

“The Rise of China and Future of U.S.-South Korea Relations”

Capstone: General University Honors

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Purpose

For the first time in eight years, I had the opportunity to revisit the country that has been a distant memory of my past. The inherent love for my former country that had been overshadowed by my American upbringing slowly began to unravel into nostalgic sentiments as I journeyed through the streets of Seoul. It was my study abroad experience at Yonsei University that initially sparked my interest in the study of Korean affairs and the U.S.-South Korea alliance. As I explored South Korea Burger Kings, Calvin Klein clothing, Ne-Yo's famous hit "Because of You," and other things that would be considered "American" seemed to be enmeshed with the discordant sounds that characterized Korean society. An infatuation with English, American popular culture, and anything else dubbed as "American" by Korean nationals led me to question the extent to which such favorable sentiments would be maintained. Over the course of my semester, I developed a profound academic interest in South Korea's foreign affairs- especially vis-à-vis China and the United States. From middle school students rushing to take Chinese language courses to my professors never missing a lecture without referencing China, I did not have to be reminded of the growing influence of China in South Korea. I have found China's rising status to a world power and the U.S.-South Korea alliance to be at odds with each other. Fortunately for me, my exposure to the field of international relations for the last three years has given me the capability to ask puzzling questions and seek possible answers to them. It is with this intention that I hope to leave the reader with a longing for discovery and further research on the topic of my capstone.

Introduction

The United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) have retained a solid relationship for about six decades in spite of the vicissitudes created by occasional clashes over sensitive matters. Aside from tangible agreements and positive diplomatic gestures throughout the course of time, the bilateral historical ties have served as an enduring testament to the closeness of the two allies. The older generations of Koreans are able to echo this and revive the memories of American soldiers and civilians who came to defend the South Korean people during the Korean War. In retrospect, the U.S. democratized the South Korean government, industrialized its economy to open markets, provided reconstructive aid, and extended a hand whenever it was in need. By examining history alone, it is possible to learn about the close bilateral alliance; yet, it is not sufficient to explain the burgeoning challenges that have yet to confront the two countries. Predicting future outcomes by referring to lessons throughout history should be the guiding principle in studying the alliance.

A main source of concern for the U.S.-ROK alliance has been the increasingly important role China has played in influencing South Koreans through its soft power strategy. To clarify further, China has sought a great amount of attention by promoting its culture and attracting foreign investment and trade into the country. Although South Koreans to this day have inherent suspicions of the Chinese, Beijing and Seoul have developed a more aligned response to the North Korean threat especially throughout the Six Party Talks, and their economies have become ever more intertwined. As China has surpassed the expectations of the international community to the status of a world power, the U.S. has expressed concerns while South Korea has been trapped in a balancing act between the two great powers. China's rise has led scholars to question the sustainability of U.S.-ROK relations in the long-term future. How has its rise shaped

South Korean policy toward the U.S.? Is China's rise hurting U.S.-ROK relations? How will ROK manage its relations between the U.S. and China? In this capstone these questions are explored and the objective is to argue that despite what scholars say about a frayed relationship, the U.S.-ROK alliance will be indispensably maintained through its security structure and in the midst of a rising China. In formulating the argument, this paper will hold the following variables constant: shifting South Korean leadership priorities based on changing administrations and the possibility of reunification taking place in the near future. Before drawing on historical and ongoing examples that support this argument, turning to traditional international relations theories to establish the necessary framework is the first step in recognizing the regional dynamics of Northeast Asia.

The Study of Sino-ROK Relations: A Relatively Recent Phenomenon

Scholarly works on the Asia-Pacific and great power relationships exist in abundance in international relations. To mention one, U.S.-China relations has been an area of recent pursuit by academics and research and intellectual investment have grown exponentially to accommodate the high demand in understanding implications of China's rise on the bilateral relationship. An area of scholarship that has been dealt in a magnitude of lesser importance has included Sino-ROK relations. In bridging the two areas together, the question of China's rise and its implications on the U.S.-ROK alliance has been a puzzling topic of study. Literature has concerned the issue of how South Korea would position itself between Washington and Beijing despite ROK's positive engagement with the latter in recent years.

While speculating on the literature concerning the U.S.-ROK alliance, it is important to consider that none of the authors have presented tangible outcomes to the response to China's rise and have instead proposed several range of choices and assessments of each course of action.

In *Between Ally and Partner*, Jae Ho Chung argues that the main dilemma [of South Korea] centers on the “blending between maintaining the status quo by remaining within the U.S.-centered alliance system or by embarking on a hopeful journey into the orbits of the Sino-centric system.”¹ This argument is unique in that it employs a hybrid decision-making on Seoul’s part in order to reap the maximum benefits that a favorable relationship with both the U.S. and China could bring to South Korea. Other scholars including Paul, Wirtz, and Fortmann in *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* take a more assertive stance to determine that “It will certainly be cheaper and more reasonable for Seoul to side with Washington, as Beijing has no intention or incentive to support Seoul at the expense of Pyongyang.”² Despite the differing stances and uncertainty of China’s rise in East Asia, Jae Ho Chung aptly captures the challenges South Korea will face in aligning its friendly alliance in a different direction in response to the growing influence of China. The Seoul National University expert states, “The rise of China...may gradually force the Seoul government to reconfigure its Cold War-based strategic thinking and reassess its half-century alliance with the United States.”³ In reconsidering its alliance with its closest ally in the international community, South Korea would be taking a big gamble in risking its survival and security against a North Korean threat or a potentially imperialistic China. Because the behavior of states is indispensably contingent on the ability of other states to wage war or carry out a military attack, it would be highly foolish to ignore the theoretical underlying of the U.S.-ROK alliance in relation to China’s rise. Without theory, it would be simply impossible to trace the motivations, intentions, and purposes that resulted in the

¹ Jae Ho Chung, *Between Ally and Partner* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) 112.

² T.V. Paul, James J. Wirtz, and Michel Fortmann, *Balance of Power: Theory and Practice in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 119.

³ Jae Ho Chung, "The Korean-American Alliance and the “Rise of China”: A Preliminary Assessment of Perceptual Changes and Strategic Choices," *Stanford University*, Feb. 1999, 10 Oct. 2010 <<http://iis-db.stanford.edu/pubs/10109/Chung2.pdf>>, 5.

behavior of a particular state and the outcome of that decision. The subsequent section presents both a constructivist and realist perspective but will emphasize that the latter approach is more useful and relevant in explaining the future consolidation of U.S.-ROK relations.

A Constructivist and Realist Perspective of China's Rise on the U.S.-ROK Alliance

In international relations theory, constructivism is one of the three political science lenses that aims to explain state behavior in terms of history, identity, and values- socially constructed phenomena.⁴ As it pertains to ROK, the theory draws on the interests of the South Korean government elite, perceptions of the North Korean threat, and public opinion of the U.S. David Kang, a leading East Asian expert at the University of Southern California, is a proponent of constructivism, using it to discredit applications of Western international relations theories to the Asia region and presenting reasons for East Asian accommodation to China's rise. In speaking of South Korea's response to this rise, Kang argues that ROK is experiencing a shifting national identity, a realignment of its foreign policy priorities that emphasizes reunification, and a public opinion reflecting a more favorable attitude towards China rather than the U.S.⁵ His statement is convincing in light of recent years, particularly looking at U.S.-ROK policy divergences in the Six Party Talks and rising anti-American sentiments which all have implied a bumpy road for the prospective bilateral relationship. However, the constructivist approach fails to take into account the initial sources of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the implications for the future security dimensions in Northeast Asia, specifically on the Korean peninsula. It examines the Korean people as a social whole but does not provide an adequate explanation on the patterns seen throughout the history and path of South Korea's foreign policies. In another work titled *Forging an Enduring Foundation for U.S.-ROK Relations*, Kang asserts that "U.S.-ROK relations are best

⁴ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations* 9th ed. (New York: Longman, 2010) 121.

⁵ David C. Kang, *China Rising: Peace, Power, and Order in East Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

served by emphasizing their similar values on a number of basic issues,”⁶ referring to the recently seen trend toward the promotion of democracy, human rights, and other values in the international system. The argument that U.S.-ROK shared values which include capitalism, democracy, and free market economy will sustain the relationship against the backdrop of a rising China is sensible, but not the most pragmatic explanation considering that it leaves the big question of security and stability out of the picture. In a 2005 international conference in Seoul, Sunhyuk Kim of Korea University stated in his *Recasting Korea's Foreign Policy: Theoretical Reflections* presentation that neorealism does not offer the most useful framework for describing South Korea's foreign policy. Instead, he believed that because democratization and other political and social changes have reshaped state identity in South Korea, the theoretical foundations that could be applied were neoliberalism, new institutionalism, and constructivism.⁷ The change in national identity translates to a new national interest and from this, foreign policy is derived⁸ according to Kim. This argument however only addresses the changing South Korean history and identity, and not the origins of South Korea's foreign relations with external powers, which at the core are best understood by the realist framework. Although Kim does not explicitly present a constructivist case of the U.S.-ROK alliance, one can assume that he would attempt to use Korea's changing national identity to address new directions for the bilateral relationship.

More compelling in studying the U.S.-ROK alliance and getting a better feel for the possible path of the relationship is the contrasting lens commonly known as realism. Realist school of international relations arguably underscores the necessity of power and military

⁶ David C. Kang, "Forging an Enduring Foundation for U.S.-ROK Relations," *The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation*, 12 Oct. 2010 <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/programs/program_pdfs/rok_us_kang.pdf>, 1.

⁷ Sunhyuk Kim, "Recasting Korea's Foreign Policy: Theoretical Reflections" Proc. of New Directions for Korea's Foreign Policy and the East Asian Community, Korea Press Center, Seoul. Asiatic Research Center, Korea University and Korea National Strategy Institute, 22 July 2005, 12 Oct. 2010 <<http://knsi.org/knsi/admin/work/works/booklet.pdf>>, 16.

⁸ Ibid. 16.

capability in ensuring the state's survival in the international system.⁹ Realism is pertinent in the sense that its rationale in explaining the U.S.-ROK alliance draws on the primary source of the alliance which at the initial time was the belief that more weight on the balance of power favoring the U.S. and South Korea would be essential in deterring the communist threat from the Soviets, Chinese, and North Koreans on the other end. Putting the concept of anarchy into context, intentions of people in an anarchic world are uncertain and force is the ultimate decider¹⁰ in the fate of a state. Likewise, South Koreans are suspicious of Chinese intentions as Chinese economic and military capabilities continue to outmatch others in the world. The fundamental basis of the U.S.-ROK alliance is founded on a security-centric framework, although scholars point to economic integration and globalization as reasons for an evolving relationship and alliance serving purposes other than security. Jin Ha Hwang's speech at an Asia Foundation conference in Seoul echoes the continuing role security will play in cementing a more cooperative U.S.-ROK alliance, "North Korea's military threats such as nuclear weapon development and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction seem to be a continuing significant variable in discussing the future of the alliance."¹¹ For as long as the North Korean threat exists, the U.S. and South Korea will inevitably have to utilize and develop the security element of their alliance. John Delury also adds to this argument by stating that "The cultural base of South Korea-America relations is, conversely, narrowing down to the USA-ROK security alliance."¹² Delury's argument of a "narrowing down" might indicate negative

⁹ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations* 9th ed. (New York: Longman, 2010) 43.

¹⁰ Victor Cha, "Realism, Liberalism, and the Durability of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance," *Asian Survey* 37.7 (1997): 609-22, *JSTOR*, University of California Press, 24 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645511>>.

¹¹ Jin Ha Hwang, "What Can We Explore to Enhance the ROK-US Alliance?" Speech, New Areas of Cooperation in the US-ROK Alliance, Seoul, 4 Nov. 2009, *The Asia Foundation*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, The Asia Foundation, 18 Sept. 2010 <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/HwangKeynoteSpeech091104.pdf>>.

¹² John Delury, "Cultural Dimensions to US-China and US-South Korea Relations," *The Asia Foundation*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, The Asia Foundation, Aug. 2010, Sept. 2010. <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/8.JohnDELURY.pdf>>.

implications on the future alliance as it falls short of addressing economic and other strategic facets; however, there is a degree of certainty that the alliance will be sustained even if security will be the only cohesive element of the relationship. In other words, alliances “are not marriages of love, but marriages of convenience¹³ from a realist point of view. Proponents would likely agree that an alliance serving just security purposes might still constitute a “marriage.” The strongest case for realism in analyzing U.S.-ROK relations is Victor Cha’s argument that “in the end, U.S.-ROK ties always remained firmly grounded in a basic realist convergence of what constituted security against the North: containment, forward deployed deterrence, relative military superiority, and non-dialogue.”¹⁴ In essence, the realist mentality that one of the leading Korea experts adopted has emphasized the importance of viewing and understanding the alliance from a military and power-driven perspective.

For as long as North Korea is dependent on China as the main provider of economic aid and security, balance of power on the Korean peninsula will need to be maintained. To guarantee this balance, a solid U.S.-ROK alliance is required and there has not yet been any sign of divergence. The presence of the North Korean security threat is the rationale of this alliance,¹⁵ but even if the threat wanes South Korea will need a strong U.S. backup force to provide for its security. Without the bilateral alliance, the flashbacks of the “hermit kingdom” besieged by surrounding great powers in South Korea’s early modern history might potentially resurface to the East Asian scene. Despite South Korea’s rising economic power, it cannot help but tilt towards an ally instead of being neutral and it will do so by allying with a global power that is

¹³ Joshua S. Goldstein and Jon C. Pevehouse, *International Relations* 9th ed. (New York: Longman, 2010) 63.

¹⁴ Victor Cha, "Realism, Liberalism, and the Durability of the U.S.-South Korean Alliance," *Asian Survey* 37.7 (1997): 609-22, *JSTOR*, University of California Press, 24 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645511>>.

¹⁵ John Delury, "Cultural Dimensions to US-China and US-South Korea Relations," *The Asia Foundation*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, The Asia Foundation, Aug. 2010, Sept. 2010. <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/8.JohnDELURY.pdf>>, 6.

distant from the peninsula.¹⁶ It is very unlikely that South Korea will have the ability to reach any level of autonomy regarding its security position in East Asia even though its military is one of the most modern and technologically advanced in today's world. South Korea has a strong defensive capability on the Korean peninsula; yet, it relies on the U.S. to fill the gaps in its offensive capabilities. Complementing the powerful standing armed forces of Koreans, the U.S. forces in South Korea number approximately 30,000 troops. Thus, it is important to have a thorough understanding of the alliance that dates back to the 1950s. A historical account in the following section shows the evolution of the U.S.-ROK alliance and the lasting impacts of the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula.

Origins of the U.S.-ROK Alliance

Although U.S.-ROK relations was first established under the United States-Korea Treaty of 1882 during the Joseon Dynasty,¹⁷ it was not until the outbreak of the Korean War and the eventual formation of the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty that led to the consolidation of the bilateral relationship. The legal foundation of the alliance was well-established in the 1950s and has successfully led to sustainability in the midst of bumpy areas of the relationship. What is striking in the early U.S.-ROK relationship is that the U.S. did not consider South Korea as a main source of national interest until a perceived communist takeover on the peninsula was imminent and its future role in East Asia left vulnerable. When the U.S. finally decided to consider South Korea within its "defensive perimeter," it made every effort to defend the latter's interests and fate of the Korean people. Roughly five decades earlier, the U.S. had even recognized Japan's decision to annex Korea in exchange for its acceptance of U.S. control over

¹⁶ Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009) 3.

¹⁷ Jin Ha Hwang, "What Can We Explore to Enhance the ROK-US Alliance?" Speech, New Areas of Cooperation in the US-ROK Alliance, Seoul, 4 Nov. 2009, *The Asia Foundation*, Center for U.S.-Korea Policy, The Asia Foundation, 18 Sept. 2010 <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/HwangKeynoteSpeech091104.pdf>>.

the Philippines under the Taft-Katsura agreement.¹⁸ The path towards a genuine friendship marked by shared interests and values has been remarkable, especially since South Korea was not a significant U.S. concern until the outbreak of the Korean War.

An accurate picture of China's role throughout the alliance process between the U.S. and South Korea can be sketched by putting things into a historical perspective. Under Mao's People's Republic of China (PRC), his "two-camp" outlook of the world, divided into a socialist camp led by the Soviet Union and a capitalist camp led by the U.S.¹⁹ naturally allowed him to line his interests with those of the former camp. When the Korean War broke out on June 25, 1950, Mao was doing everything to end his own civil war against the Kuomintang and reinvigorate its economic system,²⁰ while simultaneously trying to come up with a prompt response to the North invasion. The geographical proximity of North Korea to Chinese borders and a potential spillover effect were the main drivers in Mao's decision to quickly choose a side, ultimately supporting Kim Il Sung. On the U.S. side, the invasion by the north indicated the alarming possibility of "losing" South Korea to the communists. In a document known as NSC 48/5, the Truman administration sought a solution of the Korean problem through political rather than military means.²¹ The intervention of Chinese military forces in Korea crushed the hopes of the U.S. in reunifying a non-communist Korea and instead led the Americans to push for a southern half that was free from communist control. In securing this, armistice negotiations were held and conclusively, a military cease-fire was established. The stalemate had several implications for both China and the U.S. First, Mao's national security concerns involving the Korean peninsula was entirely reduced and he was able to gain a reputation for his country as the

¹⁸ Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 3.

¹⁹ Ibid. 4.

²⁰ Ibid. 7.

²¹ Ibid. 37.

“Middle Kingdom.”²² For the U.S., it was able to enact its proposed policies to contain the spread of communism in South Korea. It also created “a chain of defensive walls around China, ranging from the bilateral security treaties with Japan and South Korea...”²³ The Soviets and Chinese had created a military alliance against the U.S. throughout the Korean War; when the war came to a stop and the armistice was signed, the U.S. this time strategically formed an alliance with South Korea. As years went by, U.S. influence shaped the development of South Korea, while Chinese interests remained firmly fixed to the security of North Korea.

The diverging ideologies between the socialist and capitalist camps inevitably led to a distinct division between South Korea and the U.S. on one side and North Korea and China on the other. To legally bind the security relationship, the U.S. and ROK adopted the Mutual Defense Treaty in 1953 which stipulated that the U.S. would defend South Korea against North Korea and any other external aggression.²⁴ Under the treaty obligations, Article III provides the fundamental basis of the security relationship, declaring that both the U.S. and ROK would act jointly to meet the common danger of an armed attack on either party.²⁵ The establishment of this framework finally allowed the U.S. to have an institutional guarantee of supplying security when it was appropriately needed. On a broader scale, the defense treaty also serves as “the foundation for other affiliated security arrangements and military agreements between the ROK and U.S. governments and militaries.”²⁶ The significance of the interconnectedness of other

²² Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 56.

²³ Ibid. 57.

²⁴ “South Korea,” *U.S. Department of State*, Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 28 May 2010, 30 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2800.htm>>.

²⁵ “1953 Mutual Defense Treaty,” *United States Forces Korea*, 2 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/%28A%28QFdpjrOEyWEkAAAAN2Y4OWI1YjktOTMwMC00ZWNmLWJkZDYtZW M3YWY0MjE1M2MxCg9hyTkOaLN5TIFa5hh47FYKts41%29S%28ijwsva455gtsqvqlibsb1r55%29%29/sofa.1953.mutual.defense.treaty.76>>.

²⁶ “Military Alliance,” *Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the United States of America*, 27 Oct. 2010 <http://www.koreaembassyusa.org/bilateral/military/eng_military4.asp>.

security arrangements to the U.S.-ROK relationship has been mirrored by the lasting commitment of both governments to uphold the articles of the defense treaty. This treaty still remains to be a vital component of South Korea's security and foreign policy and will play a major role in formulating policy decisions in the future.

Shifting Chinese Foreign Policy: Impact on Relations with ROK

To analyze the role China played throughout the consolidation of the U.S.-ROK alliance, it is essential to first take note of Chinese foreign policy during Mao's era. In *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy*, Professor Quansheng Zhao of American University argues that "It was with the goals of regime survival, national security, and the preservation and enhancement of ideology that China entered the Korean War."²⁷ In this respect, China viewed the longevity of North Korean communism as crucial in preserving its own ideological interests. The action that China took in siding with the north was additionally represented in its slogan of "revolution" that exemplified Mao's rule for nearly three decades. As Mao "pushed his revolutionary ideas in Chinese foreign policy to fight against imperialism [the United States]"²⁸, it became more distant from the U.S. and closer to North Korea. This alignment naturally allowed South Korea to reap the benefits an alliance with the U.S. could bring to its political culture, economy, and people.

As international relations scholars began noticing an uphill rise in China's power in the early 1990s, the necessity of addressing its rise and how to deal with it became a main platform of every great power's foreign policy agenda. For Chinese government officials, the vision of China paralleling U.S.'s standing in the world was more than adequate to give them the motivation to further liberalize its economy although retaining a firm political grip on its people. Looking back in Chinese modern history, China's altering mentality is reflected in the shifting

²⁷ Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-macro Linkage Approach* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1996) 47.

²⁸ Ibid. 49.

foreign policy priorities of Chinese elite policymakers. This is evident in Chinese foreign policy shift from “revolution” to “modernization.” The sole architect of the latter term, Deng Xiaoping sought to develop China from a rural, poor economy to a more technologically advanced society. In order to do so, he took the first step in recognizing that China would be outpaced and eventually overrun by Western societies. The year 1992 was a testament to this recognition, as China and South Korea normalized diplomatic relations.²⁹ The historic moment hit scholars as a surprise, especially because China had for so long remained steadfast on ideology and national survival. Professor Quansheng Zhao even stated that he had overemphasized past revolutionary ideas between North Korea and China and did not expect normalization between South Korea and China to occur in a short period of time.³⁰ As changing international circumstances have called for a more interdependent relationship among countries, China under Deng had rapidly been able to transform itself into a major economic power by the late 1990s. A beneficial relationship with South Korea provided abundant access to capital and technology and allowed China to build vital economic ties while maintaining strong historical ties with the north. The following section discusses how China has grown to fit South Korea’s realm of interests.

Rising Importance of China to South Korean Foreign Affairs

Trade Relations

A relationship between PRC and ROK has been mutually beneficial to the interests, priorities, and future developments of both governments. South Korea’s capital and advanced technology has met Chinese demands, while China’s vast markets and political recognition have

²⁹ "China Outruns U.S. in S. Korea 15 Years after Normalization of Ties," *The Hankyoreh*, 23 Aug. 2007, 9 Sept. 2010 <http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/230868.html>.

³⁰ Quansheng Zhao, "Economic and Cultural Factors," U.S.-China Relations, School of International Service, Washington. 10 Nov. 2010, Lecture.

satisfied the Koreans.³¹ Since the 1970s, China's main national priority has been economic growth.³² It has come to realize that national security was not just related to political and strategic issues, but also to economic development.³³ This has been reflected in its shifting approach to South Korea. Since the normalization of Sino-ROK diplomatic relations in 1992, the bilateral relationship has been marked by an unprecedented growth in trade, cultural exchange, tourism, movement of scholars and students, and various partnerships. As China adopted an open reform policy under Deng Xiaoping in 1992, South Korea went on to join the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1996. China's continuous high rates of growth and ROK's outward trade policy provided a great economic opportunity for both sides. Over fifteen years, trade grew from \$2.56 billion in 1990 to over \$100 billion in 2005, while Korean investment in China [as a share of FDI] rose from 4% in 1991 to 43% in 2006.³⁴ In the early 1990s up until the financial crisis, South Korea's comparative advantage in capital and technology allowed its economy to supplement that of China's in labor and land. Learning from South Korea's rapid economic development period under authoritarian leadership³⁵, China looked to the Korean model to open up its economy. This model that was established through its reputation from the "East Asian Miracle" and South Korea's provision of development loans gave a fruitful backdrop for the Sino-ROK economic relationship to flourish. The relationship met a juncture during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis as the South Korean Won plunged in value. Investment and trade came to a halt and the Chinese were forced to examine Korea's mistakes and learn about the dangers of financial liberalization. The relationship was revitalized at the

³¹ Quansheng Zhao, *Interpreting Chinese Foreign Policy: The Micro-macro Linkage Approach* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1996) 68.

³² Ibid. 6.

³³ Ibid. 42.

³⁴ Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009) 47.

³⁵ Ibid. 54.

wake of China's entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001.³⁶ On a global level, this historical moment was felt by the members through lower Chinese tariffs, but for South Korea, investment from firms such as Samsung, SK Telecom, LG, Hyundai, and Posco³⁷ were able to pour rapidly into China. China's opening of its markets and willingness to join other industrialized countries in the WTO contributed to its rise in rank as South Korea's number one trading partner in 2004.³⁸ As the years passed by, South Korea recognized that as China became more competitive in the world market it was reducing its trade surplus and causing a major strain on South Korean companies. In a series of bilateral trade disputes and cases of antidumping, the two countries have encountered trade friction. The primary concern of ROK has been the international competitiveness of Chinese goods and as it becomes more economically dependent on them, ROK will need to diversify its source of imports.

Despite the economic opportunities the relationship with China has brought to the country, it is improbable that Sino-ROK bilateral economic ties will have the tendency to align South Korea more in China's favor. The ongoing negotiation for the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA) represents South Korea's hedging strategy against an economically dominant China. According to Woo, the KORUS FTA was "a bold attempt by South Korea to balance against the rise of China."³⁹ Although significant to South Korean interests, Chinese economic clout will not have much weight when juxtaposed with the economic benefits of the U.S.-ROK relationship. China has become South Korea's "largest trading partner, largest destination for FDI, largest recipient of exports, and most important source of economic

³⁶ Scott Snyder, *China's Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009) 58

³⁷ Ibid. 59.

³⁸ Ibid. 60.

³⁹ Meredith Jung-En Woo, "East Asia after the Financial Crisis," *Insight into Korea: [understanding Challenges of the 21st Century]*, (Seoul: Herald Media, 2007 118-27), 126.

growth.”⁴⁰ The growing Chinese economic interdependence and influence have led South Korean leaders to contemplate whether China’s leverage from its economic prowess could potentially damage U.S.-ROK relations. Scott Snyder echoes this by stating that an improvement of Sino-South Korean relations can serve as a useful lever for weakening the U.S.-ROK alliance and removing U.S. forces from the Korean Peninsula.⁴¹ This, however, should be the least of anyone’s worry since an improvement in Sino-ROK relations will have less influence on South Korea’s relationship with the U.S. The economic relationship is a main driver in Sino-ROK relations; yet it does not seem to be the most significant variable in causing disequilibrium in the U.S.-ROK security alliance. Additionally, a potential ratification of the KORUS FTA would further increase South Korea’s access to American markets which would have broader diplomatic, political, and symbolic implications for the bilateral relationship. A ratified FTA between the two allies will be the best case scenario for the future relationship.

Educational Ties: Student Exchanges

As recent as September 2010, the number of student exchanges that have occurred has been unparalleled in the history of Sino-ROK relations. For the last several thousand years, Buddhist monks and scholars were sent from Korea to imitate China’s rich arts and culture,⁴² but not the other way around. With globalization, Korea’s modern technology, and popular culture attracting Asian audiences, China has built a deeper interest in Korea’s exchange programs. Based on Yonhap News, the number of Chinese students studying in South Korea was at 53,461 in 2010, 70% of all foreign students studying abroad, while the number of Korean students

⁴⁰ Scott Snyder, *China’s Rise and the Two Koreas* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2009) 76.

⁴¹ Scott Snyder, "Sino-Korean Relations and the Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance," *NBR Analysis* 14.1 (2003): 51-72. *National Bureau of Asian Research*, National Bureau of Asian Research, 29 Oct. 2010, <<http://www.nbr.org/publications/element.aspx?id=293>>, 3.

⁴² Woo-hyun Sohn, "Chinese Students Ride Korean Wave to South Korea," *Yonhap News Agency*, 20 Sept. 2010, 5 Nov. 2010, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/n_feature/2010/09/15/22/4901000000AEN20100915009400315F.HTML>.

studying in China was at 66,800 a year ago.⁴³ This is truly striking when comparing the number to 2003 figures, which reflected 24,000 Korean exchange students studying in China.⁴⁴ Much different from several decades ago, Chinese students now have a strong understanding of Korean culture and a working knowledge of the Korean language. While Sino-ROK relations expand in various fields in the coming years, the demand for translators will increase and so will the number of Chinese and Korean students seeking employment in each respective country. In terms of China studies in Korea, the establishment of the Confucius Institute, designed to promote Chinese language and culture, and the Chinese Culture Center in Seoul⁴⁵ have indicated China's efforts to integrate its customs into Korean society. Seoul was Beijing's first location for the Confucius Institute, and since then 12 institutes have been created through Korean universities.⁴⁶ This has been China's way of making its culture appealing internationally through its soft power strategy.

Cultural Ties: Tourism and Partnerships

According to the Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry (RIETI) in Japan, tourism has increased significantly between China and South Korea with more than two million Chinese and Koreans visiting each other every year.⁴⁷ In 2002, over 1.6 million South Koreans

⁴³ Woo-hyun Sohn, "Chinese Students Ride Korean Wave to South Korea," *Yonhap News Agency*, 20 Sept. 2010, 5 Nov. 2010, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/n_feature/2010/09/15/22/4901000000AEN20100915009400315F.HTML>.

⁴⁴ Michael Yoo, "China Seen from Korea: Four Thousand Years of Close Relationship," *RIETI* -

独立行政法人経済産業研究所 *RIETI*, 21 Apr. 2003, 10 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.rieti.go.jp/users/michael-yoo/cfk-en/02.html>>.

⁴⁵ Sam Powney, "A Glance at the Background and Current Directions of Cultural Diplomacy in Eastern Asia," *Institute for Cultural Diplomacy*, 15 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/pdf/case-studies/a-glance.pdf>>, 4.

⁴⁶ David Hundt, "South Korea Confronts the Rise of China," *The University of Sydney*, Proc. of Global Korea: Old and New, University of Sydney, Australia, Sydney, 9-10 July 2009, 17 Nov. 2010 <http://sydney.edu.au/arts/korean/downloads/KSAA2009/Global_Korea_Proceedings_128-139_Hundt.pdf>, 132.

⁴⁷ Michael Yoo, "China Seen from Korea: Four Thousand Years of Close Relationship," *RIETI* -

独立行政法人経済産業研究所 *RIETI*, 21 Apr. 2003, 10 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.rieti.go.jp/users/michael-yoo/cfk-en/02.html>>.

visited China, while 440,000 Chinese visited South Korea in 2001. A more telling story of the strong cultural ties that have been created over the last several years is depicted in the projects that were proposed and implemented bilaterally. In the last decade or so, the number of Chinatowns across the world has grown as Chinese influence has spread tremendously. In 2003, the first Chinatown was created in Incheon, South Korea.⁴⁸ The decision to establish a Chinatown in one of the most rapidly developing cities contrasts heavily with Korea in the “Middle Kingdom” ages. When Korean government officials paid tribute to China’s emperor, they were able to retain some sense of national pride since there was no Chinatown at home.⁴⁹ A rising China in the modern day has inevitably brought increased popularity of Chinese food, products, and culture into Korean society. In 2005, the 8th World Chinese Entrepreneurs Conference in Seoul marked South Korea’s efforts to integrate more into the Chinese business community and build understanding between Korean and Chinese businesses. Echoing this, Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Energy Lee Hee-boem stated that South Korea “has set up strategic cooperation ties with Chinese entrepreneurs all over the world through this year’s meeting.”⁵⁰ A rapid effort to enhance cultural ties has been aptly accommodated by South Korea.

A Rising China: The South Korean View

In the previous three sections, there was strong evidence of the important role China has played in South Korea’s foreign relations concerning trade, educational, and cultural ties as China has risen to the global scene. ROK has grown dependent on China’s economy, while its students and people have embraced the educational and cultural opportunities China has offered them inside and outside of the country. Have these bilateral exchanges and developments led to

⁴⁸ Norimitsu Onishi, "This Chinatown Lacks Only One Thing — Chinese," *The New York Times*, 1 Mar. 2007, 18 Nov. 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/01/world/asia/01iht-korea.4763868.html?_r=1>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Convention Enhances Ties between S.Korean, World Chinese Entrepreneurs," *People's Daily Online*, 13 Oct. 2005, 21 Oct. 2010 <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/200510/13/eng20051013_214016.html>.

broader problems external to the relationship? If so, what has been the underlying framework to explain any approaching changes?

From a theoretical perspective, realism is a helpful tool in analyzing the relationship between state behavior and the use of power. It is based on the notion that states are self-interested and aim to increase its influence and power. Realistic pessimism, a variation of realism that predicts a less hopeful outcome, is a common Korean view on the rise of China. Believers of this political thought say that China's goal is to increase its leverage on the Korean peninsula and will do whatever it can to offset the U.S.-ROK alliance⁵¹ to establish hegemony in the region and overtake the U.S. In fact, South Korea and China have smoothed economic and cultural ties over the last few decades, but political and diplomatic issues have been fraught with tension. One of the rationales behind the realistic pessimism view seems to be China's increasing modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), leading to more suspicions of Chinese intentions and their continual assurances of a "peaceful rise." Reaching double digits, defense spending has shot up in the last several years, but the lack of transparency has hindered any efforts to accurately access China's military data. The Center for Strategic International Studies and the Peterson Institute for International Economics predict that if the PLA is able to improve its military development capabilities and sustain them, it will certainly lead other countries to shift their defense policies to adapt to a new threat,⁵² in this case concerning a militarily stronger China. The prediction is applicable to South Korea, as it has aimed to deepen its ties to the U.S. and increase its own military capabilities despite ongoing economic activities with China. Furthermore, there have been predictions that China's growing influence in East Asia will be

⁵¹ Hee-ok Lee, "China's Rise and Its Impact on Korea: Viewpoints and Realities," *Korea Focus*, 2009, 1 Oct. 2010 <http://www.koreafocus.or.kr/design2/layout/content_print.asp?group_id=102902>.

⁵² C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Nicholas R. Lardy, and Derek J. Mitchell, *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008).

accompanied by a growing Japanese military, raising concerns on what implications this would have on the security of the Korean peninsula. Daniel Sneider, the Associate Director for Research at the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center at Stanford University, remarked that “the possibility that Korea may become caught between these two powers without a strong U.S. presence in the region has emerged as an argument in some Korean circles for preserving the alliance with the United States.”⁵³ While it is important to take into account the thought processes of government officials, renowned academics, and other players influencing policymaking, the view of the public can sometimes give a more comprehensive picture of a nation’s perspective. How has the South Korean public reacted to its nation’s relationship with China?

Public Sentiment of China and U.S. in South Korea

In light of exchanges that have characterized the Sino-ROK relationship, the public polls in South Korea have witnessed a rise in favorable opinion toward China. South Korea’s trade dependence and the realization of China’s rise have instigated a desire to heed more attention and study to China’s culture, government, business, and citizens. On the other hand, Korean perception of the U.S. has been negative since the candlelight protests and the acquittal of American soldiers involved in the killing of two school girls in 2002. However, although public opinion has fluctuated for the last decade, support for a stronger U.S.-ROK alliance has experienced a moderate incline. In a July 2004 survey conducted by the East Asian Institute and Joong-Ang Ilbo, Korean support for the U.S.-ROK alliance increased from 20.4% in 2002 to

⁵³ Daniel Sneider, "Strategic Abandonment: Alliance Relations in Northeast Asia in the Post-Iraq Era," Rpt. in *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, Vol. 18, (Washington: KEI, 2008. 1-21) 3.

36.9% in 2004.⁵⁴ To further supplement this, the U.S. was chosen by the Korean public to be the country ROK should cooperate with the most at 53%, compared to 24% for China.⁵⁵ This contrast has signified that to the Korean public, an alliance with the U.S. remains to be the better strategic option than one with China. Media specialists and Korean scholars have explained the divisions that exist in Korean public opinion regarding the U.S.-ROK alliance. The cleavages have raised concerns in the alliance, but have not been significant enough to cause a deterioration of overall positive public opinion. South Korea does not appear to trust anyone but the U.S. in providing for its security. In fact, ROK clearly “recognizes China’s growing influence in regional and global affairs, but does not trust it as much as the U.S.”⁵⁶ Considering the background of China’s economic and military rise, South Koreans have held concerns about its motives in East Asia. China’s history of domination during the tributary era and the fickleness of its authoritarian government have prevented South Korea from being reassured of Chinese benign intentions. In this respect, the U.S.-ROK alliance has not been in any state of peril and will continue to be seen in a positive light by the South Korean people.

What is equally surprising is the steep rise in favorable Korean public opinion of the U.S. starting sometime after points of friction in 2002. In considering the public opinion polls of the U.S. and China, there is clear evidence of how Korean public view has evolved over time. Based on the Pew Global Attitudes Project conducted in 2007, U.S. favorability has risen in South Korea, from 46% in 2003 to 58% in 2007 while unfavorable views of China grew from 31% in

⁵⁴ Nae-Young Lee, "Changing South Korean Public Opinion on the US and the ROK-US Alliance," *East Asia Institute*, Proc. of America in Question: Korean Democracy and the Challenge of Non-Proliferation on the Peninsula, Seoul, East Asia Institute, 10-11 May 2005, 20 Nov. 2010
<http://www.eai.or.kr/data/bbs/eng_report/2009051216194514.pdf>, 4.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 6.

⁵⁶ David Hundt, "South Korea Confronts the Rise of China," *The University of Sydney*, Proc. of Global Korea: Old and New, University of Sydney, Australia, Sydney, 9-10 July 2009, 17 Nov. 2010
<http://sydney.edu.au/arts/korean/downloads/KSAA2009/Global_Korea_Proceedings_128-139_Hundt.pdf>, 132.

2002 to 42% in 2007.⁵⁷ This indicates that even though China has projected its soft power strategy across the region, including South Korea, the citizens of the country in reality do not place China above the U.S. and have more favorable views toward the latter than the former. A topic of major concern to policymakers is the view of the younger generation in South Korea toward North Korea and the U.S. The younger generation does not embrace the memories of American soldiers during the Korean War and the killing of two school girls by U.S. military vehicles in 2002 seems to overshadow any dab of goodwill toward American soldiers stationed in South Korea. Additionally, they have held a benign perception of the North Korean threat and have downplayed the immediate security threat that could arise at any point on the peninsula. Despite these sentiments by the younger Korean generation, they still recognize the importance of having the U.S. as an ally. Judging from this, even the wide thinking gaps among the Korean public seem to meet at a common point.

China-ROK-U.S. Relationship and Policy toward North Korea

Before the normalization of Sino-ROK relations, relationships among the players in the region (e.g. South Korea, China, U.S.) could only be analyzed in a bilateral sense. A Sino-DPRK relationship and a U.S.-ROK relationship were two factors that defined the dynamics of power, influence, and alignment in the region. Following normalization in 1992, South Korea became the center of the seesaw, hesitant to shift all of its weight to one side in fear of the risks involved in abandoning the other. Through this context, a trilateral relationship among China, South Korea, and the U.S. has been crucial in getting to the bottom of the foreign policymaking process and alignment calculations.

⁵⁷ Daniel Snider, "Strategic Abandonment: Alliance Relations in Northeast Asia in the Post-Iraq Era," Rpt. in *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, Vol. 18, (Washington: KEI, 2008. 1-21) 18.

For the last few decades, the issue of North Korean nuclear weapons has been the single most important aspect of all the stakeholders in the Korean peninsula. Through a multilateral framework known as the Six Party Talks, involving the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, the members have sought to denuclearize North Korea. From these countries, China has been known to be the “regulator” of the six parties, since it has been the only state that has had the most leverage over Pyongyang. For most of the negotiations that took place in the 2000s regarding North Korea, ROK and U.S. policies have diverged and the South Korean government has aligned its interests more closely with the Chinese. During the Kim Dae-jung administration, the Sunshine Policy giving unconditional aid to North Korea was severely criticized by the U.S. under the Bush administration that supported a more stringent policy toward the north, while it was bolstered by the Chinese. Interestingly enough, Kim still supported a strong U.S. presence in South Korea although his North Korea policy diverged from the U.S. stance. President Roh Moo-hyun continued the Sunshine Policy and voiced that South Korea should play more of a balancer role among China, Japan, and the U.S., causing immediate concerns in Washington.⁵⁸ Soon after President Lee took office, U.S.-ROK relations improved but with no effect on South Korean policy alignments with the U.S. Following the breakdown of the Six Party Talks in 2008 and North Korea’s nuclear test in 2009, U.S. and ROK policies have been very close.⁵⁹ According to the CRS report published in November 2010, the Obama and Lee administrations have “adopted a policy of ‘strategic patience’ involving three elements: refusing to return to the Six Party Talks without an assurance from North Korea that it would take irreversible steps to denuclearize; gradually attempting to alter China’s strategic assessment

⁵⁸ Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mary Beth Nikitin, and Mi Ae Taylor, "U.S.-South Korea Relations," *Federation of American Scientists*, Congressional Research Service, 3 Nov. 2010, 29 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf>>.

⁵⁹ Ibid. 7.

of North Korea; and using Pyongyang's provocations as opportunities to tighten sanctions against North Korean entities."⁶⁰ Simply put, Lee's approach has diverged from his predecessor's in that ROK would only provide economic aid and other "carrots" that was contingent on North Korean compliance on steps to denuclearize, a policy adhered by the Obama administration. The convergence in policies has made it easier to match up rhetoric with action, as was seen in the Cheonan incident of March 2010. An analysis of this event will be made in a later section of the capstone.

For the time being, North Korea does not present a major threat to the U.S., but it may someday have the full capability to threaten the U.S. directly, as stated by Defense Secretary Robert Gates.⁶¹ For purposes of continued security for Americans at home and abroad, a security alliance with South Korea would be absolutely critical in deterring future threats. On the South Korea side, the Cheonan incident was a grave reminder that the North Korean threat was imminent and that an underestimated approach would not be acceptable.

Sino-ROK Divergences: Obstacles to a Sino-centric Order in East Asia

Dating back several hundred years, the hierarchy of Asia was constructed in a manner that fit China at the center and the rest of the smaller states around the periphery through a tributary system. As time passed by, the lesser states slowly evolved from a state whose livelihood hinged on China's behavior to one that could sustain and protect itself from foreign invaders. In addition, the continuous role of the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific has shaped the dynamics of East Asia and maintained the balance of power. In this respect, it has been a struggle for the Chinese to skillfully establish hegemony over any one state or particular area. Factors such as the

⁶⁰ Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mary Beth Nikitin, and Mi Ae Taylor, "U.S.-South Korea Relations," *Federation of American Scientists*, Congressional Research Service, 3 Nov. 2010, 29 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf>> 7.

⁶¹ Qin Yaqing, "China-US Relations and the Korean Peninsula," Proc. of A Korea-U.S.-China Trilateral Conference on Globalization, Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula, Chung-Ang University, Seoul.

U.S. alliance with Japan and territorial issues between China and South Korea have resisted the conditions for a Sino-centric order.

U.S. Alliance with Japan

Aside from its alliance with the ROK, the U.S. successfully maintained an alliance system with its one time enemy from World War II, Japan. Since the American occupation in 1945 following the war, the U.S. has used its legally tight alliance relationship with Japan to project its power in East Asia and simultaneously use the alliance to offset China's rising power in the region. Domestic sentiments in South Korea have been characterized by growing anti-Japanese and pro-Chinese sentiments and have raised concerns for the U.S. regarding the possibility of Korea "slipping into China's sphere of influence."⁶² Additionally, the U.S. believes that Korea is likely to be sucked into China's influence out of inertia and would ultimately need Japan to defy this pull.⁶³ To what extent this would be true is uncertain, but there is a very low possibility that this vacuuming of ROK into China's sphere would actually occur. If at some point it does, it would indeed be a clever option for the U.S. to have Japan on its side. By continuing to reinforce its military alliance with Japan, the U.S. can check China's power and prevent South Korea from leaping to the other side. The current circumstances on the peninsula indicate that South Korea will not be swayed by a rising China, no matter how close or beneficial the economic relationship might be to Seoul's interests. Most likely for the U.S., a firm alliance with both Japan and South Korea will be maintained, although the degree of solidarity remains uncertain and is variable based on unraveling events. The U.S.-based alliance system in East Asia, which includes Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, would likely discourage any kind of military conflict on the peninsula as the balance of power would remain in place. As

⁶² Kichan Bae, *Korea at the Crossroads: the History and Future of East Asia* (Seoul: Happyreading, 2007) 429.

⁶³ Ibid. 430.

Beijing views the concept of alliances as “exclusionary, provocative, and harmful to China’s interests,”⁶⁴ it will continue to engage in strategic partnerships in an attempt to challenge the U.S. alliance system dominating East Asian security.

Goguryeo Dispute between China and South Korea

A constant battle for territory and sovereignty has been a common theme in Asian history. Japan and ROK are still involved in a several hundred years long dispute over Dokdo Island in the East Sea, while Southeast Asian countries have yet to settle demarcation issues of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. Often, these territorial disputes have caused major political and diplomatic obstacles, reproducing a sense of distrust and suspicion. Regarding Sino-ROK relations, territorial disputes are not of critical concern and instead represent an area in its relationship that is indirectly shared with other external countries through their practice of foreign affairs. What does remain the most contentious bilateral issue to this day is the treatment of the history of Goguryeo by China. Chinese attempt to rewrite its history to include Goguryeo, Korea’s ancient kingdom that existed from 35 B.C. to 668 A.D.,⁶⁵ has fueled outrage among the Korean public. China’s effort has been manifested through the “Northeast Project,” a project they have characterized as solely an academic venture to carry out research.⁶⁶ However, Korea’s investigation and realization of the project as a PRC government-sponsored project has undermined Chinese credibility to South Koreans. Because the Goguryeo debate concerns the national identity and historical context of the Korean people, their nationalistic sentiments and China’s “academic” justifications for a claim on a peripheral part of Korean history have

⁶⁴ C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Nicholas R. Lardy, and Derek J. Mitchell, *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities* (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2008) 217.

⁶⁵ Taeho Kim, "Sino-ROK Relations at a Crossroads: Looming Tensions amid Growing Interdependence," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 17.1 (2005): 129-49, 13 Nov. 2010
<http://www.kida.re.kr/data/kjda/06_Taeho%20Kim.pdf>, 130.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 142.

certainly come into conflict. A full claim of South Korea to Goguryeo will further complicate the settlement since most of the territory during the time period was bordered by China.

Based on the previous paragraphs, challenges to a Sino-centric East Asian order are apparent in alliance issues involving the U.S. and Japan, and Sino-ROK disagreements regarding historical and national identity. Against this backdrop, a rising China should not be a main point of concern for surrounding countries. Notwithstanding the suspicions and lack of trustworthiness felt by neighboring countries toward China's rise, South Koreans have pursued hedging to accommodate their national interests.

South Korea's Hedging Strategy

David Hundt, a lecturer at Deakin University in Australia, states that hedging is a strategy that is best suited for large and powerful states like Japan and not so realistic for smaller countries like South Korea because of its geographical proximity to China.⁶⁷ He does however state that it has been one of the main strategies adopted by Seoul to formulate an appropriate response to China's rise. Throughout the Roh Moo-hyun administration, a policy of aligning with China was pursued but this came to an end as soon as President Lee entered into office. Regardless of President Lee's pro-American tendencies, he adopted a new policy known as "twin hedging," employing both engagement and soft balancing toward China.⁶⁸ An engagement policy has allowed Seoul to reap the full benefits of having China as its number one trading partner and main source of foreign direct investment. When Roh was in office, he emphasized this approach and made it the cornerstone of his foreign policy agenda, while dismissing the

⁶⁷ David Hundt, "South Korea Confronts the Rise of China," *The University of Sydney*, Proc. of Global Korea: Old and New, University of Sydney, Australia, Sydney, 9-10 July 2009, 17 Nov. 2010
<http://sydney.edu.au/arts/korean/downloads/KSAA2009/Global_Korea_Proceedings_128-139_Hundt.pdf>, 129.

⁶⁸ Sukhee Han, "From Engagement to Hedging: South Korea's New China Policy," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 20.4 (2008): 335-51, *Informaworld*, 27 Nov. 2010
<<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all?content=10.1080/10163270802507328>>, 335.

U.S.-ROK relationship to the background. As Lee has engaged with China diplomatically and economically, he has simultaneously made every attempt to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance beyond security, “soft balancing” against a rising China. Still, the Lee administration has not left sight of China’s increasing economic dominance and the impact on the South Korean economy. His approach toward China and the U.S. has been thoughtfully calculated, cooperating with an economic partner, but keeping its long-time friend closer. South Korea is not the only country pursuing this hedging strategy. Many of the countries in the region recognize China’s ascent to power but that it will not surpass the U.S.’s role as a hegemon and stabilizer anytime soon. Yet, it is striking that several of the Southeast Asian countries have hedged between China and the U.S. for strategic purposes.

The U.S.-ROK Alliance: Moments of Reinforcement

No one can deny that the U.S.-ROK relationship underwent rough points throughout its six decade long alliance. Anti-Americanism, protests in South Korea, presidential statements of “drawing closer to China” (e.g. Roh Moo-hyun), and literature condemning the U.S.-ROK relationship have all sought to undermine the argument that a bilateral alliance is necessary and required in the long-term future. Yet, the cooperative partnerships and pledges to strengthen the relationship have spoken louder than the barrage of denunciations.

Immediately following the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, South Korea dispatched several hundred troops to aid in the war effort. Its defense spending has increased as well, demonstrating the continued commitment and investment on the security of the Korean peninsula and to its alliance with the U.S. In June 2009, the U.S.-ROK security alliance was once again reinforced under the “Joint Vision for the Alliance,” an initiative to improve future defense

cooperation.⁶⁹ Interestingly, the joint statement refers to the defense treaty which established the foundation of the bilateral security alliance as the world witnessed peace and stability on the Korean peninsula for nearly sixty years. From this bedrock emerged a prosperous security relationship that has grown to “encompass political, economic, social, and cultural cooperation”⁷⁰ in the twenty-first century. The statement by Obama’s White House emphasizing that the strategic alliance based on shared values and interests stems from the security relationship is evidence of a security first, the rest later policy. Under Reform 2020, President Lee has also avowed to increase the defense budget to 9.9% each year, although he reduced this to 3.6% for FY2010 because of economic pressures.⁷¹ In July 2010, the first “2+2” meeting involving the U.S. and South Korean foreign and defense ministers was held in order to further consolidate the relationship.

A military alliance has been the core of the relationship and in this context, an alliance has inevitably been a key complement to South Korea’s national interests. If there is ever a possibility that the military relationship would be challenged, whether it be from any of the factors mentioned previously, South Korean mentalities will always converge on the serious and imminent threat of North Korea, thereby reassessing the problems and focusing on how to revitalize the relationship. Lieutenant General Edward Rice of U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) raises an even more prominent issue, the fact that North Korea is still “not very transparent in terms of

⁶⁹ Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mary Beth Nikitin, and Mi Ae Taylor, "U.S.-South Korea Relations," *Federation of American Scientists*, Congressional Research Service, 3 Nov. 2010, 29 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf>>.

⁷⁰ "Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea," *The White House*, 16 June 2009, 30 Nov. 2010 <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Joint-vision-for-the-alliance-of-the-United-States-of-America-and-the-Republic-of-Korea/>.

⁷¹ Mark E. Manyin, Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mary Beth Nikitin, and Mi Ae Taylor, "U.S.-South Korea Relations," *Federation of American Scientists*, Congressional Research Service, 3 Nov. 2010, 29 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41481.pdf>>.

their capabilities and their intentions.”⁷² As a result of this uncertainty, South Korea will not want to risk a detrimental blow to its security and will continue to push for an alliance with the U.S. that is built on deterrence and that will contribute to the security on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. The U.S. commitment of a nuclear umbrella will assure this security.

After the Cheonan Incident: U.S.-ROK Military Drills and China's Response

In March 2010, any progress that had been consolidated regarding inter-Korean relations came to a standstill when the South Korean Warship “Cheonan” sank suspiciously near the Yellow Sea. An international investigation led by South Korea, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Sweden declared that a North Korean torpedo had sunk the South Korean warship. As the ROK government prepared swiftly to take action through the United Nations, China's hesitancy and lack of firm response indicated its ambivalence in choosing a side with either of the two Koreas. Whether China's response was an act of its hedging strategy, it undeniably caused a major strain in its relationship with ROK as it delayed its condolences to the victims for over a month and as it hosted Kim Jong Il in Beijing several days after President Lee paid a visit to seek China's cooperation.⁷³ China's “two Korea policy” might have to undergo a reassessment since maintaining beneficial relations with both the north and south and accommodating their unique interests have been extremely difficult to do. Despite what Chinese interests have been, considering their downplayed response to the sinking, their actions have not been a strategic move and have hurt its reputation in the region more so than its bilateral relationship with ROK.

⁷² “U.S. Military Bills N. Korea 'potential Threat,' Calls for More Info+,” *Breitbart*, 15 July 2010, 23 Nov. 2010 <http://www.breitbart.com/article.php?id=D91U4QRG0&show_article=1>.

⁷³ David Kang, “China and the Cheonan Incident,” 38 *North*, US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2 June 2010, 25 Nov. 2010 <<http://38north.org/2010/06/china-and-the-cheonan-incident/>>.

The sinking pointed a rough patch in the Sino-ROK relationship, and the UN Security Council's Presidential Statement on July 9 condemning the attack⁷⁴ but not pointing fingers at the north gave enough reason for the Lee Myung-bak government to flex its military strength. In any event, the Cheonan incident provided an opportunity for South Korea and the U.S. to reassert their military alliance through a series of drills in international waters near Chinese maritime boundaries. Otherwise known as "Invincible Spirit," the U.S.-ROK joint military exercise from July 25-28 and the USS George Washington carrier⁷⁵ was a strong reminder of the historical alliance and that any arising threat to ROK's security would not go unnoticed or ignored. A second exercise known as "Ulchi Freedom Guardian" in August further emphasized the bilateral effort to ensuring stability and peace on the Korean peninsula. Beijing's managing its own military exercises in the Yellow Sea in response to the bilateral drills was its way of signaling to Washington and Seoul of its discontentment.⁷⁶ In essence, the provocative behavior of Beijing has foreshadowed a more assertive Chinese security policy on the Korean peninsula in the future and a closeness of U.S.-ROK military relations. These military drills might seem to only benefit ROK because of the geographical proximity of the North Korean threat to Seoul where most of South Koreans inhabit, but it will have extending benefits to the U.S. as well. According to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, North Korea's nuclear weapons program does not present a major threat to the U.S.; yet he realizes that it might have the capability to threaten the U.S. directly.⁷⁷ In this sense, the security alliance with South Korea is just as critical to its own national interests in the Asia-Pacific, and efforts to expand military ties and future joint drills

⁷⁴ Kurt M. Campbell, "The Security Situation on the Korean Peninsula," *U.S. Department of State*, 16 Sept. 2010, 25 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.state.gov/p/ear/rls/rm/2010/09/147210.htm>>.

⁷⁵ Evans J. R. Revere "A Dragon Rises: China's Ascendancy and the U.S.-ROK Relationship," *Proc. of China's Rise and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, Jeju, The Asia Foundation, Aug. 2010, 19 Nov. 2010 <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/2.EvansREVERE.pdf>>, 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 3.

⁷⁷ Qin Yaqing, "China-US Relations and the Korean Peninsula," *Proc. of A Korea-U.S.-China Trilateral Conference on Globalization, Northeast Asia and the Korean Peninsula*, Chung-Ang University, Seoul.

will indeed present new opportunities for the U.S. Although not as significant as actual military maneuvers, high-level diplomatic visits by American officials have added to the already robust U.S.-ROK alliance. The physical appearance of Secretary of State Clinton and Secretary of Defense Gates at the Demilitarized Zone following the Cheonan incident was U.S.'s way of telling Seoul and the rest of the international community that it was committed to the security of the South Korean people.

DPRK-PRC Relations: Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance

Official diplomatic relations between North Korea and China was established in 1949. The natural alliance that formed throughout the Korean War reinforced the relationship as both countries shed significant amount of blood for the civil war in China and the fight against the UN Command backed by South Korea and the U.S. Today, the DPRK-PRC military relationship that was established through the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance⁷⁸ does not represent a mutually serving pact. Strictly a military assistance agreement, it seems to be a defense relationship that broadly serves Chinese interests only when it is necessary. Looking at the evolution of the bilateral relationship since the Korean War, China's leverage on Pyongyang's fate has significantly gotten stronger. What is unique from the DPRK-PRC treaty agreement is that it does not make a reference to the principles of the United Nations and neither party is able to terminate the treaty without mutual consent.⁷⁹ This stipulation along with the fact that the UN General Assembly had designated China and North Korea as aggressors during the Korean War⁸⁰ implies that both countries share a common history distinctly different from that of the U.S.-Japan or U.S.-ROK alliance. Throughout DPRK-PRC diplomatic history, the joint

⁷⁸ "DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China*, 23 Oct. 2003, 16 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/wjlb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2701/>>.

⁷⁹ Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 60.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 60.

opposition to the normalization between Japan and South Korea was the climax of their military friendship.⁸¹ To counter the tripartite alliance involving South Korea, Japan, and the U.S., China and North Korea were determined to bring their relationship to a higher level, and indeed for the next several decades, Chinese aid and support for North Korea stayed firm.

Towards the start of the twenty-first century, there was evidence that China ceased to give unconditional support to North Korea, as Pyongyang performed a series of nuclear tests and failed to live up to its nuclear treaty commitments. However, this did not change Beijing's attitude towards Pyongyang. In fact, fortunately for Pyongyang, the PRC seems to be "tilting" more towards it after the Cheonan incident.⁸² This is certainly a good sign for Pyongyang especially in light of the preparations for the succession of Kim Jong Il. Unlike his father's monopolizing power on the entire state, Kim Jong Eun, the third son deemed to be the next ruler, has decided to employ the military, political, and diplomatic expertise of experienced officials in the current regime. The showing of Zhou Yongkang, a senior member of China's ruling Politburo, in Pyongyang on October 10, 2010 was a way for China to show its support for North Korea's succession arrangements.⁸³

The DPRK-PRC 60th diplomatic anniversary on September 28, 2009 was another reminder of China's commitment to the economic security and sustenance of the North Korean regime. DPRK Ambassador to China Choe Jin Su's statement at the anniversary delineates Pyongyang's continuous China policy, "We will take the 60th anniversary and the Year of DPRK-China Friendship as a new starting point, and are ready to make concerted efforts with

⁸¹ Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 60.

⁸² Evans J. R. Revere "A Dragon Rises: China's Ascendancy and the U.S.-ROK Relationship," Proc. of China's Rise and Implications for the U.S.-ROK Alliance, Jeju, The Asia Foundation, Aug. 2010, 19 Nov. 2010 <<http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/2.EvansREVERE.pdf>>, 3.

⁸³ "Spinning the Wrong 'Un," *The Economist*, 14 Oct. 2010, 8 Nov. 2010 <<http://www.economist.com/node/17259065>>.

China to expand friendly cooperative ties.⁸⁴ On the side of the Chinese, they welcomed Choe's remarks and reaffirmed their continual support, with a gesture of a toast. In times of more uncertainty involving the succession process of the North Korean regime, China's show of support and celebration of anniversaries still cast a strong bond between the two countries. Just recently in October 2010, the Chinese and North Koreans honored those who fought in Beijing, coming together once again to publicly announce the unified alliance dating back since the start of the war. Xi Jinping, Vice President of China, proudly announced: "It was also a great victory gained by the united combat forces of China's and the DPRK's civilians and soldiers, and a great victory in the pursuit of world peace and human progress."⁸⁵ From China's high-level visits to public gestures showing support for DPRK, the bilateral relationship appears lively and sturdy. To what extent DPRK-PRC relations will develop is hard to measure, but for the time being China is showing full signs of support.

Although China's shift from a one Korea policy to a two Korea policy has allowed it to engage with South Korea in terms of trade and investment opportunities, it has not caused any severe strains on the solidarity of the DPRK-PRC relationship. Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, authors of *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations*, argue that the days of China guarding its economic relations with North Korea and marginalizing South Korea as a "colony" of the U.S. are gone and that the Chinese have expanded economic ties with Seoul.⁸⁶ One might assume that this might alter Chinese intentions and future prospects for relations with the two Koreas. However, there has not yet been any indication of China moving away from its relationship with

⁸⁴ "China, DPRK Mark 60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties," *Xinhuanet*, 28 Sept. 2010. 14 Nov. 2010 <http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-09/28/content_12123116.htm>.

⁸⁵ "China Marks Anniversary of Participation in Korean War," *China Daily*, 26 Oct. 2010, 17 Nov. 2010 <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010-10/26/content_11456703.htm>.

⁸⁶ Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 169.

the north. China still seems willing and unwavering in its position to contribute to the economic survival of the North Korean regime. To the Chinese, North Korea will continue to remain as a strategically useful buffer zone and for this reason, a military alliance will be crucial to its national security interests. Furthermore, Beijing has wanted to avoid another big military conflict and has “a particular interest in the creation and maintenance of a peaceful and stable situation in the Korean Peninsula.”⁸⁷ Considering this, it will certainly not take sides with the U.S. or South Korea in order to maintain the balance of power and not upset the north, whose childlike behavior might potentially cause instability and a flood of North Korean refugees across Chinese borders.

The Future of U.S.-ROK Relations

Through a hedging strategy, South Korea's success has been evidently important in maintaining a good balance between its economic interests in China and security provisions from the United States. For most of the alliance's existence, preserving the security structures by following U.S. policy closely⁸⁸ has been a top priority for the ROK government. However, succumbing to U.S. policy has created problems for South Korea regarding its autonomy and various risks for policy makers.⁸⁹ This however, does not imply that ROK will cease to tailor its security policy to U.S. strategy. ROK seeks to minimize its dependence on the U.S. military yet will rely on it for military deterrence against North Korea and any potential aggressors in the region. South Koreans will with no doubt look to improve its national defense capabilities in the near and long-term future. Although the logistical details of defense and military capability has not been the scope of this capstone, “a thorough analysis of current correlation of forces,

⁸⁷ Quansheng Zhao, “Beijing Eyes Seoul: Bilateral Relations and Regional Roles,” *World Outlook (Taipei)* 1.1 (1992): 13-19, 4.

⁸⁸ George Ehrhardt, “The Evolution of US-ROK Security Consultation,” *Pacific Affairs* 77.4 (2004-2005): 665-82, *JSTOR*, 29 Oct. 2010 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/40023537>>, 670.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

opposing firepower ratios, or terrain-dominated strategy”⁹⁰ would implicate that the South Korean military cannot stand on its own no matter how advanced it has become in recent decades. South Korea will continue to rely on the U.S. for technological, weaponry, and defense support.

A Peaceful U.S.-China Relationship

The future of U.S.-ROK relations will depend highly on the direction of the U.S.-China relationship. The U.S. and China are both the “poles” in East Asia and maintain a balance of power that is conducive to the stability and peace throughout the region. In July 2009 at the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington, D.C., President Barack Obama stated in his opening remarks, “the relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as any bilateral relationship in the world. That really must underpin our partnership. That is the responsibility that together we bear.”⁹¹ The U.S.-China relationship is indeed the most significant relationship and will shape the dynamics of order and stability in East Asia. The longevity of the U.S.-ROK alliance is absolutely critical to the security of South Korea, but this will only endure if a U.S.-China balance of power is maintained and if the bilateral U.S.-China relationship remains flexible to the changing conditions in the region. To further echo this, in a situation “where China and the U.S. manage their relations well, Seoul will have more freedom to retain warm relations with both Washington and Beijing, and to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance.”⁹² Additionally, the stability of a U.S.-ROK alliance will allow ROK to serve as a regional balancer, thereby adding to a peace that already exists in East Asia. From the

⁹⁰ Bruce E. Bechtol, “Preparing for Future Threats and Regional Challenges: The ROK-U.S. Military Alliance in 2008-09,” Rpt. in *Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies*, Vol. 19, Washington: KEI, 2009, 75-99.

⁹¹ Kevin Hechtkopf, “Text: Obama's Speech on U.S.-China Relations,” *CBS News*, 27 July 2009, 19 Nov. 2010 <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-5190916-503544.html>.

⁹² David C. Kang, “Forging an Enduring Foundation for U.S.-ROK Relations,” *The Maureen and Mike Mansfield Foundation*, 12 Oct. 2010 <http://www.mansfieldfdn.org/programs/program_pdfs/rok_us_kang.pdf>, 4.

South Korean perspective, it is a known fact that it can do very little to influence the U.S.-China relationship. South Korea will need to make strategic choices as a result.

In the years ahead, China's rise will have differing implications on the structure of the Asia-Pacific and on the foreign policy agendas of surrounding powers. There is a level of uncertainty in what the rise of China would influence in terms of the power structure in Asia and the economic challenges the world's largest market would face. But what remains most predictable is China's ability to conduct foreign affairs on the Korean peninsula in the decades to come. Without even a hint of hesitancy, China will play the central role in establishing rapprochement between North and South Korea and ultimately resolving the Korean conflict. Because a peaceful settlement of the Korean problem is in the interests of both South Korea and the U.S., the U.S.-ROK relationship will nevertheless to a certain extent be shaped by Chinese actions. The future of U.S.-ROK relations reveals a promising prospect: the alliance will be mutually beneficial and absolutely necessary when accounting for the lessons from history. Korea has historically been a strategic stronghold for military conflict among major powers (bingjia bizheng)⁹³ and for this reason a united alliance with the U.S. will be the wisest strategic choice. The U.S. alliance system and military presence are two factors that have kept East Asia peaceful and stable. Even today, Americans and South Koreans continue to view North Korea in military terms, especially its nuclear weapons and missile programs.⁹⁴ To that end, both countries will strengthen efforts to improve bilateral defense capabilities and missile programs. Security is the foremost priority for South Korea and to safeguard this, it will undeniably turn to its closest ally for the appropriate protection. In this regard it is more than a safe bet that the U.S.-ROK

⁹³ Quansheng Zhao, "China's New Approach to Conflict Management: The Cases of North Korea and Taiwan," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, Silk Road Studies Program*, May 2006, 16 Nov. 2010 <http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/2006/Zhao_final_complete_2006.pdf>, 12.

⁹⁴ David Kang, "China and the Cheonan Incident," 38 *North*, US-Korea Institute at SAIS, 2 June 2010, 25 Nov. 2010 <<http://38north.org/2010/06/china-and-the-cheonan-incident/>>.

alliance will be favorably sustained even if disagreements often cloud the sparks in the relationship.

A Changing U.S.-ROK Security Relationship?

Setting Chinese and American foreign relations vis-à-vis South Korea, it is remarkable how far the U.S. and ROK have come in sustaining an alliance in a short period of time. Linked by geographical conditions, a Confucian culture, and a tributary system in which Korea paid tribute to the Chinese monarch in order to maintain diplomatic relations, China and South Korea have shared a long history.

In the twenty-first century, the complexities of the DPRK-PRC and U.S.-ROK alliances have been evident in the evolution of the relationships since the breakdown of the Cold War structures and changing demands of the Chinese. China's two-Korea policy has focused on retaining close relations with North Korea while growing economically closer to South Korea. Against this setting, Chae-Jin Lee has argued that the North would seek to take advantage of relations with the U.S. as a counterweight to China's growing closeness with South Korea.⁹⁵ If a solution to the Korean problem concerning denuclearization hinged on America's ability to wage successful diplomacy with Pyongyang, a bilateral framework that left out Seoul would cause a strain in the U.S.-ROK relationship. For the time being, this does not seem likely and the U.S. Department of State has reassured the international community that it will not handle issues on the Korean peninsula without the inclusion of South Korea. Concerning the Sino-ROK relationship, it will never be able to substitute the U.S.-ROK alliance; nor will it take precedence over an alliance that has been built in the name of security, deterrence, and defense. But South

⁹⁵ Chae-Jin Lee and Doo-Bok Park, *China and Korea: Dynamic Relations* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution, 1996) 175.

Korea should realize by now that a downplayed attitude toward the Sino-ROK relationship will only hinder its progress toward reunification and solution of the Korean peninsula.

The security relationship between the U.S. and South Korea is bound to change, as ROK becomes less dependent and voices for a larger say in the use of military bases in its home country. For the last several decades, the U.S. has served as a supporting role in U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). There are already initiatives from the South Korean government to push for a more equal security relationship between the two countries. The days are over when South Koreans had no choice but to comply with all procedural and legalistic matters concerning their security arrangements with the U.S. South Korea is a more developed country today and will play an active role in pursuing a level of parity with the U.S. that is more satisfactory to its policies, interests, and future vision.

Conclusion

This capstone has touched upon a diverse range of issues concerning China's rise and the U.S.-ROK alliance. It opened up with a literature review on the constructivist and realist approach to the U.S.-ROK alliance, eventually concluding that the realist case was more convincing in light of the recent conditions for security and stability in Northeast Asia. To put theory into a historical context, the origins of the U.S.-ROK alliance were considered and the evolution of Chinese foreign policy from "revolution" to "modernization" was examined to understand its impact on China's relations with South Korea, which led us to explore the trade, educational, and cultural ties that have developed since normalization of relations in 1992. Stepping away from the perspective of the leaders in government, an analysis of South Korean public sentiment toward the U.S. and China was used to effectively gauge whether a stronger U.S.-ROK alliance was preferable to an alignment with a rising China. Next, the triangular

China-ROK-U.S. relationship shed light on policy convergences and divergences and the implications of these on the bilateral relationships within this triangle. Obstacles to a Sino-centric order including a U.S.-Japan alliance and historical disputes over Goguryeo showed that China's rise would be checked by external factors. The following section on South Korea's hedging strategy provided evidence that it was practicing a balancing act in order to retain economic relations with China while simultaneously leaning on the U.S. for security provisions. The next sections on moments of alliance reinforcement, joint initiatives following the Cheonan incident, and DPRK-China relations, indicated that a security framework was so institutionalized in the U.S.-ROK alliance that the relationship is bound to endure. Yet, the last two sections on the future of U.S.-ROK relations and a changing U.S.-ROK security relationship implied the uncertainty of the circumstances in Northeast Asia and the changes the relationship would need to experience in order to cope with the altering global economic system, North Korea's continuous military provocations, and a rising China.

Final Thoughts

As I have spent the last several weeks finalizing this capstone project, I have been appalled at the capriciousness of North Korea's behavior and the immediate possibility of a North Korean invasion. The attack in Yeonpyeong Island a little over a week ago was another reminder to South Korean citizens and the international community that its security relationship with the U.S. is still the most solidified basis in terms of dealing with North Korea. The poor response to the North Korean artillery shelling revealed the vulnerability of South Korea's security and that its military has a long way to go in ensuring the safety of its people. Taking this into consideration, a U.S. military presence is not only necessary, but will also be a prerequisite for success if a bigger strife were to play out. Whether the latest attack was a direct result of Kim Jong Eun's leadership or another competitor struggling to control the reins of power, it has only made the U.S.-ROK alliance stronger. The recent high-level visits by U.S. top officials and ongoing joint military drills have certainly reinvigorated the security relationship. Furthermore, the rejection of returning to the Six Party Talks by the U.S., Japan, and South Korea in the context of the North Korean attack has also consolidated the decision-making process of how to deal with the situation. As the clock ticks day by day, the entire world will await the behavior and actions that the "spoiled child" will take in the north, while counterparts just 35 miles south of the demilitarized zone will continue to live in high levels of anxiety and fear. We can only hope and pray that our alliance will serve more than a deterrent and as a lasting instrument for peace, stability, and order on the Korean peninsula.

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