



CENTER FOR U.S.-KOREA POLICY

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U.S.-ROK STRATEGIC ALLIANCE 2015

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The delay of the wartime operational control (OPCON) transfer from April 2012 to December 2015 provides additional time to carefully consider the OPCON issue in the context of the two presidents' 2009 shared vision about the future of the U.S.-Republic of Korea (ROK) alliance.

When the U.S. and South Korea reached the OPCON transfer agreement in 2007, the Roh Moo-hyun government viewed the transfer as a sovereignty issue. Against the backdrop of latent anti-Americanism in South Korea, then U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld saw the OPCON agreement in terms of global posture requirements of the U.S. military. Neither side seriously considered military readiness or required preparation time as factors that would drive this fundamental shift in responsibilities and influence the capability and commitment essential for deterrence.

Since the election of Lee Myung-bak, the U.S.-ROK relationship has taken a dramatically different turn. Presidents Obama and Lee emphasized close cooperation and coordination through their June 2009 announcement of a Joint Vision for the Alliance. This vision emphasized the importance of the security relationship while also broadening the scope of alliance cooperation to include economic and social issues and regional and global challenges. A shared vision and cordial relations based on enduring friendship and common values provide exactly the right foundation to guide the implementation of new forms of institutional cooperation designed to ensure that the alliance is sustainable.

A roadmap for this alliance transformation is outlined in the new "Strategic Alliance 2015" plan, an outcome of the first-ever U.S.-ROK Foreign and Defense Ministers' Meeting (or

"2+2 meeting") held this July in Seoul. The plan encompasses not only OPCON transition—with the attendant ROK capabilities to lead the warfight—but also consolidation of U.S. bases into two hubs, tour normalization, and management of U.S. forces in Korea within broader, world-wide mission requirements.

The OPCON transition plan envisions South Korea as taking the lead in defense against North Korea as well as in other operational plan requirements. The ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) will lead warfighting while the U.S. Korea Command (KORCOM) will become a supporting command, and the current U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) will disappear. As the transition is reexamined, it is important to ensure that the combined capability and synergy remain in the new structure. The show of commitment to the alliance must also be visible and consistent throughout the transition to send the message of deterrence to North Korea.

A key principle of war is unity of command, which has been successfully applied to many alliances and coalitions in the past as an attempt to reconcile the differences in geography, functions, services, and coalition. Another important principle of war is simplicity. Clausewitz observed how the simplest thing is difficult in war, accumulating to produce friction, which complicates warfighting.

U.S.-ROK CFC provides both the unity of command and simplicity, serving as a warfighting headquarters during combined operations. The OPCON transition plan must incorporate these crucial principles into the new command and control structure while ensuring combined capability, including combined systems of communication and coordina-

tion. Furthermore, this combined capability must not be divided into separate U.S. and ROK capabilities but be seamlessly bridged to create synergy. For instance, the added effectiveness, interoperability, and relations built from co-location and common daily practices that existed under the CFC should not be lost.

South Korea needs a single ground component command that is able to coordinate closely with air and sea components. These components would report to a single warfighting command, the ROK JCS. It is important to ensure that the Joint Force Commander is not overtasked with duties other than warfighting. The ROK components should also be able to coordinate closely with U.S. counterparts.

In crisis management, stronger integration is needed between the Ministry of Defense and the JCS and among the services. Jointness among Army, Air Force, Navy, and the Marine Corps in all stages of the military process are essential for enhanced capability and execution. The U.S. learned this lesson the hard way during Operation EAGLE CLAW in 1980, which failed to rescue U.S. hostages in Iran, largely due to the lack of integration and coordination among services. Jointness will enhance South Korean military capability and will require a change in culture among services and strong leadership.

After the sinking of the Cheonan in May, President Lee created a new Commission for National Security Review to reexamine South Korea's national security strategy. The Commission is carefully considering a few dozen initiatives, including the conscription service duration, crisis management, and integration among services. Specifically, the Commission will recommend that the army service duration be restored to 24 months, recognizing the degraded military readiness and overall troop strength resulting from a declining birthrate and the shortening of service duration to 18 months by the Roh administration that was aimed to reduce total ROK troop numbers from 500,000 to 190,000. While the new initiatives will increase South Korean military capability, the ROK National Assembly must also support such initiatives by approving the appropriate budget.

One aspect of the Strategic Alliance 2015 is the realignment and relocation of U.S. Forces Korea. These efforts began with the 2002 Land Partnership Plan (LPP), which closed, and is closing, numerous small U.S. Army camps and posts. The LPP helps the U.S. restructure its posture and become more efficient through consolidation of U.S. force presence around two hubs, Daegu and Osan Air Base-Garrison Humphreys, south of Seoul. Yet another plan, the 2004 Yongsan Relocation Plan, deals specifically with the relocation of U.S. forces from Yongsan Army Garrison in Seoul mostly to Garrison Humphreys in Pyeongtaek. Originally, CFC headquarters would move from Yongsan, but with the OPCON transition, it would be KORCOM, the U.S. element, that would relocate. Synchronizing the timing of OPCON transfer and the Yongsan relocation is yet another issue for consideration.

Tour normalization is another component of Strategic Alliance 2015. Currently, the tour is one to two years depending on whether the military members are accompanied by families. Tour normalization adds an additional year and increases the number of families that can be brought to Korea. It implies a reduction in personnel turnover, which minimizes the loss in knowledge and the time needed to re-learn the military process, and also helps build stronger relationships with ROK counterparts while lessening the stress on the families. Longer tours demonstrate greater U.S. commitment through long-term presence, which helps deter aggression. However, with normalized tours, the military may be tasked to deploy away from the Korean Peninsula, which could negate some of the benefits of such an initiative. Thus, the impact of tour normalization should be carefully examined in terms of ensuring deterrence.

Strategic Alliance 2015 incorporates key transformation issues to promote a successful transition to a new military alliance geared for the 21st Century. Shared vision and values should paint the background as the two allies approach the U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting in October.

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The views expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Air Force, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government.

NEWS & EVENTS

OCTOBER 14, 2010 – HARVARD UNIVERSITY – CAMBRIDGE, MA

PROSPECTS FOR DENUCLEARIZATION OF NORTH KOREA: CHINA'S PERSPECTIVE, LEVERAGE, AND ROLE

Harvard University's Korea Institute presents a lecture on North Korean denuclearization and the role of China. Scott Snyder, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director, will serve as the guest speaker. Event details are available at: <http://korea.fas.harvard.edu>.

OCTOBER 12, 2010 – KOREA ECONOMIC INSTITUTE – WASHINGTON, DC

THE CHINA-ROK TRADE RELATIONSHIP AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGING SECURITY COOPERATION

12:00-1:30pm, KEI Conference Facility, 1800 K Street NW, Suite 1010

The Korea Economic Institute will host a luncheon program for the release of its KEI Academic Paper Series on Korea. Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director Scott Snyder and Research Associate See-Won Byun will present a paper on Sino-ROK trade and implications for security cooperation. Event details are available at www.keia.org.

SEPTEMBER 27-28, 2010 – NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE KOREA SOCIETY – NEW YORK, NY

U.S.-ROK-JAPAN TRILATERAL

The National Committee on American Foreign Policy and The Korea Society will hold a U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral meeting in New York on “Current Regional Security Challenges”. Scott Snyder, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy Director, will speak on a panel on the state of the alliances. This meeting is closed to the public.

PUBLICATIONS

Scott Snyder (August 25, 2010), “The Cheonan Incident and Its Impact on Regional Security,” *Asia Unbound*, Council on Foreign Relations.

Kim Taewoo (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Are We Now? (ROK Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security,” Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and The Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Seoul.

Ralph Cossa (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Are We Now? (U.S. Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

Paik Haksoon (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Are We Now? (DPRK Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

Drew Thompson (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Are We Now? (PRC Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

Lee Chung Min (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Do We Go From Here? (ROK Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

Evans Revere (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Do We Go From Here? (U.S. Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

Kevin Shepard (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Do We Go From Here? (DPRK Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-

Cheonan Regional Security.”

Kim Heungkyu (August 13, 2010), “Post-Cheonan Regional Security: Where Do We Go From Here? (PRC Perspective),” Paper presented at The Asan Institute Symposium on “Post-Cheonan Regional Security.”

For a complete list of publications, please visit:
www.centerforuskoreapolicy.org.

VIEWS ON THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

“In the sixty-two years since the founding of the Republic of Korea, our two nations have enjoyed a strong and enduring alliance...Our commitment to the security and defense of the Republic of Korea will never waver.”

--**President Barack Obama**, Statement on Korean Independence Day, August 13, 2010, Washington DC.

“We look forward to Seoul hosting the G-20 Summit later this fall and the second Nuclear Security Summit in 2012. Your great success as a democratic nation and your emergence as a world economic leader continue to be an inspiration for all countries striving to develop.”

--**Hillary Clinton**, U.S. Secretary of State, Statement on Republic of Korea’s National Day, August 13, 2010, Washington DC.

“As strong allies, both the United States and the ROK face the same common dangers from the threats of North Korean and Iranian proliferation. I expect that our close cooperation will continue on these and many other issues, along with our other key allies and partners around the world.”

--**Robert J. Einhorn**, Special Advisor for Nonproliferation and Arms Control, “Terrorist Financing and Financial Crimes,” Press Briefing in Seoul, August 2, 2010.



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The Center for U.S.-Korea Policy aims to deepen and broaden the foundations for institutionalized cooperation between the United States and South Korea by promoting a comprehensive U.S.-ROK alliance partnership on emerging global, regional, and non-traditional security challenges. A project of The Asia Foundation, the Center is based in the Foundation's Washington DC office.

The Asia Foundation is a private, non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. Drawing on 50 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

For more information on Center activities please visit: www.centerforuskoreapolicy.org.

The Center for U.S.-Korea Policy is based in the Washington DC office of The Asia Foundation with seed funding from the Smith Richardson Foundation. The Center accepts donations from the public and private sector for its programs and operations. Inquiries should be directed to Scott Snyder at ssnyder@centerforuskoreapolicy.org.

This newsletter is produced by the Center for U.S.-Korea Policy to provide updates and analysis on current policy issues related to the U.S.-ROK alliance partnership. All views expressed in this publication are those of the author(s).

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