

An Assessment of the ROK's Defense and Security Requirements in Alternative Futures¹

Choi Kang and Park Joon-sung

CHOI, KANG is currently working in Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security(IFANS). Previously, he served at the National Security Council Secretariat in 1998-2002 as Senior Director for Policy Planning and Coordination. He was a participant at the Four-Party Talks as one of the South Korean delegates and is the Executive Director for Planning of CSCAP-Korea National Committee. From November 2002 to March 2005, he worked at Korea Institute for Defense Analyses as Chief Executive Officer of Task Force for Current Defense Issues. Prior to joining the National Security Council in May 1998, Mr. Choi worked at KIDA in 1992-1998, where he conducted more than 40 research projects in the field of arms control, crisis/consequence management including pol-mil games, and the ROK-US security alliance. He was editor of Korean Journal of Defense Analysis (KJDA) and Director of International Arms Control Studies. He was one of the main drivers of major pol-mil games at national level such as Ulchi-Focus/Lens. Mr. Choi is also the author of numerous published articles including "Inter-Korean Arms Control and Implications for the USFK," "Future ROK-US Security Alliance," "North Korea's Intentions and Strategies on Nuclear Game" among others. He earned his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Ohio State University, his M.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and B.A. from Kyunghee University. He can be reached at kchoi05@mofat.go.kr.

PARK, JOON-SUNG is a researcher at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security(IFANS). He can be reached at jspark01@mofat.go.kr.

Paper presented at the KiFS/NBR conference –
"U.S.-ROK Alliance: Implications of an 'Alternative Future'"
The Korean Institute for Future Strategies and The National Bureau of Asian Research
Seoul, South Korea
September 10-11, 2007

¹ This paper is prepared for KIFS-NBR conference. Views and ideas in this paper are those of the authors. They do not represent those of IFANS, or any other government agency of the ROK.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What if there is no US troop in South Korea? Can South Korea stand alone in defending itself from external aggression? To answer the questions, in this paper, two cases have been analyzed: alternative future with no alliance and targeted future with cooperative self-reliant defense. In each case, three categories of requirement (hardware, software, and humanware), or military establishment, under different situations (peacetime, crisis or pre-hostility, and war), have been assessed. Unfortunately, none of them has passed the test. And most importantly, reliable deterrent measures and posture cannot be found in both cases. In alternative future, South Korea appears to be incapable of preventing and winning the war. In targeted future, South Korea may be able to win the war with huge damage. So the ROK-US alliance is very critical element, may be the most critical element in determining the outcome.

But it is inevitable to see the transformation of the ROK-U.S. security alliance. Many things have been negotiated and resolved. The underlying assumption and understanding in that transition is that the ROK-U.S. security alliance should be maintained. However, hopes and wishes should not make us blind to the reality. There must be close coordination among four factors: situation/challenges, structure, contents, and capabilities. Flexible cohesiveness and objective-oriented approach should guide us into the future.

For the ROK, many things should be done to achieve cooperative and more self-reliant defense. Fundamentals and basics must be revisited. Continuous efforts to transform its own defense posture should go along with its efforts to strengthen the alliance. In doing so, the ROK should find the areas where it can make contribution to the realization of common values and ideas going beyond the Korean Peninsula. That will enhance the strategic value of the ROK and the alliance. For the U.S., the ally's concerns should also be well taken. Some situation-wise and region-specific modification seems necessary.

Among others, the alliance transformation must be driven and guided by the situation and demands, not by politics.

Self-reliant defense and the ROK-US alliance must go forward hand in hand. It is simply not a matter of choosing between the two alternatives. From this day onward, as it has in the past, the ROK-US alliance will grow into even more robust ties based on mutual respect and close cooperation

President Roh Moo-hyun

August 15, 2007

1. Introduction

The Participatory government of South Korea has identified and pursued “policy of peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia,” known as Northeast Asian Initiative, as one of the three administrative goals. And, to achieve this goal, it has put forward the three strategies: a) balanced and pragmatic diplomacy; b) cooperative and self-reliant national defense; and c) North Korea policy of trust and engagement.² The first two have special implication for the ROK-US security alliance since the first is an issue of regional security architecture and the second is about the ROK-US alliance and its defense posture.

While underscoring the importance and necessity of the ROK-US alliance further into the future,³ the Roh Moo-hyun administration has emphasized that the ROK should become less dependent upon the U.S. and more self-reliant in defending itself from external threats and aggression. In the address on the 58th Anniversary of National Liberation Day, President Roh stated that:

... the U.S. security strategy has been undergoing changes. It is unbecoming for us to allow our defense policy to unravel and national opinion to go into tailspin every time the strategy of the United States changes. Things will not work out simply by crying out against the withdrawal of the American troops. Now it is time for us to accept the changes in reality. During my remaining term in office, I intend to help lay a firm foundation for our armed

² This was reiterated by President Roh Moo-hyun recently in his address on the 62nd Anniversary of National Liberation of Korea on August 15, 2007.

³ President Roh persistently emphasizes the compatibility and mutually complementary nature of the ROK-US alliance and self-reliant defense.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

forces to be fully equipped with self-reliant national defense capabilities within the next 10 years.⁴

Furthermore, the Roh administration has expressed strong desire to play a “balancing role” to bring about an order of peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia by transforming the ROK-US alliance into “comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial one” and by enhancing cooperative relations with neighboring countries. In addition, further down the road, regional security cooperation and integration in Northeast Asia have been constantly underscored.⁵

Consequently, three tasks, which are interlocked together, have been carried out: adjustment and transformation of the ROK-US alliance; strengthening self-reliant defense posture; and multilateral security dialogue/cooperation and regional integration. Except the last, which is somewhat linked to the resolution of the North Korean nuclear problems within the framework of the Six-Party Talks, the first two tasks have already produced some visible results. However, the controversies and concerns over the directions and plans, which have been introduced and pursued by the Roh administration, have not faded away. A new structure and operating mechanism(s), adjusted division of labor, and capabilities to be acquired should be tested against magnitude and nature of challenges the ROK might face in the future. Based upon the test, additional adjustments or changes must be identified and sought.

Furthermore, to test the necessity of and rationale for maintaining the ROK-US security alliance, it would be possible to think about the unthinkable: that is, what if there is no ROK-US security alliance. Is it possible for the ROK to stand alone against any aggression? What additional military establishments are required to stand alone?

In this paper, two cases will be analyzed: alternative future and targeted future. In each case, three categories of requirement (hardware, software, and humanware), or military establishment, under different situations (peacetime, crisis or pre-hostility, and war), will be assessed.

⁴ Address by President Roh Moo-hyun on the 58th Anniversary of National Liberation, August 15, 2003, webmaster@president.go.kr, searched on July 19, 2007.

⁵ On regional security cooperation, the ROK government has always emphasized the complementary nature of relations between alliance and multilateral security cooperation.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

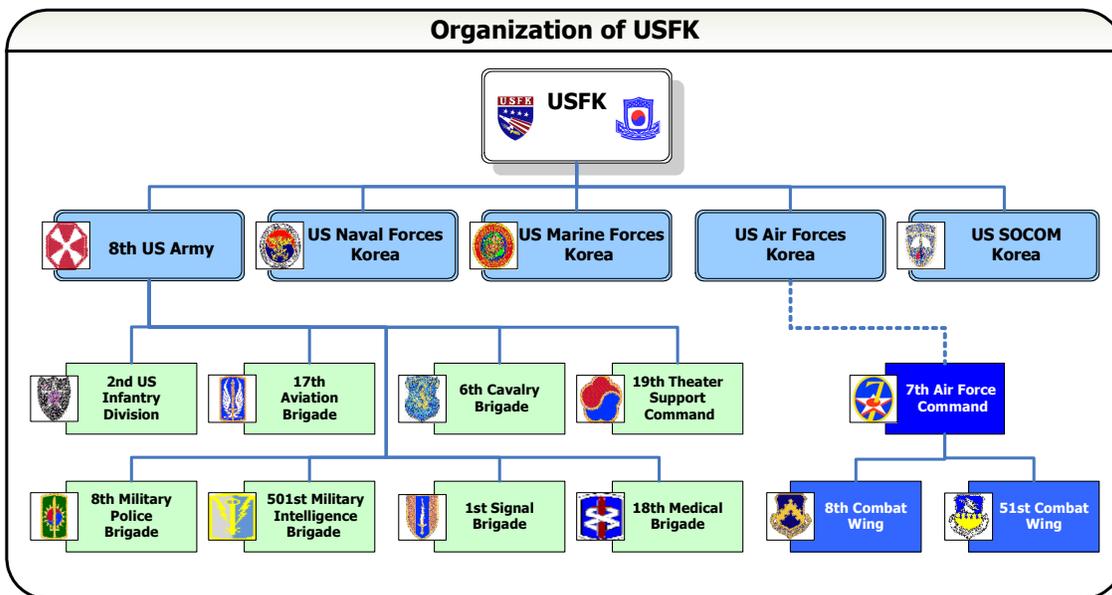
Table 1. Analytic Framework for Defense Requirement

	Hardware	Software	Humanware
Peace-time			
Crisis			
War			

2. Alternative Future and the Requirements for the ROK’s Self-reliant Defense

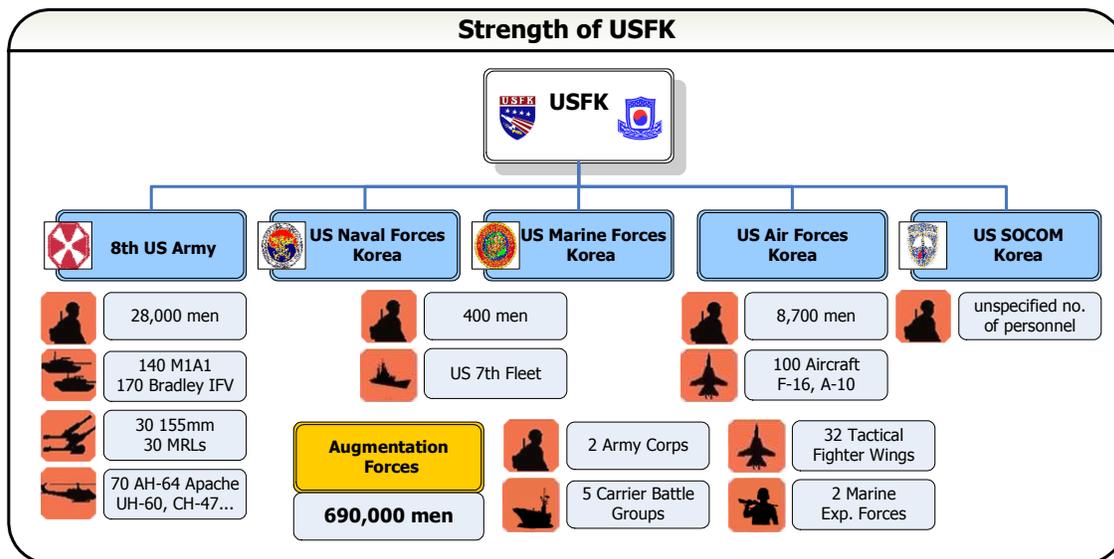
As of today, the ROK and the U.S. have the obligation under the Mutual Defense Treaty. The armed forces of two countries are organically linked through the Combined Forces Command. And the U.S. maintains approximately 28,000 troops in South Korea. In peacetime, to prevent any aggression from taking place, the U.S. provides extended deterrence, or nuclear umbrella, vis-à-vis the ROK. And, to assess the situation, the U.S. also provides information and intelligence. In addition, planning, exercising, and training are also important assets that the U.S. provides. In a word, the U.S. plays a vital function of deterrence and stability in peacetime.

Diagram 1. Organization of USFK



For crisis and pre-hostility situation, the ROK and the U.S. have developed and share a set of CASOPS (crisis action standard operating procedures). And the U.S. has developed a set of measures, known as FDO (flexible deterrence options), to manage crisis situation for two purposes: prevention of further escalation and preparation for full-scale war.⁶ In war, the U.S. is believed to provide huge augmentation forces to repel North Korean aggression, to destroy North Korean forces, and to achieve decisive victory.⁷ Based on TPFDL or TPFDD (Time-Phased Force Deployment List or Data) Furthermore, through the UNC,⁸ the U.S. can mobilize rear area support from various countries, including Japan. Since the Commander of CFC exercises war-time operational control over not only USFK and but also ROK armed forces, all information and intelligence are gathered at the CFC and disseminated from it to field commanders.

Diagram 2. Strength of USFK



As we can see in Table 3, the USFK has formidable strength, which helps the ROK armed forces deter, defend, prevail, and win. If there is no USFK or US support, the ROK would face

⁶ FDOs include not only military measures but also political/diplomatic measures and economic measures.

⁷ This may include the unification of Korea.

⁸ The UNC had three functions until 1978: war-fighting; maintaining the Armistice arrangement; and rear area support (force provider). The war-fighting mission was transferred to the Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1978.

difficulties to overcome military deficiencies and it must spend more than \$220 billion to make up the hardware deficiencies, which is ten times of the ROK's annual defense budget.⁹

Peacetime: Weak Deterrent Posture

Having sketched out the overall picture, details should be assessed. The first goal of the ROK is the deterrence of North Korean aggression, especially surprise attack: that is, make it sure that North Korea cannot achieve its political and military goals by force. So deterrence usually starts with reliable early-warning capabilities. And it also requires neutralizing capabilities, either passive or active, and retaliatory capabilities. At this stage the ROK's armed forces do not have any of these capabilities. What makes the situation even worse is asymmetrical threat of North Korea, nuclear, chemical, biological, and missile.

Currently, despite its efforts to upgrade early-warning capabilities over the years,¹⁰ the ROK is mostly relying upon the U.S. for strategic, even tactical, information and intelligence since it does not have air surveillance/reconnaissance systems such as U-2 and satellite. Key intelligence and information are provided through the CFC. For example, annual military intelligence report on North Korea, known as PIE (Peninsula Intelligence Estimate), is a joint product of the ROK and the U.S.¹¹ Unless the U.S. provides raw material, it is not possible to produce PIE. Thus, unfortunately, the ROK is left blind without the U.S. assistance. This means that the ROK is very much vulnerable to North Korea's surprise attack and does not have enough time to find ways and means to deter the North Korean aggression vis-à-vis the South.

Let's assume that the ROK has real-time visual S/R capabilities—gathering, fusion, production, and dissemination of intelligence and information. To make deterrence work, the ROK should have passive and active defense systems since those systems and capabilities increase the credibility of counter-threat by minimizing the damage North Korea can bring upon the South. Two types of threat stand out mostly in this regard: artillery¹² and missile. Up until recently, the USFK was entitled to carry out counter-battery, or counter-fire, mission. That mission has been

⁹ Dr. Juhyun Park, senior research fellow, estimated the total value of USFK equipment and material: that is, USD 220 billion. This figure does not include operation cost. If we include the operation cost, the value of USFK is much higher.

¹⁰ While it has some audio signal intelligence and information capabilities, the ROK does not have visual and imagery intelligence and information capabilities. It takes time for intelligence organization to analyze signal-based information.

¹¹ In addition, Capability Plan (CP) and Order of Battle (OB) are primarily product of the U.S.

¹² It is estimated that North Korea deploys 13,000 artillery systems. Among them, about 300, including MLRS, are targeted against the capital area of South Korea.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

transferred to the ROK in 2006. To carry out the mission effectively, software to run the systems in a coordinated manner and intelligence/information of the targets are required. Thus further improvement of counter-fire capabilities—more equipment/systems, and upgraded operating software-- is very necessary.

Over the years, North Korea has improved and increased missile capabilities. It has whole range of missiles, short, medium and long-range. Missile test of July 4, 2006 has proved that North Korea has the capability to effectively coordinate and use different missile systems systematically and simultaneously. However, the ROK does not have reliable and effective defense systems against North Korean missile.¹³ Its own missiles, such as Nike and Hawk, are old and ineffective. It does not have its own missile defense systems. Thus South Korean population and strategic targets are exposed to North Korean missile threats all time. Consequently, this makes the ROK's deterrence and defense posture very weak.

Planning, exercise, and training should also be intensified. Various independent operational plans (OPLAN) should be thought, designed and tested.¹⁴ To maintain reliable deterrent and defense posture and to make the personnel capable of carrying missions assigned, based on such plans, exercises and training should also be upgraded. This is going to be heavy burden on manpower management during peacetime since the ROK needs to have more troops.

Crisis: Lack of Proper Tailored Response Capabilities

Compared to peacetime deterrence posture, crisis management looks better as we have witnessed in the past, including Yeonpyong naval clash in June, 1999. There can be various types of crisis on the Korean Peninsula. But three types of crisis—limited armed clash, rear area infiltration, and contingency in the North--need special attention. In any case, the key issues in crisis are intelligence and proper responses.

There has been a series of armed provocations of North Korea along the DMZ (demilitarized zone) and NLL (Northern Limit Line) since the end of the Korean War. As we have observed in naval clashes in June 1999 and June 2002, the ROK is capable of handling such provocations by itself. Two elements seem to have assisted. The one is that neither side wants the crisis to escalate into full-scale war. And the other is the expected U.S. physical involvement. North Korea knew

¹³ If North Korean missiles are tipped with WMD warheads, the ROK will suffer even severely. And aftermath effects would also be huge and cause social instability and chaos.

¹⁴ Currently, the ROK and the U.S. have OPLAN 5027, 5026, 5029 and 5030.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

that they cannot win the war due to the robust ROK-US combined defense posture and the expected U.S. involvement, should the crisis escalate. If the crisis escalated and expanded, based on the consultation with the ROK, the U.S. would have brought FDOs in to manage the situation. Thus the ROK-US security alliance has great implications for crisis management also. If there is no such mechanism, it would be very difficult for the ROK to manage crisis effectively with full determination. The ROK does not have any additional asset such as military FDOs, while political and economic FDOs are possible.¹⁵

Let me turn to another issue, where the ROK finds itself vulnerable: that is, rear area infiltration and counter-SOF mission. The key is detection and elimination before it reaches the shore. To carry out that mission, helicopters with night vision are required. Right now, the ROK does not have sufficient number of helicopters. What it has done is the increase of sorties of fixed-wing aircraft. That actually increases the burden on the airpower and may result in the reduction of effectiveness of other operations,¹⁶ which are supposed to carry out by those aircraft.

Finally, we should think of quite different type of crisis: that is, contingency in the North.¹⁷ Whatever the causes are and whatever the scenarios can unfold, the ROK will face very serious security challenges, which are quite different from war. Main objectives of the ROK under the situation would be (1) containing the situation within the North and prevention, or minimizing, of spill-over effects and (2) stabilization of internal situation in the North, maybe exploitation of the situation for unification. And major issues we can think of under the contingency of North Korea are: emergency humanitarian assistance; refugee; unwanted, or unintended, military clash; lose of control over and use of WMD; and unnecessary involvement of 3rd party. To handle these issues and challenges, the ROK must have additional defense and national resources in different nature. Especially, two things must be considered seriously: capabilities required for stabilization of the North and those for WMD since otherwise the probability of other parties' involvement will be very high. The ROK will be juxtaposed between the two missions: avoidance of war on one hand and stabilization/ containment of the situation inside the North on the other. For this objective, the

¹⁵ The ROK has two systems: mobilization and martial law. The ROK's mobilization system has only one mobilization system: that is, war-time mobilization. It is like all-or-nothing system. Thus it has to opt to martial law, which is quite controversial. If martial law is announced, regional commander becomes in charge of administrating that specific region.

¹⁶ So, pre-ITO (integrated target order) must be adjusted. This may result in less successful result of mission accomplishment.

¹⁷ The CFC has Concept Plan 5029 for North Korean contingency. But it has not been established as operational plan yet due to the different position between the ROK and the US over the issue of who takes the charge, Commander of CFC or Chairman of ROK JCS.

ROK must have well thought-out tailored response capability, which might similar to MOOTW (military operations other than war) capability.

Wartime: Neither Prevailing nor Decisive

Once war broke out, the ROK should defend, prevail, and win. Among others, as being described afore, counter-fire capability is very necessary to neutralize North Korean artillery attack, especially on the capital area. And, to stop, or slow down, North Korean progress far into the South, anti-tank capabilities such as landmines, attack helicopters, and close-air support should be acquired.¹⁸ But those capabilities are not available today. Thus it would be difficult for the ROK military to stop the North Korean progress and to provide security for the capital area.

Second, air-superiority is one of the key elements in determining the outcome. The air superiority is supposed to be provided by the U.S. through the 7th Air Wing Command and other 32 tactical fighter wings. While the ROK air force has F-16s and F-15s, it does not have sufficient number to acquire air-superiority. Naturally the ROK air force will be over-burdened and diverged. Consequently, it will become very tough to achieve a momentum of decisive victory in the early stage of war, or to turn the tide against North Korea. And more sufferings and damages are expected.

Integrated battlefield information management is another challenge. In recent years, the ROK has introduced and begun the process of designing and building network centric warfare (NCW) systems. It will take some time for the ROK military to complete and operate the systems.¹⁹ Thus, the whole flow from sensor to shooter will not be with the ROK for the time being. Until that time, the ROK military does not have capacity or system to execute theatre-wide military operations in a well-coordinated manner.

Mobilization of reserve force is worth attention. If no augmentation is expected, the ROK should have a very reliable and well-trained reserve force. The ROK has 3 million reserve troops. But it is doubtful on the credibility of training and equipment of the reserve troops. Furthermore, mobilization system itself is unrealistic. To compensate the absence of augmentation force from its allies, the ROK should intensify the training of the reserves and equip them with weapons

¹⁸ It is reported that the ROK intends to stop the North Korean progress north of Seoul, possibly FEBA (forward edge battle area).

¹⁹ Someone has estimated 5-7 years to complete the systems.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

provided for active forces. Otherwise, the reserve remains just a paper tiger and becomes burden, not asset.

Delay of counter-offense and lack of prevailing capability will create problems in logistics. It is believed that the ROK does not have sufficient war reserve for long duration.²⁰ Once war broke out, the ROK would turn the civilian sector into emergency war production systems. But it will take some time for the civilian facilities to produce and supply war material, equipment, and spare parts. But if the civilian facilities are attacked, which will be the case, the production and supply will be further delayed and cause serious problems in the battlefield. What makes even worse is that once the alliance is gone, there will be no force-provider, especially rear area support and the ROK is on its own. Timely supply of war material will be definitely constrained. Consequently, holding the defense line would become a tough task and counter-offense/prevailing would also become infeasible.

Once the ROK acquired material and equipment overseas, it should bring those in, calling it reception. However, two problems or constraints are expected. The one is lift capability. The ROK navy is still coastal navy and it does not have strategic lift capability. Thus it must charter civilian vessels for lift operation. These vessels must be escorted by combatant surface ships. Up until now, safety of SLOC (sea line of communication) has been primarily assigned to the U.S. and partially Japan. It is uncertain how much the U.S. and Japan will involve in guaranteeing the safety of SLOCs. So the ROK navy should find ways to secure the safety of SLOCs. Those include anti-submarine warfare, AEGIS, mine-swiping, strategic surface lift capabilities, and air-power to protect.

In sum, from peace-time to war-time, for the ROK to stand alone, there are so many things to do and acquire and huge financial and manpower requirements. Somehow, the ROK may be able to defend itself with substantial damages and suffering. But it is very unlikely for the ROK to prevail and achieve decisive victory.

²⁰ It was reported that the ROK has war reserve about for 10-12 days. Currently the ROK and the U.S. are discussing the transfer of WRSA (War Reserve Supply for Ally). And the U.S. has maintained pre-positioning system.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

Table 2. Estimated Force Requirement

	Hardware	Software	Humanware
Peace-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deterrent capabilities ● Early-warning systems ● Passive/active defense (MD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● S/R capabilities ● Intelligence & information dissemination ● Strategic intelligence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intelligence & information analyzing/production ● Planning ● Training ● Exercise
Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Military FDOs ● Counter-SOF capa. ● Counter-fire capa. ● Contingency capa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Political FDOs ● S/R capabilities ● Contingency plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PsyOps capa. ● Civil-military affairs capa.
War-Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Defending/prevaling & winning capa. ● Air-superiority ● Deep strike capa. ● War reserve/supply ● Rear area stabilization and support ● Anti-sub, mine-swiping, lift, protection capa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrated battlefield management system ● NCW-based C4I 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reserve mobilization/training

1. Some elements, especially C4ISR, overlap across time and situation.
2. Capacities in each category are highlighted one.

3. Targeted and Adjusted Future and Force Requirement

Adjustment of the ROK-US Security Alliance System

Since 2003, the ROK and the U.S. have discussed and resolved a series of pending issues concerning their alliance through frameworks such as the Future of the ROK-U.S. Alliance Policy Initiative (FOTA), the Security Policy Initiative (SPI), the ROK-U.S. Annual Security

* NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper *

Consultative Meeting (SCM), and other important high level meetings.

Through the FOTA meetings,²¹ the ROK and the U.S. were able to reach an agreement on the relocation of the Yongsan Base, the realignment and reduction of the 2nd Infantry Division, the transfer of ten special missions, and the revision of the Land Partnership Plan (LPP).

Table 3. Major Outcomes of the FOTA

<p>1. Yongsan Relocation Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- CFC, UNC, and USFK HQs facilities and areas in Seoul shall be relocated to Pyongtaek by 2008 <p>2. Relocation/Reduction of USFK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 2-phased relocation of 2nd Infantry Division<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ 1st Phase : consolidation of 2nd ID into Dongducheon/Uijeongbu by 2007■ 2nd Phase : relocation of 2nd ID to Pyongtaek- Reduction of 12,500 troops by 2007 <p>3. Revision of Land Partnership Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Return of the land, approximately 16,100 ha, to the ROK <p>4. Transfer of 10 special missions</p>
--

In their first Strategic Consultation for an Allied Partnership in January 20, 2006, the two parties also concluded agreement concerning the ‘strategic flexibility’ of the U.S. forces in Korea (hereafter USFK). The agreement reads as follow:

“The ROK, as an ally, fully understands the rationale for the transformation of the U.S. global military strategy, and *respects the necessity for the strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the ROK* (emphasis added). In the implementation of strategic flexibility, *the U.S. respects the ROK position* (emphasis added) that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people.”²²

Except the transfer of 10 special missions, the outcomes of FOTA are rather quantitative

²¹ The FOTA meeting had been held for 12 times from April 2003 to September 2005. The FOTA was commissioned for six missions: expanding the ROK’s security role on the Korean Peninsula; strengthening the USFK’s role for regional stability; modernizing combined defense capability; providing favorable conditions for the presence of USFK; base realignment and relocation; and studying future combined command structure.

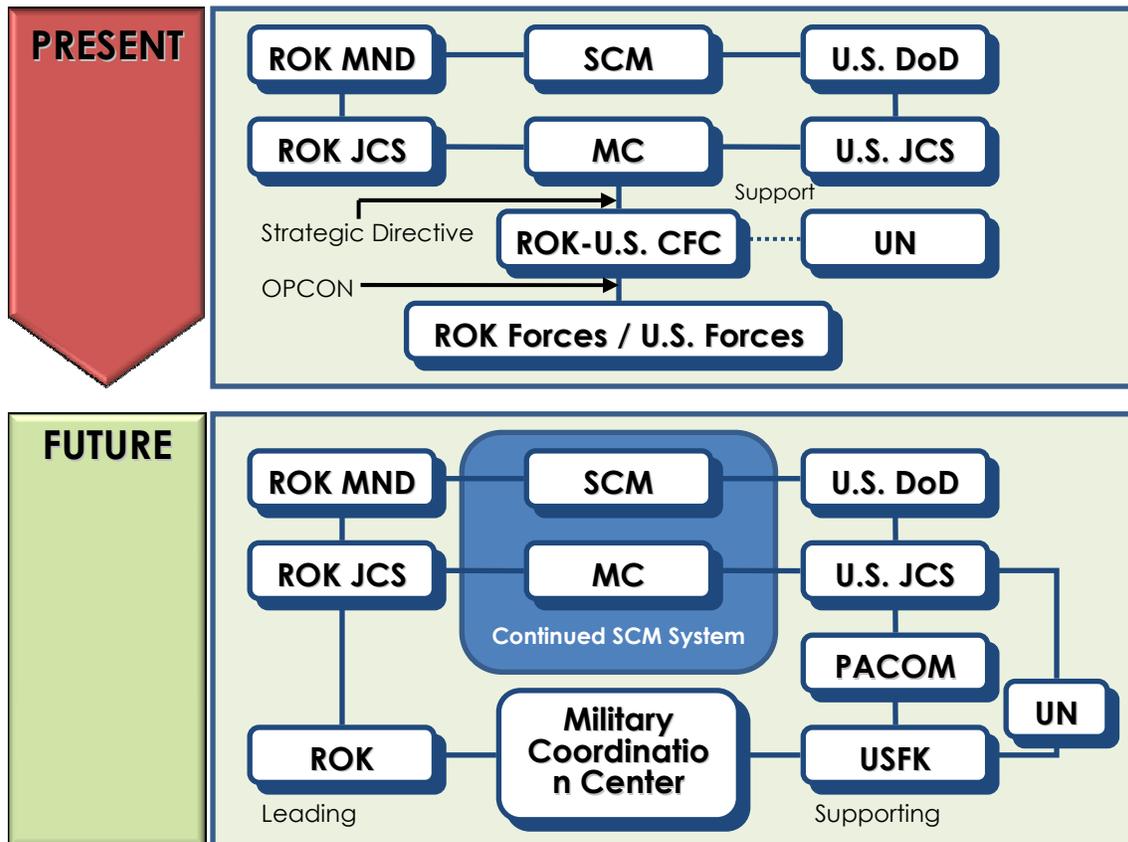
²² *The Korea Herald*, January 22, 2006.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

adjustment, similar to what we have seen in the past. The basic structure and operating mechanisms of combined defense posture were not touched upon.

Three tasks—Joint Vision Study (JVS), Comprehensive Security Assessment (CSA), and Command Relations Study (CRS)—had been carried out by Security Policy Initiative SPI meetings. Except the date for the transfer of wartime operational control, the blue print for structural change was set forth at the 38th Security Consultative Meeting. Three months later, both sides agreed that A new alliance structure and functions will be in place as of April 17, 2012. The ROK-US Combined Forces Command (hereafter CFC), which was established in 1978, will be dismantled. The ROK and the U.S. will have separate command relations, which are linked by Military Coordination Center (hereafter MCC). The function of defending South Korea against any external threat or aggression will be carried out primarily by the ROK itself, whereas the U.S. will assume the supporting roles.

Diagram 3. Command Relations Structure



*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

Though both parties have agreed on the fundamental principle of a ‘comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial alliance,’ there is a lack of consensus concerning how to substantiate the agreements signed between them. In particular, the transfer of wartime operational control, the establishment of a new command, relations, and the relocation of U.S. military bases, all of these issues are directly related to the question on how to develop the relationship between the ROK Korea and the U.S. In this regard, the stability and efficiency of the future alliance can largely depend on the direction and progress of these agreements. In addition, questions such as: “What roles should South Korea and the U.S. be entitled to carry out after the ROK creates independent military commands?” “What functions should the Military Coordination Center (MCC) perform?” and “What status should be assigned to the United Nations Command (UNC) after the ROK-U.S. CFC is dismantled in tandem with the transfer of wartime command?” must be considered. In dealing with these issues, the bottom line is the establishment of a constructive and enduring partnership.

Seoul and Washington agreed to set up the MCC, a joint center to ensure operational cooperation between the two forces. At present, consultations on the scale, role, and status of the MCC are being conducted. However, both parties have different approaches with regard to the role of the MCC. While the U.S. plans to provide minimal cooperation, the ROK expects the U.S. to provide maximum cooperation and support.

Highlighting that the ROK-U.S. relationship under the new command system is that of ‘being supported’ and ‘supporting,’ the U.S. attempts not to bear the cost and responsibility of providing comprehensive security. In this regard, the U.S. argues that it is inappropriate to expect the MCC to play a major role in place of the current CFC under the new system. In contrast, the ROK wants the MCC to bridge the new Korean command and the CFC, playing cooperation and coordination roles between the two forces.

With respect to the scale and role of the MCC, the U.S. is not likely to take an active role in advancing the MCC structure to one that can assume immediate wartime operations as the CFC. This is because the U.S. seems to believe that if the MCC is entitled to play a similar role with the CFC, there will be certain limitations placed on USFK activities. Hence, the U.S. prefers direct cooperation between the operational commands during the time of war, while limiting the role of the MCC to communications and cooperation. Accordingly, the U.S. is expected to call for an

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

establishment of a crisis action standard operating procedure (CASOP), although the U.S. must pursue unity in the field of C4I due to the importance of information.

Underlining that its position is a supporter under the new command system, the U.S. is expected to ask the ROK to present the scope of support it wishes to seek from Washington. At the same time, the U.S. is likely to reject the provision of providing as much support as it used to, while calling the South for an effort to increase military capacities. Because it is hard for the ROK to present the scope of support and cooperation within 2~3 years before completing the establishment of new war plans and the estimation of required military capacities, the U.S. appears to have an advantage in negotiating with the ROK, as the ROK lacks time and information. Therefore, it is presumed that the U.S. will attempt to minimize the number of U.S. ground troops while increasing U.S. naval and air forces in the region.

Based upon the review of the stances of both, it is possible to speculate the future command relationship and structure between the ROK and the United States: less organically linked and widely dispersed; much more burdened in coordinating and orchestrating the operations; less presence of U.S. troops; and smaller augmentation force. Consequently, for the ROK, the immediate concerns are to secure and maintain U.S. extended deterrence and security commitment and to effectively cooperate and coordinate with the U.S. forces under the new command relations. To make up the deficiencies and to be more self-reliant, the ROK has launched “Defense Reform 2020.”

Defense Reform 2020

The ROK has launched a very ambitious defense reform plan, called “Defense Reform 2020,” which is divided into five categories: reducing manpower and correcting service composition of manpower, civilization of the Defense Ministry, strengthening the JCS system, securing long-term defense budget, and maintaining and developing the ROK-US alliance within the framework of a cooperative and self-reliant security policy. On presenting the Defense Reform 2020, Defense Minister Yoon illustrated the following guiding principles:

- Launching the defense reform now, rather than later, because it is a pressing task
- Creating a military force that sees further, moves faster, and strikes more precisely, to cope with rapidly changing modern warfare environments

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

- Making the defense management system more efficient, accountable, and responsive to the people
- Building an economic force that is low-cost and highly-efficient
- Implementing the reform gradually along the three distinctive phases until 2020
- Conducting the reform within the law to be approved by the National Assembly
- The reform will be pursued with a firm ROK-U.C. combined defense posture
- The reform process will be transparent to the public and the international community.²³

Among others, force size, force structure and weapon systems to be acquired are worth attention. The basic idea is to transform manpower-based force into technology-based force. The present forces of 680,000 will be reduced to “an elite force of 500,000” by the year 2020. The major reduction will be on the army, which will be cut down from 548,000 to 371,000. The navy will be reduced from 68,000 to 64,000, whereas the air force will remain the same—65,000. The 3 million reserve troops will be cut down by half--1.5 million.

The main objectives of Army’s force development are the increase of fire-power and mobility. Next-generation armored vehicles, KMH (Korean Multipurpose Helicopters), K-200 type next generation armored personnel carrier, K-9 self-propelled artillery, next generation MLRS, and medium/high-altitude UAV are included. The navy’s primary focus is the expansion of operational range and increase of attack capability. By 2020, the navy will have five fleets (1st, 2nd, 3rd fleet, submarine command, and airpower command) with 70 ships of approximately 120,000 tons. Plus the navy will double the number of aircraft, about 100. Destroyers (KDX II/III), submarines KSS II/III), AEGIS-class cruisers, and LPX will be added by 2020. The air force puts emphasis on early-warning system, air-borne refueling system, next generation fighters, SAM-X, M-SAM, and information gathering systems.²⁴

Assessment

If all these programs are completed by 2020, the ROK’s defense posture would be much improved and reliable. It will have more fire-power (or strike capability) with higher level of precision, higher mobility, longer range, and higher jointness. The problem is how to manage the

²³ Han Yong-sup, “Analyzing South Korea’s Defense Reform 2020,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1 (Spring 2006), p. 116.

²⁴ The exact number of weapons systems to acquire has not been announced yet.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

transitional period, or miss-match period, from 2012 to 2020 and to maintain reliable deterrent posture. During that period, it is probable to see half-full situation.

In peacetime, while the U.S. will say that it will honor its security commitment to the defense of the ROK under the Mutual Defense Treaty, the U.S. will emphasize the ROK's primary leading role in defending itself. Physically, the U.S. seems not to have sufficient augmentation forces, especially ground troops. Politically, the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea can be questioned. On the other hand, the ROK does not have sufficient deterrent assets of its own. So deterrence by retaliation would possibly become incredible. The U.S. is believed to continue to provide intelligence and information. With the increase of the ROK's intelligence capabilities in all dimensions, the ROK will be in a better position to collaborate with the U.S. in gathering, analyzing, producing, and disseminating intelligence and information. The key issue is how much intelligence/information infrastructure of both forces is closely connected and inter-operable.

Planning capabilities would also be increased. The problems may rise in the area of exercises and training. Based upon new plans, there should be exercises and trainings for the forces of both countries to become familiar with their new roles and division of labor. So it is possible to argue that for the time being, there will be confusion, misunderstanding, and miss-match between the plans and reality. The period of adjustment is very necessary.

For crisis situation, Defense Reform 2020 is primarily focused on war-fighting capabilities so that it does not reflect the requirements for crisis management. Thus deficiency can be found in military FDOs, political FDOs, contingency response capabilities, and civil-military affairs. Politically and militarily, new command structure can be interpreted as a sign of weakened U.S. commitment. To eliminate such understanding, the ROK and the U.S. must devise new FDOs. Especially, there should be reinforcing relationship between military FDOs and non-military FDOs. Otherwise non-military FDOs would not be taken seriously. Secondly, contingency planning and response capabilities should also be considered. It is very difficult to predict how internal situation of North Korea unfolds during this period of time. However, against our wish and hope, there would be an increase of destabilizing elements in the North. If that's the case, it is very necessary for the ROK to consider contingency plans and response capabilities with little U.S. assistance and involvement. MOOTW capabilities not only for overseas mission but also for the contingency in the North might be worth acquiring.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

Finally, war-fighting capabilities should be assessed. Since there will be U.S. involvement and assistance, the situation will be better than the previous case, alternative future 1. The key problem is expected to rise in the area of sustainability and achieving decisive victory due to the expected decrease of U.S. augmentation force. The U.S. involvement would be mainly air and naval one, and ground operations would be the main responsibility for the ROK. So, if once they achieved a defense line, it would be possible to hold the line. But it would be difficult, if not impossible, to launch effective counter-offence and become prevailing. Further down the road, achievement of decisive victory would not be feasible. Consequently, the ROK may be forced to accept political solution, or restoration of the previous status quo, rather than military one. The other areas of concern include war reserve, rear area support, and protection of SLOCs. All these are linked up to the sustainability and effectiveness of the operations. With less U.S. involvement, it is very unlikely to expect the same level of external support and assistance. Furthermore, it is necessary for the ROK to review its capacity to handle the post-war situations and consequences. On the other hand, C4ISR capabilities will be much more improved so that the ROK can operate theatre-wide battlefield management systems. However, to become more effective and efficient, test-period is necessary.

In sum, by 2012, the ROK and the U.S. will have a new structure with some deficiencies. However, as long as the U.S. determination to honor its security commitment for the ROK is firm and strong, physical deficiencies can be overcome. And for the ROK, not only the state of art technologies and weapon systems but also the basics and fundamentals must be revisited.

Table 4. Estimated Force Requirement in the Targeted Future

	Hardware	Software	Humanware
Peace-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deterrent posture/capabilities ● Passive defense capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inter-operable information & intelligence systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training/exercises
Crisis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Military FDOs ● Political FDOs ● Contingency response capa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● New joint CASOPs & manual 	

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

War-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prevailing capa. ● Sustaining capa ● Rear area stabilization capabilities ● Post-war management & reconstruction capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrated battlefield information management systems ● Civil-military operations plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effective & reliable reserve force ● CMO manpower
----------	--	--	--

4. Points of Concerns

We have reviewed two cases: alternative future and targeted future. In both cases, among other elements, the reliability and credibility of deterrent posture are the key element. If the ROK is thinking about beyond North Korea, the ROK-US security alliance matters even more. Physical linkage is important, but the psychological bondage is more important. For that purpose, we must try to build confidence and trust in each other. To do so, it is very necessary to intensify the efforts to breed common assessment, common vision and ideas, and understanding on the desirable end state, conditions, and process/approach.

The ROK and the U.S. have had close consultation focusing on a future-oriented vision to develop the ROK-U.S. alliance. However, they must place more importance on content-oriented consultation rather than the establishment of organizational framework and structure. This is very important because through these efforts the ROK and the U.S. will be able to maximize common interests and minimize misunderstandings, avoiding costly and burdensome problems. Now it is time to think about what exactly means by saying “comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial alliance” in a more concrete way.

It was agreed that the U.S. would transfer wartime control over the Korean armed forces by April 17, 2012. Therefore, South Korea must rid itself of concerns that the transfer could have a negatively impact on the security of the Korean Peninsula. For this purpose, the ROK is required to enhance its own military capabilities while also considering a flexible approach to the agreed timeline. According to situational changes, the ROK government must adopt a flexible attitude

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

and consider alternatives such as altering the timeline, if necessary, from ‘fixed year’ to ‘target year.’

As mentioned before, the core issue between the ROK and the U.S. is expected to be content-oriented consultation, particularly concerning the scope and level of support and cooperation. Limiting its role as a supporter under the new command system, the U.S. asks the ROK to present how much support it seeks from Washington. Accordingly, by completing the establishment of operational plans that deal with the threats, main strategic goals, and operational management, the ROK government has to be able to present what support and cooperation it needs to obtain from the U.S. This type of content-oriented consultation will be conducive to the build-up of mutual trust. Much more attention must be given to roles, missions, and capabilities. Among others, the strengthening of inter-operability between the two forces is critical. Here inter-operability should not be limited to weapons-to-weapons. Rather it should go beyond just simple mechanical one. Hopefully, “comprehensive inter-operability” should be targeted. That is the way to compensate the weakened organizational linkage of new command relations. Many things should be done in intelligence and information aspect.

Since the U.S. suggests the provision of ‘bridging’ capabilities to help the South in areas where it is still developing more self-reliant defense capabilities, the ROK should classify the scope and level of support and cooperation in stages, and attempt to negotiate with the U.S. at each stage. To make the process as smooth and efficient as possible, the ROK should break down the transfer of wartime operational control and the establishment of a new command system into several phases and assess what is required for each phase.

For the U.S., the key issue is how to make the U.S. commitment to the defense of South Korea reliable and credible. The contents of U.S. extended deterrence should be reviewed and adjusted accordingly. As the force provider, the U.S. must think about more realistic assistance it can provide and ways to be engaged and involved through the phases from peace-time to war-time.

Before determining the scale, status, and the role of the MCC, the efficiency and stability of the new system must be tested through exercises under simulated combat conditions in order to minimize the risk of any adverse outcomes. In addition, the ROK needs to draw up a plan to achieve substantial cooperation between the two forces by increasing mutual compatibility of weaponry and communication, while developing new methods and technologies for joint military exercises.

*** NBR/KiFS U.S.-ROK Alliance Conference Paper ***

The UNC issue has recently emerged as a new agenda in the alliance talks because, first, there is no clear roadmap for peace in the Korean Peninsula and, second, it is hard to find a way to solve the North Korean nuclear problem. Hence, both parties should consult one another in order to sketch a roadmap and reach an agreement on the new role of the UNC, particularly concerning responsibility in armistice maintenance and crisis management.

To further strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, it is crucial not only to reach an agreement on the aforementioned issues, but to also gain the understanding and support of the people in creating a comprehensive alliance for the future. Hence, the ROK government must present a clear picture for the development of a ‘comprehensive, dynamic, and mutually beneficial alliance.’

5. Conclusion

It is inevitable to see the transformation of the ROK-U.S. security alliance. Many things have been negotiated and resolved. The underlying assumption and understanding in that transition is that the ROK-U.S. security alliance should be maintained. However, hopes and wishes should not make us blind to the reality. There must be close coordination among four factors: situation/challenges, structure, contents, and capabilities. Flexible cohesiveness and objective-oriented approach should guide us into the future.

For the ROK, many things should be done to achieve cooperative and more self-reliant defense. Fundamentals and basics must be revisited. Continuous efforts to transform its own defense posture should go along with its efforts to strengthen the alliance. In doing so, the ROK should find the areas where it can make contribution to the realization of common values and ideas going beyond the Korean Peninsula. That will enhance the strategic value of the ROK and the alliance. For the U.S., the ally’s concerns should also be well taken. Some situation-wise and region-specific modification seems necessary.

Among others, the alliance transformation must be driven and guided by the situation and demands, not by politics.