

SOUTH KOREA'S POST-9/11 SECURITY ENVIRONMENT: CURRENT KEY ISSUES AND POLICY PRIORITIES

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This article presents an author's personal view with the objective of providing several recommendations for security policy and military strategic planners as to how the ROK needs to adapt itself to the post-9/11 international security environments and deal with the related defense issues. Historically, the Korean peninsula has never been free from geopolitical interests and power dynamics of the neighboring nations, largely due to its unique geographical location. This truism still holds today. As the powerful neighboring nations believe that any significant change in the state of affairs on the Korean peninsula would variously affect their own interests, they are highly likely to intervene in Korean issues, thus solutions to the Korean problems should be devised not only in the inter-Korean but also at the international dimensions. Keeping these historical perspectives in mind and with special attention to a revolutionary change in the international security environments following the events of September 11, 2001, this article addresses the major security

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challenges and the related defense issues the ROK currently face or is likely to face, and offers some policy suggestions and recommendations, which are, for convenience, delineated according to the three levels of national strategy, security strategy and military readiness.

Introduction

It is trite yet true to note that the Korean Peninsula has historically served as the geo-strategic crossing point of traditional continental and oceanic powers such as Russia, China, and Japan. In other words, the security environment in and around the Korean Peninsula has never been free from geopolitical interests and power dynamics of the neighboring nations. This truism still holds today.

Moreover, in the post-Cold War era, the Korean Peninsula is probably the only part of the world where the Cold-War reality still looms. The ROK-US and the US-Japan military alliances constitute an informal yet *de facto* framework of trilateral security cooperation among the three countries, whereas China, Russia, and North Korea—albeit their current practical differences—remain an informal cooperative network of its own, thus illustrating the lingering effects of the major powers' geopolitical interests involving the Korean Peninsula and how a balance of power is still being played out in Northeast Asia.¹

In a similar vein, as the major powers believe that any significant

1 For an earlier discussion on the geopolitical significances of the two trilateral relationships in Northeast Asia, ROK-US-Japan and DPRK-China-Russia, see Park Yong Ok, "Korean-American-Japanese Triangle: Problems and Prospects," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1986); and *idem.*, "Sino-Soviet-North Korean Triangle and Pyongyang's Choices," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer 1986).

changes in the state of affairs on the Korean Peninsula would variously affect their own interests, depending upon the nature and direction of such changes, they are highly likely to intervene in Korean issues in order to steer the course of events to their favor. Thus, Korean issues are most likely to invite foreign interventions, and likewise, solutions to Korean problems should be devised not only at the inter-Korean but also at the international level.

Against this backdrop, this article addresses the major security challenges and the related defense issues we currently face or are likely to face. After a comprehensive yet detailed overview of Korea's security environment at the global and regional level, it offers some suggestions as to how we need to adapt ourselves to such challenges.

International Security Environment

Post-Cold War Order before September 11

The breakdown of the East European communist bloc and the former Soviet Union ushered in a new era in which the U.S. has not only consolidated its status as the world's only superpower, but led the process of globalizing such values as human rights, freedom, democracy, and market economy. The Clinton administration's "Enlargement and Engagement" stands as a shining example of such a trend and stands for new U.S.-led policies in the new era.²

On the other hand, U.S.-led unilateral globalization efforts have fanned international concerns, and at one time or another such major powers as France, Germany, China, and Russia sought to constrain the potential expansion of U.S. unilateralism. In particular, as the Bush

2 The White House, *National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement* (February 1995).

administration has pursued such controversial policies as the missile defense (MD) program and refused to join the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) and the Kyoto Protocol, there has been a steady yet unmistakable increase in international criticism.

From this point of view, the post-Cold War international order prior to 9/11 can be characterized as a “uni-polycentric system,”³ in which there exists one superpower and several other major powers around the world. In a sense, it was transitional in nature, as the so-called “U.S. runs alone phenomenon” has yet to forge.

Post-September 11 International Order

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 were a watershed for a new and different world order, which transpired even before the “post-Cold War order” matured. It was surprise attacks carried out by a small terrorist group with no nationality and unclear location, and resulted in immeasurable damage. Furthermore, it happened at the heart of U.S. military and economic activities through unthinkable inhuman methods. It subsequently altered the fundamental framework and priority of U.S. foreign policy, and in turn, the international security environment gravitated towards U.S.-centered efforts. The post-9/11 international security environment can be described as follows.

First, the 9/11 terrorist attacks have shown the world that they can be employed as a kind of effective offensive weapon. In particular, the post-9/11 international community was awakened to the dawning reality that terrorism may well function as “the poor man’s strategic weapon” with dreadful destructive power, especially if combined with

3 Huntington has defined this as uni-multipolarity indicating that there exists multipolarity in unipolarity. See Samuel P. Huntington, “The Lonely Superpower: The New Dimension of Power,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (1999), www.foreignaffairs.org.

biochemical weapons, and that it could be recklessly employed not only by terrorist groups but by other criminal organizations or even by a handful of individuals.

In addition, for the terrorists, terrorism is a means of attack that can inflict significant damage at an inexpensive cost and relatively little effort; but for the defenders, it is a completely new means of assault, that is, by definition and in reality, virtually impossible to predict as to by whom, where, and when a terrorist attack will take place. For these reasons, it is exceedingly difficult to respond or counter, thus further raising concerns in the international community.

Second, after 9/11, terrorism has emerged as a new breed of security threats, which includes both “transnational” and “non-military” threats. War against terrorism, as an effort to defeat such threats, also differs from regular warfare we have experienced up until today. There is no clear front, boundaries, or any distinctive division of combatants and civilians and no difference between military and non-military facilities. For this reason, military theorists or analysts have used such expressions as “asymmetric war” or “fourth-generation warfare” so as to indicate that the existing traditional symmetric military concepts are no longer able to respond to it effectively.⁴ Indeed, if there exists one expression to depict the most salient nature of the current international security environment, it is the “globalization of threat and security.”

Third, the post-9/11 international community has witnessed that war against terrorism is now almost entirely run by the U.S., as it is the focal point of today’s international security concerns and a related measure for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

4 For a detailed analysis on “Fourth-generation Warfare,” see Col. William S. Lind, Joseph W. Sutton and Lt. Col. Garry I. Wilson, “The Changing Face of Wars into the Fourth Generation,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (1989); Arnold A. Gould and Franklin C. Spinney, “Fourth Generation Warfare Is Here,” *Fall 2001 Newsletter* (University of Virginia: Center for South Asian Studies, 2001).

(WMD). The Bush administration does not regard terrorism as merely a criminal act which is simply accompanied by violence, but as an entirely new form of “war activity.” Accordingly, its counter-terrorism measures are not intended to just establish ‘law and order,’ but to pursue and eliminate the roots of terrorism by employing a full spectrum of military measures.⁵

One underlying problem, however, is that there is no way of knowing in advance when and where U.S. interests would be threatened, and if it is attacked, what kinds of as well as what degree of damage the attack will inflict. Thus, the U.S. intends to dig out and eliminate the roots of such a threat rather than wait for such a threat and attack to take place.

For this purpose, the Bush administration has designated the war against terrorism as its top foreign-policy priority and developed a new military policy allowing the U.S. to reserve the right to carry out “pre-emptive” attacks, if necessary. Subjects of this war are no longer limited to “terrorists and those who support acts of terrorism,” but now include rogue states that are engaged in the development of WMD, and dictatorial states.

Furthermore, while the U.S. seeks international cooperation from the U.N. and NATO as well as from its allies and friends as much as possible in order to carry out its war against terrorism, it is in some cases willing to take unilateral actions regardless of outside cooperation. The U.S. has made it clear that its criteria for assessing relationships with allies and friends are based on whether or not they agree to cooperate with its war against terrorism.

Fourth, the adamant stance and bold policies for anti-terrorism and prevention of WMD proliferation that the U.S. has adopted since 9/11 are now bearing fruit. One month after 9/11, the U.S. entered a war in

5 Regarding the legal aspects of the Bush administration’s war against terrorism, refer to Kenneth Roth, “The Law of War in the War on Terrorism,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2004).

Afghanistan, and after merely two months into the war, the U.S. annihilated Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and removed the Taliban regime, which supported the terrorist group. Following the Afghanistan War, the U.S. shifted its aim at rogue states that were in pursuit of developing WMD. The reason behind it was that the U.S. now treats “rogue states, WMD, and terrorism” to be in the same package. The war in Iraq, which broke out in March 2003, is the proof of such U.S. stance. In three weeks, the U.S. seized Baghdad and, eight months after the outbreak of the war in December, captured Saddam Hussein.

Last October, Iran declared that it would accept the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) mandatory inspection of its nuclear facilities that were allegedly designed to develop nuclear weapons.⁶ In the following December, moreover, Mr. Gaddafi of Libya also officially declared that he too would give up WMD.⁷ North Korea also repeatedly showed its willingness to freeze and dismantle its nuclear development program since last November, and by taking such measures as voluntarily inviting a U.S. civilian delegation in January 2004 to see the Yongbyon nuclear facilities⁸ and participating in the six-nation nuclear talks, the North is showing the world that it is actively engaged in a peaceful resolution of the nuclear crisis.

Finally, while the U.S.-led war against terrorism and WMD non-proliferation are being accelerated, key nations such as the EU, China, Russia, and Japan have also tried to secure and strengthen their ties with the U.S.—even if they at the same time seek to constrain what they perceive as U.S. unilateralism. For instance, China’s active engage-

6 *Yonhap News*, “Iran Signs Supplementary Agreement, Promises to Halt Nuclear Enrichment,” October 21, 2003.

7 *Yonhap News*, “Libya Declares Renunciation of Its WMD,” December 20, 2003.

8 A U.S. civilian delegation including Jack Prichard, former U.S. State Department special envoy for negotiation with North Korea visited various areas such as Yongbyon nuclear facilities in North Korea for five days (January 6-10, 2004). See *Yonhap News*, “U.S. Civilian Delegation Visited Yongbyon Nuclear Facilities,” January 10, 2004.

ment in hosting the six-party talks for a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis can be construed as an act to co-opt the issue from being the target of U.S. unilateralism.

The North Korean Nuclear Issue and Emerging Multilateralism in Northeast Asia

Northeast Asia is today witnessing two regional security challenges simultaneously. One is positive, as there are emerging signs of a regional security cooperation framework, due mainly to the initiation of the six-party talks. The other is negative, as there also exist symptoms of an arms race among the major nations in the region, which are reflected in their active pursuit of military modernization.

Against this backdrop of the two somewhat contradictory security challenges in the region, it is imperative for the Republic of Korea (ROK), while actively responding to the North Korean nuclear crisis on the one hand, to pursue its forward direction national strategies, and on the other, to strengthen "self-defense posture," to sustain the solid ROK-US alliance, and to promote "peace and prosperity." They all constitute critical security challenges the ROK needs to deal with. In particular, the ongoing process of solving the North Korean nuclear issue and the ensuing results brought forth by the six-party talks seem to have substantial impact on peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and a broader Northeast Asia as well.

As is well known, North Korea's October 2002 admission of a clandestine uranium enrichment program fueled the second North Korean nuclear crisis, put an effective end to the Agreed Framework, and consequently caused a drastic change in China's stance on multilateralism. The North Korean nuclear issue provided decisive opportunities for China to demonstrate its perceived, real role in and influence over the issue, and to enhance its regional status as well as its relations with the United States. The latter also realized that it was imperative

to establish strategic cooperation with China in order to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue. Their recognition of this grim reality led to the establishment of multilateral cooperation for resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Accordingly, the first U.S.-China-North Korea trilateral talks were held in April 2003, which was followed by the six-party talks in August 2003 with addition of the ROK, Japan, and Russia.

The six-party talks cannot be taken at face value, however. That is, if the current six-party talks were to be considered as burgeoning “regional security cooperation structure” in the region, it must be able to solve the North Korean nuclear issue through any possible means—be it peaceful or coercive. Iran’s decision to accept IAEA’s inspection on its nuclear facilities last October, arrest of Saddam Hussein last December, and Libya’s denunciation of its pursuit for WMD in the same month, all evidently shows that the unswerving “anti-terrorism and non-proliferation” policies of the Bush administration is producing positive results. It is entirely possible to optimistically predict that North Korea would never overlook such international trends. On the other hand, considering the nature of the North Korean regime and different views and stances posed by the regional players who are involved in the North Korean nuclear issue, chances that North Korea would voluntarily give up its nuclear programs—if it ever does so—are not high.

If the current six-party talks fail to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, there is a great chance that military tension in Northeast Asia will further escalate; the military modernization programs that key regional players are currently undertaking may result in a new spate of an arms race, and it would challenge the ongoing global nonproliferation efforts. In particular, if the issues of North Korean nuclear weapons and facilities are not resolved in the manner of “Complete, Verifiable, and Irreversible Dismantlement (CVID),” it will not be an exaggeration to argue that the consequences could be national calamity

to the ROK, both politically and militarily.

In the meantime, even if the six-party talks successfully resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, there is also a chance that another problem may arise. That is, one cannot ignore the possibility that this regional multilateral security structure, after solving the current nuclear issues, could be transformed into a "concert of major powers." In this respect, the Bush administration's premise for conducting war against terrorism should be noted. With regard to the war against terrorism, *National Security Strategy* of the Bush administration emphasizes "great power cooperation," while pointing out that great powers in the 21st century "compete in peace instead of continually preparing for war," as had been the case in the past centuries.⁹ However, even if relations between the great powers are based upon peaceful competition, the weak cannot feel comfortable with such presumption. Taiwan provides an outstanding case, as it is concerned with the six-party talks we hope are successful and with China's active role and influence in it.

The six-party talks strongly indicate that the nuclear issue, security assurance of the North Korean regime, and North-South Korean military relations can no longer be confined to an internal issue of the two Koreas, but they are most likely to evolve into a multilateral cooperation issue including the U.S. and China. Further, efforts for force modernization by the regional players, particularly China and Japan, are inextricably intertwined with nationalism. Therefore, we should not take an optimistic stance in all respects on the rise of multilateralism and trends of force modernization in Northeast Asia.

The participating nations in the six-party talks, especially the four major powers, should not only actively initiate and implement appropriate confidence-building measures among themselves, but also avoid

9 Colin Powell, "A Strategy of Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2004). On the possible emergence of a "concert of major powers" in Northeast Asia, refer to Professor Robert A. Scalapino, "Trends in East Asian International Relations," *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 24, Issue 4 (December 2001).

giving the wrong impression that their force modernization efforts are intended to be offensive or portend a new spate of an arms race. In addition, those great powers need to ensure transparency for all cooperation efforts in order to avoid any chance that their rare multilateral cooperation structure may lead to a concert of major powers.

U.S.-led War against Terrorism and Korea's Changing Security Environment

The success or failure of the U.S.-led war against terrorism and WMD non-proliferation would undoubtedly affect the future of Korean and Northeast Asian security environment. The ongoing U.S.-led wars on terrorism as well as its non- and counter-proliferation policies may be said to have been fairly successful, and they are expected to expand even further in the future. Furthermore, plans for reconstruction and democratization of Iraq are being implemented as planned—withstanding sporadic yet strong insurgencies. Once a democratic government is established, stability can be restored with extensive supports from the international community.

Then, what are the underlying implications of such situations for security environments on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia? First of all, the U.S. stance and political lines on such issues as the North Korean nuclear programs, the China-Taiwan standoff, and the relocation of U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK) are expected to become more obvious and more adamant.

Even if the current six-party talks continue with the U.S. and China leading the way, the former is expected to maintain its firm stance on North Korea. China and Russia will continue to insist on a peaceful resolution to the North Korean nuclear issue, while maintaining distance from the United States. However, if North Korea continues to take a negative attitude towards, or rejects proposals made by the pertinent nations, chances are high that they might eventually cooperate with the

U.S. to pressure North Korea. Recognizing the necessity of U.S. leadership in containing North Korea's nuclear program, they are more likely to cooperate with the U.S. as a more desirable course of action to enhance their national interests rather than try to exercise their influence on the U.S., while using North Korea as a bargaining chip.

Furthermore, the North Korean nuclear issue can be linked to the Taiwan issue. While maintaining a firm stance on the "One China Policy," the U.S. will continue to strictly deter Taiwan's attempt for independence. The U.S. finds it imperative to maintain a strategic partnership with China in dealing with Korean issues including the North Korean nuclear program. Realizing this, China also will have some leeway in dealing with the Taiwan issue, while being able to support the U.S. with respect to the North Korean nuclear issue. In this respect, Taiwan seems to have serious concerns over the process and results of the ongoing six-party talks.

Finally, the ROK's policy towards North Korea, including its stance on the North's nuclear program, cooperation with the U.S. with respect to its additional troop dispatch to Iraq and relocation of USFK may well affect the future development of the ROK-US alliance. In particular, mutual trust and a "will-for-alliance" between the ROK and the U.S. will be critical. Since 9/11, the U.S. has been re-evaluating its ally status with the U.N., NATO, international organizations, and a host of its existing allies. In other words, the U.S. is asking the world over to choose "terrorism or anti-terrorism" or "proliferation or non-proliferation."

In particular, the ROK faces an imminent situation to respond to both North Korea's nuclear weapons development programs, and its WMD including biochemical weapons. As North Korea both directly and indirectly admitted its nuclear weapons development programs and possession of such weapons since October 2002, it proved to the world that the promises, agreements, and declarations it made to the international community with respect to its nuclear development pro-

grams were all lies.¹⁰

The Korean security situation, as outlined above, demands the ROK to choose to either wait for Korean peace to be realized at some time in the future while continuing its lopsided support for North Korea, or actively engage in international efforts to root out all sources of terrorism and prevent possession of nuclear weapons including WMD by rogue states through actively assisting U.S. efforts for the reconstruction and establishment of a democratic government in Iraq and the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Key Security Tasks and Defense Issues

Basic Premise and Scope

Against what should we protect ourselves and prepare? This question eventually provides a frame of analysis on the scope and characteristics of security issues. Every state has its own “national goals” and “defense objectives.” These are what we need to protect, and constitute challenges and external threats we need to prepare against.

The national goals of the Republic of Korea are: 1) Korea will uphold its nationhood, seek peaceful unification, and ensure lasting independence under the ideologies of free democracy; 2) Korea will protect the freedom and rights of its citizens and create a social welfare system that achieves equality in their standard of living; And 3) Korea

10 Since its withdrawal from NPT on January 10, 2003, North Korea both directly and indirectly admitted a possession of nuclear program, indicating that it had reprocessed 8,000 spent fuel rods and showed its will to strengthen nuclear deterrent capability. Also, during the U.S. civilian delegations' visit to North Korea, the latter apparently tried to demonstrate its nuclear deterrent capability to the delegation including Dr. Hacker of Los Alamos Research Laboratory by showing the plutonium it announced it had finished reprocessing.

will work to improve its status in the international community in order to demonstrate dignity as a nation and contribute to world peace.”¹¹ Its defense objectives are: 1) The ROK military will defend the nation from external military threats and invasion; 2) Uphold peaceful unification; and 3) Contribute to regional stability and world peace.”¹²

Accordingly, our security tasks can first be derived from an analysis of all internal and external situations, their changing trends, and causes that promote changes that undermine or threaten our national and defense objectives. For one thing, analyzing and devising countermeasures to the post-9/11 trends of the changed international security environments and U.S. foreign policies and their effects may fall into this category. For another, we may delineate our security tasks in terms of policy-making and strategic planning, which include defining our stance in the international arena and making choices as a responsible member of the international community. For instance, this may include whether or not we should participate in the U.S.-led war against terrorism, and if so, the scope and size of our participation, or preparations in response to the restructuring of U.S. forces overseas. For still another, we can also derive our security tasks from the military capability dimension, which is comprised our self-defense capability, maintaining alliances, and crisis management capabilities. Tasks include how we evaluate our relative military capabilities, set directions for the force modernization, dissolve the anti-American sentiment, and maintain and strengthen the ROK-US alliance.

In addition to the criteria for classification mentioned above, security tasks can be identified and classified in accordance with the levels of analysis. For instance, security issues can be divided and scrutinized at the global, regional, and national levels, or they can be categorized into national strategic, security strategic, and military readiness levels for in

11 Cabinet Council Resolution, February 16, 1973.

12 Cabinet Council Resolution, March 10, 1994.

the near-, medium-, and long-term time span. Unfortunately, space does not permit us to fully examine these in this paper. However, giving the first consideration to military-security aspects, I will refer to several tasks that are believed to be exceptionally important, and those tasks that we need to wisely deal with both at present and in the future.

National Strategic Level

Regarding global affairs, it is paramount for the ROK to assess the impacts the ongoing U.S.-led war against terrorism may have on the overall international security environment. In particular, it needs to ensure that these impacts will not affect its security situation so as to invite another war on the Korean Peninsula, while at the same time prevent North Korea from possessing nuclear weapons. From the regional standpoint, it is important to pursue peaceful reunification, while maintaining friendly and cooperative relations with neighboring powers. At the peninsula level, it will be crucial to promote reconciliation and cooperation between North and South Korea, by which we may induce reform and opening in North Korea, while consolidating a national consensus on the nature of a unified Korea founded on liberal democracy, market economy, human rights, and other universal common values. Further considerations of the tasks are as follows:

We need to fully understand and appropriately respond to the changing trends and characteristics of the post-9/11 U.S. foreign policies and military strategies.

As the U.S. is expected to retain its role and status as the world's only superpower for a considerable period of time in the future, many have witnessed immense changes in U.S. national security awareness, foreign policies, and relationships with its friendly nations since Sep-

tember 11. First, the U.S. realized that there exist security vulnerabilities that its homeland might be subject to external attacks, thus taking the hard-line policy that it would be willing to take all necessary measures including preemptive attacks in order to preserve its national security. Second, designating war against terrorism the highest priority of its foreign policy, the U.S. defines a friend and a foe according to whether or not a nation will cooperate with the U.S. in combating terrorism. Third, by declaring the non-proliferation of WMD a matter pertaining to the war against terrorism, the U.S. will regard any attempt to develop, export WMD, and support terrorist activities as a hostile act against the U.S. and the international community. Finally, unlike the Clinton administration, the Bush administration is developing military strategies, which include strengthening its power projection capabilities and readiness for WMD terrorism and developing a multilateral cooperation framework.

Under these circumstances, it will be important for us to maintain and develop a firm future-oriented strategic partnership with the U.S., as well as close cooperation in dealing with North Korea. While the primary objective is to ensure that the concept of a U.S. preemptive attack will not cause a war on the Korean Peninsula, it is necessary for us to prepare countermeasures in case of an urgent situation. Also, both nations must admit differences in their views on various issues including North Korea and policy priorities, and based upon this, they need to contrive the ROK-the U.S. or the ROK-U.S.-Japan cooperation schemes. Disguising different perspectives that do exist in reality as if they did not is very dangerous, and while retaining the firm ROK-U.S. alliance, it will be desirable to devise ways to develop a regional multilateral security cooperation structure.

In relation to international coalition on terrorism, we need to pursue a course of action that maintains effective cooperation with the U.S. and friendly relationships with the Islamic states, simultaneously.

Taking into full account the conflicts and distributions of the Islamic moderates and extremists, and Sunni and Shiite parties, we need to understand the dynamics of inter-relations among the three conflicting forces: International coalition on terrorism, the Islamic moderates, and the Islamic extremists. Additionally, we should clarify our purpose of joining the international coalition. That is, our participation in the international coalition is limited to anti-terrorist activities (e.g., information exchanges, precautionary actions, and if necessary, military action), and we must draw a clear line that participation in the international coalition on terrorism differs from maintaining normal diplomatic relations between nations.

However, if placed to choose either a U.S.-led international coalition on terrorism or existing relations with certain Islamic nations opposing it, we must firmly adhere to the international coalition. At present, the war against terrorism is the issue of paramount importance, not only for international security, but also for our own security as well. Therefore, it may precede any other inter-relations between nations. For instance, if the war against terrorism is escalated and the international trend is to dispatch combat troops, it would be more desirable for us as well to dispatch combat troops. Air force and navy transportation units, field medical support and civil engineering units, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams, and biochemical weapons detection personnel are all essential elements in fighting a war, and in some cases, we need to consider dispatching combat units such as special operations forces.

We must ensure that any future competition between the U.S. and China does not lead to a situation of “a shrimp among whales.”

When caught in the struggle between big, powerful states, small, weak states have a tendency to become neutral in order to hold on to their independence and sovereignty. On the other hand, powerful states have a tendency to distrust those small, weak states advocating neutrality because from their perspective, neutrality is nothing but a means that serves their own convenience, and they would give up neutrality anytime when there are better means available.¹³ Therefore, history shows that the small, weak states' advocacy of neutrality can be ignored anytime the big, powerful states feel necessary. Belgium is an example of such historical events when caught between France and Germany on the brink of World War I.

In the process of peaceful unification, we may face a situation of “a shrimp among whales” due to the mixed interests of neighboring nations. Recognizing the Korean Peninsula as part of Chinese culture, the U.S. is concerned with possible deepening and developing relations between the ROK and China, while China is keeping its eyes on the Korean Peninsula in which U.S. forces are stationed. Relating to their national interests, Japan and Russia, too, are observing the Korean unification process and willing to intervene, if necessary.

Therefore, we need to resolve concerns of the neighboring nations as we promote inter-Korean reconciliation or peaceful unification. As a way to fulfill this goal, we may consider establishing a multilateral security cooperation structure, in which all neighboring nations such as China, Japan, and Russia may participate, while retaining the current solid ROK-US alliance. In some sense, this could be the most rational

13 Regarding some paradoxical and dangerous aspects of neutrality taken by small and weak states, see Gerald Stourzh, “Some Reflections on Permanent Neutrality,” August Schou and Arneolav Brundtland, eds., *Small States in International Relations* (New York: Wiley & Sons, 1971), pp. 93-98.

and most realistic option.

We must actively review and promote “a nuclear and biochemical weapons-free Korean Peninsula.”

All cooperation pertaining to the North Korean nuclear issue such as the Joint Declaration of Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1992 and the Agreed Framework between the U.S. and North Korea in 1994 have been to no avail. The future of the Light Water Reactor (LWR) Project, which emerged in an attempt to induce North Korea to give up their nuclear program, also seems unclear.¹⁴ Even if the project were to successfully complete, there is no guarantee that it will resolve the nuclear issue. North Korea has yet to join the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), and though it joined the BWC, North Korea is widely believed to possess a vast amount of biological weapons.

Without resolving issues mentioned above, can peace still be realized on the Korean Peninsula? Can reconciliation and cooperation between the two Koreas bring peace and alleviate military tensions? With WMD issues unsolved on the Korean Peninsula, can we obtain support and cooperation for unification from the neighboring nations? At present, it seems that there are no definitive answers to these questions. However, it would be appropriate to clarify our stance. “A nuclear and biochemical weapons-free Korean Peninsula” could be an option to provide answer to these questions.

We must facilitate public awareness and agreement on the intrinsic attribute of the current North Korean regime and the politico-ideological orientations of a unified Korea.

Should we recognize the current North Korean regime, especially

14 *Yonhap News*, “KEDO Officially Suspends LWR Project,” November 22, 2003.

the Kim Jong Il leadership, as a real partner of peaceful unification, or as a temporary expedient for maintaining talks on peace and unification? Is the northern half a subject of unilateral absorption by the south, or a legitimate constituent of a Korean commonwealth or federation? Is the governmental form of a unified Korea (e.g., politics, diplomacy, military, and economy) more continent-friendly or Pacific-friendly, or perhaps neutral? It would be desirable and even imperative to gather a public consensus on these issues.

What we can never give up or yield is the general values of humankind such as liberal democracy, the market economy, and basic human rights. These values cannot stand together with the current North Korean regime. Thus, it would not be irrational to consider the change in the nature of the regime—that is, reform and opening of the regime—as conditions that must be solved for Korean peace and unification.

Because of its unique geographical location and geopolitical conditions, the Korean Peninsula, as noted earlier, has never been free from power dynamics and conflicts of interest of its neighboring nations. Therefore, we ought to ensure the neighboring nations that a unified Korea will not threaten regional stability and security. In this respect, “neutrality” is often suggested as a way of meeting this situational demand. Historical lessons, however, show that neutrality often causes misunderstanding and distrust from the neighboring nations, and if not accompanied with physical strength to protect it, it does not have any practical meaning.

Thus, the commendable concept of foreign policy that a unified Korea must pursue is to develop a multilateral cooperation structure based on the solid ROK-U.S. alliance. This may be the most realistic measure for the ROK to maintain its status as an independent and sovereign nation, while maintaining balanced cooperative relationships with its neighboring nations.

Security Strategic Level

We need to embark upon joint ROK-US studies and measures regarding the policy changes of U.S. forces structure overseas and the future of the USFK.

This is something we need to fully prepare in order to tackle the current and likely future challenges. As a symbol of the ROK-U.S. alliance and as part of the U.S. interests and commitment to the Korean Peninsula, its physical presence here has a long history, albeit just a series of small- and large-scale forces withdrawal carried out since the end of the Korean War.¹⁵

The official positions that both the ROK and U.S. governments have thus far maintained regarding the U.S. military presence in Korea is that the USFK will remain in Korea for “as long as is desired by both governments and their peoples.” Therefore, a rational interpretation of this statement is that, if either government or people no longer want the USFK to be stationed in Korea, the USFK will withdraw at any time. In the past, it was not uncommon for the U.S. to unilaterally notify the ROK of its forces withdrawal plans. However, this mechanism is not very desirable, and both nations must jointly review the plan prior to its implementation. In particular, both nations should jointly study and develop mid- and long-term plans for the future of the USFK in the case of the unification process beginning or North Korea no longer posing any threats. The underlying problem for us is how to go about making a national strategic decision on the presence of the USFK. The public’s emotions should not interfere in resolving this problem. The anti-American sentiment that is rising in some parts of our society today could be a factor. Yet, it is not appropriate for this sentiment to

15 Sang Cheol Lee, *Dilemma between Security and Self-Reliance: Theory of Asymmetric Alliance and the ROK-U.S. Alliance* (Seoul: Yunkyung Publications, 2004), pp. 238-47.

develop into anti-Americanism or a call for the withdrawal of USFK.

There is a need for active review and development of multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Since the late 1980s, the ROK government has formally proposed to establish a multilateral cooperation structure in Northeast Asia. Although there exists the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), it is led by Southeast Asian nations; thus, focused and detailed management of Northeast Asian issues is still desired. Therefore, it is necessary to pursue a multilateral security mechanism dedicated to Northeast Asia.

Due to a combination of such factors as the lingering effects of the Cold War structure and region-wide historical antipathy and distrust, together with various causes of regional conflicts in Northeast Asia, a multilateral security mechanism of its own was lagging behind. In addition, the U.S. and China had been lukewarm on the idea, thus leaving any multilateral cooperation structure in the region a dubious idea. For instance, the U.S. and Japan hoped to develop the ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral military cooperation, whereas China took a cautious and even wary view towards the idea, viewing such a move as an effort for containment. Also, while China favors the quadripartite structure (that is, China, the U.S., and the two Koreas) for settling peace on the Korean Peninsula, in which China participates as an armistice agreement signer, Japan and Russia prefer a multilateral cooperation structure, in which all related regional players can participate. However, China had been reluctant to participate in that sort of multilateral cooperation structure desired by Japan and Russia.

Things have changed. As mentioned earlier, with the U.S. and China taking the leading role in the first six-party talks held in Beijing in August last year, official multilateral cooperation at the government level has taken the first step, which involves all pertinent regional players. In order for the six-party talks to take root as a regional multi-

lateral security cooperation structure in the future, its relations with existing bilateral alliances must first be clarified. That is, if and only if there is a presumption that the new regional security cooperation structure does not replace but complement the existing bilateral alliances, will the structure have a chance for success?

All three nations (i.e., the ROK, the U.S., and Japan) need to share an understanding of the scope, level, and limits of their future-oriented security and military cooperation.

With respect to ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral military cooperation, the ROK has taken a rather passive position, probably due to its relations with China, whereas the U.S. and Japan have been more active. However, because this ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral security cooperation is essential in complementing the ROK-U.S. alliance, it should be beefed up as well. Therefore, it will be desirable to run and maintain ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral military cooperation in parallel with a multilateral cooperation framework including China at the same time so that ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral military cooperation would not pose a threat to neighboring nations. In the end, it will be the most realistic option to develop a new multilateral cooperation framework in parallel with the ROK-U.S.-Japan trilateral relationship, with principal emphasis on the ROK-U.S. alliance.

The ROK Government must take a more proactive role in enhancing its people's understanding of the importance of the ROK-US military alliance.

Using such trendy terms as “pro-American,” “anti-American,” and “flunkey” is anachronistic thinking in the present era. The twenty-first century is characterized by pragmatism, national competitiveness, and welfare of the people. Nations of this century pursue general values

such as liberal democracy, human rights, and quality of life. We must reject ideas and systems rooted in totalitarianism or collectivism that are against the characteristics and requirements of the current times, and we should also be wary of exclusive and closed nationalism. Governments should not overlook the importance of educating their people about these characteristics and requirements.

What does the U.S. mean to the people of the ROK? Does it support or impede peace and unification of the Korean Peninsula? Is the USFK a security partner or merely a group of foreign troops that must be withdrawn? Why should the USFK and the ROK-U.S. alliance be retained even after unification? Should the functions of the United Nations Command (UNC) be dismantled upon the settlement of peace on the Korean Peninsula, or appropriately modified and applied so as to be consistent with our national interests? With its firm determination, the ROK government must actively engage itself in forming and expanding a national consensus on these issues.

With regard to military talks with North Korea, the ROK needs to maintain firm the ROK-U.S. cooperation.

The two principal players on the Korean Peninsula are undoubtedly North and South Korea. By signing the Basic Agreement and other supplementary agreements in 1992, both sides officially recognized this fact. However, North Korea obstinately retains a sophistry that it will not talk with the ROK on military issues, since North Korea and the U.S. are the parties directly concerned with military issues. North Korea often argues that, since there already exists the 1992 Basic Agreement and other supplementary agreements between the two Koreas, once a peace or non-aggression agreement is established between North Korea and the U.S., all issues pertaining to Korean peace will be accordingly solved. These are all fallacious arguments.

If the two Koreas cannot talk about military issues, then what do the

inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation signify, and how can we achieve peaceful unification? Both the ROK and the U.S. should not tolerate such an irrational stance on North Korea's part. North Korea must be willing to engage in military talks with the ROK.

Military Readiness Level

While maintaining military readiness against the North, appropriate levels of defense budget must be ensured in the long run in order to promote defense reform and Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)

In order for our armed forces to build mid- and long-term strategies in preparation for its future environment and to facilitate force modernization plans to fulfill its objectives, an adequate level of defense budget must be consistently and steadily maintained. In addition, considering that building military capabilities and military reforms are mid- and long-term projects which often take 10 to 20 years to bear fruit, we cannot afford to defer them any longer.

Regarding the recent reconciliatory atmosphere with the North, a growing number of people insist that we cut the defense budget and redirected it for public welfare instead. However, we should seek realistic answers as to why our neighboring nations are steadily increasing their defense budget and accelerating force modernization efforts, despite the fact that the Cold War conditions do not hold in the region and that there is no direct and present enemy threatening their security.

As illustrated in a historical lesson that "It is easy to forget war in peace, but one must prepare for war in peace," we must not overlook the continuing uncertain security conditions in Northeast Asia and the standoff between North and South Korea, where the two sides are yet to build even the slightest military confidence. Under such conditions, it would truly cause perplexity if encountered with the question, "Do

we really need to increase our defense budget?”

Taking into account the current state of international security and future security uncertainties, our defense budget must reflect on requirements to build minimum level forces in order to cope with military revolutions undertaken by neighboring nations. In order to achieve this, military experts agree that at least 3% of GDP must be steadily set aside for the defense budget for 15 to 20 years.¹⁶

During the process of relocation of the USFK and the Yongsan Garrison, we must prevent the ROK-U.S. combined deterrence and defense posture from being weakened and strengthen our readiness against tremendous North Korean asymmetric warfare capabilities including terrorism.

Today, the entire world is focusing its interests on the U.S. war against terrorism; and reconstruction and democratization of Iraq is a part of the U.S. war against terrorism. As rogue states possessing WMD are highly likely to have links to terrorists, any state attempting to develop, possess, or proliferate nuclear weapons or other WMD can be viewed as a potential subject of the war against terrorism.

Looking at North Korea's past history of terrorism and its support for such activities, taken together with its nuclear weapons development, a vast amount of biochemical weapons, and large number of special operation forces, it is fully capable of implementing asymmetric warfare. In particular, in light of the nature of the North Korean regime, it may implement an asymmetric type of provocation against the South.

One of the most critical security tasks may include a diplomatic effort to prevent the war against terrorism from spreading to the

16 ROK Ministry of National Defense, *Self-Reliant Defense and Our Security* (Seoul, 2003), pp. 39-46.

Korean Peninsula. In the meantime, we must exert parallel efforts in preparation for an emergency and continue to maintain and strengthen close ROK-US military cooperation for this purpose.

With respect to our participation in UN peacekeeping operations and anti-terrorism activities, there is a need to reinforce our readiness posture that may enable our active participation in the U.N. Stand-by Arrangement System.

The United Nations is contriving measures to complement the existing UN Stand-by Arrangement System that may enhance promptness and efficiency of U.N. peacekeeping operations by ensuring rapid emplacement of combat forces, and it is calling for active participation from its members.

We need to review our plans to actively participate in the amended UN Stand-by Arrangement System so that we may contribute to the UN's preparation, not only for PKO, but also for critical requirements such as the war against terrorism.

It is desirable for us to review our position with respect to the U.S. Missile Defense (MD) program, and make clear, internally and externally, our concrete air-defense plans to cope with North Korean missiles, in particular.

The Bush administration's missile defense project signifies changes in the U.S. defense paradigm. That is, the project has an implication of its will to solidify its status as the world's only superpower. Further, while welcoming participation from allies, the U.S. is clearly indicating that the latter's stance for and against it will not affect the future of the project.

Instead of an outright dismissal, I believe we need to strategically review the U.S. missile defense project from the mid- and long-term

perspectives. If we join the project, it may, of course, result in some negative responses from China, Russia, and North Korea. In particular, if our participation goes further than Research and Development (R&D) and moves toward development and emplacement, we expect resistance from China and Russia, which will consequently induce increased military tension in the region.

At the same time, however, we must keep in mind that we also need to establish our own independent missile defense network. Not only can our independent missile defense network respond to a possible North Korean missile attack or WMD terrorism, it also enables our military to conduct efficient operations in the case of an emergency, provides a sense of security to the people, and contributes to the development of science technologies. In particular, if we limit our participation to R&D or promote the idea as part of establishing our own air defense network, we may also defuse negative responses from China and Russia.

Regarding the inter-Korean railway/road reconnection, we must maintain firm military readiness in case of an emergency.

Connecting railways and roads that pass through the Military Demarcation Line (MDL), while the military standoff between the ROK and North Korea still remains intense, is an exceptional endeavor, to say the least. On the one hand, it can be seen as a promising development that can promote mutual confidence and ease military tension between the two confronting armed forces. In addition, the connection of railways and roads can be seen as part of advanced military confidence-building measures.

The underlying problem is that though having agreed to such an advanced measure as railway/road reconnection, North Korea refuses to even talk about the most basic military confidence-building measures such as installation of military hotlines, mutual notification and

observation of military exercises, military personnel exchanges, and so forth.

We should not misinterpret that reconnecting the once-severed railways would lead to the establishment of a significant level of confidence between North and South Korea. Prevention is better than a cure. We should maintain firm readiness, so that we can swiftly interdict, deny all access, and respond in case of an emergency.

Concluding Remarks

At the global level, the most fundamental and important task we are facing is to participate in an international coalition for anti-terrorism and non-proliferation, while preventing North Korea from developing and possessing nuclear weapons. At the regional level, we must ensure that we do not get caught among the neighboring major powers, as signified by the traditional situation of “a shrimp among whales.” To achieve this task, we must continuously maintain adequate military and diplomatic capabilities. At the Korean Peninsula level, we may induce North Korea to reform and open its society and enhance inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation, while maintaining and strengthening military readiness against the North.

For this purpose, first of all, we need to enhance understanding and acceptance of the reality that maintaining and developing the solid ROK-U.S. alliance continuously is the foundation of our national security policy. No matter how we define the concept of “national power,” the international order cannot escape from the logic of power. The fact that those nations who used to be hostile towards the U.S., such as China and Russia, are now vying for improving their respective relations with the U.S. buttresses this argument. Even the Kim Jong Il regime is pursuing improvement of its relations with the U.S. for its survival. In other words, classifying nations into friend or foe is even-

tually a matter of national strategic choice that is built upon national interests, not upon public sentiment.

Second, with respect to anti-terrorism and non-proliferation issues, we must clarify our domestic and foreign policies that are in tune with the ongoing U.S.-led anti-terrorism and non-proliferation policies. While actively joining in the international coalition for anti-terrorism and non-proliferation, it is necessary to strengthen our domestic counterterrorism readiness. Also, though we must do our best to prevent any conflict and trouble from occurring with certain states with anti-American disposition including North Korea, it seems desirable to decisively choose the U.S.-centered international trend, before being placed at the crossroads. From this perspective, the fact that we are neither invited nor participating in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) evidently shows how equivocal our status is in the international arena.¹⁷

Third, regarding the North Korean nuclear issue, alleviating military tension between the two Koreas as well as peace and unification on the Korean Peninsula, we should be able to synchronize opposing interests of neighboring nations as much as possible, while trying to build a groundwork for public consensus. In order to do this, it seems desirable to maintain the firm ROK-U.S. alliance and build a multilateral cooperation structure in which all pertinent regional players can participate. The current U.S. and China-led six-party talks have potential to develop into a multilateral cooperation structure in Northeast Asia in the future. We must be careful, however, that this multilateral cooperation structure does not become a “concert of major powers” for cooperation and negotiation. For this purpose as well, maintaining and

17 The Joint Declaration on Non-proliferation of WMD at G-8 Summit held in Krakow, Poland in May 2003 led to the emergence of PSI. The purpose of PSI is to interdict international trafficking of WMD, its delivery means, and other related material by concerned states and groups. At present, a total of 14 countries are participating in PSI.

developing a future-oriented ROK-U.S. alliance would be the most realistic course of action.

Fourth, readjustment of the USFK and relocation of the Yongsan Garrison, including Combined Forces Command (CFC) and United Nations Command (UNC), to south of the Han River clearly reflect the determination of the U.S. government. Thus, we must bring to an end unnecessary arguments on its determination. We now must exert our utmost efforts to complement estimated vulnerabilities in terms of the military readiness level, while maintaining firm mutual confidence and will for alliance and minimizing possible conflicts and discord that may arise in the process of relocation.

Finally, we must decisively promote future-oriented defense reform and military modernization, while eyeing the changing trend of the regional military situation. To achieve this goal, an adequate amount of the defense budget must be continuously ensured in the long run. For instance, Japan's pursuit of military power is a national decision that Japan must make. It is not a problem to be solved, even if the neighboring nations criticize the possibility of expanding Japanese armed forces. Similarly, crying out loud "Dok-do belongs to the ROK" will not solve the territory conflict. We need to remind ourselves of the common lesson "Prevention is better than a cure," according to which well-preparedness during peacetime will prevent calamity later.