



ROK-U.S. Strategic Alliance for the 21st Century

Kim Sung-han

Professor, KU GSIS

Email: ksunghan@korea.ac.kr

Agenda

1. ROK-U.S. Alliance in the Post-Cold War Era

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

1. ROK-U.S. Alliance in the Post-Cold War Era

1.1. The ROK-U.S. alliance was a product of the Cold War.

1.2. End of the Cold War: The ROK-U.S. alliance was exposed least of all to the aftereffects of the post-Cold War due to the 1993-4 NK nuclear crisis.

1.3. Inter-Korean Summit: The June 2000 summit created a controversy in South Korea on whether the reduction of tension on the Korean peninsula would be compatible with the existence of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

1.4. Rise of Anti-American Sentiment: South Korea's rising nationalistic sentiment in 2002 developed into a demand for more "reciprocal and equitable" relationship between South Korea and the United States.

1. ROK-U.S. Alliance in the Post-Cold War Era

1.5. Challenges for the ROK-U.S. Alliance

1) Emergence of Korean nationalism

2) Policy and perception gap between the U.S. and the ROK over how to deal with North Korea

3) U.S. uncertainties about how to work with its (traditional) allies

4) Growing influence of China on the Korean peninsula



2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.1. Four Scenarios



1) Status-quo

2) ROK-U.S. Strategic Partnership

3) ROK-U.S. Strategic Alliance

4) Multilateral Security Cooperation
- multilateral plus
- multilateral minus

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.2. Lee-Bush Summit for the Strategic Alliance (April 18, 2008)

- 1) Proceeding with the existing agreements for transfer of wartime OPCON and elevating the FMS status of ROK;
- 2) Approval of KORUS FTA within the year;
- 3) Calling on North Korea to produce a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear programs;
- 4) Coordination of inter-Korean relations and denuclearization;
- 5) Cooperation on achieving a post-2012/post-Kyoto international framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions;
- 6) Cooperation in reforming the UN and strengthening multilateral organizations, including advancement of a Free Trade of the Asia Pacific

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.3. Three Principles of Strategic Alliance

Values: Alliance based on liberal democratic values (Cooperate with like-minded countries)

Trust: High level of trust in political, economic, and military areas (Upgrade trust from personal to institutional level)

Peace: Alliance should contribute to regional and global peace (Bind together for soft power diplomacy)



2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.4. Why do we need a strategic alliance ?

1) Dealing with the North Korean Question

- Strategic approach to the 'North Korean question'
- North Korean question: nuclear problem, humanitarian situation, conventional military threats, political contingencies, etc.
- A strategic approach needed

2) Diluting Korean Nationalism and U.S. Unilateralism

- Excessive nationalism and unilateralism : negative impact on the alliance
- Strategic alliance that goes beyond the Korean Peninsula will provide Korea with a broader perspective
- U.S. will be consulting with a strategic hub of Northeast Asia

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.4. Why do we need a strategic alliance ?

3) Preparing for Reunification

- U.S. role as a moderator on the verge of reunification
- ROK-U.S. strategic alliance : protection against unwelcome foreign interference in unified Korea

4) Stabilizing Sino-Japanese Rivalry

- U.S. temptation: contain China through its alliance with Japan
- Korea: strategic rival neither to China nor to Japan
- Regional role of the ROK-U.S. strategic alliance: effective stabilizer against the potential Sino-Japanese rivalry

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.4. Why do we need a strategic alliance ?

5) Partnership for Human Security

- **Human security: natural disaster, infectious disease, human rights violations, terrorism, human smuggling, drug-trafficking, environmental degradation, etc.**
- **Strategic alliance should advocate a soft power diplomacy that builds empowering networks among like-minded countries regarding human security issues**

6) Realizing Multilateral Security Cooperation

- **Bilateral alliances and multilateral cooperation may coexist**
- **U.S. did not oppose OSCE because Europe acknowledged NATO**
- **ROK-U.S. alliance for human security : more likely to be compatible with multilateral security cooperation mechanisms**

2. How to Envision the ROK-U.S. Alliance

2.4. Why do we need a strategic alliance ?

7) Commitment to Transformation

- **Military transformation : better, lighter, and faster deployment**
- **Transformational diplomacy : to establish peace thorough proliferation of freedom**
- **Korea may share the benefits of military transformation while building up its capacity to support transformational diplomacy**

*** Cope with 20th century threat (N.K.) and 21st century threats (human security) simultaneously**

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.1. Adopt a Vision Statement

President Bush's visit to Korea in August 2008 will be a good opportunity to declare the vision statement for the strategic alliance.

After that, an ROK-U.S. Council for Alliance Transformation could be established to study concrete plans for mutual cooperation.

Foreign and defense ministers (2 + 2) would examine the report from the Council in 2009.

Joint Declaration on New Strategic Plan will be announced at a summit meeting in 2009.

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.2. Make a Strategic Division of Labor

On a local level, the U.S. can help South Korea to lead reconciliation and cooperation with North Korea and to establish peace regime on the Korean Peninsula.

On a regional level, the U.S. plays the role of the balancer between China and Japan, while South Korea recognizes U.S. leadership.

On a global level, South Korea can help the U.S. in the area of anti-terror/proliferation, disaster rescue operations and human security.

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.3. Utilize Mutual Strategic Assets

South Korea: geopolitical location, role model of U.S. ally, expertise on North Korea, Korean perspective to China, military compatibility with U.S., etc.

United States: information, intelligence, military presence, commercial networks, etc.

South Korea may utilize U.S. strategic assets to expand its diplomatic horizon, while the U.S. may use South Korean strategic assets to maintain leadership role in Northeast Asia.

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.4. Agree on Direction of Change in North Korea

The two countries should agree on the desired direction of North Korean change and discuss ways to induce it toward that course.

They should focus on complete denuclearization, not management of the nuclear problem.

Priorities: the alliance, nuclear weapons issue, and peace regime.

Concept Plan 5029 should be upgraded to Operation Plan 5029.

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.5. Review OPCON Transfer

The two governments should pursue the transfer as a common goal, but they should be prepared to review progress around six months before the timing of actual transfer.

They have to review progress to ensure that they maintain joint capabilities and interoperability and that they deal fully and transparently with ROK concerns generated by new command relationships.

The new command structure must be effective and engender confidence in both militaries and among both peoples.

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.6. Ratify KORUS FTA

FTA : removing the barriers impeding the free flow of goods

Alliance of trust : Advent of upgraded relationship based on trust

Senator Obama : “While Korea has exported hundreds of thousands of automobiles, the U.S. has barely exported 5,000 units” . . . But, the U.S. may have strategic benefits such as discouraging East Asian regionalism (cf. Asia Pacific regionalism) through its strategic relationship with Korea

3. Tasks for the Strategic Alliance

3.7. Promote Public Diplomacy

Define 'Global Korea': People should understand why South Korea should expand its diplomatic horizon for its own interests

Strategic alliance is not to contain China but to engage China.

Remove South Korea's 'entrapment fear': U.S. public diplomacy needed to improve its image.

How to reconcile South Korea's global contribution with U.S. agenda

A pixelated illustration of a white house with a brown roof and a green lawn. The house has a chimney on the left side and a window on the right. The text "Thank You!" is written in large, bold, blue letters across the bottom of the image.

Thank You!