sup> Shin, Hyonhee, Lee Joyce, “Factbox: U.S. and South Korea’s security arrangement, cost of troops”, March 8th, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southkorea-usa-alliance-idUSKBN2AZ050>

<sup>34</sup> World Bank. (2022). Military expenditure (% of general government expenditure) - Korea, Rep. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.ZS?end=2020&locations=KR&start=1995&view=chart> (Accessed December 2022)

<sup>35</sup> World Bank. (2022). Military expenditure (% of GDP) - Korea, Rep. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=KR> (Accessed December 2022)

antagonized the US-Korea relationship due to Trump’s demand for a 5-fold increase in payments from South Korea. The talks carried into the Biden administration wherein a 13% increase was agreed upon in March 2021. In the 2019 agreement, nearly half of the costs came from paying salaries to roughly 9,000 South Korean citizens hired to aid US troops, with 36% used to “cover construction costs such as building facilities within US bases”, and the remainder covering services and materials. A further look at military spending by countries that established their Status of Forces Agreements at roughly the same time gives more insight. Less military spending as a percentage of GDP over time reflects either growth in the overall economy, low priority for military investment, the coverage of military necessities by an outside party/ally, or some combination of these factors. World Bank Data can be seen above (see Figure 4-21).

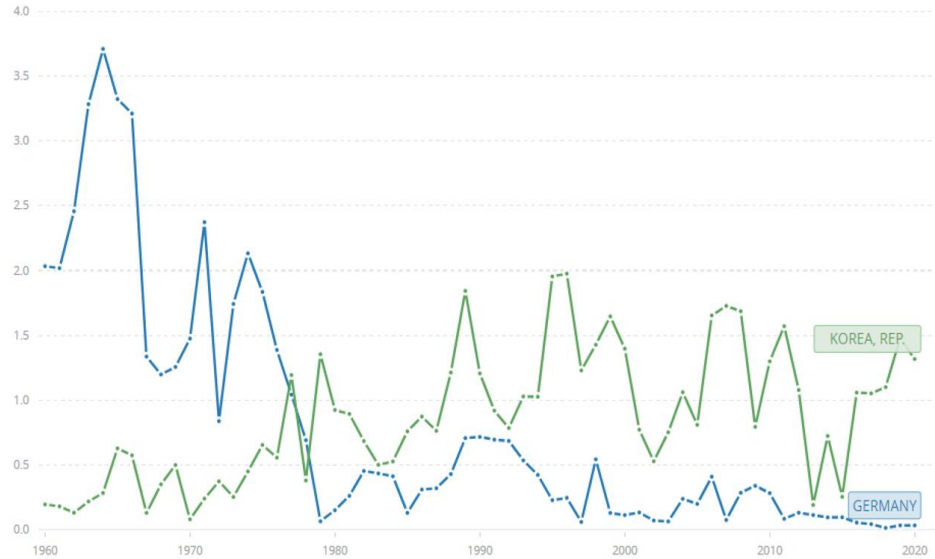


Figure 4-21 Source: Arms Imports (in Billions USD), (World Bank 2020)

We can also see Arms Imports in Billions (\$USD) of dollars between Germany and South Korea since 1960 and compare them with these figures.

The changes in cost sharing between the US and South Korea began in the late 1980s and 1990s as the Cold War ended. There was a drastic decrease in 1969 and further dip in 1991 of total US forces personnel in the ROK. The ROK began sending cash payments in 1989 after bilateral negotiations, and in 1991 they negotiated through 1995 to increase payments. Special Measure Agreements adjusted these payments over time, but the authors here note that one grievance the Korean public has is the burden sharing in comparison to other states that have agreements with the US.

We can also see Arms Imports in Billions (\$USD) of dollars between Germany and South Korea since 1960 and compare them with these figures.

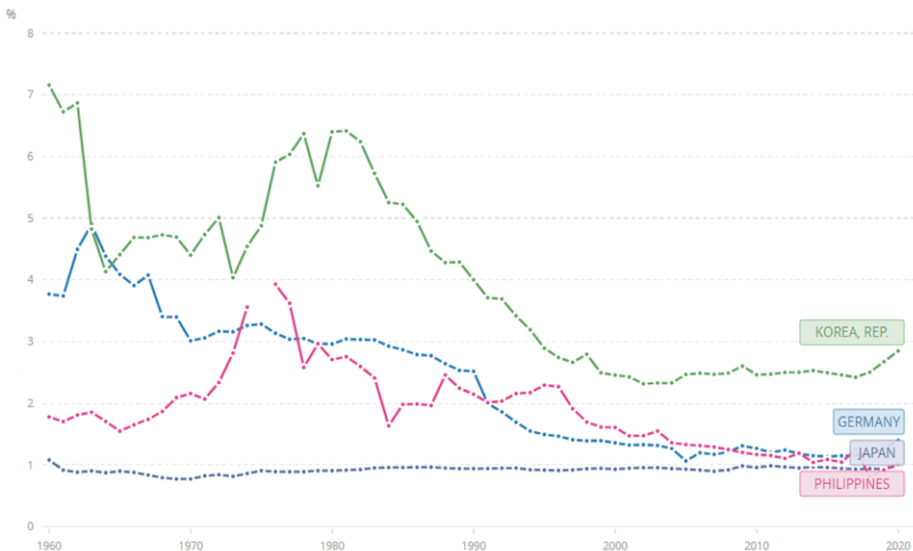


Figure 4-20 Source: Military Spending (% of GDP) Korea, Germany, Japan, & the Philippines (World Bank 2020)<sup>36</sup>

Contrasting the US-Korea case with Germany, Italy, and Japan in Table 4-6 also serves to highlight how despite having many bases and troops in several geographically and economically different countries, the rights of German and Italian governments to regulate military base operations is much higher<sup>37</sup> (see Table 4-6).

<sup>36</sup> World Bank. (2022). Military expenditure (% of GDP) - Germany, Korea, Rep., Japan, Philippines. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS?locations=DE-KR-JP-PH> (Accessed December 2022)

<sup>37</sup> Okinawa Prefectural Government, “Japan-US SOFA wildly different from US agreements in Germany, Italy: Okinawa Pref”, April 22nd, 2018. <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20180422/p2a/00m/0na/005000c>

	Japan	Germany	Italy
<b>Application of domestic laws on U.S. military</b>	Domestic laws not applicable as a general rule	Domestic laws applied to use of U.S. military facilities, and on drills and exercises conducted outside of facilities	U.S. military must follow domestic laws concerning drills
<b>Right to enter U.S. military bases</b>	No stipulations on Japan's right to enter	Clear stipulations on the right of German central and local governments to enter, entrance possible without advance notice in case of emergency	Italian military manages U.S. bases, and Italian commanders are always on duty inside U.S. bases
<b>Regulations on U.S. military drills and exercises</b>	Japan has no regulatory authority; details not reported to Japan	U.S. must seek permission and approval from Germany for drills and exercises	U.S. military must provide advance notice and obtain approval from Italian commanders for drills and exercises
<b>Right to investigate U.S. military aircraft accidents</b>	Japan cannot conduct investigations without U.S. military's consent	German military can initiate and lead investigations	Italian military can initiate and lead investigations

Source: Okinawa Prefectural Government Research Study (2018)

Many of the permissions that the German and Italian governments have to investigate or simply enter US military bases are notably ones that would in many cases have prevented pollution accumulation on South Korean military installations. Despite having a vibrantly active environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s (Japan notably did improve environmental laws, allowing South Korea to draw some companies in with their more lax laws during the light and heavy chemical manufacturing phases), the civil society organizations did not institutionalize in “umbrella organizations” as with Germany, or into “large, professionalized environmental non-governmental organizations” such as in South Korea, with many dissipating by the late 1970s<sup>38</sup>.

Table 4-7 below shows costs for Germany, Japan, and South Korea as reviewed under the Department of Defense’s report on allied contributions in March of 2001.

	Host Country Support (\$ million)			Number of U.S. Troops	Defense Budget (\$billion)	Defense / Total Cost / GDP (%)		Total Cost / D.Cost / Personnel (\$1,000) / Defense (%)	
	Direct	Indirect	Total						
Germany	33.6	1344.1	1377.7	68,196	32.89	1.55	0.06	20.2	0.10
Japan	3957.2	1223.9	5181.1	40,244	2.18	1.03	0.13	128.7	9.38
Korea	324.7	397.2	721.8	36,130	11.52	2.84	0.18	20.0	2.82

Source: (Scobell et al, 2003) <sup>39</sup>

At the time, the negotiation tensions also included the fact that the Korean Forces to Augment US Forces (KATUSA) was not counted as a part of Korea’s financial or resource contribution to the alliance. Additionally, the Korean and US estimates of contributions were up to \$1.4 billion USD different from each other due to the United States’ evaluation

<sup>38</sup> Schreurs, Miranda. (2002). Democratic Transition and Environmental Civil Society: Japan and South Korea Compared. *The Good Society* 11. 57-64.

<sup>39</sup> Scobell, Andrew, Boose, Donald W., Hwang, Balbina Y., Morgan, Patrick. (2003). *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance*. Monographs. 40.

of the land contribution mechanism. The atmosphere prior to the 2001 revision of the SOFA can to some degree be ascertained by noting public opinion about the presence of USFK, and shown below is a public opinion survey from the JoongAng Ilbo that the *Recalibrating* authors bring attention to:

	September 1992	June 1995	September 1997	July 2000
Stay - Even after unification - As long as South-North confrontation continues	(42.5) 4.9 37.6	41.5	(58.5) 5.9 54.6	27.1
Pull out gradually/in stages	44.9	45.6	30.3	63.2
Pull out shortly/complete withdrawal	4.8	5.9	2.4	9.0
Don't know	-	6.9	6.9	-

Source: Same as Table 4-7

During the late 1990s and early 2000s many young adults began to view the US as a barrier to relations with North Korea after perceived progress under the Sunshine Policy.

The North-South 2001 Summit and 2002 Asian Games cooperation between North and South Korea reinforced this and the 2003 connection of railways between the two showed significant promise, so this is reasonable. Though the 2006 and later nuclear crisis would diminish much of this progress, at the time of revision for the 2001 SOFA this was the atmosphere.

Another point of interest is that South Korea’s SOFA with Kyrgyzstan is more in favor of South Korea than the US-Korea one is in favor of the US. Specifically, this is because the jurisdiction of soldiers remains with South Korea whether crimes are committed on or off duty. This leaves room for Korea to be criticized for making demands of the US that it does not follow itself. Yoon suggests modification of this arrangement to address this and also suggests the US-Korea agreement establish a standard for determining “on or off” duty, rather than the current “ad hoc certificate” system.

Finally, the US was going through a wave of intense domestic base cleanup from the late 1980s to late 1990s. By 1992 the Department of Defense was cleaning up approximately 1,8000 military bases “at home and abroad”<sup>40</sup>. In addition, over 60% of sites

<sup>40</sup> Durant, Robert F. (2007). *The Greening of The U.S. Military: Environmental Policy, National Security, and Organizational Change*. Georgetown University Press.



included contamination from “fuels and solvents”, with “toxic and hazardous wastes” being a primary concern at another 30% of sites. Between 1985 and 1989 estimates for cleanup shot from a conservative \$5 billion USD to over \$42 billion.

After accusations of the military taking too long to “study” cleanup efforts in attempts to delay the process, the Community Environment Response Facilitation Act (CERFA) and the 1993 Executive “Community Reinvestment Program” by President Clinton placed timelines and pressure on base cleanup and closures processes.

By 1994 the sites needing cleanup exceeded 28,000, but at the same time the DoD had achieved over 60% of closures and returned 30% of bases to local communities. The major hurdle was the quick nature of the program came at the expense of diligent care and cleanup.

This rush to suddenly address environmental issues and the associated costs placed massive pressure on the military and the subsequent push in the mid-1990s to more efficiently spend military funds led to hesitancy such as in 1996 for the US to renegotiate the SOFA with South Korea in a way that would add to environmental liabilities. The strategic interest of the US then has been to avoid these discussions as long as possible, and only with growing domestic pressure do these issues generally get brought to the negotiating table.

## US Current Policy

The US still has no obligation to compensate or clean up environmental degradation on military bases before returning them, they outline in their Environmental Governing Standards (EGS) several responsibilities that require communication and referencing of Korean environmental law<sup>41</sup>. Under the Responsibilities section of the EGS US Forces must “Identify ROK national environmental standards, including those specifically delegated to regional or local governments for implementation, to determine whether ROK national environmental standards should be incorporated into this EGS; and to obtain and maintain copies of applicable ROK environmental documents, standards and regulations”.

There is also a requirement to ensure that “EGS and related environmental standards are consistent with SOFA and other relevant international agreements”, though this leaves some degree of ambiguity since the SOFA has delegated responsibility for these issues to subcommittees. The US military is required to “consult with appropriate ROK officials directly or through the SOFA Environmental Subcommittee on environmental issues as required under the SOFA and the Memorandum of Special Understanding on Environmental Protection (MOSUEP) to coordinate this EGS and to maintain effective cooperation on environmental matters”, addressing this issue to some degree.

Audits of the environmental aspects of this agreement are conducted yearly internally and external audits for compliance are completed at least once every 3 years. Complaints require a response within 14 days of receipt by USFK. Temporary waivers from EGS are available so long as they provide a plan for return to compliance and internally review waivers.

The rest of the EGS standards are very detailed and offer minute detail on how air, water, and ground areas are to handle emissions and pollution. Disagreements in policy and limits of emissions would entail nuanced debate surrounding acceptable limits to emissions and the method of disposal. The issue of cleanup or compensation for polluted areas falls outside that purview.

## Conclusions

A difference of extreme importance in the development of civil society and democracy lies with the age and political structure of Germany and South Korea. From the very outset, the Federal Republic of Germany was a democracy with extremely high levels of freedom in regards to civil society and political participation compared to South Korea. While rebuilding needed to occur in both countries after World War 2 and the Korean War respectively, the education levels prior to each conflict had a large impact on citizen mobilization and participation in civil society. Beyond this, Germany became well integrated with its neighbors in Europe whereas South Korea’s closest geographical partner was limited to an estranged relationship with Japan that was not even formally normalized until 1965 (one

<sup>41</sup> United States Forces Korea. (2020). Environmental Governing Standards. <https://www.usfk.mil/Portals/105/Documents/Publications/Regulations/US>

FK-Reg-201-1-Korean-Environmental-Governing-Standards-2020.pdf (Accessed 20 December)

year before the first SOFA and only 5 years after a failed democratization attempt).

Perhaps of even greater consequence was the structure upon which political parties could receive funding through the federal government. The Green Party, despite the differences of opinion within the group, worked together to secure the 5 percent votes necessary to gain parliamentary representation in Germany. No such structure existed in South Korea. Though civil society groups dedicated to the environment developed in the 1980s, they were stifled by government authoritarian repression of media reporting and protesting, and upon democratization in 1987, the wide array of groups seeking redress of issues hampered major changes in governance regarding environmental issues until the late 1990s.

Though South Korean NGOs have received much private funding, and though environmental issues became recognized in the 2001 SOFA, there were no mechanisms to pursue any compensation from environmental damage done to areas occupied by US military bases. Further, South Korean social movements have tended to revolve around issues that evoke national outrage or passion, such as was the case in the SOFA revision targeting criminal jurisdiction.

The political machine of Germany is quite complicated as well, however the inherent funding available to environmental groups in Germany compared to the lack of any environmental South Korean student or labor movement integration with any political party in the 1980s stands out. Structurally, the political development of Germany, with a focus on democracy at a much earlier time and a gradual building of environmental organizations and political power, combined with civil society for a more supported establishment of environmental politics as a major part of the political sphere.

Though environmental issues would capture public attention in South Korea during the 1990s and 2000s, environmental civil society largely has been unable to integrate like its counterpart, and though each government has respective branches dedicated to environmental issues, the scope of the work historically has converged from very different starting points.

Further, the return of US military bases as a political issue, though recognized in before the early 2000s,

was only publicly on the radar of the average citizen after the 2001 renegotiation of the SOFA, in particular because events such as the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, took precedence. The incident on 9/11 did not help these matters as US attention was drawn to the Middle East. Though this did not stop ongoing activity in South Korea, political will shifted back a few years until newspapers began circulating the idea of US military base returns again.

Table 5-1 is a summary of the situation detailed in the preceding section:

Germany SOFA Dates		Civil Society	Result
1959	Enacted	No involvement in SOFA negotiation	No Environmental Provisions or Compensation for Degradation
1971	Amended	Focused on protecting specific regions or issue, not formally organized to effectively politically participate	Limited Revisions; No land degradation compensation
1981	Amended	Green Party Not Yet in Power, falling environmental enthusiasm and lingering oil shock effects	Limited Revisions; No land degradation compensation
1993	Amended	Green Party Success in 1987, State funding of groups exceeding thresholds in elections	Major Revisions; Land Use Justification & Compensation Requirement
Korea SOFA Dates		Civil Society	Result
1966	Enacted	No Civil Society Political Involvement	No environmental clauses
1991	Amended	Civil Society Present (Limited, Political Parties Largely Not Environmentally Focused)	No compensatory environmental clauses added to the agreement
2001	Amended	Civil Society Present (Focused on Jurisdiction Issue)	Environmental Concerns noted in SOFA; No compensation clause, but yearly SOFA Meetings arranged along with working groups to establish criteria for environmental harm

The overall conclusion of this paper is that whereas Germany had political integration of environmental issues in the 1970s and 80s regardless of changes in elected leadership (conservative versus progress, for example), there was no such integration in Korean politics during the postwar era. Authoritarian control of the government hindered even the study of environmental issues and focused primarily on economic growth, with citizens harmed by environmental degradation typically seeking compensation directly with the companies or industries that caused harm, rather than the national or provincial governments.

The German unification at the end of the cold war was roughly also the time of the first revision of the US-Korea Status of Forces Agreement. Whereas the growing national focus on environmentalism, protesting, demonstrating, and collaborating with environmental organizations was a growing trend for decades leading to the major revision of the NATO-Germany SOFA in 1993, democracy was very freshly transitioning in Korea after June of 1987. Though South Korea would quickly host the 1988 Olympics and changes to regulations and laws came impressively quickly, the groundwork for domestic civil groups like Green NGOs was still in its infancy.

With no environmental organizations truly existing before the early 1980s, and those organizations only truly expanding the scope of their missions after democratization, the 1991 and 2001 revisions of the SOFA agreements, much like the 1971 and 1981 revision of the NATO-Germany SOFA, ultimately did not majorly change the legal liability of the United States government and military forces to clean up or compensate foreign governments to clean up environmental degradation that came about as a result of US military base operations in allied countries. In light of South Korea's notably successful candlelight vigil movements and rallying to amend the SOFA in regards to criminal jurisdiction of military personnel, the question of why South Korea has not pushed harder to amend imbalances in the SOFA lingers.

The lack of a permanent residence in the form of a political party, alongside the half-measures by the Joint Committee to address concerns are indicators that civil society and democracy in South Korea have not integrated to a sufficient level, nor has public sentiment regarding environmental issues grown strong enough to spur that kind of political integration.

The vast majority of outrage regarding the SOFA in Korea came about due to prosecutorial concerns and the lack of justice many citizens felt regarding crimes committed by US personnel. Similarly, the initial concerns of German citizens about nuclear facilities being installed in their regions ballooned into major issues because the government was perceived to be dismissive of citizen concerns and desires to be heard within a democratically-elected government.

The rallying point for German citizens on this issue was a key milestone in making environmental issues a centerpiece in German politics and existentially tied to the perception of democracy itself. Though the environmental movements in South Korea have a strong history of aligning themselves with democratization, there have to date been few nationwide incidents that have existentially tied environmental concerns of the citizens with their notions of democracy.

The most common health concerns cited in recent years, such as air quality issues, have often been off-loaded onto foreign actors such as Chinese manufacturing, and though there have been major wins in the reduction of pollution in the last few decades, it seems unlikely that there is large enough

national concern to pressure Korean politicians to openly call for major compensation from their US allies regarding pollution in Yongsan or other military installations around the country, let alone any potential future improper waste disposal issue that may be uncovered.

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