



# UNISCI Discussion Papers

## HOW TO COPE WITH THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSITION OF THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE

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### Introduction

In recent years, the ROK-US relation is not in its best moment. It has been under stress due to the North Korean nuclear issue, the ROK-US Alliance status question and the US Forces in Korea (USFK) realignment.

During the last half century, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the USA have kept a close and mutually beneficial relationship. The ROK-U.S Alliance established in 1954, after the Korean Civil War and at the beginning of the Cold War with the aim to deter further aggression by North Korea to the South, has provided stability not only to the Korean peninsula but also to Northeast Asia.

Today, after the international political changes following the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s, the ROK-U.S Alliance has been put on the test ground. The U.S. military presence in the ROK and the status of the Alliance have been the subject of strong controversy to the point that it has never been an issue so openly discussed in the South Korean society.

Some politicians in Washington are quite upset and critical toward the South Korean attitude saying that “they forgot what we have done to save their country in the Korean War.”<sup>2</sup>

Under these circumstances it is appropriate to try to reflect and analyze why the questions of the bilateral Alliance and anti Americanism have arisen in South Korea as a big issue and the strong response of the U.S on this. As a Korean proverb says, “every tomb has reason to be,” the outcry about the transformation of the Alliance must have its *raison d’etre* as well.

The main points of this paper are: 1. The historical background of the ROK-U.S Alliance  
2. Challenges to the transformation of the Alliance  
3. Future direction of the Alliance

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<sup>1</sup> *Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI.* The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.

<sup>2</sup> Bandow, Doug: “Bring the Troops Home Ending the Obsolete Korean Commitment,” *Policy Analysis* of the Cato Institute, No. 474, 7 May 2003.



## 1. Understanding the historical background of the Alliance

In order to understand the historical background of the Alliance it is necessary to know what interests and commitment the US had in the Korean peninsula. In fact, the American interest in Korea before the 1940's was insignificant. Although, the United States had been the first Western nation to sign a formal diplomatic treaty with Korea in 1882, it had been the first foreign embassy to leave in November 1905 after the Japanese had forced the Koreans to sign a protectorate treaty. Especially, since the 1905, the American policy in Korea was based on the Taft Katsura Memorandum<sup>3</sup> which states the mutual respect of Japan's take over Korea and the U.S.'s control of the Philippines. This had remained as the basic American policy toward Korea until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941.

However, after the Japanese defeat in WW II, creating a geopolitical vacuum in Northeast Asia and the war time alliance between the Soviet Union and the United States started to break down and mutual suspicion increased the U.S. policy toward the Korean peninsula totally altered. Facing the liberation of the Korean peninsula neither of the two great powers of the post war era, the United States and the Soviet Union, was willing to relinquish to the other, or to the Koreans themselves.<sup>4</sup> Thereafter, American policy on Korea had undergone a gradual shift and former American indifference to Korea was replaced by the same fear of Russian control of the peninsula.

One of the evidences is that anticipating a long and difficult battle in 1945 for the Japanese main island, the United States sought Soviet participation in the war against Japan on the Asian mainland, and the U.S. military leaders were willing to pay the price of Soviet control over Manchuria and Korea.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, the Soviet armies began to enter Manchuria and Korea. However, with the atomic bomb attack to the cities of Japan, it became clear that the war was over and the anticipated U.S invasion of the Japanese territory would be unnecessary. The end of the war came sooner than expected, on August 15, 1945 with the Japanese Emperor's declaration of unconditional surrender. At this point, facing the Soviets who had advanced into the Korean peninsula upon their declaration of war against Japan in early August, the United States hastily proposed a temporary military occupation of Korea in zones dividing at the middle, 38th parallel. This decision came out as the American troops could not be moved quickly enough to prevent the Soviet armies that had entered the Korean peninsula. Unless an agreement was reached, the Soviets could occupy the entire peninsula and place Korea under communist control. This is exactly what the US feared about the Soviet's expansion of socialism and communism in Asia.

Dean Rusk, a Major at the time, and Colonel Charles H. Bonesteel, later a commander of American forces in South Korea, were given thirty minutes to select an appropriate dividing line. They chose the thirty-eight parallel, in the middle of the peninsula.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> MacNair, H. F. and Lach, Donald F. (1955): *Modern Far Eastern International Relations*, Toronto, D. Van Nostrand Co., Ltd. pp.101-102.

<sup>4</sup> Borthwick, Mark and others (1972): *Pacific Century: Korea: Liberation, Division, and War, 1945-1953*, Colorado, Westview Press, p. 371.

<sup>5</sup> US asked the Soviets to enter the war in the Asian scenario because it was impossible for Washington to mobilize its troops so rapidly from Europe. An agreement for Soviet participation in the war that left the invasion of these two areas entirely in Soviet military hands was reached at Yalta and Potsdam in 1945.

<sup>6</sup> In an emergent meeting of the State-War Navy Coordinating Committee of the U.S. on August 11, the General Order No. 1 was issued to divide the peninsula into two occupation zones. See, Eckert, Carter J. and others (1990): *Korea Old and New: A History*, Seoul, Ilchokak, p. 335.



It could be understood that considering that the U.S. government supplied the Soviet with approximately \$11 billion for military cooperation and the Soviet needed continuous American economic assistance, Stalin did not raise objections to the contents of the order.<sup>7</sup> Under these provisions the Russian commander accepted the Japanese surrender north of the 38th parallel, the American commander to the south.

After this agreement, with the end of the war, and with the two occupying forces in Korea, the Allied foreign ministers met in Moscow on December 7, 1945, and decided to establish a trusteeship for a five-year period. They also agreed to form a joint United States-Soviet commission.<sup>8</sup> This decision of the powers was denounced by the Koreans, because they viewed this as a permanent division of the country but it was simply ignored. The independence that Koreans were fighting for so long time did not arrive with the defeat of the Japanese.

### 1.1. Unworkable Joint Commission

It rapidly became apparent that there was no political consensus in Korea, as the Korean community was torn between extremists of right and left. In the north the Russians supported the communists, while in the south the Americans helped Syngman Rhee's leadership of the right wing.

The fact was that while both the United States and the Soviet Union were committed to resolve the Korean problem through trusteeship, their occupation forces manipulated to pursue nationalist policies which envisioned a unified Korean government only on terms that excluded, respectively, either the right or the left. Such position naturally inclined each occupation force to favour two separate Korean states over a unified state in which power had to be shared.

In this atmosphere, it was already clear that the Commission was in trouble. In addition to this, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were also in the process of change as Roosevelt's internationalism was being replaced by Truman's containment policy. By the summer of 1947, the Soviet-U.S Joint Commission had become moribund and it seemed inevitable that two separate Korean regimes would eventually emerge.<sup>9</sup>

Especially, given the situation, the American military government was not popular and faced violent protest from the Koreans. American world strategy was criticized and confronted with the problem of relieving itself of an embarrassing situation in Korea. In this situation, the primary objective of the United States in the region was the earliest possible withdrawal from Korea.

As early as 1947, American military authorities concluded that from the point of view of its own military security, the United States had little strategic interest in Korea. Consequently, the U.S. transferred its burden into the U.N.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Rubinstein, Alvin Z. (1998): *Soviet Foreign Policy Since W.W. II: Imperial and Global*, Massachusetts, Winthrop Publishers, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> In this circumstance, in the Yalta Conference, President D. Roosevelt proposed a forty-year international trusteeship (based on the U.S. experience in the Philippines). This was eventually shortened to five years at the Soviet insistence.

<sup>9</sup> Kwak, Tae Hwan and others (1982): *U.S.-Korean Relations, 1882-1982*, The Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Seoul, Kyungnam University Press, p. 67-68.

<sup>10</sup> Borthwick, *op. cit.*, p. 380-383.



In August 1947 the Commission adjourned for the last time, and a tragic process was put in motion in September 1947, when the United States announced its intention to move the Korean question to the United Nations. The Soviets objected protesting that the U.N had no jurisdiction, but the United States succeeded in obtaining approval in the General Assembly for the establishment of a United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) to supervise general elections leading to the formation of an independent Korean government.<sup>11</sup>

The Soviets, acting through their North Korean surrogates, refused UNTCOK entry to the northern zone. At American insistence, the United Nations then voted to proceed with elections only in the south. In spite of objections from both north and southern nationalists like Kim Ku and Kim Kyu-sik, who feared a permanent division of the country and still hoped for a negotiation with the north, the elections were held in May 10, 1948 in the south only. Two months later a new constitution was adopted by the National Assembly, and on August 15 the Republic of Korea (R.O.K) was established with Syng-man Rhee as its first president.<sup>12</sup> North Korea responded holding its own elections on August 25 and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was officially established on September 9, 1945.<sup>13</sup> The Soviets and its communist bloc recognized the North Korea as the only lawful government in the peninsula while the US and its allies did the same with South Korea.

## 1.2. Korean War

Although the United States had pursued since September 1947 two major objectives in Korea - the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Korean government and the containment of Communist expansion in Asia - the leaders of the United States constantly viewed the Korean problem as an "unhappy burden". Therefore, the primary objective of the U.S was the earliest possible liquidation of American responsibilities in Korea.

Consequently, the United States withdrew its troops as the South established its own government, leaving behind as military advisers a total of 500 men compared to 3,000 Soviet advisers in the north. In addition to this, to keep the South from going to war and reunifying the country by force, the U.S. took with its departing forces all weapons that could be used offensively - airplanes, tanks, and heavy artillery. In this respect, there is a sharp contrast between the U.S. policy toward South Korea and the Soviet policy in the North: the Soviets only withdraw their occupation forces after making sure the North Korea was left with Communist Party firmly in control and strong in defence. The American Military Advisory Group estimated that the ill-equipped, ill-trained men that made up the R.O.K. army could hold out for no more than fifteen days.<sup>14</sup> Despite President Rhee's warning of a possible North Korean military movement, the U.S. did not pay attention to it because its political leaders did not see any great need for retaining troops in Korea and even Korea had been placed outside of the U.S. defence perimeter.

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<sup>11</sup> The adopted resolution provided for a Temporary Commission on Korea. It would consist of the representatives of Australia, Canada, China, El Salvador, France, India, the Philippines, Syria, and the Ukraine. See, Kim, Hak-joon (1992): *Unification Policies of South and North Korea, 1945-1991: A Comparative Study*, Seoul, Seoul National University Press, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup> Appleman, Roy E. (1961): *U.S. Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu*, Washington D.C., pp. 14-15.



As evidence, the U.S Secretary of State Acheson mentioned that the defence perimeter of the United States in Asia no longer included either Formosa or Korea. Although he stressed U.N. protection for places beyond the perimeter, he made it clear that "no person can guarantee these areas against military attack."<sup>15</sup>

Subsequently, the first major attempt toward Korean unification by military means took place in the early morning of June 25, 1950. South Korean security forces were totally unprepared in terms of numbers, equipment and training.

Thus, when the well trained North Korean Army with more than one hundred and fifty tanks and fighter planes attacked on June 25 1950, Seoul fell into the north in three days and it was certain that unless outside forces intervened, Korea would be unified by force under the control of North Korea.

However, following the North Korean surprise attack U.S. President Truman decided to intervene in the war in support of South Korea. On June 26, right next day the war broke out, he ordered the use of U.S. planes and naval vessels against North Korean forces, and on June 30, U.S. ground troops were dispatched.<sup>16</sup> The reaction of the U.S. toward the North Korean attack on the South was very quick and decisive.

At this stage, one can see radical change of U.S. policy toward Korea in such a short period of time; only five months before Acheson had stated that U.S. can not defend Korea.

The United States chose to reassert itself in Korea with several reasons: first of all, the United States did not see the North Korean invasion as a civil war, but rather as part of a Soviet ambition to expand its control over the world which if not stopped in Korea, would extend to other parts of the world.

Second, there were the strategic calculations: in geopolitical terms, the requirement to retain control of the Korea Strait and with it the capability to limit Soviet access to the sea between Korea and Japan.

Third, a Communist victory in Korea could not be permitted to encourage the left wing in American-occupied Japan. The loss of any additional territory to Communist control, in this case Korea, after the loss of China in 1949 would be very painful.

Finally, it was the American moral commitment to the Rhee Syng-man regime in South Korea.<sup>17</sup>

Whatever the reasons for American intervention, there is one thing to be noted: The possibility of Korean reunification was not a relevant consideration to intervene in the war. America's immediate policy was rather to re-establish the status quo "ante bellum" along the 38th parallel. Evidence strongly suggests that, although President Rhee urged the total defeat of the north, eliminating the division of Korea and unifying the whole peninsula as the UN forces pushed back the North Korean forces up to near the Chinese border. Nevertheless, US policy

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<sup>15</sup> Kwak and others, *op. cit.*, p.66-69. See also, Bohlen, Charles E. (1973): *Witness to History 1929-1969: Thoughts on Korea*, N.Y, W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., p. 290-294. McLellan, David: "Dean Acheson and the Korean War," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.83, No. 1 (March 1968), pp.16-39. Salvador, Inassimo (1963): *The Rise of Modern Communism*, NY, Rinehart and Winston, pp. 94-97.

<sup>16</sup> Knapp, Wilfried F. (1967): *A History of War and Peace: 1939-1965*, London, Oxford Univ. Press, pp.220-229.

<sup>17</sup> Rees, David (1964): *Korea: The Limited War*, N.Y., St. Martin's Press, pp. 21-35.



makers from the beginning seemed intent upon confining the war to a limited scope as it is shown in President Truman's directions to General MacArthur, as well as in the two resolutions of June 25 and June 27, in the United Nations, no mention was made of any desire to unify Korea.<sup>18</sup>

Almost one year after fierce battles had originated a rigid stalemate where in the battleground, the parallel diplomatic stalemate between Russia and the U.S. began to break down. On June 23, 1951, the Soviet representative to the U.N. Security Council, Jacob Malik, suggested that negotiations on a Korean armistice could be started based on the 38th parallel. The US responded on June 30, that cease-fire talks could be initiated.<sup>19</sup>

Without consideration of President Rhee's opposition, truce negotiations started. While the negotiations were approaching to its end, Rhee Syng-man, fearing that Korea's future as a united nation was in danger began protesting again that the ROK forces would fight on alone rather than accept a peace agreement that left the peninsula partitioned.<sup>20</sup>

To appease President Rhee the United States made five pledges: 1) The promise of a U.S.-ROK security pact, 2) A loan of U\$200,000,000, 3) An agreement on the part of the U.S. to withdraw from the political conference after ninety days if nothing constructive resulted, 4) Aid in expanding the ROK Army, 5) An agreement to hold high level US-ROK talks on all aspects of the issue before the conference for the unification of Korea opened.<sup>21</sup>

Eventually, Rhee accepted the inevitability of a UNC armistice under strong pressure from the US government although South Korea never signed the truce agreement. Finally, a truce was finally signed on July 27, 1953 at Panmunjom, between the U.S., North Korean and China.

## **2. Challenges to the transition**

As agreed before the ending of the war, a ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty was concluded on October 1, 1953 and the ROK-US alliance has remained ever since lasting more than half century. The alliance has played a significant role in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. It helped to achieve ROK's national development including the promotion of democracy and current economic prosperity. However, the alliance is facing serious challenges in recent years due to the changing internal and external security environment of the post-Cold War era and the North Korean nuclear issue.

As indicated above the ROK-US alliance is the product of the Cold War based upon a threat from North Korea. Thus in theory, the end of the Cold War should dismantle the ROK-US alliance as well. But events such as the North Korean nuclear crisis of 1993-1994, and the second nuclear crisis in October 2002 together with the fight of terrorism in the world reaffirmed the importance of keeping the ROK-US alliance.

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<sup>18</sup> John, Spanier W. (1959): *The Truman MacArthur Controversy and the Korean War*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, pp. 257-259.

<sup>19</sup> Jewell, Kim A. (1989): *American Military History: The Korean War, 1950-1953*, Center of Military History, United States Army, Washington, D.C., Chapter 25.

<sup>20</sup> On June 18, 1953, President Rhee released 25,000 prisoners of war from detention camps guarded by ROK troops and let escape 2,000 additional as a protest for the unsatisfactory Eisenhower's replay to Rhee's request on the defense pact. This action blocked the final stage of agreement of the truce.

<sup>21</sup> Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: The Korean War*, N.Y. Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 56-58.



On the other hand, the ROK-US alliance faced a very important turning point in June 2000 after the inter-Korean summit meeting which raised the hopes of many Koreans that the two Koreas would be able to resolve their own problems by themselves. As the result, the summit of 2000 created a controversy in South Korea on whether the ROK-US alliance provides a positive impact on tension reduction on the Korean Peninsula or not.

Unfortunately, Korean society does not react positively with strong anti-Americanism, to which the Americans and the U.S government responded strongly. This mutual animosity is the outcome of a lack of understanding on both parts. Mainly there are three points that explain this situation; lack of understanding of each other, different threat perception, and different political objectives

First of all, based on long standing misunderstandings or simply a lack of deep knowledge of the historical background of the alliance, both the South Korean people and the American public have developed an increasing animosity toward the alliance.

On one hand, the young Korean generation who did not experienced the Korean War and many on the left now view ROK-US history in terms of problems caused by the US. As it was mentioned above, many Koreans feel that the US is responsible for some of the most tragic events in Korean contemporary history from allowing the Peninsula to fall under the Japanese empire with the Taft-Katsura memorandum after the Russo-Japanese War, to dividing the Peninsula in 1945, and its support of military authoritarian governments. While the Americans view Korean history in terms of the Korean War and the sacrifice of 37,000 Americans stationed in the South Korean soil helping to secure its freedom and stability cannot understand why Korea seems so ungrateful.

In this respect, one thing that the Koreans should note is that it is thanks to the alliance with the U.S. they can enjoy today stability and economic prosperity, regardless of whatever reasons and interests the US has in Korea, which were described in detail above.

Secondly, there is a difference on threat perception between the two allies. During the Cold War period, the alliance was intact because there were primarily shared common threats, those threats from the Communist bloc: North Korea, China and the Soviet Union. South Korea and the United States were united in containing the communist world.<sup>22</sup>

In this circumstance, there has been very strong domestic support of the alliance both in the United States and the South Korea. Thus, the cooperation in the alliance was quite comprehensive: In the 50s and 60s, at the beginning of the alliance the U.S. was carrying most of its burden as the country was in the process of development. However, as South Korea has been performing well in its economy it has also been increasing its defense burden sharing with the U.S as part of its obligations as an ally. From the mid-70s on, South Korea has been quite cooperative in defense cost sharing.<sup>23</sup> Although there have been always small frictions regarding the alliance status and other issues such as command and control, they could be put aside or accommodated easily while giving priority to the common security interests.

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<sup>22</sup> Chung In Moon: "The Roh Moo Hyun Government and the ROK-US Alliance: Opportunities, Constraints, and Prospects, *Brookings Institution*, Washington D.C., 30 Jan. 2003.

<sup>23</sup> It has to be noted that maintaining troops stationed in Korea costs less than to keep them in the U.S. soil. First they can deploy quicker and easier and secondly, South Korea government shares the defense burden.



This well comprehended and combined security alliance started to be questioned as the North Korea's nuclear issue emerged and the Sunshine Policy became a principal guideline in Seoul for the unification of the Peninsula. The Sun-shine Policy of President Kim Dae-jung might have caused a different threat perception on North Korea while the North Korea's nuclear problem brought divergent views in terms of the urgency and criticality in dealing with the issue.<sup>24</sup>

There are some differences of opinion between Washington and Seoul on their strategic goals and the methods of dealing with the North Korea. While South Korea focus on nuclear and missile issues as a Korean peninsula problem and thus tries to resolve the issue through dialogue, the U.S views the North Korea's nuclear issue in the framework of its global and regional security.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the U.S urges immediate actions to punish the North and promotes the notion of regime change. With this strategy, the Bush Administration does not support the Sun-shine Policy, on the contrary it wants the collapse of the North through isolation and containment. The US even argues that sanctions and military options should be considered while South Korea explicitly opposes any possible military strike against the North. For South Korea it is important to continue the Sun-shine Policy through cooperation with the North in order to reach the ultimate goal of the Koreans, the unification.

These different concepts and methods on dealing with North Korea partially contributed to the gradual erosion of the ROK-US alliance. In addition, there is other important factor that might produce the impact on the alliance: The majority of the South Korean population was born after the Korean War and this young generation do not appreciate as much as the old generation the American contribution to South Korea in security, economic prosperity and development of democratic stability. This generation also feels less threat from North Korea than their parents' generation does. To some of them North Korea is no longer a significant threat. There is even an extreme belief that US troops are not necessary and that the US troops are an impediment to peace and stability on the peninsula. This has particularly come about with the establishment of the US doctrine of pre-emption and calls by some conservative politicians in Congress for the complete withdrawal of US forces so that the US can have the flexibility of taking US unilateral action against the North Korean nuclear program.<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, the U.S has also encountered a changing domestic political landscape in the post-9/11 shock and has made guide line policy of friends and foes as the new American foreign policy. Accordingly, the attitude of South Korea toward the North disturbs the U.S Administration. In view of this, domestic political changes in both South Korea and the U.S are likely to be one of the principal sources of friction and can bring about tension that could undermine the half century old bilateral alliance.

### **3. Possible solution for the future Alliance**

In conclusion, the tension and distrust based on long standing misunderstandings of history and the policy differences between the two allies since the end of the Cold War have

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<sup>24</sup> Kwak, Tae-Hwan and Wilborn, Thomas L. (eds.) (1969): *The U.S.-ROK Alliance in Transition*, Seoul, Kyungnam University Press, pp. 69-70.

<sup>25</sup> The U.S. views North Korea as an enemy who diffuses the nuclear arms technology and material to other nations has to be checked.

<sup>26</sup> Moon, Katharine H.S.: "Anti-Americanism" in South Korea," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 21 November 2002, pp.12-13.





developed an increasing animosity toward the alliance.<sup>27</sup> This situation should be repaired and overcome since both sides of the alliance have benefited from its existence during over 50 years and both would suffer if the alliance were to crumble.

There are three basic requirements to repair the alliance in trouble. First step is to make understand both administrations that it is necessary to do so for their own benefit. The second step is to establish a long term vision acceptable to both countries. Finally, both nations must commit to establishing a structure of combined strategy which can be suitable for the newly developed internal and international situation.

From the U.S. point of view, the U.S. forward-deployed presence in the region has two vital interests: First, Asia Pacific is the principal trading region to the U.S. and second to check the rising China. Since there is no NATO-like, multilateral structure, the U.S. security architecture in the Asian-Pacific region is founded on bilateral relationships which are critically important countries to US: the ROK, Japan, the Philippines, Australia, and Thailand. Therefore, if one of those relationships, say with South Korea, were to disappear it would harm the remaining architecture. Thus, the ROK-US alliance is important and valuable to the U.S and to its interests.

For South Korea, it is unquestionable that the alliance is vital to its security and continuous economic prosperity. Considering the fact that the north still represents a clear and present danger to the South, and Korea is surrounded by powerful neighbours, the alliance provides a guarantee of the stability for South Korea at present and it will be necessary to continue to keep it even after the unification.

### **3.1. For those objectives, there are three fundamental issues to be resolved.**

First of all, in accordance with the international situation a combined strategy based on comprehensive engagement, with consultations at the political and military level between the alliance's administrations will provide a framework that allows management of the current and future crisis.

For example, in order to reach a common goal of the alliance, such as taking North Korea out of the nuclear arms business, the politicians of both countries should build a relationship based on trust.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, there should be an agreement on the divergent ROK and US policies (sunshine policy versus regime change). Most importantly while the US desires regime change it seems not prepared for it. Fundamental to the strategy is that both near term crises and long term strategy must be managed if the US wants to help in the unification of the Korean peninsula and eventually contribute to the peace and prosperity of the region.

<sup>27</sup> In fact the anti-Americanism is not new. As early as 1950's, 1960's and 1970's there were protests against U.S. troops from a perspective of the civilian living around the bases caused by embarrassment, humiliation, resentment and racism toward the Koreans. In the 1990's and early 2000's, the leftist oriented youth organized more serious anti-American protests. Almost every time their anger was prompted by the lack of information and attention by the U.S. troops and the Korean government regarding on the death of a colleague or civilians in accidents or crimes committed by American military men.

<sup>28</sup> A fundamental issue is the idea of trust. The ROK wants to build a relationship based on trust while the US believes the North cannot be trusted at all. On the other hand the ROK policy is focused on peace and prosperity based on the gradual cooperation and dialogue with the North while the US is focused only on the current threat of the nuclear issue.



President Roh Moo Hyun has no plans to abandon the Sunshine Policy.<sup>29</sup> This is a very conciliatory policy toward the North based on trust, dialogue, and openness. In contrast to the ROK policy, the current US policy to end the North Korean nuclear issue is more aggressive in methods including the prospect of sanctions.

Accepting the different view, the US and the ROK should work closely in order to normalize relations with the DPRK. Despite the repulsiveness of the regime, normalization of relations will provide communication channels. In addition, the normalization will serve as the access to the regime and open potentially a wide range of contacts with officials in the middle and upper levels of the party.

Lastly, it is necessary to reform the alliance status and restructure the capability of the alliance force, not only because the South Korean public protests<sup>30</sup> about the locations of US military bases (large-scale posts and training sites are concentrated in the capital, Seoul and in downtowns of other major cities) but also the US strategy in Northeast Asia is in need of change.<sup>31</sup>

Another factor that contributes to transform the location and nature of the bases is that with the inter Korean cooperation and as a result of the reduction of the North threat, it will not be necessary for the USFK to be centered on ground forces along the DMZ (Demilitarized zone), and Northern Kyonggi province (US 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division).<sup>32</sup> From the US point of view, the transfer of the bases to the near sea and airports to make rapid mobilization in the events of conflicts in other parts of the region will prove to be more practical and suitable for the regional strategy.

If overwhelming air superiority is mobilized to paralyze the enemy's central command, to isolate the enemy's armored units through close air support, while the ROK Army plays a major role in ground battles, the division of roles will be successfully materialized and it might lead to a reduction of US ground forces in ROK as well.<sup>33</sup>

When the two countries closely coordinate and consult for the best interest of the alliance, it can play a very important role as a regional alliance. In effective functioning of the alliance can contribute not only to the stability of the Korean peninsula but also to building a community of security in East Asia as a regional alliance.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> President Roh renamed Sun-shine Policy to the "Peace and Prosperity Policy".

<sup>30</sup> The most recent anti Americanism and the protests against US troops stationed in Korea were triggered by the death of two middle-school girls who were crushed by a U.S. armored vehicle in 2002.

<sup>31</sup> After the September 11 terrorist attack, US has been implementing new strategic concepts through the military transformation and the Global Defense Review (GPR). Accordingly, US has moved from "treat-based" to "capability-based" approach to strategic defense planning, focusing more on what portfolio of capabilities it will need to swiftly counter various forms of threats rather than who might be a threat to US.

<sup>32</sup> Based on the agreement between the alliances in 2003, the ROK and U.S decided to relocate the Yongsan Garrison to the Pyeongtaek area by the end of 2008. See Defense White Paper 2004, pp. 110-111.

<sup>33</sup> This scenario is actually reflected in the 2003 plan for the realignment of the UFFK troops. See Defense White Paper 2004, The Ministry of National Defense, Seoul, 2004, p.103.

<sup>34</sup> Moon, Chung In: "The Roh Moo Hyun Government and the ROK-US Alliance: Opportunities, Constraints, and Prospects". Borthwick and others, *op. cit.* p. 371.