

# **THE US-ROK ALLIANCE**

## **The Feasibility of the Continuing US Military Presence in the Republic of Korea**

**By Jeongmin Park**

**A thesis**

**submitted to the Victoria University of Wellington  
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters of International Relations**

**Victoria University of Wellington**

**2012**

### Abstract:

The U.S. – ROK alliance is currently on a high after a decade of fluctuating relations. Both the Obama and Lee administrations have been focused on producing a future plan that takes both nations strategic interests into account while also considering the changing dynamics in the region. The alliance partners have had to overcome differences of opinion on foreign policy, the rise of anti-Americanism in South Korea, the emergence of China as a power in the region, and the continuing nuclear ambitions and instability in North Korea. This paper discusses how the realignment of the force command structure and a unified long-term strategic plan, has effectively modified the USFK to better deal with these wide ranging issues and remain a force of strategic relevance now and in the future of Asia. The USFK therefore remains an important part of the U.S. – ROK alliance that has positive security implications for both the Korean Peninsula and its surrounding region. It has also become the catalyst for stronger all-round relations between the long-time allies, which lead to positive flow-on effects in economic matters such as the U.S. – ROK Free-Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA).

## Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Overview of U.S. – Korean Security Relations	3
Anti-Americanism and the Effects of Korean Popular Opinion	6
The Evolution of the U.S. – ROK Military Alliance	12
The New U.S. Defence Strategic Plan and its Effect on the USFK	16
The North Korean Influence on the USFK	21
The Effect of China's Rise on the Korean Defence Dynamic	27
The Effect of Kim Jong-Il's Death	31
The Effect of Domestic Politics on the USFK	34
Arguments Against the USFK Remaining on the Korean Peninsula	38
Why the USFK Should Remain on the Korean Peninsula	44
Conclusion	50
Bibliography	54

## Introduction

In the year of the Korean War armistice in 1953, Washington drafted a bilateral security treaty with the U.S. aligned Republic of Korea. This in effect was a unilateral defence guarantee, a pledge to protect the ROK from the communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its allies. The agreement saw the establishment of a permanent military presence in the ROK. Together with successive strong-armed military governments spanning 28 years, backed by the U.S., and led by Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-Hee, South Korea rose from the rubble of the war to become the world's 13<sup>th</sup> largest economy.

However while economic development flourished under tightly controlled military leadership along with U.S. policy advice and support, the people began to speak out against the oppressive government. A series of mass demonstrations and civil unrest during the 1970s and 1980s led to constitutional reform and a series of firsts. These included the first free direct presidential election of 1987, the first non-military president elected in 1992, and the first time a leader of the opposition was elected as president in 2002. Throughout this post-war period, the constants remained support from the U.S. government (albeit to varying degrees), and aggressive antagonism from the North.

The introduction of Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy in 1997 brought about a radical change in inter-Korean relations, with unconditional engagement favoured over the hard-line policy promoted by U.S. advisers and conservative governments of the past. Although this led to improved relations between the two Korea's, it caused a rift in the U.S. – ROK alliance as the allies disagreed on how to deal with the North and preserve the security of the region. The revelation that North Korea had been developing a nuclear weapons programme in 2003 only exacerbated the growing criticism of the Sunshine Policy. For the first time since its inception the USFK's future came under serious threat as the long-term alliance partners' strategic plans for the future began to diverge.

The election of Lee Myung-Bak as president in 2008 brought with it a renewed focus on U.S. – ROK relations. The continued presence of the USFK in South Korea was confirmed as part of the long-term security strategy of both alliance partners. This

had followed a decade of alliance uncertainty as successive progressive governments used the Sunshine Policy to distance themselves from the defence strategy that had become enshrined in South Korea, during the military rule that followed the signing of the armistice. The 'Myung-Bak (MB) Policy' took a hard-line approach to inter-Korean relations, imposing sanctions and halting aid in response to the North's belligerence and continuing nuclear ambitions.

The two different policy approaches became the subject of debate within South Korea and between key stakeholders such as the U.S. and China. Opponents of the MB Policy argued that it created tension between the Koreas and gave too much decision making power to the U.S., reducing the likelihood of diplomacy and threatening the possibility of peaceful reunification. Opponents of the Sunshine Policy argued that the unconditional engagement policy allowed the North to pursue its nuclear programme without fear of repercussion, placing the future of the USFK at risk by alienating the U.S and threatening the long-term security of South Korea. The Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents of 2010 and the death of Kim Jong-Il raised further questions, while domestically the impending 2012 presidential election and public perceptions of the U.S. – ROK alliance had the same unsettling effect.

This paper seeks to establish the long-term feasibility of the U.S. Military Presence in South Korea by analysing a number of domestic and international factors. It will illustrate how public perceptions in South Korea of the security provided by the USFK, have become more positive since the establishment of North Korea's nuclear ambitions and the incidents of 2010. The rise of China and its effect on the security dynamics of the region will be examined, as well the effects its patronage of the North has on the U.S. – ROK's strategic planning. Another major factor in securing the future of the USFK has been the renewed strategic focus on East Asia by the U.S. post-Afghanistan. The unveiling of the U.S.' long-term defence plan pinpointed the Asia-Pacific as its new focal point for defence strategy, as well as announcing plans to drastically reduce its troops in the Middle-East by the end of 2012. This effectively guaranteed the continuing U.S. military commitment to the Korean Peninsula and assuaged any fears that the USFK would pull out during a crucial transitional period in the region.

My research will analyse the relationship between the four main stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula and how these dynamics affect factors that determine the continued presence of the USFK such as popular opinion, foreign policy, security concerns and regional security needs. These factors are also used to explain the strategic motives behind the long-term plans of the U.S. – ROK alliance and how these plans establish the continuing feasibility of the USFK.

The section on the effects of anti-Americanism in South Korea, analyses how the public's view of the USFK has affected relations between the alliance partners and influenced joint defence policy. A specific focus will be placed on the changing attitudes of the Korean public as a result of various factors. From the negative views against the USFK because of its links with the oppressive military government, to the positive views during the MB era as a result of the deterrence factor provided by the USFK against renewed North Korean aggression.

The changing nature of the regional security environment and its effect on both the nature and direction of the U.S. – ROK defence strategy will also be examined. The U.S. has recently confirmed its ten year defence plan and in it has strongly indicated that the Asia-Pacific will be its major focus because of the importance of the region to its future strategic goals. Coupled with the operational command handover jointly managed with South Korea, the USFK has evolved as required to maintain its feasibility. The rise of China as a major power in the region along with its continuing support of North Korea during an unstable period for them will be analysed in light of the impact it has on the USFK. The death of Kim Jong-Il and its impact on North Korean foreign and nuclear policy will also be discussed, to examine its effect on the region and the U.S. – ROK defence posture.

To conclude, the paper will propose that because of these regional considerations, the long-term strategic plan of the U.S. – ROK alliance, and the uncertainty surrounding North Korea's transitional period, the USFK remains a feasible and integral part of the future.

### Overview of U.S. – Korean Security Relations

The U.S. has had a presence in Korea since World War Two, after the Japanese surrender and subsequent annexing of Korea. The country was split along the 38<sup>th</sup>

Parallel, with the Soviet Union remaining North and the U.S. South. With Korea being split along political lines, a series of skirmishes along the parallel eventually lead to a surprise large scale attack by the communist Northern forces. This led to the beginning of the Korean War, which lasted from 1950 – 1953. Since the signing of the armistice in 1953 signalled a cease-fire to the Korean War, the communist North Korea and capitalist South Korea have had a fraught relationship marked by frequent diplomatic and military clashes. The USFK maintained its presence after the signing of the armistice, when the two Korea's were split by the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). In the year of the armistice signing the US initiated a bilateral security treaty, which in reality was a unilateral defence guarantee that established a permanent troop presence in the South. Since then, the North's default posture has been to maintain an aggressive stance against the US-ROK alliance. However after the downing of an ROK plan in 1987, overt acts of war were abandoned in favour of diplomatic attacks.<sup>1</sup>

When Lee Myung-Bak became the South Korean President in 2007, it represented a swing back of public support towards conservative foreign policy. This brought with it a harder stance towards North Korea and a stronger pro-U.S. stance than the two previous progressive Presidents, Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Mu-Hyun.<sup>2</sup> The stronger U.S.-ROK alliance meant greater economic and defence cooperation, with a review of the U.S. military presence in the ROK resulting in the status quo being maintained. The introduction of the MB Policy negatively affected inter-Korean relations, with the North growing more hostile in its dealings with President Lee's government, and outspoken in its criticism of the ROK being a 'puppet' of the US.<sup>3</sup> This came to a head in 2010, with the sinking of a Korean Naval Ship and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island.

The South Korean Naval Corvette Cheonan sank in the Yellow Sea on the West Coast of Korea in March 2010 killing 46 sailors. The UN Security Council tasked a South Korean led Joint Investigation Group (JIG) to investigate the circumstances

---

<sup>1</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *'The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous'*, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.2.

<sup>2</sup> Snyder, S. (2009). 'Lee Myung-Bak's Foreign Policy', *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, 21(1), p.93.

<sup>3</sup> Klingner, B. (2008). *New South Korean President Brings Conservative Policy Change*. Washington: The Heritage Foundation, p.4.

surrounding the sinking. The JIG presented a summary of their investigation and concluded that the Cheonan had been sunk by a torpedo fired by a North Korean submarine. Although condemned by the UN and the majority of the international community, North Korea denied any involvement in the sinking. As a result, South Korea suspended all trade and diplomatic discourse until the North admitted its role in the sinking and offered a full apology. The North responded by stating that “if the South puppet group comes out with 'response' and 'retaliation', we will respond strongly with ruthless punishment including the total shutdown of North-South ties, abrogation of the North-South agreement on non-aggression and abolition of all North-South cooperation projects.”<sup>4</sup>

Although there was a constant war of words being engaged between the two nations following the Cheonan sinking, the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of November 2010 by North Korean artillery was as devastating as it was unexpected. The bombardment consisting of 170 artillery shells followed a South Korean military exercise in the area, causing widespread damage on the island. Four South Koreans were killed and a further 19 were injured. Unlike the Cheonan incident, the North admitted it had fired the artillery shells but said that they were merely retaliating to the ROK conducting military exercises in their territorial waters. The U.S. stood by its long-term ally and condemned the bombardment. As a show of alliance solidarity large-scale joint military exercises were conducted, with the added effect of demonstrating to the rest of the region the ability of U.S.-ROK military forces to surge on the Korean Peninsula. As a result of Lee Myung-Bak's MB Policy, this further consolidated an alliance that had been at its strongest since the days of military rule in Korea.<sup>5</sup> The North predictably spoke out against the exercises, labelling them an act of aggression. As expected, China kept its neutral stance and called for calm, stressing the need for a return to the six-party talks and further diplomacy.

What had started out as a flashpoint in inter-Korea relations had become a focal point for security issues causing tension in the region, which involved the UN Security Council and competing US and Chinese interests. The incidents served to

---

<sup>4</sup> Kim, M. (Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010). North Korea Declares Phase of War with South, *Reuters*.

<sup>5</sup> Snyder, S. and Byun, S. (2011). 'Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations', *The Rusi Journal*, 156(2), p.75.

highlight the need for greater regional diplomacy in light of the failed six-party talks, which were mediated by China and aimed at discussing issues such as denuclearisation and security. U.S. and Chinese reactions to Cheonan and Yeonpyeong provided a litmus test of the two nation's leadership in regional security issues, as well as demonstrating how the strengthening U.S. – ROK alliance conflicts with China's desire to expand its influence on regional security on the back of their rapid economic growth.<sup>6</sup> With an obvious difference in strategic planning between China and the U.S. exposed by Cheonan and Yeonpyeong, both nations' management approach to the Korean peninsula came under scrutiny. As a result of this strategic introspection, the issue of the U.S. military presence in the ROK came to the fore in Washington as well as the major East-Asian nations.

### Anti-Americanism and the Effects of Korean Popular Opinion

The US – ROK alliance has been a solid basis for security on the Korean Peninsula since the signing of the armistice in 1953. Although there have been a number of incidents between the two Koreas, the alliance and its associated U.S. military presence in South Korea has served as an effective deterrent against another full scale inter-Korean war.<sup>7</sup> ROK governments have demonstrated unwavering and universal support for the alliance, with the authoritarian military rule in particular doing everything in its power to maintain strong ties with Washington. In contrast public sentiment on the alliance has fluctuated, with the rise of an anti-American movement coinciding with the pro-democracy student protests of the 1970s and 80s. Prior to this period of democratic reform, the strong public support for the alliance was attributed to the gratitude of those who has experienced and suffered through the Korean War by many political analysts. Professor Young-Shik Lee of Hannam University observed that “America was viewed as the saviour country, that saved Korea...Korea was very grateful, especially after the Korean War for receiving significant economic aid.”<sup>8</sup> As a result, that generation of South Korean's remained loyal to and supportive of the United States Forces Korea (USFK) in their country.

---

<sup>6</sup> Snyder, S. and Byun, S. (2011). 'Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations', *The Rusi Journal*, 156(2), p.75.

<sup>7</sup> Stevens, W. (2006). *Is U.S. Forces Korea Still Needed on the Korean Peninsula?*, Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> Evans, L. (2003). International Institute, *The Rise of Anti-Americanism in South Korea*, Los Angeles, UCLA.

The lasting effects of loyalty and gratitude from the Korean War generation and the rapid economic growth achieved by the U.S. backed authoritarian government, meant that the U.S. – ROK alliance was considered an essential element of South Korean development. As stated by Nae-Young Lee, the alliance “served as an effective security framework to deter North Korean aggression. In addition, it has helped to create a stable environment for economic dynamism and democratic consolidation within South Korea.”<sup>9</sup> This stability lasted until the U.S. backed authoritarian system of leadership underwent democratic transition as a result of mass protests in the 1980s. The popular opinion in Korea during this period was that the U.S. was propping up the military government to serve its own interest. As anti-American sentiment grew, the U.S. managed to retain support amongst the Korean people by not actively interfering with the transition to democracy while remaining a firm ally. This maintained the solidarity of the alliance throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and allowed the USFK to remain in an operational capacity during the transition to democracy.

Even with the USFK remaining, the U.S. noted that the protests demonstrated how the people’s voice in South Korea had the ability to instigate reform. As democracy flourished in South Korea, the U.S. – ROK alliance remained steady while many political firsts for the nation occurred. Kim Young-Sam, the first non-military president was democratically elected and Kim Dae-Jung became the first leader of the opposition to be elected president. The inauguration of Kim Dae-Jung also marked a significant shift in political ideology, with the progressive former political activist and prisoner departing from the conservative background of previous administrations. His election demonstrated a shift in public opinion towards a more liberal view on both the economy and foreign policy. Since the forced democratisation of South Korea, the nation’s leadership could not take public opinion lightly as they realised the greater influence and voice of the people. Amidst strong public support, Kim’s ‘Sunshine Policy’ proposed greater engagement with the North, while re-addressing the nation’s relationship with its traditional ally the U.S. On a wave of progressive popular support, the role and necessity of the USFK began to be questioned.

---

<sup>9</sup> Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance*, Korea University: Department of Political Science, Workshop Paper 05/05, p.2.

The election of Roh Moo-Hyun was seen as a sign of the South Korean public's approval of Kim Dae-Jung and his Sunshine Policy. Roh was a former member of Kim's cabinet who pledged to continue to uphold the principles and intent of the Sunshine Policy through his own 'Peace and Prosperity Policy.' Public opinion on the U.S. – ROK alliance had fluctuated during Kim's presidency with surveys showing that a majority supported greater engagement with North Korea, but at the same time believed that U.S. – ROK ties needed to remain strong. However, the U.S. had become uneasy at Roh's stance on issues such as unconditional aid and engagement with North Korea, allied with a reduction in joint military exercises and defence discourse. Washington remained wary of the North's intentions and was vocal in its criticism of what it saw as Roh's divergence from what had been discussed in joint talks, effectively undermining U.S. strategy towards North Korea.<sup>10</sup> This was exacerbated by the fact that while inter-Korean relations were steadily improving, the North had taken an increasingly belligerent stance towards the U.S. – ROK alliance. This created a dilemma for Seoul and once again raised questions regarding the future of the USFK.

An unintended side-effect of the Sunshine Policy and the subsequent improvement in inter-Korean relations was its effect on public support for the U.S. – ROK alliance. Beginning with the first inter-Korea summit between Kim Dae-Jung and Kim Jong-Il in 2000, the South Korean public perceived the hard-line stance of George Bush's North Korea Policy as detrimental to the possibility of Korean reunification. Roh stated that "for the existence and prosperity of the nation, then sunshine policy is absolutely necessary, and thus must be carried on."<sup>11</sup> Although the new administration had gained popularity with the South Korean public by vowing to continue the progress made in inter-Korean relations, the fact that the U.S. opposed the continuation of unconditional engagement with the North promoted by the Sunshine Policy led to further diplomatic tensions. To gain further traction with the younger voters who were the main supporters of the anti-American movement, Roh openly criticised the U.S.' attempts to influence Korean policy.

---

<sup>10</sup> Kim, C. (2005). *The Roh Moo-Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea*, East-West Center, Working Paper 08/11, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p.11.

The rise in anti-American sentiment rose from the public's resentment against the overt U.S. influence in Korean foreign policy, a desire to have a more 'equal' partnership, and a high profile incident where two schoolgirls were accidentally killed by a U.S. armoured vehicle during a training exercise in Gwangjeok. Although the U.S. military made a formal apology to the families of the two victims, the incident served to inflame an already combustible atmosphere. Roh himself did little to dissuade the anti-American sentiment, provoking outrage when he went as far as to state that he "might favour neutrality if a war ever broke out between North Korea and the United States."<sup>12</sup> As a result of the growing tide of negativity towards the U.S., regular USFK joint military exercises were put on hold. Washington began to question whether the benefits outweighed the costs of pooling a large portion of defence resources in a country seemingly intent on downgrading a long-term alliance.

Although the political stage was where the friction was being played out, domestically the South Korean public were demonstrating their antagonism by holding anti-American protests and barring U.S. military personnel from certain areas. For the first time since the pro-democracy protests during the 1980s, the U.S – ROK alliance seemed to be weakening with the leaders of both countries refusing to budge on their respective positions regarding North Korea. The future of the USFK looked as unsteady as it had ever been, and the influence the people of South Korea had on the alliance was demonstrated again.

As the U.S. – ROK alliance began to weaken during Roh's presidency, political observers such as Doug Bandow of the Cato Institute believed that the "U.S. had no vital interests in Korea that justify huge costs and sacrifice" and that with the further rise in anti-American sentiment amongst the population "the two nations need to prepare for divorce."<sup>13</sup> With political pressure mounting in the U.S. against the USFK presence in the ROK because of Washington's continuing military commitment to the Iraq campaign, the anti-American sentiment from both President Roh and the Korean

---

<sup>12</sup> Levin, N. (2004). *Do the Ties Still Bind?: The U.S. – ROK Security Relationship after 9/11*, California: Rand, p.21.

<sup>13</sup> Bandow, D. (2005). *The Future of the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Equality, Mutuality, and International Security*, Korean Association of International Studies Conference, Conference Paper, Seoul, Republic of Korea 24 – 25 March 2005, p.12.

public provided further ammunition for those who believed the USFK was no longer feasible. The U.S. response to Roh's threat to weaken ties with Washington and maintain a neutral position between the U.S. and China on regional issues, was to cut 100 jobs of South Koreans working at U.S. military bases and withdraw key combat equipment. The official reason given was that these measures were implemented because of "reduced financial support from South Korea."<sup>14</sup> However the U.S. was clearly demonstrating that it would not tolerate the undermining of their contribution to ROK security.

However a major turning point in inter-Korean relations occurred when North Korea withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in January 2003, amidst reports that it had used financial aid received on humanitarian grounds to fund its nuclear programme.<sup>15</sup> Even with this renewed security threat from the North, Roh vowed to continue making inter-Korean reconciliation his top priority. In the past it had been a trend for the South Korean public's attitude towards the U.S. - ROK alliance to become positive when an external threat to national security arose.<sup>16</sup> The North Korean nuclear crisis proved the validity of this trend. A 2002 survey showed that 39% of South Koreans believed the U.S. was its biggest security threat compared to 33% for North Korea.<sup>17</sup> This is in stark contrast to a similar survey in 2005 after the nuclear crisis arose, where 88% believed that North Korea was the biggest threat to security. Another question in the 2005 survey showed that 36% of South Koreans wanted a stronger defence alliance with the U.S. compared to 20% of respondents in the 2002 survey.<sup>18</sup> With concern over the nuclear threat shifting support back towards the U.S. – ROK defence relationship, the USFK once again became a symbol of solidarity and security.

It could be seen that during the Peace and Prosperity period, the reason for friction

---

<sup>14</sup> Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance*, Korea University: Department of Political Science, Workshop Paper 05/05, p.2.

<sup>15</sup> Kim, C. (2005). *The Roh Moo-Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea*, East-West Center, Working Paper 08/11, p.13.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance*, Korea University: Department of Political Science, Workshop Paper 05/05, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> Kim, C. (2005). *The Roh Moo-Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea*, East-West Center, Working Paper 08/11, p.16.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance*, Korea University: Department of Political Science, Workshop Paper 05/05, p.4.

within the U.S. – ROK alliance was the “diverging perception and policy stance of the two governments toward North Korea. Considering the fact that the South Korean public shows their support for the U.S. – ROK alliance to deter North Korean threats, the policy stance of the Roh government does not seem to adequately represent the policy preferences of the Korean public.”<sup>19</sup> This divergence in leadership direction did not always correspond with public opinion on North Korea or the U.S. – ROK alliance. With the increased threat to national security in the form of a nuclear capable North, the South Korean public became increasingly supportive of the USFK and its ability to act as a threat deterrence. It was the ability of the USFK to provide security on the Korean Peninsula that cemented the legitimacy of the alliance in the minds of the South Korean public. This paved the way for critics of both the Sunshine and Peace and Prosperity policies, to campaign for a change in foreign policy during the 2007 presidential election.

As it transpired, the conservative Grand National Party (GNP) returned to power in a landslide victory. Lee Myung-Bak had correctly gauged the rising tide of public opinion against the perceived incompetence of Roh’s government as well as the belief that the Peace and Prosperity Policy was not providing the security and deterrence against the nuclear threat of North Korea. Lee could see that there was a wave of negative public opinion surrounding the principles of the Sunshine Policy. He quickly took advantage of the opinion swing back towards a conservative foreign policy, stating his intention to take a hard-line approach towards the North’s nuclear ambitions and to improve ties with the US that had been damaged during Roh’s tenure. Public opinion polls conducted during the lead up to the 2007 presidential election demonstrated that the majority of the South Korean public favoured a return to a hard-line stance. They believed sanctions against the North were a necessary measure forced by the North’s refusal to adhere to the region’s nuclear non-proliferation treaty. A key part of this conservative policy was to maintain the combat power of the USFK.

The caveat to this support was the fear that imposing such sanctions would provoke the North into further military aggression. As a result, the public believed the U.S. –

---

<sup>19</sup> Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance*, Korea University: Department of Political Science, Workshop Paper 05/05, p.15.

ROK alliance was as important as ever because of the security and deterrence factor the USFK presence on the peninsula provided. Anti-American sentiment dropped dramatically with the return of the conservative GNP under Lee Myung-Bak, whose election campaign centred on strengthening the U.S. – ROK alliance in the wake of North Korea's developing nuclear capabilities. The landslide win in the 2008 presidential election demonstrated the public support for Lee's MB Policy and his plans to strengthen U.S. - ROK relations, introduce a hard-line foreign policy and impose sanctions on the North in response to their nuclear non-proliferation refusal.<sup>20</sup> The U.S. was supportive of the MB Policy, and the damage to the U.S. – ROK alliance caused by policy disagreements during the sunshine era began to mend.

The positive trajectory that the U.S. – ROK alliance followed after Lee's inauguration and the launch of his MB Policy, continued with the drafting of the KORUS FTA and talks to increase the frequency of joint military training on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>21</sup> Although economic analysts forecast the positive effects the KORUS FTA would have on domestic economic activity and a greater demand for South Korean made exports goods, the decision to end a ban on U.S. beef exports was a key aspect of the FTA that caused a national outcry. While the negative reaction of the North in response to the hard-line MB Policy led to security concerns and a renewed public support for the U.S. military presence in Korea, the beef export agreement led to renewed anti-Americanism. The Korean media coverage centred on the poor quality of U.S. beef that was reflected in its cheaper price, as well as the negative effect it would have on the Korean beef industry. Large scale public demonstrations against the agreement had the desired result, as both countries administrations revised the agreement in June 2008 to limit sales of U.S. beef to cattle less than 30 months old.<sup>22</sup> Public demonstrations began to wane and more significantly demonstrated how influential public opinion had become in terms of the U.S. – ROK alliance and the continued presence of the USFK.

---

<sup>20</sup> Kwon, H. (2010). 'Economic Perceptions and Electoral Choice in South Korea: The Case of the 2007 Presidential Election', *The Pacific Review*, 23(2), p.6.

<sup>21</sup> Han, S. (2011). *The State of the U.S. – ROK Alliance*, Korea Programme Essay, Council on Foreign Relations Press, p.1.

<sup>22</sup> Nicksch, L. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, 01/10, p.15.

## The Evolution of the U.S. – ROK Military Alliance

From the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the U.S. military alliance with South Korea has remained steady, even with fluctuating domestic politics and attitudes towards North Korea. When evaluating the future of this military alliance, the U.S. identified five issues that have the potential to alter the alliance structure and the overall U.S. military presence in South Korea. They are; the relocation of U.S. troops in South Korea to strategic areas of the Korean peninsula, changing the command structure from the current joint forces command to an independent co-operative command, the reduction of U.S. ground forces in South Korea, a greater South Korean contribution to U.S. led overseas operations, and a host nation contribution to the cost of maintaining a U.S. garrison in South Korea. These issues arose from a number of factors both strategic and political. They included the deterioration of conventional North Korean land forces as resources were pulled towards nuclear development and advanced weaponry, the anti-U.S. military protests that followed the launch of the Sunshine Policy, and U.S. military commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>23</sup>

The military alliance between the U.S. and ROK had suffered more than the economic relationship, during the two progressive presidential terms of Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun. Kim introduced the ground-breaking Sunshine Policy which advocated unconditional engagement with the North, with the ultimate goal of peaceful reunification. Roh's Peace and Prosperity Policy was a continuation of the Sunshine Policy's strategy towards the North and a domestic refocus on economic growth rather than military capability. Although continuing to push for stronger diplomatic ties with Seoul, this new policy direction was a concern for Washington with open criticism from Roh in particular threatening the future of the USFK. The U.S. believed that the unconditional engagement was allowing the North to receive the benefits of economic assistance without offering any compromise in return. These fears were realised when it was discovered that the North has reneged on the terms of an East Asian Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty by developing a nuclear weapons development programme.<sup>24</sup> At a time when the U.S. – ROK military alliance

---

<sup>23</sup> Nicksch, L. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, 01/10, p.16.

<sup>24</sup> Lee, N. (2005). 'Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK-US Alliance', *America in Question: Korean Democracy and the Challenge of Non-Proliferation on the Peninsula*, p.9.

was needed to neutralise a new security threat from the North, policy disagreements and U.S. military commitments to the Middle East meant that the reduction of USFK personnel and their role in South Korea seemed probable.

The 2004 programme to reduce the number of U.S. troops in South Korea aimed to withdraw approximately 10,000 troops and redistribute the remaining forces to hub bases such as Pyeongtaek. This was in line with strategic estimates that the likelihood of a ground force invasion through the DMZ was unlikely. The impact of the withdrawal of U.S. troops at such a vulnerable time was reflected in the opinions of the Korean public who began to turn against the policies of the Sunshine Policy and support the U.S. – ROK alliance in greater numbers.<sup>25</sup> Although the friction remained between Washington and the progressive South Korean government, President Bush accepted Roh's proposal to change the command structure of the joint U.S. – ROK armed forces from the Combined Forces Command (CFC) it had been since the armistice to a separate forces command structure. The structure changeover was scheduled for 2012 and signalled the first major defence agreement since the advent of the Sunshine Policy. However with the on-going threat of the North's nuclear ambitions and the South Korean public's backlash against the progressives, the return of the conservative GNP created a period of domestic transition that initiated a reassessment of the defence alliance and the role of the USFK.

Lee Myung-Bak's MB Policy, returned to the conservative principles that had dominated policy decision-making during the presidency of Park Chung-Hee. However the level of adherence was much less severe than the absolute anti-North Korean attitude prevalent at the time. Even with the MB Policy pushing for a closer alliance with the U.S and a hard-line stance towards the North, engagement was encouraged as long as there was compromise on key issues such as nuclear non-proliferation.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. welcomed the return of a conservative government as the foreign policy was more in line with its own strategy on North Korea and Asia as a whole. As the two partners' policy vision merged once more, joint future planning for

---

<sup>25</sup> Moon, K. (2011). *South Korean Public Opinion Trends and Effects on the ROK-US Alliance*, Seoul: The Centre for US-Korea Policy, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Kim, S. (2009). 'Korea's Conservatives Strike Back: An Uncertain Revolution in Seoul', *Global Asia*, 3(1), p.78.

the USFK began to progress. Even with the alliance becoming stronger than it had been during the consecutive progressive governments, decisions on the force command structure and reduction of U.S. forces was postponed in light of the nuclear security threat from the North and the requirement for more troops in Afghanistan.

The withdrawal plan had originally looked to reduce U.S. troop level from 37,000 to 25,000 by the end of 2008, with 3,600 man brigade sent to Iraq as part of the first stage of reductions.<sup>27</sup> However during talks with Washington, Lee requested that any further reductions be delayed until a clear joint defence strategy was developed and implemented. With the U.S. – ROK alliance at its highest point since South Korean democratisation, Washington agreed to delay the reduction but in return expected a greater contribution to the alliance from the ROK. Although the delay in making a decision appeared to place the future of the USFK in limbo, the joint defence planning showed that the USFK remained a key element of the alliance's strategy.

President Obama visited South Korea in 2009 to discuss the U.S. – ROK defence relationship, the North Korea conundrum, and the KORUS FTA. Along with cementing the date of the operational command transfer from 2012 to 2015, Obama requested a South Korean ground troop contribution to Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> In response to the firm commitment by Obama to continue the strong U.S. – ROK defence alliance, the South Korean government announced that they would forward for approval to the National Assembly, plans to send a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) of approximately 300 troops to Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> This PRT would be located north of Kabul and be under the command of the U.S. led International Security Assistance Force Headquarters.

In addition to the agreement to send troops to Afghanistan, the South Korean government also pledged to increase their direct financial contribution for the maintenance of U.S. forces to 42% of the total cost (US\$571 million).<sup>30</sup> This would

---

<sup>27</sup> Jung, S. (2009). 'Obama Hints at Rotating Troops in South Korea to Afghanistan', *Korea Times*, 20 Nov.

<sup>28</sup> Han, S. (2011). *The State of the U.S. – ROK Alliance*, Korea Program Essay, Council on Foreign Relations Press, p.1.

<sup>29</sup> Kim, D. (2009). 'U.S. Intelligence Chief Discusses Seoul Troop Dispatch to Afghanistan', *Korea Times*, 27 Nov.

<sup>30</sup> Nicksch, L. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, 01/10, p.18.

increase by 4% each year until it reached the 50% threshold requested by Washington.<sup>31</sup> By making a commitment to reciprocate their defence interests, the alliance partners had effectively guaranteed their commitment to the USFK. Both of these major agreements signalled the dedication of both nations to strengthen the U.S. – ROK alliance and maintain a strong U.S. defence presence in South Korea.

### The New U.S. Defence Strategic Plan and its Effect on the USFK

In early 2012, President Obama briefed the Department of Defence on his ten year defence strategic plan. The plan along with an evaluation of the global security situation was compiled in a presidential report titled ‘Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence.’ The plan was a combined effort involving close consultation between the President, security advisors, and the various service chiefs. The report proposed a new structure and role for the U.S. military over the next decade in light of the projected global security climate. With this in mind, the report outlines the aims to create a military that is “smaller and leaner, but agile, flexible, ready, and technologically advanced.”<sup>32</sup> Along with the global security climate, the other major factor considered when creating the ten year plan was the global economic downturn and its enforced fiscal austerity. As a result, “the U.S. defence budget will be cut by \$487 billion and the sizes of the Army and Marine Corps will shrink by 80,000 and 14,000 respectively over the next ten years.”<sup>33</sup>

The dramatic spending and force reductions have been met with concern and criticism from various groups in congress on both ends of the political spectrum. The conservative faction of the Republican Party was concerned about how the reduced defence spending and size would affect domestic security. On the other hand, liberal elements in congress supported even greater cuts to spending and personnel. The withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan meant that defence budget cuts could be justified and funnelled towards domestic issues such as the health system.<sup>34</sup> The

---

<sup>31</sup> Nicksch, L. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, 01/10, p.19.

<sup>32</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.1.

<sup>33</sup> Barnes, J. & Hodge, N. (2012). ‘Military Faces Historic Shift’, *Wall Street Journal*, 01/12.

<sup>34</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.2.

differing opinions of domestic politics in the U.S. were also reflected in the reaction of South Korean interest groups. Supporters of the reduction or withdrawal of U.S. troops saw the ten year plan as a sign that the USFK would reduce in number as Washington abandons “outdated Cold war-era systems of large conventional ground forces, no longer sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations.”<sup>35</sup> Supporters of the continuing U.S. – ROK defence relationship in the form of the USFK considered the report with trepidation, fearing a USFK downsize would compromise security during a period of upheaval on the Korean Peninsula.

The South Korean media began to focus on what it believed were the four issues the ten year plan would create for security policy-makers if implemented. The first of these issues was how the potential reduction in USFK troops would affect the security situation in Korea. The second was closely linked to the reduction of USFK troops, as it centred on how the surge plan for USFK forces in the event of a North Korean invasion would work with a smaller force. The third issue looked at how the USFK would need to be structured to enable strategic flexibility in light of the report’s plan to make U.S. forces smaller but more agile, flexible, and quickly deployable.<sup>36</sup> The last issue was how the plan’s proposed budget cuts on U.S. defence spending would affect South Korea’s defence budget in light of Washington’s demand for financial burden sharing when it came to sustaining the USFK. All of these issues caused concern because to the South Korean public it appeared that the U.S. commitment to the USFK was waning.

While clarifying that the budget and troops cuts were inevitable following the scaling down of military operations in the Middle-East, the ten year plan stressed that U.S. strategic interests would shift to the Asia-Pacific in the near future. The rise of China and the growing importance of Asia in relation to the world economy behoved the U.S. to maintain a strong presence and involvement in the region. President Obama moved quickly to quash South Korean concerns on how the budget and troop cuts would flow on to the USFK. On a trip to Australia he announced plans to have a permanent U.S. Marine force stationed there, and stated that the U.S. “will be

---

<sup>35</sup> The U.S. Department of Defence, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence*, Jan 2012.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

strengthening our presence in the Asia-Pacific and budget reductions will not come at the expense of that critical region.”<sup>37</sup> In support of the president’s statements, the Secretary of Defence added that the U.S. would “increase its institutional weight and focus on enhanced presence, power projection, and deterrence in the Asia-Pacific.”<sup>38</sup> These statements combined with the ten year plan, further demonstrated the U.S.’ commitment to a stronger U.S. – ROK alliance that had been confirmed during bi-lateral talks in late 2011. No major reductions to the force level of the USFK were confirmed following meetings between high-ranking defence leaders. Therefore, the troop reductions would likely take place in Europe and the Middle-East rather than South Korea and Asia. The future strategic focus was now officially aimed towards the Asia-Pacific.

The current operational plan for a USFK surge in the event of a North Korean invasion was established prior to the release of the ten year plan. The surge had a deployment window of 90 days to mass 690,000 ground troops, 160 naval destroyers with crew, and 2,000 combat aircraft.<sup>39</sup> The feasibility of these numbers was questioned by critics once the War on Terror in Afghanistan massed military resources to the Middle-East. Even with the projected withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, the planned reduction of the U.S. Army and U.S. Marines has made these numbers impossible to achieve regardless of the timeframe. However, this has served to highlight the need for the USFK to maintain its combat strength in the face of U.S. military reductions as the region remains a high strategic priority. This may mean that the U.S. delays pulling out USFK troops in time for the South Korean military to maintain its steady growth in capability, so that the overall joint U.S. – ROK military force retains its combat power on the Korean Peninsula. This would require further joint strategic planning, as well as a firm commitment from Washington to maintain the USFK.

It is a significant statement of support for the future of the USFK that they remain committed to remaining in South Korea without a drastic reduction in troop numbers,

---

<sup>37</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Klingner, B. (2012). ‘The Missing Asia Pivot in Obama’s Defence Strategy’, Memo 3443, Heritage Foundation, p.2.

despite the streamlining of the defence force adopted by the ten year plan. As long as U.S. forces are stationed on the Korean Peninsula, then the U.S. government “cannot easily abandon its commitment to South Korean security because not only does the U.S. government cherish the effort and cost that it has already devoted to maintain the alliance for the past 60 years, but it would also have concerns about damage to other alliance relationships caused by withdrawing its commitment to South Korean security.”<sup>40</sup> However with public support for large scale military intervention having waned in the U.S. since the Afghanistan campaign, the USFK presence remains largely a strategic deterrence force rather than one poised for direct combat intervention. However, this does not make it any less tactically effective. With Washington having now shifted its strategic focus on East-Asia, the traditionally strong U.S. – ROK alliance has provided a solid platform for the U.S. to remain influential in the region while “improving the ability of South Korea to defend and deter against North Korean aggression.”<sup>41</sup>

The recurring theme of the ten year plan was that by downsizing the U.S. armed forces they would develop a more flexible and easily deployable force. This would be applicable to all U.S. forces stationed overseas. Increasing the strategic flexibility of the USFK however, raised two major security concerns with the South Korean government. The first was a practical concern that the frequent in and out of station movement to maintain force stability, would jeopardise the readiness and cohesion of the USFK. The second was the possibility that having a flexible US military presence as part of the USFK could lead to South Korean forces being drawn into an undesirable conflict. With the U.S. concentrating its military focus in the Asia-Pacific, the fear for Seoul is that any conflict in the Taiwan Strait would antagonise China and inadvertently draw the ROK into any power struggle between the U.S. and China.<sup>42</sup>

Through robust bi-lateral strategic planning concerning the future of the USFK, the security concerns were addressed by recognising the negative side-effects of

---

<sup>40</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.3.

<sup>41</sup> Manyin, M., Chanlett-Avery, E. & Nikitin, M. (2011). *U.S. – South Korea Relations*, CRS Report, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.6.

downsizing without reason and reaching a compromise on force reduction.<sup>43</sup> The excessive U.S. troop movement in and out of South Korea that was seen as unavoidable because of the operational commitment of U.S. troops in the Middle-East could now be addressed. A longer posting duration and an improvement in USFK stationing and conditions of service, were identified by both militaries' leaders as two critical adjustments that could promote deployment stability and reduce the personnel turnover. Money would be spent to improve the facilities of U.S. bases in South Korea in order to upgrade them as 'forward station garrisons' rather than 'rotationally deployed garrisons'.<sup>44</sup> The upgrade in facilities would be accompanied by a tour of duty normalisation, where a longer 36 month accompanied posting replaces the current 12 month unaccompanied model.

To resolve the second concern Washington agreed to consider South Korean concerns when becoming involved in regional conflicts, particularly in the Taiwan Strait. Mechanisms were put in place to ensure that the flexibility of the USFK to serve U.S. strategic interests was balanced by South Korea's primary concern over North Korean aggression and reluctance to antagonise China. The amount of effort put into planning to counter these concerns, demonstrated the importance placed on the USFK's survivability by U.S. military command.

With the U.S. government's commitment to reducing defence spending while maintaining a strong presence in the Asia-Pacific, it is likely that Washington will demand more financial burden-sharing from its alliance partners. Although the ten year plan does not specifically outline this intent, annual talks between the U.S. – ROK alliance have highlighted the need to synchronise co-operation during the USFK's transition. While the U.S. defence heads co-ordinate the handover of USFK operational command to South Korea by 2015 as well as realigning their forces in the region, it has requested that the South Korean government shoulders more of the financial burden of maintaining the USFK.

The specifics of cost-sharing between the USFK alliance partners, is determined in a five-yearly planning cycle called the Special Measures Agreement (SMA). Under

---

<sup>43</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.3.

most recent SMA in 2009 “South Korea has contributed directly about US\$743 million in 2011, which comprises about 42 percent of the total cost of maintaining the USFK. Pointing to South Korea’s advanced economic power, Washington continues to urge Seoul to increase its contribution.”<sup>45</sup> The announcement of Obama’s ten year plan before a firm commitment to by Seoul to increase its contribution, means that the pressure on South Korea to increase its cost share is likely to increase.

The current defence expenditure of South Korea stands at 2.7% of its GDP and is one of only four out of the 27 other NATO member states to be over 2%.<sup>46</sup> The two major ROK defence plans in place are the 2030 Defence Reformation Plan and the 2015 Operational Command Transfer. Both plans heavily involve co-operation and co-ordination with the U.S., and both require incremental increases in South Korean defence expenditure. The current uncertainty over the region’s security climate as a result of North Korean leadership change and China’s rise, combined with the importance placed on a strong U.S. – ROK defence alliance by the South Korean public, means that such spending increases can be justified. Not only were the increases justified by the political climate, they were necessary to make a strong statement of support for the ten year plan and the USFK’s role within it.

However with President Lee’s influence on the wane and the rise in popularity of the progressives who support a reduction in defence spending, it became “too burdensome both politically and fiscally for the South Korean government to pay a drastically increased larger cost sharing for the alliance.”<sup>47</sup> With the U.S. – ROK alliance committed to moving forward with the USFK under a common strategic goal, and the political uncertainty of the upcoming South Korean presidential election, the decision on how to spread the financial burden would have to wait until the next SMA. To counteract this uncertainty, a major part of the GNP’s current campaign consisted of a clear message that it was time for South Korea to stand up and take a greater responsibility for its national security.

### The North Korean Influence on the USFK

---

<sup>45</sup> Manyin, M., Chanlett-Avery, E. & Nikitin, M. (2011). *U.S. – South Korea Relations*, CRS Report, p.20.

<sup>46</sup> Kim, Y. (2012). *The New Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12, p.4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, p.5.

Kim Dae-Jung's Sunshine Policy sought to create a new pathway towards peaceful re-unification with the North, by meeting belligerence with diplomacy and positive engagement. Roh Moo-Hyun continued down this path with his Peace and Prosperity Policy. Advances were made in mutual diplomacy such as the historic inter-Korea summit in 2000, and South Korea continued to provide economic aid and diplomatic concessions to maintain the cordial relationship with the North. Kim believed that his Sunshine policy would be able to "win North Korea's trust with patience and generosity while ignoring the fundamental political dynamics on the Korean peninsula."<sup>48</sup>

The U.S. has expressed misgivings at this approach as it felt that the unconditional goodwill of the policy would allow the North to act without fear of reprisal. In spite of the diplomatic progress made on the back of the Sunshine Policy, the revelation that North Korea was developing a nuclear weapons programme, the continuing oppression of the North Korean population by its leadership, and the belligerent stance adopted by the North against the U.S. – ROK alliance meant that the U.S. fears were being realised. The initial optimism that had surrounded the Sunshine Policy was quickly replaced by the strong likelihood of failure.

The North's continuing defiance of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty meant that the U.S. policy towards Korea during the Clinton and Bush administrations concentrated on regional security and the repercussions of the North's nuclear ambitions. Washington's unease at the unconditional engagement approach of the Sunshine and Prosperity Policies meant that the U.S. – ROK alliance was weakened because of the difference in strategy regarding the North.<sup>49</sup> The U.S. had always maintained a wary and outspoken stance against the North's nuclear ambition and its proliferation of weapons. President Bush even went as far as including North Korea in the 'axis of evil' along with Iran and Iraq in his 2002 state of the union address.

In contrast, South Korea was considered its strongest ally in the region in military terms. As a result, the USFK became more than a force. It became a symbol of

---

<sup>48</sup> Lee, S. (2010). 'Engaging North Korea: The Clouded Legacy of South Korea's Sunshine Policy', *Asian Outlook*, 2(1), p.2.

<sup>49</sup> Kim, S. (2011). *Identity Prevails in the End: North Korea's Nuclear Threat and South Korea's Response in 2006*, East Asia Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper, 07/11, p.3.

defensive solidarity. The relationship has always been a point of conflict between the Korea's, with the North continually labelling the South a puppet of the U.S. and threatening to limit inter-Korea diplomacy unless the U.S. military's influence and presence on the Korean peninsula is reduced.

In 2003 because of growing concerns about North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, six-party talks were initiated to find a peaceful resolution to this threat to regional security. These talks included North and South Korea, the U.S., China, Japan, and Russia. The talks encompassed a range of issues from the nuclear ambitions of North Korea, diplomatic relations between the states, and the U.S. military presence in South Korea.<sup>50</sup> The first four rounds of talks yielded little progress as the supposedly allied member-states spent time pushing their own individualistic policy agenda towards North Korea.<sup>51</sup>

This lack of co-operation was exacerbated by the conflicting agendas of China and the U.S., who apart from being traditional allies of the opposing Koreas were both jockeying for position in the race for regional influence. China in particular were loath to overtly criticise the North Korean nuclear stance even under pressure from the other member-states, as it believed forcing the North into a corner would threaten regional stability by provoking an unpredictable reaction. While the U.S. has adhered to its policy of imposing sanctions on North Korea to demonstrate that such belligerent behaviour would have negative repercussions, China looked to persevere with the six-party talks to preserve regional stability in order to protect its own economic growth.<sup>52</sup>

A breakthrough seemed to have been reached by the fifth round of talks, when North Korea finally agreed to shut down its Yongbyun nuclear facility in exchange for emergency energy assistance and a relaxation of financial sanctions. On receipt of the first round of fuel assistance and a release of previously frozen North Korean banking accounts, the Yongbyun facility was shut down under the supervision of independent inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

---

<sup>50</sup> Lee, B. (2009). *Six Party Failure on North Korea*, Seoul: Institute for Peace and Co-operation, p.1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>52</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post-Crisis Era and Change in the Korea Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44.

However in early 2009 under international pressure not to do so, North Korea proceeded with what it termed a satellite launch. The international pressure was a result of evidence that the satellite test was in fact a test of the 'Taepyeong-2,' a long range ballistic missile.<sup>53</sup> The U.S. and South Korea reacted to this breach by seeking United Nations (U.N.) sanctions against the North. The U.N. Security Council approved a resolution that restricted the financial transactions of North Korean institutions. North Korea reacted by refusing to take part in any six-party talks or be bound by any six-party agreements in the future unless such sanctions were relaxed. This was accompanied by a pledge to expel IAEA inspectors and continue its nuclear programme, unless the U.S. drastically reduced its military forces in South Korea and around the Korean peninsula.<sup>54</sup>

Even with the unsettled regional environment caused by the breakdown of the six-party talks and subsequent resumption of North Korea's nuclear programme, the U.S. – ROK defence alliance continued to strengthen through a combination of joint strategic planning and reciprocation on common interests. Plans for large scale U.S. force reductions and relocations were put on hold, as the two allies looked to solidify in the face of North Korean belligerence. The plans to change the USFK command structure to allow South Korea greater operational control over its own forces continued to develop. Washington and Seoul released a joint forces vision statement that outlined the future plans for the alliance, with expansion onto the global stage and the transfer of USFK command high on the agenda.<sup>55</sup> This strategy was manifested in a series of joint military exercises in the region, where the ROK defence headquarters assumed operational command with an eye towards the future transition. It seemed as if the increased threat from North Korea had highlighted the importance of the USFK, and brought the two partners closer together through adversity.

In October 2009 somewhat surprisingly in light of the U.S. – ROK alliance's increasing show of force and solidarity, Kim Jung-Il requested bilateral U.S. – North

---

<sup>53</sup> Wiseman, P. (2009). 'World Powers Tense Over North Korean Missile Launch', *USA Today*, 04 June.

<sup>54</sup> Nicksch, L. Nicksch, L. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, 01/10, p.2.

<sup>55</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post-Crisis Era and Change in the Korea Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44.

Korean talks to negotiate the end of U.N. sanctions. Washington agreed to the talks and sent an envoy to North Korea. The message from Washington was clear and had the full support of the South Korean government. In order to lift the sanctions North Korea must “resume participation in the six-party talks and a renewed commitment to the September 2005 six-party statement calling for denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.”<sup>56</sup> The initial response from North Korea was positive although the envoy report indicated that the North was more interested in bi-lateral talks with the U.S. rather than returning to six-party talks. They were seeking “to draw the U.S. into negotiation of a bilateral peace treaty, move the nuclear issue into a bilateral peace treaty negotiation (ending the six-party talks), negotiate with the United States over elimination of the ‘U.S. nuclear threat’ (in effect a reduction of U.S. forces in Korea) and demand an early elimination of U.N. and U.S. sanctions against North Korea.”<sup>57</sup>

The negotiations appeared to signal a fresh start in the relationship between the U.S. – ROK alliance and North Korea. This was reflected by the lack of military provocation from North Korea during 2009, where land incursions into the demilitarised zone (which had occurred regularly during the 1990s and 2000s) were non-existent following the bilateral negotiations. However the sense of optimism was tempered by the North’s official withdrawal in 2003 from the nuclear non-proliferation treaty it had ratified in 1985.<sup>58</sup> These fears were confirmed on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 2010, when a South Korean naval corvette *Cheonan* was sunk in waters near the Northern limit line. Although the North immediately denied responsibility for the sinking, an independent U.N. investigation found that the damage to the hull that caused the corvette to sink was inflicted by a shockwave likely to be from a North Korean submarine torpedo.<sup>59</sup> As the tension and accusations flew following the U.N. findings, North Korea conducted an artillery shelling of the South Korean territory Yeonpyeong Island. The North justified this barrage as self-defence, an inevitable

---

<sup>56</sup> ‘U.S. to Have Bilateral talks with N Korea to Resume 6-Way Process’, *Asia Pulse*, September 14, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> ‘DPRK Foreign Ministry Proposes to Parties to Start of Peace Talks’, *North Korea Central News Agency*, January 11, 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Kim, S. (2011). *Identity Prevails in the End: North Korea’s Nuclear Threat and South Korea’s Response in 2006*, East Asia Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper, 07/11.

<sup>59</sup> Hong, J. (2011). ‘Remembering the Sinking of the South Korean Warship Cheonan, and the Way Forward for the Korean Peninsula’, *The Baltic Times*, 748(1), p.15.

retaliation for what it perceived as aggressive South Korean military manoeuvres close to North Korean waters.

These two incidents were considered significant flashpoints within the spectrum of inter-Korean relations, as they had significant security ramifications that extended beyond the Korean peninsula.<sup>60</sup> The shifting power dynamics of the region, the rise of China, uncertainty over North Korean leadership, and a shift in South Korean foreign policy all contributed to the increasing significance of inter-Korean conflict and the subsequent response of East-Asian stakeholders. The period also marked a sudden escalation of inter-Korean tension after almost a decade of relative cordiality that accompanied the two progressive governments of Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-Hyun. This raised the question of whether the shift in foreign policy to a hard-line North Korean and pro-U.S. stance that was initiated by Lee Myung-Bak's conservative GNP, had contributed to the escalation of tension.

The Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents and the key stakeholders' response to them "established a direct linkage between inter-Korean tensions and the broader regional environment, placing a spotlight on the quality of Sino-U.S. relations and regional crisis management capabilities."<sup>61</sup> Although U.S. – ROK discussions regarding the future of U.S. forces on the Korean peninsula had always taken regional factors into consideration, the events of Cheonan and Yeonpyeong demonstrated how the unpredictability of the North and the changing dynamics of East Asian relations, was forcing a review of the feasibility of U.S. forces in Korea. The response of China to these incidents and the North's claims that it was merely retaliating to South Korean security threats, served to demonstrate the motives of Chinese policy on Korean issues and its reluctance to condemn actions by North Korea for the sake of regional stability. Throughout this crisis, people in South Korea remained relatively calm, believing in the abilities of the USFK to deter any further escalation. Many also believed that the incidents were pre-meditated by the North to show that it still had the conviction to strike if it felt justified.

---

<sup>60</sup> Snyder, S. and Byun, S. (2011). 'Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations, *The Rusi Journal*, 156(2), p.74.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p.74.

The Defence Reformation Plan 307 was launched in 2010 as a direct response to the increased North Korean aggression that culminated in the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents. The plan was drafted in consultation with key USFK leaders and used the new U.S. inspired model of force flexibility. It looked at enhancing collaboration among the four branches of the ROK defence force in addition to improving synchronisation with the U.S. force component of the USFK. This approach “calls for a more flexible posture to respond to future attacks, as opposed to the ‘total war’ scenario that has driven much of Seoul’s defence planning in the past.”<sup>62</sup> The future of the USFK is more secure with a common strategic direction agreed upon by both alliance partners. It is the renewed stability and purpose of the USFK that has led to the previously reticent National Assembly approving a 6.2% increase in defence budget for 2011.<sup>63</sup> By sparking a security conundrum on the Korean Peninsula through a series of military attacks, North Korea has inadvertently made an already strong U.S. – ROK defence alliance even stronger and more united in its vision for the future.

### The Effect of Kim Jong-Il’s Death

The death of Kim Jong-Il in late 2011 following 17 years of autocratic rule in North Korea created a wave of uncertainty on the Korean peninsula, raising questions about the effect it would have on the region and its stakeholders. After a long mourning period and speculation regarding the leadership, Kim Jong-Il’s son Kim Jong-Un was announced as his successor. Once the announcement was made, President Lee immediately stated that the inter-Korean relationship was at a crossroads, with an opportunity to move forward positively. However in line with his stance since his inauguration, he placed a caveat on the prospect of relations improving by stating that North Korean sincerity was essential for the two Koreas to work together to open a new era.”<sup>64</sup> Lee was unwavering in his support of the stance the U.S. – ROK alliance had adopted, with the North Korean nuclear programme being the only barrier to resuming talks. Diplomacy and aid remained the incentives offered to the North, with Lee stating that South Korea is “ready to resolve security

---

<sup>62</sup> Manyin, M., Chanlett-Avery, E. & Nikitin, M. (2011). *U.S. – South Korea Relations*, CRS Report, p.19.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p.19.

<sup>64</sup> Coonan, C. (2012). ‘The Two Koreas are at a Turning Point, says South’s Leader’, *The Independent*, 03 Nov.

concerns on the Korean peninsula and provide assistance to revive North Korea's economy through agreements in the six-nation talks."<sup>65</sup> However, national security would not be compromised with the USFK ready and willing to counter any provocation by the North.

These comments proved that even after the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, the death of Kim Jong-Il has fortified optimism that inter-Korean relations can improve. While this optimism may remain, statements regarding defence have also demonstrated that both Seoul and Washington remain wary as to the intentions of the new leadership in North Korea so will look to maintain the ready state of the USFK.<sup>66</sup> However, North Korea has maintained frosty relations with the U.S. – ROK alliance since Lee's conservative government took charge and the U.N. imposed sanctions on them as a result of its nuclear activities. Lee's failure to send a condolence delegation to pay their respects to Kim Jong-Il seem to rally the North Korean media against the South Korean government once again, with threats of revenge and retribution aimed at the ROK. They have also urged the North Korean people to get behind the new leader Kim Jong-Un, partially assuaging fears that China, the U.S. and South Korea had of a leadership battle that could have severely de-stabilised the country. It is this instability in North Korea and the possible consequences that has made the consolidation of the USFK after its planned modification so important.

Predicting how the new leader of North Korea would approach inter-Korean relations was always going to be a challenge, with the North's unpredictability being proven on numerous occasions. Even with the antagonism from the North towards South Korea since Lee Myung-Bak's conservatives returned to government and took a hard-line stance on inter-Korean relations, not many observers predicted the events of 2010. The Cheonan sinking and Yeonpyeong Island shelling had followed a relatively calm period on the Korean peninsula following the launch of the Sunshine Policy, with antagonism more likely to be manifested in political speeches and diplomatic conflict.<sup>67</sup> The two acts of war showed that North Korea's biggest danger apart from

---

<sup>65</sup> Coonan, C. (2012). 'The Two Koreas are at a Turning Point, says South's Leader', *The Independent*, 03 Nov.

<sup>66</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44, p.6.

<sup>67</sup> Ko, B. (2011). *The Prospects for East Asian Security in the Post-Crisis Era*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 43.

its nuclear ambitions was its unpredictability. They justified both acts by citing self-defence, with U.S. – ROK naval manoeuvres off the Korean coast regarded as a security threat. However, such USFK exercises were a regular occurrence raising the question of whether the incidents were used to gain leverage for future negotiations regarding aid. What the unpredictability created was the need for a stable USFK, able to execute multiple contingencies that could react to all North Korean courses of action.

As the dust settled on the incidents of 2010, inter-Korean relations returned to the status quo of antagonism accompanied by threats of retribution. The death of Kim Jong-Il and the subsequent announcement of Kim Jong-Un as the North's Supreme Commander created an environment of uncertainty on the peninsula. A long period of national mourning did nothing to indicate how the new leader would approach inter-Korean issues. North Korea's position became clear after strongly worded statements from Pyongyang were directed at South Korea during North Korea's traditional New Year's Day message. North Korea reiterated its previous refusal to deal with Lee Myung-Bak and his conservative government, after Lee's MB Policy cancelled the unconditional economic and food aid to the North unless it dismantled its nuclear programme. North Korea also explicitly demanded the removal of U.S. troops stationed in Korea.<sup>68</sup> Yoo Ho-Yeol Professor of North Korean studies at Korea University noted that such threats immediately following the leadership succession, were "aimed at increasing leverage in future negotiations to revoke sanctions and wrest more aid."<sup>69</sup>

The U.S. has taken a cautious approach to North Korea, preferring to wait until the new leader has settled in and shown his intentions before making any decisions on diplomatic re-engagement and the resumption of aid. Of particular concern to the alliance was that the death of Kim Jong-Il might de-stabilise the North Korean military in the event of a power struggle. However the immediate elevation of Kim Jong-Un as the supreme military commander assuaged such fears. Although the power transfer from father to son seemed to be a seamless, Washington remains

---

<sup>68</sup> 'North Korea to Defend Kim Jong-Un to the Death', *Reuters*, 01 Jan 2012.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

alert to the situation, maintaining regular communications with its East-Asian allies while ensuring that the USFK remains on high alert.

The most obvious effect Kim Jong-Il's death has had on the USFK is that the proposed changes to its command structure and strategic placement have been delayed, until Kim Jung-Un makes his intentions towards the U.S. – ROK alliance known. Nonetheless in a show of solidarity, Washington released a statement saying “we remain committed to stability on the Korean peninsula, and to the freedom and security of our allies.”<sup>70</sup> This was obviously a direct rebuttal of Pyongyang's call for U.S. troop withdrawal from the Korean peninsula immediately following Kim Jong-Il's death. To accentuate its stance, the USFK was placed on high alert as Lee Myung-Bak called a National Security Council meeting to discuss contingency plans. The planned changes to the USFK were also shifted back to their original timelines.

While the U.S. has postponed its plans to donate a significant amount of aid until the leadership situation in North Korea has settled, China has taken the lead and donated a large quantity of food and fuel in a clear sign that it remain the North's closest ally and largest benefactor. Washington had been hoping that their offer of aid could be the catalyst to resume nuclear disarmament talks in light of Kim Jong-Il's poor health, with the North willing to suspend its uranium enrichment programme in exchange for food aid and a relaxation of economic sanctions.<sup>71</sup> However the U.S. – ROK alliance remains hopeful that Kim Jung-Un will be receptive to multi-lateral negotiations once he has settled into his role and received the aid promised to his father before he died, regardless of the continuing presence of the USFK.

However official statements broadcast on North Korean state television calling for all citizens to rally in support of the new leader against enemies of the state, cast doubts on the North's true intentions regarding its nuclear programme. These broadcasts followed on from earlier statements made by the North Korean Defence Ministry immediately following Kim Jong-Il's death, asking for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and a stop to what it believed was joint U.S. – ROK provocation towards their country. Statements such as these have led the U.S. – ROK alliance to believe that

---

<sup>70</sup> ‘U.S. Wary after Kim Jong-Il's Death’, *Associated Press*, 19 Dec 2011.

<sup>71</sup> Greenemeier, L. (2011). ‘North Korea's Nukes: Does the Death of Kim Jong-Il Mean Trouble for the U.S.?’, *Scientific American*, 12(1), p.2.

the leader may have changed but the ideology has not. This has placed plans for positive re-engagement with the North on hold and meant that the USFK's deterrence effect remains an important factor.

### The Effect of China's Rise on the Korean Defence Dynamic

One of the major foreign policy challenges for the U.S. concerning East-Asia is the need to recognise the rise of China's influence in the region, while maintaining a commitment to strengthening alliances with traditional allies such as South Korea. Conversely, China's foreign policy conundrum is that the U.S. remains a key contributor to the economic development that has led to its rising status and influence as a world power.<sup>72</sup> With China's exponential economic growth making it an economic superpower, the government has shifted its long-term policy focus onto increasing China's regional influence and becoming a leading political power in Asia. The U.S. retains a strong influence in Asia and alliances with Japan and South Korea have grown stronger in recent years, both economically and strategically. However with both Japan and South Korea pragmatically strengthening economic and diplomatic ties with China, the U.S. now sees the 'China factor' as the biggest challenge to its regional influence even with the improved U.S. – China relations in recent years.<sup>73</sup>

China and the U.S. have historically been on opposite sides of the inter-Korean conflict. During the Korean War, the U.S. encroachment onto Chinese territory as well as the shared communist ideology between North Korea and China led to China's entry into the conflict. During the period since the signing of the armistice and the end of the Cold War, relations had remained stable to the point of cordiality. However China's inherent mistrust of the 'U.S. hegemony' and a clash of strategic interests meant that any meaningful diplomacy did not develop.<sup>74</sup> The economic rise of China led to its growth and globalisation as a nation. China's development as a global force also led to greater diplomatic ties with U.S., as the two most powerful actors in the region looked at working together to promote regional stability in spite of

---

<sup>72</sup> Kim, T. (2000). *Balancing U.S. Alliance and Chinese Co-operation: Korea's Emerging Security Challenge*, Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China, U.S. Defence College, p.29.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, p.29.

<sup>74</sup> Khoo, N. (2011). 'Fear Factor: Northeast Asian Responses to China's Rise', *Asian Security*, 7(2), p.97.

fundamental differences.<sup>75</sup> The Korean peninsula and its surrounding issues are central to the strategic agendas of both China and the U.S. in East Asia.

Even with the conflicts of the past, both the U.S. and China have officially maintained that they share common interests concerning Korea, such as stability on the peninsula and meaningful diplomacy to improve relations between the North and the South. However, “in light of their vast differences in strategic visions, political systems, social values, and objectives, let alone diverging interests over bilateral and regional issues, it is far more logical and more empirically valid to say that the United States and China are likely to remain divergent over peninsula issues as well.”<sup>76</sup>

China has been able to wield a greater influence in East-Asia because of the economic interdependence that now exists between China and other East-Asian states of influence such as South Korea and Japan. As a result of this interdependence the actions and decisions of Beijing are now affecting all aspects of policy making for these East-Asian states, not just economic policy. Although this has not had a detrimental effect on U.S. security ties with South Korea and Japan, it has created a policy issue concerning how the alliances deal with a “modernising and more powerful Chinese military financed by the growing Chinese economy.”<sup>77</sup>

The growing relationship between South Korea and China has not led to a corresponding drop in the strength of the U.S. – ROK alliance. It is also notable for its total lack of military co-operation. China seems to maintain a wary but diplomatic stance concerning the future of the USFK. It has however demonstrated the pragmatism of international relations between East-Asian states by providing “a model for how deepening economic relations can bring two capitals together politically.”<sup>78</sup> To put the economic relationship in context, by the mid-2000s China had become South Korea’s largest trading partner and largest buyer of South Korean exported goods.

---

<sup>75</sup> Chanlett-Avery, E. and Nanto, D. (2006). *The Rise of China and its Effect on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea: U.S. Policy Choices*, CRS Report for Congress, 01/06, p.4.

<sup>76</sup> Kim, T. (2000). *Balancing U.S. Alliance and Chinese Co-operation: Korea’s Emerging Security Challenge*, Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China, U.S. Defence College, p.30.

<sup>77</sup> Chanlett-Avery, E. and Nanto, D. (2006). *The Rise of China and its Effect on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea: U.S. Policy Choices*, CRS Report for Congress, 01/06, p.3.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p.24.

Lee Myung-Bak's successful efforts to positively develop the U.S. – ROK defence relationship had little effect on South Korea's improving economic and diplomatic relationship with China. This has been supplemented by regular public visits by Chinese leaders to Seoul to consolidate the shifting image of China as an archaic, ideologically incompatible state, to a "benign, pragmatic economic partner."<sup>79</sup> However, even with relations at a political level continually improving there have been underlying concerns amongst the South Korean public regarding Sino – ROK relations. With the growing military capability of China resulting from massive financial investment, South Koreans are asking questions of its motives as well as questioning the ability of the USFK to match such a growing force if necessary. Although not officially stated, China's rapidly expanding military has become a major consideration for the future strategic posture of the USFK.

The tensions caused by these concerns were manifested in controversies surrounding historical issues, such as the assertion by Chinese politicians that the 'Koguryo Kingdom (37 B.C. – 668 A.D.)' was a part of Chinese territory and not an independent Korean entity as Koreans claimed. This fed into South Korean paranoia and led to accusations of Chinese hegemonic ambitions in Asia. Combined with concerns over continuing Chinese support for North Korea, the image of China as a benevolent economic partner began to erode.<sup>80</sup> With public outrage rising on both sides, officials from Beijing and Seoul worked together to resolve the controversy and Beijing sent an envoy to negotiate an agreement. A five-point agreement was subsequently drawn-up which managed to placate Korean concerns. Even with its resolution, the controversy proved that underlying tensions still existed and could lead to a shift away from the close relationship in recent years. This was highlighted by a Rand Corporation study that noted "growing concerns and anxieties about Chinese economic policymaking and diplomacy show that the honeymoon in Chinese – South Korean relations is decidedly over."<sup>81</sup>

When discussing the security environment on the Korean peninsula, the effect of

---

<sup>79</sup> Kim, T. (2000). *Balancing U.S. Alliance and Chinese Co-operation: Korea's Emerging Security Challenge*, Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China, U.S. Defence College, p.32.

<sup>80</sup> Snyder, S. (2004). 'A Turning Point for China – Korea Relations?', *Comparative Connections*, 6(3), p.407.

<sup>81</sup> Madeiros, E. et al. (2008). *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*, Santa Monica: RAND Monographs, p.17.

China's long-term strategy to increase its influence on the region and push the U.S. to the periphery must be examined. China has at times adopted a confrontational posture towards the U.S. and its hard-line stance towards the North, which has served to exacerbate the disagreements on issues such as the North Korean nuclear issue. Recent criticism of U.S. moves to expand its military influence in the Asia-Pacific region through joint military exercises with East Asian allies, demonstrates China's desire to reduce the influence of the U.S. in the region. However as regional stability is high on strategic China's agenda, outright criticism of U.S. – ROK plans to solidify the USFK's future and increase its capability has not been forthcoming. The two military entities merely remain in a wary state of fake indifference.

It can be seen then that in spite of the advances made by China in building relationships with East-Asian partners, they still lag behind the U.S. as preferred bilateral alliance partners. South Korea in particular has been looking to “maintain good relations on the basis of, rather than instead of a close relationship with the United States.”<sup>82</sup> Evidence of this preference could be seen in a 2009 CSIS survey where 94% of South Korean respondents felt that the U.S. were a greater force for peace in Asia compared to the 6% who responded in favour of China.<sup>83</sup> In addition to this, South Korean's believed that the U.S “will continue to be the main source of dissuasion, deterrence, and defence” in the region.<sup>84</sup> With the future of the USFK seemingly secure, the future direction of the U.S. – ROK – China triumvirate rests on its respective reactions to North Korean policy.

### The Effect of Domestic Politics on the USFK

The upcoming 2012 presidential election in South Korea will be conducted during a period of upheaval on the Korean Peninsula, with the leadership change in North Korea, the passage of the KORUS FTA, and the re-emergence of the progressive Democratic Party (DP) making the outcome unpredictable. Elections will be conducted for both the National Assembly and presidency in South Korea, with the maximum presidential term of five years having been served by Lee Myung-Bak. Lee

---

<sup>82</sup> Madeiros, E. et al. (2008). *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*, Santa Monica: RAND Monographs, p.19.

<sup>83</sup> Bates, G., et al. (2009). *Strategic Views on Asian Regionalism: Survey Results and Analysis*, Washington D.C.: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, p.6.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p.23.

has put his weight behind Park Geun-Hye as his preferred GNP presidential candidate with software company CEO Ahn Cheol-Soo the most serious rival for the candidacy. However the candidacy race is the least of the GNPs problems with approval rating steadily declining during Lee's term to the extent that polls are showing greater support for the DP. The stable economy remains the strongest factor in favour of the GNP, while polls also show that support for the U.S. – ROK defence alliance remains strong in the wake of uncertainty regarding North Korea's intentions after its leadership transfer. However the controversy over the KORUS FTA as well as national unrest at the growing unemployment rate and rich-poor gap, has allowed the DP to become a legitimate challenger to the GNP.

South Korea managed to weather the global economic crisis through a combination of fiscal frugality and maintaining a strong trade surplus on the back of key exports such as electronics and automobiles. However the government focus on supporting large conglomerates, rising inflation, a growing unemployment rate, and growing economic inequality, led to a swing in public opinion towards a more liberal public policy.<sup>85</sup> A study by Hankyoreh newspaper showed that conglomerate profits rose by 73% in 2011, while workers' incomes rose only 1.3% over the same period.<sup>86</sup> The result of by-elections in 2011 demonstrated this discontent towards the GNP with the DP scoring significant victories in areas such as Bundang, a traditional GNP stronghold. The poor performance in the polls has had repercussions on the U.S. – ROK alliance, with the KORUS FTA and key defence strategy plans on hold as the pro-U.S. GNP hastily strategized a campaign to counter their slide in popular support.

In recent South Korean presidential elections, the key issue has usually been the economy and how it should be managed to improve the people's standard of living. However the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents raised the question of whether the hard-line approach of the MB Policy is one that should be persevered with. The unpredictability demonstrated by the North in those incidents has exacerbated the security concerns of South Korea.<sup>87</sup> The North Korean leadership succession to Kim

---

<sup>85</sup> Borowiec, S. (2011). 'A Wake-Up Call for South Korea's Grand National Party', *Global Asia*, p.1.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>87</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44, p.6.

Jung-Un has only added to this uncertainty.<sup>88</sup> The strong statements of support for Kim Jong-Un on North Korean state television has raised fears that the new regime will “conduct another round of provocations, including a third nuclear test, to escalate tensions and distract the country’s attention from internal failures, as well as boost internal unity for the succession to Kim Jung-Un.”<sup>89</sup>

As a result, the defence issue has risen in priority compared to previous election campaigns where the primary focus has been the economy and associated standard of living. The support for the U.S. – ROK defence alliance remains high because of the guaranteed security provided by such a powerful ally. Surveys showed that less than a quarter of those polled believe that the country’s military could deter North Korean aggression without U.S. help.<sup>90</sup> Therefore because of the influence of popular opinion in South Korea, the planned changes to the USFK command structure and resourcing is likely to be maintained regardless of the election result.

However polls also showed that even with popular support for the USFK, the public believe that the U.S. wields too much influence on what should be an equal partnership.<sup>91</sup> The public believes having a government that is an equal alliance partner, will give their country the freedom to compromise and negotiate on issues that the U.S. may disagree on. This could be seen in the controversy surrounding the KORUS FTA and North Korean flashpoint incidents, where the hard-line strategy of the U.S. – ROK alliance polarised sections of the population. The population maintained support for the U.S. – ROK alliance’s refusal to back down against North Korean aggression. However most believe that diplomacy must be the first option to resolve an issue before choosing to retaliate, which may lead to an escalation of conflict. The pragmatic nature of domestic politics in South Korea has meant that any major changes to the U.S. – ROK alliance such as the KORUS FTA and USFK command handover, will be implemented after the National Assembly elections.<sup>92</sup> In such a pivotal period for domestic politics, the incumbent GNP will not risk the

---

<sup>88</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula’s Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44, p.7.

<sup>89</sup> Cho, S. (2011). ‘2012: Ripe for a Flashpoint?’, *The Diplomat*.

<sup>90</sup> Woo, J. (2011). ‘South Korea’s Shifting Politics’, *The Diplomat*.

<sup>91</sup> Han, S. (2011). *The State of the U.S. – ROK Alliance*, Korea Program Essay, Council on Foreign Relations Press, p.1.

<sup>92</sup> Hamisevicz, N. (2011). ‘12 Things on the Korean Peninsula to Watch for in 2012’, *The Peninsula*, Korea Economic Institute.

possibility of voter disillusionment over controversial decisions just as a new government will not risk changing decisions made with the blessing of the majority.

With major agreements on the KORUS FTA and USFK structural change already signed off, the U.S. has been looking with interest at the domestic political situation in South Korea. The U.S. – ROK alliance had gone from strength to strength following the incidents of 2010, as Presidents Lee and Obama continued to co-ordinate a joint response strategy as well as a long-term security plan. The alliance had mobilised the USFK rapidly, working “to stage major exercises to signal alliance solidarity and bolster deterrence. The allies reviewed procedures and defences and took steps to ensure joint deterrence in the Yellow Sea.”<sup>93</sup> Lee and his MB Policy had placed a major emphasis on closer ties with the U.S., looking to repair the damage that successive progressive governments had inflicted on the alliance through their insistence on unconditional engagement with the North without U.S. consultation. Even with the inroads made into synchronising the alliance’s strategic direction, the strong possibility that the DP wins the upcoming election could mean a return to the Sunshine Policy abandoned by Lee and the GNP.<sup>94</sup>

The Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents combined with the uncertainty over both Korea’s future leadership, contributed to the decision to postpone the transfer of USFK operational command to the ROK by a minimum of three years.<sup>95</sup> Even with the delay, the U.S. remains committed to the USFK modification plan. Both governments are determined to maintain the new schedule for command handover and force restructuring. This issue is one of the few on the election agenda that both the GNP and DP have agreed upon, albeit for different reasons. The GNP believes that transferring command will allow South Korea to “take the lead in its own defence, with full support from its American ally. Doing so will enhance South Korean military leadership and capabilities and strengthen the domestic political basis of support in Korea for a continuing alliance relationship with the United States.”<sup>96</sup>

---

<sup>93</sup> Noerper, S. (2011). ‘New Beginnings in the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Recommendations to the Obama Administration’, *The Korea Society*, p.6.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.8.

<sup>95</sup> Noerper, S. (2011). ‘New Beginnings in the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Recommendations to the Obama Administration’, *The Korea Society*, p.7.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p.7.

The DNP maintains that it supports a continuing alliance with the U.S. However it believes that taking over sole operational control of the USFK will allow greater decision-making freedom without pressure from Washington, as well as reducing the number of U.S. troops on the Korean Peninsula. This would create a spirit of goodwill towards Kim Jung-Un's North Korea by satisfying one of the conditions it asked for, in exchange for renewed bilateral discussions on inter-Korean issues. The defence budget has also been a point of conjecture for the DNP, who believe that the maintenance of the USFK must not be at the expense of domestic spending on areas of concern. While it acknowledges the security provided by the alliance is important with the unpredictable leadership situation in North Korea, costs signed off by the GNP such as U.S. troop relocation have been criticised as unnecessary. Washington watches the election campaign with trepidation at the possibility of a DP win, with U.S. defence analysts believing that such a result could set back the progress made since the launch of the MB Policy in 2007.<sup>97</sup>

#### Arguments Against the USFK Remaining on the Korean Peninsula

Since the signing of the armistice in 1953 that signalled an inter-Korean truce, the DPRK has instigated a number of direct military and terrorist attacks on both U.S. and ROK elements. However since the bombing of Korean Air Flight 858 in 1987 by North Korean agents, "Pyongyang has eschewed blatant acts of war in favour of diplomatic brinkmanship."<sup>98</sup> The Cheonan sinking and Yeonpyeong Island shelling in 2010 represented a return by North Korea to the strategy of the past, where aggressive acts of war were initiated under the pretence of self-defence. A strong U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula was seen as a deterrent against North Korean military aggression.

Although the U.S. had reduced total troop numbers during the 2000s as a result of military commitments to the Middle-East and an agreed incremental handover of joint forces command back to the ROK, the main U.S. defence commitment remained largely unchanged.<sup>99</sup> The planned command handover has been pushed back

---

<sup>97</sup> Manyin, M., Chanlett-Avery, E. & Nikitin, M. (2011). *U.S. – South Korea Relations*, CRS Report, p.6.

<sup>98</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.2.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p.2.

further and the South Korean reliance on the U.S. – ROK defence alliance remains as strong as ever. Critics of the continuing presence of U.S. troops on the Korean peninsula believe that this reliance has become unnecessarily strong in light of South Korea's growing defence capabilities and consistently robust economy.

Throughout the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, South Korea has acted in close consultation with the U.S. This is reflective of a defence alliance that has always found its uses and stood the test of time since its inception in 1953. However with such a long-standing alliance, there is the expectation to act in manner that takes into account the partner's interests as well as their own. With the military might of the U.S. second to none globally, South Korea seems the partner most likely to benefit the most from such a defence relationship.<sup>100</sup> The U.S. looked to actively assist South Korea's desire for greater strategic capability by providing defence hardware in the form of ballistic missile technology, as well as advanced information assets such as communication nodes and computing systems. With the tactical command handover to occur in addition to the technological assistance provided, the framework of the alliance transformed into a division between U.S. strategy and ROK tactics. As a result, the command and decision-making entity in the alliance has more commonly been the U.S.

This was especially apparent during the early years of the alliance, when South Korea was recovering from the war with an export led economic plan advised by Washington. This was not an undesirable situation for both nations, as South Korea benefited through U.S. military protection and economic assistance while the U.S. benefited from the strategic advantage and influence of having such a strong ally in the region. However opponents of the alliance's continuation believe that the rapid rise in South Korea's military capability and economic clout has changed the nature of the relationship, to the extent that the preferred policies of the two partners are likely to make such a smooth relationship unlikely.

An example of how U.S. interests would influence joint responses to North Korean aggression could be seen in its response to the Cheonan sinking. The U.S. publicly stood by its alliance partner South Korea in condemning North Korea after the

---

<sup>100</sup> Bandow, D. (2005). 'Seoul Searching: Ending the U.S. – Korean Alliance', *The National Interest*, 81(1), p.12.

independent U.N. report on the sinking was released. This was in direct contrast to Beijing's public statements calling for measured diplomacy with North Korea for the sake of regional stability, rather than retaliation and further sanctions. However Washington reportedly agreed with China's response behind closed doors, urging South Korea to show restraint in its responding course of action. This stance was attributed to the fact that the U.S. was committed to implementing the USFK transformation plan it had drafted with South Korea. Any head-on military response would require a mobilisation of the USFK in anticipation of direct conflict with North Korea, during a vulnerable period of transition. From the U.S.' viewpoint, it "had reason to insist on a peaceful response. It would be folly for the United States to go to war over the sinking of the Cheonan."<sup>101</sup> This strategic decision by Washington trumped South Korean concerns that favouring discourse over a military response would embolden North Korea by showing weakness in the face of its belligerence.

Doug Bandow's report on the U.S. – ROK alliance regards it as a negative burden to both partners. He feels that South Korea does not control its own strategic decisions, while the U.S. is maintaining their defence presence in South Korea at a great cost when the nation can defence itself.<sup>102</sup> Critics in South Korea believe the Cheonan fallout demonstrated the diverging interests between the two traditional allies, and provided a strong message that "where positions diverge between the two countries, decisions over South Korean security will still be made in Washington, not Seoul."<sup>103</sup> This did nothing to refute claims that the U.S. – ROK defence alliance was not equal, but one in the mould of a senior-junior partnership.

This provided ammunition to anti-American groups in both South and North Korea who believed that this inequality was symptomatic of U.S. ambitions for hegemony in the region. These groups cited the pressure placed on South Korea to provide military assistance for the U.S. led war on terror in Afghanistan and Iraq during the Bush administration, as further examples of how the U.S. is taking advantage of its role as the senior alliance partner to serve its own interests. If this was the case now they argued, the U.S. had the ability to use South Korea as a strategic base for any

---

<sup>101</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p.1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, p.4.

regional operations, whether it is against China or North Korea regardless of the impact it could have on the Korean people.<sup>104</sup>

Although South Korea loses the ability to make independent command decisions based on its own strategic interests, Bandow argues that such a one-sided alliance places a greater burden on the senior partner. South Korea has been a loyal ally of the U.S. that can be relied on for mutual support, with extensive economic and strategic ties in the region. However he believes that the end of the Cold War has “sharply diminished South Korea’s security importance – relevance, even – to the United States. With no connection to a potentially aggressive soviet union (and to a lesser extent, a virulently revolutionary China), North Korea is an irrelevant strategic backwater.”<sup>105</sup> Critics also point out that the threat level is too low for the defence commitment of the U.S., even with the nuclear research programme developed by North Korea. There are almost 30,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea as of 2010. Yet even with North Korea’s desire to develop its military technology, along with the fact that it has the fourth largest army in the world in terms of manpower, one U.S. carrier group can be quickly mobilised and possesses more firepower.<sup>106</sup> The nuclear issue and a history of unpredictable North Korean behaviour remain concerns, yet nothing suggests that the North is suicidal enough to utilise what nuclear weapons it may have.

Nuclear non-proliferation in the region remains a high strategic priority for Washington, especially with China slowly gaining in influence as a regional power. However opponents of the U.S. garrison force have promoted the option of Washington lobbying for nuclear non-proliferation from a distance.<sup>107</sup> The example of the six-party talks has been used to demonstrate how multi-lateral diplomacy has the ability to give nations the platform to have an influence on regional matters without using military resources. This is especially pertinent with the long and drawn out war on terror in Afghanistan having such a huge cost on the U.S. military in both

---

<sup>104</sup> Moon, C., and Lee, S. (2010). ‘Military Spending and the Arms Race on the Korean Peninsula’, *Asian Perspective*, 33(4), p.71.

<sup>105</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> Wimbush, E. (2008). ‘A Parable: U.S. – ROK Defence Relationship Breaks Down’, *Asia Policy*, 5(1), p.298.

<sup>107</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.4.

manpower and defence expenditure. Additionally, the presence of U.S. forces has been cited by China in particular as a barrier to North Korean diplomacy and compliance with the other member states during the six-party talks. As a result, the six-party talks have broken down, with North Korea even ignoring requests by its strongest ally China to commit to further talks. Critics of the U.S. forces in South Korea acknowledge that the Cheonan incident may have shaken the stability of regional security in East-Asia. However they point out that the U.S. military “had not even been placed on a higher state of readiness”<sup>108</sup> raising questions about the U.S. perceptions of North Korea as a genuine threat.

The strong economic position of South Korea is seen by opponents of the USFK’s presence as proof that the country can stand on its own two feet. South Korea has the financial clout to fund purchases of military technology as well as having defence agreements with powerful allies that allows easy procurement of such weaponry. In stark contrast North Korea is impoverished, with international sanctions and embargos meaning that it does not have the means or the support to procure leading military technology.<sup>109</sup> Even China, its last remaining ally of note is unlikely to risk international condemnation by intervening in any inter-Korean conflict or provide support in the form of military weaponry. China’s strategic focus remains on maintaining its economic growth, promoting regional stability through multilateral diplomacy, and taking a leadership role in Asia. As China’s unconditional backing of North Korea becomes less guaranteed, its relationship with South Korea maintains an upward trajectory.

Although their nuclear ambitions remain a concern, North Korea does not have the technological means or desire to initiate a nuclear stand-off.<sup>110</sup> Its military strength lies in the sheer number of manoeuvre elements it possesses. In terms of leading military technology it is outmatched by South Korea alone. Therefore critics continue to state that “exaggerating the North Korean military threat to South Korea”<sup>111</sup> can no

---

<sup>108</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.5.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, p.5.

<sup>110</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula’s Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44, p.8.

<sup>111</sup> Niksch, L. (2010). ‘The OPCON Military Command Issue Amidst a Changing Security Environment on the Korean Peninsula’, KORUS Forum Paper, 03/10, p.2.

longer be used to justify the sizeable U.S. military presence. South Korea has the defence budget to increase military spending and negate the North Korean strength in numbers, yet it does not do so as a result of U.S. defence subsidies.

Understandably South Korea is loath to lose the defence benefits the U.S. – ROK alliance provides, which has allowed the U.S. to increasingly dominate the terms of the partnership. Even with this being the case, the financial cost of South Korea maintaining the same defence outputs without the presence of the U.S. forces would be enormous. South Korea's National Defence Ministry admitted as much stating that "if the USFK should be withdrawn, it would take an astronomical amount of additional defence expenditures to compensate for its absence."<sup>112</sup>

Supporters of the withdrawal of U.S. troops from the Korean Peninsula, believe that the South Korean claims that it does not have the means to replace the USFK are untrue and a ploy to continue taking advantage of the alliance. The USFK benefits not only include a deterrent effect on North Korean aggression, but also the discounted military technology and economic benefits that having such a strong defence relationship entails. Jae-Jung Suh notes in his articles that Seoul is overplaying the importance of the USFK in the security of South Korea, and "while the U.S. military adds to the South's capability, some of its contribution may be superfluous, especially given that Seoul is already enjoying military advantages. The alliance's supplementary effect therefore, is smaller than it seems at first."<sup>113</sup> Since the Yeonpyeong shelling, the security of South Korea has been a high priority for the voting public compared to previous years when inter-Korean relations remained antagonistic but stable. If this is the case, there would be little disapproval from the South Korean public if the decision was made to bolster defence spending. Yet the Defence Ministry seems content to maintain the status quo and lean on the military assistance of the USFK when they could do more themselves.<sup>114</sup>

Critics of the USFK have conceded that although they believe the U.S. – ROK military alliance is outdated, recent events have shown that the alliance partners remain committed military partners with a jointly developed strategy for security on

---

<sup>112</sup> Suh, J. 'Allied to Race? The U.S. – Korea Alliance and Arms Race', *Asian Perspective*, 33(4), p.122.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid, p.123.

<sup>114</sup> Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute, p.6.

the Korean Peninsula. The vocal criticism of North Korea and pledges to support the ROK by Washington in response to the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, demonstrate that the U.S. – ROK defence alliance remains solid. The resumption of six-party talks remains a viable option for the U.S. to remain an influence in the region without having a military presence in South Korea, as it is the only official U.S. – North Korean channel for dialogue.<sup>115</sup> However, North Korea has refused calls from the U.S. and China to resume these talks because of the U.N. sanctions placed against it for continuing to defy the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. As a result, the most viable first step proposed by supporters of the USFK withdrawal is the transfer of joint operational control to the ROK. This would set the precedence for greater defence responsibility on the Korean Peninsula to the ROK, allowing the gradual reduction of both the USFK and the South Korean tendency to rely on it.

The number of those supporting the withdrawal of the USFK remains steady on both sides of the alliance. However, the fact remains that those with policy making influence remain convinced that retaining the status quo will send a message of strength and remain a deterring force against North Korean aggression. The majority of South Korea's population supports the continued presence of U.S. forces on the Korean Peninsula because of the security guarantee it provides.<sup>116</sup> This is a view shared by the current commander of the USFK General Walter Sharp who stated that in the present climate of uncertainty in North Korea "there should be no question left in Pyongyang's mind about the joint ROK – U.S. commitment to fight together."<sup>117</sup>

Although the USFK command transfer to the ROK is still going ahead, it has been postponed until 2015 because of the importance of remaining stable during such an uncertain period in North Korea. The North Korean military has shown its unpredictability with the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents in 2010, and will be keen to demonstrate solidarity behind its new leadership. Diplomacy from a distance has a role to play, yet it does not provide the security and strategic advantage that the USFK offers. The financial cost of maintaining the USFK may be high, yet the

---

<sup>115</sup> Yoon, J. (2011). 'The Effect of U.S. Foreign Policy on the Relationship Between South and North Korea: Time Series Analysis of the Post-Cold War Era', *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 11(1), p.260.

<sup>116</sup> Moon, K. (2011). *South Korean Public Opinion Trends and Effects on the ROK – U.S. Alliance*, Centre for U.S. – Korea Policy, 02/11, p.1.

<sup>117</sup> Cossa, R. (2010). 'The Korea's Cheonan Incident: Choosing an Appropriate Response', *East Asia Forum*, 05/11.

strategic and economic benefits of maintaining a strong U.S. – ROK alliance outweigh the costs. Keeping a U.S. military presence in South Korea remains a key component of maintaining the legitimacy of the alliance.

### Why the USFK Should Remain on the Korean Peninsula

The U.S. strategic objectives in Korea have remained largely unchanged over the four major phases since the signing of the armistice. The decades immediately following the armistice saw the growth of the U.S. garrison presence in South Korea, which by deterring North Korean aggression allowed South Korea to rebuild and grow after the war. The second phase encompassed the Cold War period and with each of the Korea's aligned with opposing sides, the primary aim of deterring North Korean aggression became even more pertinent. As the Cold War ended, the primary defence objective remained the same.

However the methods to achieve this objective began to expand, as the possibility of diplomacy with North Korea increased with the fall of the iron curtain. The U.S. began taking steps to not only ensure the security of its South Korean allies, but move towards a possible reunification of Korea. The September 11 attacks brought about a new phase of global security with the U.S. led War on Terror, bringing about a change in U.S. strategy regarding East-Asia. The USFK continued to serve as a deterrent against North Korean aggression but also assigned its forces as a stabilising entity for the whole region. Finally with U.S. forces pulling out of Afghanistan, Washington shifted its strategic focus on the Asia-Pacific where South Korea remained its staunchest ally.

During the successive progressive governments in South Korea, it seemed that the diverging ideologies and interests between the alliance partners would result in either the scale-down or dissolution of the long standing alliance. The progressive governments placed a greater emphasis on pursuing an unconditional engagement policy with North Korea, rather than developing the U.S. – ROK alliance. Even during this difficult period for the alliance, observers noted that “there was an increasing overlap between the underlying political interests of both countries on a broad range

of strategic issues”<sup>118</sup> where the continuing presence of the USFK could be the base by which co-operation could be rebuilt. The return of the conservative GNP under Lee Myung-Bak and his MB Policy allowed these mutual strategic and political interests to be addressed co-operatively, under a reaffirmed U.S. – ROK alliance. Lee declared the restoration of this alliance as his top priority, with the 2009 U.S. – ROK Joint Vision Statement signed by Lee and Obama a major step towards a confirmed future for the USFK. The identification and accomplishment of joint strategic objectives appeared to be a methodology used by the alliance to prove the continuing feasibility and relevance of the USFK.

The U.S. – ROK alliance’s vision for the USFK during Lee’s presidency highlighted the importance of joint planning towards a mutual strategic purpose, under a command structure that is operationally focused and promotes effective co-operation. Presidents Lee and Obama’s Joint Vision Statement of 2009 and the ten-year U.S. Ministry of Defence plan introduced in 2011, are examples of both partners identifying these characteristics as vital components of a successful future alliance. This has enabled the alliance to maintain the USFK’s relevance by using it as a strategic asset to remain a powerful regional force. This creates the “opportunity to operationalisze U.S. – ROK co-operation on off peninsula security issues to strengthen alliance capabilities, reflecting South Korea’s growing interests and capacity.”<sup>119</sup> The USFK is used as a platform by the U.S. to maintain a strong foothold in East-Asia, preserving regional stability by creating a balance of power in light of China’s growing influence.

By moving forward with a coherent and strategically focused long-term plan, the U.S. – ROK alliance has shed the patron-benefactor dynamic that characterised the relationship during its formative years. The command and institutional structures have been modified to correspond with both alliance partners’ military capabilities and objectives. The most notable change has been the planned operational command transition of the USFK, with South Korea taking a leading role in its own national defence. This has addressed the issue of feasibility by placing less of a burden on the U.S., and was conducive to Washington pledging a long-term

---

<sup>118</sup> Snyder, S. (2012). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.9.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid, p.11.

continuation of support to USFK maintenance. This commitment to co-operation has allowed the beginnings of the transition to occur seamlessly, as the mutual strategic interests of the alliance partners are given equal consideration. With the USFK set to remain an integral part of the U.S. – ROK alliance during and after the command handover, “the main factors shaping the international security posture and needs of the two countries must continue to be developed into a shared strategic vision”<sup>120</sup> if the alliance is to remain feasible.

The U.S. remains a global leader both economically and in the area of security. It has maintained this strong level of influence in the Asian region principally through co-operation with allied states such as South Korea and Japan, in addition to its long standing garrison presence in both countries. In return for the strategic advantages having such a presence in the region entails, the U.S. has shouldered the burden of leadership as well as a commitment to financially invest in the maintenance of the USFK. However regardless of the costs, the presence of the USFK provides a strategic focal point that allows the alliance to flourish as both nations work to a common plan aimed at achieving joint objectives. This has allowed the U.S. to maintain a solid foothold in a region it has identified as crucial in its strategic vision, while allowing South Korea to continue developing its military capabilities in relative security.<sup>121</sup> At the same time, “South Korea’s diplomatic profile has become more multidimensional” as its political dependence on the U.S. becomes less pronounced.

The renewed focus on the U.S. – ROK alliance brought about by the development of a joint strategic plan, has improved the public perception of both the alliance and the role of the USFK in South Korea. The Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents served to highlight the unpredictability of the North, especially as they followed a period of relative calm in inter-Korean relations. The South Korean public felt that relations had failed to improve to the extent they had hoped for during successive progressive governments that had distanced themselves from stronger U.S. – ROK defence ties, and favoured unconditional engagement with the North.<sup>122</sup> The return of the conservative government was ushered in emphatically by a South Korean public

---

<sup>120</sup> Snyder, S. (2012). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.12.

<sup>121</sup> Ehrhardt, G. (2005). ‘The Evolution of U.S. – ROK Security Consultation’, *Pacific Affairs*, 77(4), p.681.

<sup>122</sup> Lee, N. and Jeong, H. (2011). *Ambivalence toward North Korea: South Korean Public Perceptions Following the Attack on Yeonpyeong Island*, East Asia Institute, Briefing Paper 01/11.

supportive of a return to stronger U.S. – ROK ties and a strong USFK committed to providing security against external threats.

Even with recent domestic trends showing a drop in support for the conservative GNP and a steady rise in popularity of the progressive DP, support for the USFK's long-term strategy and presence remains strong. Amidst the uncertainty surrounding the North Korean leadership change and the rise of China bringing a shift in the political dynamic of the region, the bilateral commitment to the USFK has brought a welcome element of stability and security to South Korea.

While the U.S. – ROK alliance has encompassed a broad range of political and economic co-operation, the existing structure of security co-operation has been critical to sustaining the alliance. The current solidarity of the alliance has derived from its close military relationship, with the USFK providing a focal point for bilateral diplomacy and co-operation. It has also provided “a basis on which to enhance its political leverage in dealing with neighbouring countries and to strengthen its position and status in the international community.”<sup>123</sup> The defence relationship within the alliance has continued to be relevant because of the joint vision on regional security and South Korea's recent willingness to take a lead role in the USFK. This has allowed the U.S. to retain a long-term military commitment in South Korea, as the financial and command burden is further distributed between the alliance partners. The long-term commitment means that the USFK is co-ordinated in a way that maximises its combat strength, which allows it to respond in a timely manner to any security threats regardless of origin.<sup>124</sup>

The feasibility of the USFK cannot be evaluated without a discussion of the original reason for its existence, the deterrence of North Korean military aggression and the protection of South Korea from external threats. After a period of relative calm, the North Korean security threat has become more pertinent since the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents of 2010. The incidents served to both strengthened the U.S. - ROK joint defence co-operation and expose the gaps in USFK incident response co-ordination. This has led to positive measures being taken to rectify issues as a part

---

<sup>123</sup> Snyder, S. (2012). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p.13.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.14.

of USFK restructuring, such as the expansion of joint naval capacity and surge capability. Joint military exercises soon followed, as the U.S. – ROK alliance used the USFK to demonstrate its ability to mass forces in response to any act of aggression.

This show of force was combined with fresh economic sanctions and a freeze on aid from both Washington and Seoul. These measures were consistent with the hard-line MB policy that sought to deter any belligerent behaviour from the North and pressure it to adopt complete denuclearisation. While economic sanctions would hit North Korea hard, China's continuing economic aid meant that the damage inflicted would be partially offset. The USFK's show of force added another level of deterrence on top of the economic sanctions and further illustrated its importance to South Korean security. Since these measures have been put in place, North Korea seems to have focused on renewing dialogue rather than attempting provocation.

Since the death of Kim Jong-Il and the subsequent succession of his son Kim Jong-Un, Pyongyang has made official statements that could be perceived as veiled threats towards the U.S. – ROK alliance. These statements are based around the theme of justified retaliation if North Korea's sovereignty is threatened by the alliance. However they have also expressed a willingness and desire to resume the stalled six-party talks without pre-conditions. Observers have viewed these gestures with cynicism as the North remains non-committal to denuclearisation, which has been the U.S. – ROK alliance's objective when engaging in diplomacy. Although tensions have eased since the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents, the instability surrounding the leadership succession and the North's reluctance to commit to nuclear non-proliferation show that a tangible threat remains. This has meant that co-operation between the alliance partners during the USFK transformation plan and OPCON transfer period is vital for security on the peninsula. Therefore the long-term commitment by both Seoul and Washington to a strong USFK has been crucial to maintain its feasibility.

In spite of China's rapid economic development it still remains the North's greatest benefactor, with food and fuel aid continuing despite growing international pressure on it to stop until the North agrees on denuclearisation. China has been reluctant to criticise North Korea because of its unpredictability, which would only become more

volatile if its main ally were to turn its back. Nevertheless, China has maintained a commitment towards multilateral diplomacy as a means to promote regional stability. When Lee Myung-Bak was elected president he re-aligned Seoul's foreign policy closer to Washington, consolidating the U.S. – ROK alliance and drawing criticism from the North. The confirmation of a joint strategic plan and a long-term commitment to the USFK presence in South Korea was included in this policy reform. Although not openly critical of the USFK and its strategic aims, China opposed joint exercises in the Yellow Sea. This stance is consistent with China's primary strategic objective of regional stability, which has often been at odds with the U.S. – ROK's method of imposing sanctions on the North to force their denuclearisation.

It is undeniable that the security order of East-Asia has been influenced by the rise of China as a regional power. It is partly in response to this changing dynamic that the U.S. – ROK alliance has continued to consolidate its security strategy through measures such as the 'Koreanisation' of the USFK by transferring operational command to the ROK. The release of Obama's National Security Strategy as well as the U.S. – ROK Joint Vision Statement in 2010, defined the future role of the USFK and its strategic aims for the region. In response to these consolidation measures, China "has been trying to alter the U.S. – ROK alliance with its own political, military, and economic tools."<sup>125</sup> China and South Korea retain close economic ties and improving diplomatic ties, but a defence relationship is non-existent. China's steadfast support of the North and refusal to impose sanctions as a result of the North's provocations has been a point of conjecture between Beijing and the U.S. – ROK alliance. China has pushed for the six-party talks to continue while the alliance remains commitment to the security of South Korea by pressuring the North to fully denuclearise.

By continuing its aid to the North, China maintains economic leverage over Pyongyang. It has used this leverage to promote stability on the Korean Peninsula and preserve its economic growth, by advising North Korea against overt aggression in favour of diplomacy. However the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong incidents proved that the leverage would only go so far in the face of North Korean volatility. Beijing's

---

<sup>125</sup> Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44.

ability to criticise the continuing presence of the USFK under the guise of regional stability was taken away, as the North proved once again it could not be controlled. Suggestions from certain stakeholders in the region that a new Northeast-Asian peace order could emerge were based on the durability of the USFK and the long-term commitment of the U.S. to the region. Even with the rapid development of China's military, it still lags behind the U.S. in terms of combat power. Therefore with its recent upgrade in surge capability, the USFK remains a major force in the region. For these reasons, China's ability to influence the region and its policy decisions regarding the Korean Peninsula remain intrinsically intertwined with the U.S. – ROK alliance.

### Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated that in spite of the changing regional environment and a transitional period for the U.S. – ROK alliance, the USFK remains a feasible entity. A number of domestic and international factors that have shaped the current inter-Korea dynamic have been analysed, to gauge whether the USFK has kept pace with the changes to remain a relevant and effective security force.

The first major domestic factor discussed, was the effect of South Korean public opinion on both the USFK and the U.S. – ROK alliance as a whole. Public opinion on U.S. – ROK defence matters have a correlation with the perceived threat of North Korea and to a lesser extent China. A strong anti-American movement had been gaining momentum during the Sunshine Policy era, because of the belief that the continuing presence of the USFK would harm the inroads made in inter-Korean relations by the engagement first policy. This made any plans to consolidate or strengthen the USFK untenable, as public opinion forced the South Korean government to take a step back from U.S. plans to strengthen the alliance. However the discovery of North Korea's nuclear programme brought with it a more tangible security threat, leading to a shift in South Korean public opinion as they began to value the security provided by the USFK. The public felt that the North's refusal to denuclearise was a clear indication that the unconditional engagement policy was not in the best interests of South Korean security. With the backing of the public, the new conservative government sought to rebuild the shaky U.S. – ROK alliance and secure the future of the USFK as an essential component of national security.

Once the U.S. – ROK alliance had become stronger on the back of the MB Policy, it focused its attention to producing a long term plan that would solidify the alliance, modify the USFK to maintain its relevance, and set achievable strategic objectives. The joint planning was influenced by the changing global security environment, with the Iraq campaign drawing to a close and troop pull-outs from Afghanistan projected for late 2012. As a result the U.S. shifted its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific region amid fears of a possible Chinese regional hegemony, North Korean nuclear weapon development, and continuing threats of aggression. To counter this and fully commit to the alliance, the U.S. in consultation with South Korea drafted a ten year defence plan that included modification of the USFK to improve its effectiveness.

The plan gave a renewed strategic focus to the alliance by outlining a set of achievable objectives within a set timeframe. These included a USFK command handover to the ROK and an increase in surge capability without increasing troop numbers. These measures proved that the U.S. was fully committed to the alliance, the East-Asian region, and a modification of the USFK to maintain its strategic effectiveness. By addressing issues such as troop turnover, joint funding with South Korea, and surge capability, the alliance has ensured that the USFK remains a feasible defence asset that has adapted to the changing regional environment.

Another domestic factor that has had an external influence on the U.S. – ROK alliance is the changing face of domestic politics. The upcoming general election in South Korea has seen another shift in public support with the rise in popularity of the progressive DP. The DP has targeted the KORUS FTA as another example of the power imbalance in the alliance, accusing the South Korean government of being led by the U.S. in policy decisions. They also attacked the response to the Yeonpyeong and Cheonan incidents, highlighting the government's inability to react without Washington's consent. The GNP responded by highlighting the operational command handover of the USFK as an example of the balanced nature of the alliance. However with the instability in North Korea following the death of Kim Jong-Il and the Taepyeong missile test, the DP has been reluctant to overtly criticise the role of the USFK. Public approval of the USFK and the bilateral defence alliance as a whole has remained high, as the majority believe that a strong USFK is an essential element of national security and regional stability. .

With the release of Washington's ten year defence plan and the USFK restructure projected to be complete in 2015, it can be seen that the alliance has favoured a long-term strategic vision over short-term gains. With North Korea's new leader seemingly willing to engage in diplomacy but continuing to ignore calls for denuclearisation, the stability of the Korean Peninsula remains uncertain. The alliance has stated that it is receptive to diplomacy, but is unwilling to proceed until North Korea shows a genuine intent to abandon its nuclear programme. China has also maintained that its stance on Korean relations is one of peacemaker, with Beijing again pushing for multilateral diplomacy such as the failed six-party talks. As a result while the major stakeholders in the region have each stated their position regarding the Korean Peninsula, a stalemate has been reached until the North is willing to abandon its nuclear ambitions. Until then, the USFK remains a key security guarantee for South Korea and a platform through which the U.S. can maintain a presence in a region that has become its new strategic focus.

In conclusion, it is clear to see that because of the current security climate in East-Asia the USFK remains as relevant as ever. North Korea remains a tangible security threat with the installation of Kim Jung-Un as leader appearing to have no effect on its position regarding the U.S. – ROK alliance or nuclear proliferation. While not destabilising the situation, China's unchanging position has meant that the alliance cannot fully depend on its support, which was demonstrated during the incidents of 2010. The feasibility of the USFK has been established by consistently strong public support in South Korea which has always been an influential factor on Seoul's choice of foreign policy. As a result the alliance has moved quickly to consolidate the future of the USFK, by outlining a long-term plan that addresses its past limitations and takes into consideration the changing regional environment.

## Bibliography:

Acharya, A. and Buzan, B. (2010). *Non-Western International Relations Theory*, New York: Routledge.

Baek, J. (2010). 'U.S. Defends Military Presence in South Korea', *Chosun Ilbo*, 29 Oct, p.2.

Bandow, D. (2005). 'Seoul Searching: Ending the US – Korean Alliance', *The National Interest*, 81(1), 11 – 16.

Bandow, D. (2005). The Future of the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Equality, Mutuality, and International Security, *Korean Association of International Studies Conference*, Conference Paper, Seoul, Republic of Korea 24 – 25 March 2005, p.12.

Bandow, D. (2010). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Outdated, Unnecessary, and Dangerous*, Foreign Policy Briefing No.90, Washington: The Cato Institute.

Barnes, J. & Hodge, N. (2012). 'Military Faces Historic Shift', *Wall Street Journal*, 01/12.

Bates, G., et al. (2009). *Strategic Views on Asian Regionalism: Survey Results and Analysis*, Washington D.C.: Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Chae, H. and Kim, S. (2008). 'Conservatives and Progressives in South Korea', *The Washington Quarterly*, 31(4), 77-95.

Chae, K. (2002). 'The Future of the Sunshine Policy', *East Asian Review*, 14(4), 3-17.

Chanlett-Avery, E. and Nanto, D. (2006). *The Rise of China and its Effect on Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea: U.S. Policy Choices*, CRS Report for Congress, 01/06.

Cho, S. (2011). '2012: Ripe for a Flashpoint?', *The Diplomat*.

Choi, K. (2010). *Challenges and Tasks in Transforming the ROK – U.S. Alliance: A Hybrid Alliance in the Twilight Zone*, East Asian Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper 9 10/10.

Christensen, T.J. (2006). 'Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?', *International Security*, 31(1), pp.81-126.

Coonan, C. (2012). 'Two Koreas are at a Turning Point, says South's Leader', *The Independent*, 03 Jan.

Cossa, R. (2010). 'The Korea's Cheonan Incident: Choosing an Appropriate Response', *East Asia Forum*, 05/11,

Elich, G. (2010). *Rising Tensions on the Korean Peninsula: The Sinking of the Cheonan, Reviewing the Evidence*. Seoul: Korea Truth Commission.

Ehrhardt, G. (2005). 'The Evolution of U.S. – ROK Security Consultation', *Pacific Affairs*, 77(4), pp.665-682.

Evans, L. (2003). International Institute, *The Rise of Anti-Americanism in South Korea*, Los Angeles, UCLA.

Foster-Carter, A. (2011). 'South Korea – North Korea Relations: Playing with Fire', *Comparative Connections* [Online], Available from:  
[http://csis.org/files/publication/1004qnk\\_sk.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/1004qnk_sk.pdf) [Accessed 14 May 2011].

Goh, E. (2011). *Japan, China, and the Great Power Bargain in East Asia*, East Asia Institute, EAI Fellows Working Paper No.32 11/11.

Greenemeier, L. (2011). 'North Korea's Nukes: Does the Death of Kim Jong-Il Mean Trouble for the U.S.?', *Scientific American*, 12(1), p.2.

Hamisevicz, N. (2011). '12 Things on the Korean Peninsula to Watch for in 2012', *The Peninsula*, Korea Economic Institute.

Han, S. (2011). *The State of the U.S. – ROK Alliance*, Korea Program Essay, Council on Foreign Relations Press.

Hong, J. (2011). 'Remembering the Sinking of the South Korean Warship Cheonan and the Way Forward for the Korean Peninsula', *The Baltic Times*, 748(1), p.15.

Hwang, J. (2011). *The Post Crisis Era and Change in the Korean Peninsula's Security Order*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 44.

Jung, S. (2009). 'Obama Hints at Rotating Troops in South Korea to Afghanistan', *Korea Times*, 20 Nov.

Khoo, N. (2011). 'Fear Factor: Northeast Asian Responses to China's Rise', *Asian Security*, 7(2), pp.95-118.

Kil, S. and Moon, S. (2001). *Understanding Korean Politics*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Kim, D. (2009). 'U.S. Intelligence Chief Discusses Seoul Troop Dispatch to Afghanistan', *Korea Times*, 27 Nov.

Kim, T. (2000). *Balancing U.S. Alliance & Chinese Cooperation: Korea's Emerging Security Challenge*, Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China, U.S. National Defence University, pp.29-38.

Kim, C. (2005). *The Roh Moo-Hyun Government's Policy Toward North Korea*, East-West Center, Working Paper 08/11.

Kim, M. (2010). 'North Korea Declares Phase of War with South', *Donga Ilbo*, 21 May.

Kim, S. (2009). 'Korea's Conservatives Strike Back: An Uncertain Revolution in Seoul', *Global Asia*, 3(1), 78-85.

Kim, S. (2011). *Identity Prevails in the End: North Korea's Nuclear Threat and South Korea's Response in 2006*, East Asia Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper 07/11.

Kim, Y. (2011). *U.S. – China Relations Statement Factsheet (July 2011)*, ASI Research Centre 10/11.

Kim, Y. (2012). *The New U.S. Defence Strategic Guidance and its Implications for South Korean Security*, EAI Issue Briefing, 01/12.

- Klingner, B. (2008). *New South Korean President Brings Conservative Policy Change*, Washington: The Heritage Foundation.
- Klingner, B. (2012). 'The Missing Asia Pivot in Obama's Defence Strategy', Memo 3443, Heritage Foundation.
- Ko, B. (2011). *The Prospects for East Asian Security in the Post-Crisis Era*, East Asia Institute, NSP Report 43.
- Kwon, H. (2010). 'Economic Perceptions and Electoral Choice in South Korea: The Case of the 2007 Presidential Election', *The Pacific Review*, 23(2).
- Lee, B. (2009). *Six-Party Failure on North Korea*, Seoul: Institute for Peace and Co-operation.
- Lee, N. (2005). *Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK – US Alliance: Korean Democracy and the Challenge of Non-Proliferation on the Peninsula*, Korea University: Department of Political Science. Workshop Paper 5/05.
- Lee, N. and Jeong, H. (2011). *Ambivalence toward North Korea: South Korean Public Perceptions Following the Attack on Yeonpyeong Island*, East Asia Institute, Briefing Paper 01/11.
- Lee, S. (2010). 'Engaging North Korea: The Clouded Legacy of South Korea's Sunshine Policy', *Asian Outlook*, 2(1).
- Levin, N. (2004). *Do the Ties Still Bind?: The U.S. – ROK Security Relationship after 9/11*, California: Rand.
- Madeiros, E. et al. (2008). *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*, Santa Monica: RAND Monographs.
- Manyin, M., Chanlett-Avery, E. & Nikitin, M. (2011). *U.S. – South Korea Relations*, CRS Report, pp.1-31.
- Mo, J. (2011). *Grassroots Influences on the U.S. – ROK Alliance: The Role of Civil Society*, East Asia Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper 05/11.

Moon, K. (2011). *South Korean Public Opinion Trends and Effects on the ROK – U.S. Alliance*, Centre for U.S. – Korea Policy, 02/11.

Moon, C. and Lee, S. (2010). 'Military Spending and the Arms Race on the Korean Peninsula', *Asian Perspective*, 33(4), pp.69-99.

Nakato, S. (2008). 'South Korea's Paradigm Shift in North Korean Policy and Trilateral Co-operation among the U.S., Japan, and Korea', *International Journal of Korea Unification Studies*, 17(1), pp.41-61.

Niksch, L.A. (2010). *Korea – U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress*, Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress 01/10.

Niksch, L. (2010). 'The OPCON Military Command Issue Amidst a Changing Security Environment on the Korean Peninsula', KORUS Forum Paper, 03/10, p.2.

Noerper, S. (2011). 'New Beginnings in the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Recommendations to the Obama Administration', *The Korea Society*, pp.1-9.

Patel, N. and Ford, L. (2009). 'The Future of the U.S. – ROK Alliance: Global Perspectives', *Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, 21(4), pp.401-416.

Reiss, M. (2009). 'Drifting Apart? The U.S. – ROK Alliance at Risk', *Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, 21(1), pp.11-31.

Roehrig, T. (2007). *Restructuring the U.S. Military Presence in Korea: Implications for Korean Security and the U.S. – ROK Alliance*, Korea Economic Institute, Academic Paper 2(1).

Shin, K. (2011). *The Media and the U.S. – ROK Alliance: The South Korean Case*, East Asia Institute, Security Initiative Working Paper 05/11.

Snyder, S. (2009). 'Lee Myung-Bak's Foreign Policy: a 250-day Assessment', *The Korean Journal of Defence Analysis*, 21(1), 85-102.

- Snyder, S. (2005). 'South Korea's Squeeze Play', *The Washington Quarterly*, 28(4), 93-106.
- Snyder, S. (2004). 'A Turning Point for China – Korea Relations?', *Comparative Connections*, 6(3), pp.406-410.
- Snyder, S. (2012). *The U.S. – South Korea Alliance: Meeting New Security Challenges*, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Snyder, S. and Byun, S. (2011). 'Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea's Provocations', *The Rusi Journal*, 156(2), 74-81.
- Stevens, W. (2006). *Are U.S. Forces Korea Still Needed on the Korean Peninsula?*, Strategy Research Project, U.S Army War College, pp.1-24.
- Suh, J. (2009). 'Allied to Race? The U.S. – Korea Alliance and Arms Race', *Asian Perspective*, 33(4), pp.122-123.
- Tiberghien, Y. (2011). *East Asian Politics and the Great G20 Game: Convergence and Divergence in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Approaches*, East Asia Institute, EAI Fellows Working Paper No.9 04/11.
- Whitney, C.B. and Shambaugh, D. (2009). *Soft Power in Asia: Results of a 2008 Survey of Public Opinion*, The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.
- Wimbush, E. (2008). 'A Parable: U.S. – ROK Security Relationship Breaks Down', *Asia Policy*, 5(1), pp.258-299.
- Wiseman, P. (2009). 'World Powers Tense Over North Korean Missile Launch', *USA Today*, 04 June.
- Woo, J. (2011). 'South Korea's Shifting Politics', *The Diplomat*.
- Yeo, A. (2011). *Biculturalism, Multilateralism, and Institutional Change in Northeast Asia's Regional Security Architecture*, East Asia Institute, EAI Fellows Working Paper No.30 04/11.
- Yoon, J. (2011). 'The Effect of U.S. Foreign Policy on the Relationship Between South and North Korea: Time Series Analysis of the Post-Cold War Era', *Journal of East Asian Studies*, 11(1), pp.255-287.

'DPRK Foreign Ministry Proposes to Parties to Start of Peace Talks', *North Korea Central News Agency*, January 11, 2009.

'U.S. to Have Bilateral talks with N Korea to Resume 6-Way Process', *Asia Pulse*, September 14, 2009.

'U.S. Wary after Kim Jong-Il's Death', *Associated Press*, 19 Dec 2011.

The U.S. Department of Defence, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Defence*, Jan 2012.