

ROK-U.S. Maritime Cooperation: A Growing Dimension of the Alliance

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Abstract

In June 2009, Presidents Lee Myung-bak and Barack Obama concluded a “Joint Vision for the Alliance” that called for the ROK-U.S. relationship to be a “comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional, and global scope.” While the focus of the alliance remains deterring an attack from North Korea, increasingly Seoul and Washington are confronting a broader array of common challenges such as piracy, illegal fishing, human trafficking, and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction that have a maritime dimension. Moreover, South Korea has undertaken a determined effort to expand and modernize its naval capabilities to build a blue water naval fleet. As a result, ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation has been growing and holds out an important opportunity for expanding and broadening the alliance.

Keywords: maritime cooperation, U.S. Navy, ROK Navy, proliferation security initiative, naval exercises, blue water navy, U.S.-ROK Alliance

Introduction¹

For over 50 years, South Korea (Republic of Korea – ROK) and the United States have maintained a security alliance to deter, and, if necessary, defeat an attack from North Korea.¹ Over the years, countless studies have examined the political, military, and economic dimensions of the alliance. More recently, scholars and analysts have considered the continued viability of the alliance, particularly in the wake of several years of anti-American sentiment from some quarters in South Korea and friction within the alliance over differing assessments of the security environment.² Most notable have been differing judgments over the proper course of action to take regarding North Korea and efforts to induce Pyongyang to relinquish its nuclear weapons ambitions.

While much attention has focused on the larger strategic role or adjustments to ground force components of the alliance, less attention has been given to changes occurring between ROK and U.S. naval forces and the potential for greater maritime cooperation. The alliance retains its primary mission of protecting South Korea from an attack by the North, and South Korea's chief security challenge is coping with the DPRK threat. Yet, the security environment has been changing and increasingly, the ROK-US alliance is taking a broader view of its role. In February 2009, Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee noted regarding ROK-U.S. ties: "at the outset of the 21st Century, it's time for our alliance to enter its next phase. . . . Such an alliance will be a comprehensive one that will go beyond simply protecting the Korean Peninsula to contribute to peace in Northeast Asia and the world."³ Regarding ROK security, Defense Minister Lee later asserted: "The establishment of a defense posture for comprehensive security refers to preparing for existing and potential threats from North Korea as well as transnational/non-military threats and building an omnidirectional defense posture that can contribute to peace in East Asia and beyond. In other words, it means gearing up for any and every kind of threat and standing ready to immediately respond to any circumstance regardless of time and place."⁴

Former Deputy Minister at the ROK Ministry of National Defense, Jeon Jei Guk, maintained: "In the face of rampant transnational threats, however, Korea cannot guarantee national security and prosperity without looking beyond the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia.

¹ The views expressed in this report are the authors' alone and do not represent the official position of the Department of the Navy, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.

Looking far ahead and wider, Korea thus has to transform its alliance with the U.S. into a strategic alliance through which the two partners address common interests at a global level encompassing Asia, Middle East, Europe, and Africa.”⁵ Thus, many South Korean officials and defense planners are looking at ROK security and the ROK-U.S. alliance in much broader terms.

U.S. officials are also viewing the alliance within a more global context. In May 2009 at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates noted that “the United States will continue to maintain its firm commitment to security on the peninsula, even as we seek to broaden the alliance to address other security challenges in the region and beyond.”⁶ In testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, former U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) Commander, Admiral Timothy Keating, maintained that North Korea remained the focus of the alliance but also “the U.S.-ROK alliance continues to transform to better meet security challenges, both on and off the peninsula” and “we continue to seek opportunities to build upon our partnership with the ROK to respond to regional security challenges such as counterproliferation and maritime security.”⁷

The ROK-US alliance has been undergoing significant changes in the past ten years and will continue to evolve. Indeed, throughout its history, the alliance has adjusted its structure on several occasions, often due to changes in the security environment or due to shifts in the political climate in one or both of the alliance partners. Most of these changes have involved aspects of U.S. ground force and the command structure. In most instances, these changes have raised concerns for the continued security of South Korea or the credibility of the U.S. commitment to South Korea’s defense. An important part of the ongoing evolution of the alliance is the growing level of ROK-US maritime cooperation and the expanded role of the alliance in addressing a broader range of security challenges. The power configuration of the alliance has changed and so has the security environment, creating forces for adjusting in the ROK-US relationship.

This article will explore these issues and argue that ROK-US maritime cooperation is an important dimension of an alliance that is expanding its scope and contributing to the long-term viability of the relationship. The remainder of the article will review South Korean goals for acquiring improved naval forces, the specific improvements in ROK naval capability, U.S. naval forces in the region, existing ROK-

U.S. cooperation and the potential for expanding these activities, and, finally, the implications of increased ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation for regional security.

“To the Sea, To the World” and Defense Reform 2020

On March 20, 2001, in a speech to the graduating class at the Korean Naval Academy, President Kim Dae-jung announced that South Korea would pursue a “strategic mobile fleet that protects state interests in the five big oceans and plays a role of keeping peace in the world.”⁸ As a result, South Korea began producing its own destroyers and submarines while organizing a strategic task force from its three fleets. According to President Kim, “The government will do all it can to help the navy grow into a true blue-water force.”⁹

In 2005, the Ministry of National Defense announced Defense Reform 2020. According to one assessment, this measure was designed to “transform Korea’s defense from a manpower-intensive military force to a capability-oriented military force, from a short-term-based force to a long-term-based force, a military-dominated defense ministry to a civilian-dominated defense ministry, a service-oriented force structure to the Joint Chiefs of Staff-centered force structure.”¹⁰ The effort is South Korea’s extensive overhaul of its defense establishment and intended “not only to resolve old problems in the defense but also to keep up with the global trends toward military transformation.”¹¹ Under Defense Reform 2020, a 15-year military modernization program, the ROK military planned to reduce its active duty force levels from 670,000 to 500,000 and the number of reservists from 3 million to 1.5 million. The Army would be reduced from 550,000 to 360,000 but the Air Force and Navy at 64,000 and 67,000 respectively would each be increased to 70,000.¹² Defense Reform 2020 was a broad Ministry of Defense directive, but it continued the move toward building a blue water navy and included the addition of a Maneuver Combat Group.

On March 25, 2008, again before a graduating class at the Korean Naval Academy, Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee read a statement from President Lee Myung-bak that stressed the importance of maritime power for South Korea’s interests and reaffirmed the intention to develop the country’s Navy:

The 21st century is the era of the ocean. We have to build a state-of-the-art force that can protect our maritime sovereignty. With a vision for an advanced deep-sea Navy, our Navy should

become a force that can ensure the security of maritime transportation lines, and contribute to peace in the world. Sea is the turf for our survival and national prosperity. Only if we efficiently defend and use the sea can peace and economic growth be secured.¹³

Under the banner, “To the Sea, To the World,” South Korea remains committed to developing a world class, blue water navy.

There are several reasons for South Korea’s determination to develop a modern, strategic naval force. First, South Korea’s primary security concern continues to be North Korea. Though most attention is focused on the ground component of this threat, the First and Second Yeongpyeong battles in 1999 and 2002 respectively, the November 2009 clash, and continuing tension along the Northern Limit Line demonstrate that the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) must remain vigilant for naval provocations from Pyongyang.¹⁴ In particular, there is significant concern for North Korea’s submarine force, either in its ability to disrupt ROK commercial shipping and the movement of ROKN warships, or its ability to deliver DPRK special operations forces along coasts in the south. Thus, continuing to improve ROKN capabilities for coastal defense remains an important priority for naval modernization.

Second, as noted earlier in President Lee’s 2008 remarks, South Korea’s dependence on exports and the need to protect its sea-born commerce are additional motivations for developing an expanded maritime capability. South Korean prosperity is heavily dependent on exports making the free-flow of commerce essential to the well-being of its people. Increased blue-water naval forces allow South Korea to provide its own maritime security while also contributing to larger international efforts to protect the maritime commons. The synergy created by the maritime cooperation of South Korea and others helps to protect global economic activity.

Third, the global security environment presents a broader array of challenges and, increasingly, more of these are maritime in nature. Piracy, limiting the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), illegal fishing, and ballistic missile defense, among others require increased maritime capabilities and cooperation. Improving ROKN capabilities is viewed as a path to address these challenges.

Finally, South Korea’s blue water capability is also being undertaken with an eye toward the uncertain future of the region. The direction of China’s rise and its future intentions are unclear. While regional conflict

is far from certain, the watch word throughout the region is “hedging” as states implement cautious strategies that attempt to account for several possible future outcomes and configurations of the security architecture in Asia. Moreover, it is unclear how Japan may respond to these uncertainties, creating the possibility of a resurgent Japan and the potential for Sino-Japanese conflict in the future.¹⁵ Given the geography of the area, regional competition would likely have a heavy maritime component so that a significant and competent ROKN would be important to protect South Korea’s, or perhaps in the future, a unified Korea’s, regional interests. Furthermore, South Korea also has specific concerns such as maintaining its control of Dokdo.

As a result of these issues, South Korea has embarked on a phenomenal building program to increase the size and capability of its fleet. Seoul is well positioned to undertake this project as it dominates the world shipbuilding industry. Early projects have often involved cooperation with outside entities, including German and U.S. companies and the U.S. Navy. However, most of the construction has occurred in South Korean shipyards such as Hyundai Heavy Industries, Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Industries, and Hanjin Heavy Industries. The rise of South Korean naval power has been a surprise in its speed and scope, as few expected Seoul to achieve what it has done in building its fleet.

In June 2009, the ROK Ministry of National Defense released a revised Defense 2020 plan that retained similar goals from the earlier version but “with more realistic and realizable plans,” including scaled-back budget projections. The initial version of Defense Reform 2020 received heavy criticism that it cut too deeply into personnel and was based on highly optimistic economic forecasts that projected unsustainable defense spending increases. All of this became particularly difficult with the global economic downturn that began in 2008. As a result, defense budget projections were adjusted “based upon realistic and reasonable principles” and some of the procurement programs and other elements were adjusted with longer time lines.¹⁶

ROK Maritime Capabilities

The Republic of Korea Navy is composed of 170 ships and submarines. In the past, these forces have been a brown water force, focused largely on patrol of its coastal seas. While the ROKN maintains this capability, it has also embarked on a major naval modernization and

expansion program for a blue water navy capable of conducting operations far beyond its coast. In 2001, President Kim Dae-jung announced the creation of a blue water navy along with significant budget increases to build this capability by 2020. Defense spending increased by 8.6 percent in 2004, followed by increases of 10 percent and 9.8 percent respectfully for 2005 and 2006.¹⁷ However, as noted earlier, budget increases have been reduced as a result of the global economic crisis and the ROK's struggling economy.

The ROKN has approximately 67,000 personnel, including a contingent of 25,000 Marines. Naval forces are divided into three fleets: First (East), Second (West), and Third (South) with 46 principal combat vessels (destroyers, frigates, and corvettes), 12 submarines, 78 patrol and coastal combat ships, 10 mine warfare ships, and 24 support vessels.¹⁸ Fleet headquarters and 3rd Fleet headquarters are located in Chinhae, 1st Fleet and 2nd Fleet headquarters are located in Donghae and Pyeongtaek respectively. South Korea intends to build a new naval base on Jeju Island at a cost of \$850 million for the new strategic fleet.¹⁹

South Korea began its transition to a blue water navy with a three-phase shipbuilding program of modern destroyers.²⁰ The first phase produced the *Kwanggaeto the Great*-class (DDH – Destroyer Helicopter) or KDX-I light destroyer.²¹ These ships are 3,800 ton multipurpose vessels outfitted with advanced weaponry and sensors. The KDX-I destroyers are equipped to work in a complex environment, either by themselves or as part of a larger battle group. The ship is configured to conduct strike operations, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), screening and convoy duty, and support for amphibious operations. In addition, the ship has a large hanger and helicopter deck capable of accommodating two helicopters. The ship was built by Daewoo Heavy Industries in South Korea, but many of the advanced combat systems were acquired from the U.S. Navy through Foreign Military Sales (FMS) arrangements. Other components were purchased from European sources. The first KDX-I, the *Kwanggaeto the Great* (DDH-971) was commissioned in 1998 followed by two more, *Ulchimundok* (DDH-972) and *Yangmanchun* (DDH-973), commissioned in 1999 and 2000 respectively. South Korea had plans to build up to ten *Kwanggaeto the Great*-class ships, but the program was cancelled when shipbuilding efforts shifted to the next phase of building the KDX-II destroyer.

The first KDX-II, the *Chungmugong Yi Sunshin* (DDH-975), was commissioned in 2003 and is named for legendary naval hero Admiral

Yi Sunshin, who on two occasions defeated a vastly larger Japanese armada in 1592 and again in 1598. Admiral Yi is also credited with building the turtle ship, the first ironclad warship in naval history. The 4,300 ton stealth destroyer is larger than the earlier KDX-I and built with a stealth hull design to deflect radar and other detection methods.²² The ship also has advanced combat systems, including top-line air defense and ASW capabilities, with many of these systems purchased from the U.S. Navy, which further enhances interoperability with U.S. naval forces and the possibility of future maritime cooperation. The KDX-II can also function as the main battle ship in a combat task force. In addition to the first KDX-II, two more ships have been built in this class, *Munmu the Great* (DDH-976), commissioned in 2004, and the *Daejoyoung* (DDH-977), commissioned in 2005. The first and third ships in this class were constructed by Daewoo while the second was built by Hyundai Heavy Industries. The ROKN intends on building three more KDX-II ships, and there have been discussions to expand this number to a total of nine additional ships. However, these plans are on hold, due to South Korea's economy and the global financial crisis.

The most technologically-advanced ship in the ROKN is the Aegis-class destroyer, *King Sejong the Great* (DDG-991) that was built by Hyundai and commissioned in December 2008. The vessel is a 7,600 ton multipurpose KDX-III destroyer that is outfitted with the latest technology, including SPY-1D radar that can track close to 900 targets and engage 17 of them simultaneously. *King Sejong the Great* also has advanced torpedo and missile launching systems, along with an anti-airplane and anti-missile defense system more advanced than the Phalanx Close-In Weapons System. Similar to the KDX I and II, the KDX III has a significant amount of its technology and combat systems purchased from the U.S. Navy, further increasing interoperability with U.S. forces. According to Park Chang-kwon, from the Korea Institute for Defense Analyses, "the Aegis ship will make the Korean Navy outright dominant over the North Korean Navy and enable it to cope effectively with regional disputes at the same time. Securing a fleet of Aegis ships will enable the nation to protect our people and maritime interests on our own. Most of all, the KDX-III's advanced anti-ballistic missile system will safeguard South Korea from the North's missile threat."²³

South Korea is one of five countries along with the United States, Japan, Spain, and Norway that have deployed an Aegis-class ship. South Korea intends to construct up to four more KDX-III vessels by 2012, and

the government has approved funding to build three more of these ships. In November, South Korea launched the second *King Sejong the Great*-class destroyer, the *Yulgok Yi I*, built by Daewoo Heavy Industries. This vessel is expected to be commissioned sometime in 2011. As a result of Hyundai's cooperation in the production of the *King Sejong the Great*, with Lockheed-Martin, the manufacturer of the Aegis combat system, the two companies have entered into a joint venture to produce a mid-sized Aegis guided missile ship for sale to third countries, possibly India or others in South or Southeast Asia. The mid-size vessel may be more appropriate for smaller countries rather than a full-size Aegis-class ship and will be equipped with the SPY-1F radar system, a version that is smaller than the SPY-1D on the *King Sejong the Great*. This is the first time Lockheed-Martin has worked with a foreign corporation to produce a vessel for sale to a third party.²⁴

In July 2007, South Korea commissioned its first amphibious assault ship, the ROKS *Dokdo* (LPH-6111) that significantly enhanced its naval capability and ability to project power in the region.²⁵ The 13,000 ton vessel has a helicopter flight deck and a flooding well deck to launch landing craft and air cushion hover craft. The *Dokdo* can accommodate every type of helicopter in the ROK military, and its hanger bay can accommodate ten helicopters. However, South Korea suffers from a shortage of helicopters, which limits the *Dokdo's* capability. The ships in this class were also designed to operate as task force flag ships with state of the art command and control capabilities for coordinating combat or humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations. Depending on the space configuration, the ship can carry up to 700 troops, seven helicopters, seven armored vehicles, six tanks, and two small landing boats. The ship also carries the Goal Keeper weapons system for tracking and destroying incoming anti-ship missiles and the Rolling Airframe guided missile system.²⁶ Construction of the *Dokdo* by Hanjin Heavy Industries in Busan began in 2003. The ship was South Korea's largest military shipbuilding project and, to date, the largest amphibious vessel built in Asia. The ship made its first trip abroad to participate in a defense exhibition in Malaysia in 2007. According to the ROKN, with its participation, "the *Dokdo Ham* is expected to help promote the country's arms exports and enhance the Navy's global status through active military diplomacy including acquisition of up-to-date information on foreign warships and equipment."²⁷

There are plans to build three more Dokdo-class ships, with the second, the ROKS *Marado*, due for completion in 2010. The third LPD, set for completion in 2013, the ROKS *Baeknyendo*, is designed to be larger than the two earlier versions, perhaps 20,000 tons, and capable of handling Vertical, Short Take-Off and Landing (VSTOL) aircraft, making this a small aircraft carrier. The fourth ship is yet to be named but is planned for completion in 2016. South Korea may also have ambitions of selling this class of vessel to other countries such as Malaysia and Turkey. The ROKN showcased the *Dokdo* in the October 2008 Fleet Review in Busan to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea. The *Dokdo* has been a significant addition to South Korea's naval capability and allows the ROKN to play a much larger role in regional affairs.

In addition to these capital ships, South Korea has 75, 170-ton fast attack patrol boats (PKM) that form the core of South Korea's coastal defense navy. In December 2008, the ROKN commissioned the first of a new patrol craft, the PKG (Patrol Killer, Guided Missile) *Gumdoksuri*-class high-speed patrol boat, specifically designed for coastal duties along the Northern Limit Line where there has been a history of North Korean incursions. The ship, *Yoon Young-ha*, is named after the Navy lieutenant commander who was killed in the 2002 naval clash with North Korea. These ships are 440-ton, high speed, guided missile boats with integrated combat systems that are similar to the Aegis system. This system allows the PKG ships simultaneously to detect and track 100 air and surface targets while its automated weapons system can engage multiple targets at the same time.²⁸ In September 2009, the ROKN launched two more PKGs, the *Han Sang Guk* and *Jo Cheon Hyeong*, named after two other sailors killed in the 2002 West Sea battle.²⁹ ROK officials have indicated that they intend to have 20 PKGs by 2015.

South Korea also has plans to build a new line of frigates (FFX class) to replace its Ulsan-class frigates and Pohang and Dong Hae-class corvettes. These older versions have insufficient air-defense systems and lack space to load helicopters. The government plans on building 12 to 30 of these 3,200 ton multirole, modular frigates for coastal patrol, anti-submarine warfare, and convoy transport. The initial design for these ships will likely come from an international source but will be built in Hyundai shipyards, with the first batch of six frigates expected for delivery by 2015.³⁰

By 2020, ROK planners intend to have two, possibly three, rapid response fleets capable of deployments beyond Korean coastal waters that include an LPH amphibious assault ship, one KDX-III and two or three KDX-II destroyers, several frigates and one or two submarines.³¹ However, due to the global economic crisis and continued budget problems, completion of these plans will be delayed.

TABLE 1. Republic of Korea Naval Forces

Vessel	Number in Service	Planned for Construction
KDX-I (DDH) <i>Kwanggaeto the Great</i> <i>Ulchimundok</i> <i>Yangmanchun</i>	3	Program ended in favor of the KDX-II
KDX-II (DDH) <i>Chungmugong Yi SunShin</i> <i>Munmu the Great</i> <i>Dae Joyeong</i>	3	3-9
KDX-III (DDG) <i>King Sejong the Great</i> <i>Yulgok Yi I</i>	2	4
Dokdo-class (LPH) <i>Dokdo</i>	1	3
Type 209 Submarines <i>Chang Bogo class</i>	9	
Type 214 Submarines <i>Son Won-il</i> <i>Jeong Ji</i> <i>An Jung-geun</i>	3	3-6
KSX-III		9 Program awaits formal approval
Fast Attack Patrol boats (PKM)	75	
Patrol Killer, Guided Missile (PKG) <i>Yoon Young-ha</i> <i>Han Sang Guk</i> <i>Jo Cheon Hyeong</i>	3	17
New Frigate Program (FFX)		12-30
Frigates (FFG) Ulsan-class	9	
Corvettes (PCC) Pohang-class	24	

Corvettes (PCC) Dong Hae-class	4	
Mine Warfare	10	
Logistics and Support	24	
Total Ships	170	

Source: *Military Balance, 2009*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, and Global Security.org.

South Korea's chief weakness in naval forces is its submarine fleet, and Seoul has already begun a determined effort to address this issue. In the late 1980s, South Korea began a project with the West German company Howaldtswerke-Deutsche Werft (HDW). The project resulted in the construction of nine Type 209 submarines that comprise the ROKN's *Chang Bogo* class. The first of the submarines was built in Germany and commissioned in 1993. The remaining eight were constructed in South Korea by Daewoo Heavy Industries, and the last of these was commissioned in 2001. It was becoming increasingly clear to ROK defense planners that North Korean submarines were a threat to South Korea's shipping lanes and its coastal waters, a threat that was emphasized by the 1996 and 1998 submarine incursions along the South Korean coast. While the *Chang Bogo* submarines are not as advanced as the fleets of others, ROKN operators showed strong skills in operating the boats. In the 1998 Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise, a ROKN submarine sank 13 ships in one simulation, surprising many of the participants. In a 2004 exercise, a *Chang Bogo* submarine sank the U.S. aircraft carrier, *John C. Stennis*, along with an Aegis-class ship that was providing protection.³²

Rather than building more of the Type 209 submarines, South Korea launched a plan to acquire the more modern Type 214 submarine, the most advanced submarine on the market and also produced by its German partner, HDW. The Type 214 has several more advanced systems, particularly the air-independent propulsion (AIP) system. *Chang Bogo* submarines are not configured with AIP and are required to surface at least once every three days to replenish their oxygen supply through the use of a snorkel. This operation requires a submarine to come close to the surface which makes them easier to detect. With the AIP system, submarines can remain submerged for up to two weeks, which increasing their stealth and capabilities.³³ South Korea has three submarines in this KSS-2 class —*Son Won-il* (SS-072), *Jeong Ji* (SS-073), and *An Jung-geun* (SS-075)— and in September 2009, ordered six

additional submarines as part of Batch 2, which it hopes will be completed by 2018. The first three boats were assembled by Hyundai Heavy Industries, and the first submarine in the second batch will be assembled by Daewoo with the remaining contracts yet to be decided. South Korea also has plans for a KSX-III program of indigenously produced three-ton submarines. The ROKN had hoped to complete the construction of these boats by 2018, but the Defense Ministry announced in May 2009 that, due to budget constraints, the submarines would not be completed until 2020.³⁴

US Maritime Strategy and Capabilities in the Asia-Pacific

ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation is part of a broader security relationship that began over 50 years ago and is currently undergoing some significant changes, particularly in its ground force and command structures. Recent changes include three key initiatives.³⁵ First, in 2003 the United States, announced that it was reducing the number of troops in South Korea to 25,000, a reduction that was later frozen at 28,500 and remains the current level of U.S. forces on the peninsula. To compensate for these withdrawals, Washington committed \$11 billion on force upgrades for existing U.S. forces. Second, the United States will return close to 50 military installations to South Korea, including the headquarters of US Forces Korea (USFK) at Yongsan that occupies valuable real estate in Seoul. These forces will be relocated at two hub locations south of the capital city with one at Camp Humphreys near Pyeongtaek and the other at Osan Air Base. Finally, in April 2012, the United States will transfer wartime operational control (OPCON) of ROK forces to South Korean commanders. South Korea had given OPCON authority to the United States during the Korean War. In 1994, USFK returned peace time OPCON, but OPCON during wartime remained with Washington. The transfer will also entail the dissolution of the Combined Forces Command, replacing it with some type of separate, parallel command structure. For U.S. forces, this command structure will be called Korea Command or KORCOM.

In addition to these structural and force changes, the alliance has tried to develop a common vision for the direction of the alliance. In June 2009, President Barack Obama and President Lee Myung-bak concluded a “Joint Vision for the Alliance” that outlined a common set of goals and concerns for the relationship. In the past the alliance focused almost exclusively on protecting South Korea from an invasion

from the North. This remains an important objective but the Joint Vision points to how the alliance is beginning to expand its purpose and scope. Thus, the statement notes that since its inception “our security Alliance has strengthened and our partnership has widened to encompass political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. Together, on this solid foundation, we will build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope, based on common values and mutual trust”³⁶ The document continues noting: “Our governments and our citizens will work closely to address the global challenges of terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, piracy, organized crime and narcotics, climate change, poverty, infringement on human rights, energy security, and epidemic disease.”³⁷ While the details will require further work and discussion, the joint vision points to an expanded view of the alliance, beyond what was conceived in previous decades and beyond concerns that are solely focused on security on the peninsula, though that continues to remain central to the alliance.

Concerning maritime issues, in October 2007, the United States Navy released a new maritime strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* that was a collaborative effort with the U.S. Marine Corps and the Coast Guard.³⁸ The strategy, the first U.S. maritime strategy since the end of the Cold War, stressed the importance of cooperation: “Expanded cooperative relationships with other nations will contribute to the security and stability of the maritime domain for the benefit of all. Although our forces can surge when necessary to respond to crises, trust and cooperation cannot be surged. They must be built over time so that the strategic interests of the participants are continuously considered while mutual understanding and respect are promoted.”³⁹ Prior to the development of the Maritime Strategy, then Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Admiral Michael Mullen called on the development of a “1,000 ship navy” – a euphemism for broader, multilateral naval cooperation with anyone willing to participate in providing global maritime security and protection of the maritime commons. The concept was later renamed the Global Maritime Partnership but the intent was the same. In the Maritime Strategy,

the Sea Services must become adept at forging international partnerships in coordination with other U.S. services and government departments [and] seeks a cooperative approach to maritime security, promoting the rule of law by countering piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, drug trafficking, and

other illicit activities. Maritime forces will work with others to ensure an adequate level of security and awareness in the maritime domain. In doing so, transnational threats—terrorists and extremists; proliferators of weapons of mass destruction; pirates; traffickers in persons, drugs, and conventional weapons; and other criminals—will be constrained.⁴⁰

In October 2009, at the International Seapower Symposium hosted by U.S. CNO Admiral Gary Roughead and attended by the naval leadership of over 100 countries, the Admiral maintained that navies must learn to work together before disasters or crises occur. “These efforts confirm that there need be no contradiction between defending our country’s sovereign rights and sailing together, against the common threats to our welfare,” according to Admiral Roughead. As a result:

Our goal should now be to bridge the regional security awareness initiatives in support of yet broader awareness and partnerships. . . . Ultimately, the time we spend learning and improving interoperability is time well spent when it comes to issues of maritime security. There is no better example today of maritime partnerships than the work so many of us are doing against piracy, the Navy’s oldest foe, in the Gulf of Aden. . . . Common use of the high seas has been a driver of international cooperation and institution-building for centuries. Today, in the early years of the 21st century, I am convinced that our new partnerships – informal as well as formal, local as well as global – are writing a new chapter in the development of international society.⁴¹

The call for partnerships and greater maritime cooperation was a global call for action, but, certainly, South Korea was one of the many potential partners for the initiative. Indeed, maritime cooperation between Seoul and Washington was already extensive as will be addressed later in this article.

The Asia-Pacific region is an area dominated by water and thus, is an important concern for the U.S. Navy. Naval activities in the region are directed by the U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) which reports to U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM). The U.S. Pacific Fleet includes five aircraft carrier strike groups, and Marines based in the region represent about two-thirds of U.S. Marine Corps combat strength. The Navy-Marine contingent includes 135,000 personnel, 180 ships, and 1,400

aircraft.⁴² Within PACFLT, the U.S. Navy divides into two fleets that patrol the Pacific Ocean region: Third Fleet headquartered in San Diego, California, is responsible for the eastern and Northern Pacific Ocean, and Seventh Fleet, is responsible for the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans with forward-deployed forces in Japan and Guam. Other U.S. units in the Asia-Pacific that could be utilized in the Asia-Pacific region are the Fifth (Japan), Seventh (South Korea), Eleventh (Alaska), and Thirteenth (Guam) Airforces and 13,000 U.S. Coast Guard personnel who are available to support U.S. efforts in the region.⁴³

U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific participate in numerous exercises and pursue many different types of engagement with foreign military forces. Major exercises include TALISMAN SABER with Australia, COBRA GOLD with Thailand, BALIKATAN with the Philippines, KEEN SWORD/KEEN EDGE with Japan, and Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), which is a large multinational exercise that includes Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, Chile, and the United Kingdom. USPACOM also has participated in over 20 disaster relief operations in the region since 1996 and makes close to 700 port visits each year in the Asia-Pacific.⁴⁴

For the ROKN, most cooperation occurs with the U.S. 7th Fleet, the largest of the U.S. forward deployed fleets.⁴⁵ The 7th Fleet has three major assignments: joint task force command for natural disaster or joint military operations; operational command of all naval forces in the region; and defense of Korea. If war breaks out, the 7th Fleet is also the Combined Naval Component Commander for defending Korea, and all naval forces flowing into the theater come under the control of the 7th Fleet Commander. However, this arrangement will change in 2012 with the transfer of wartime OPCON. After the transfer, South Korean naval forces will be the supported command while the U.S. Navy will be the supporting command, reversing a relationship that had been in place since the Korean War.

Table 2. 2009 - U.S. 7th Fleet: Ships and Units Forward Deployed in the Asia-Pacific

Yokosuka, Japan	
	Aircraft Carrier <i>George Washington</i> (CVN 73)
	7 th Fleet Command Ship <i>Blue Ridge</i> (LCC 19)
	Aegis Guided-Missile Cruiser <i>Cowpens</i> (CG 63)
	Ticonderoga-class Guided Missile Cruiser <i>Shiloh</i> (CG 67)
	Arleigh Burke-class Guided Missile Destroyer <i>Curtis Wilbur</i> (DDG 54) <i>John S. McCain</i> (DDG 56) <i>Fitzgerald</i> (DDG 62) <i>Stethem</i> (DDG 63) <i>Lassen</i> (DDG 82) <i>McCampbell</i> (DDG 85) <i>Mustin</i> (DDG 89)
Sasebo, Japan	
	Amphibious Assault Ship <i>Essex</i> (LHD 2)
	Amphibious Landing Dock <i>Denver</i> (LPD 9)
	Dock Landing Ship <i>Tortuga</i> (LSD 46) <i>Harpers Ferry</i> (LSD 49)
	Mine Countermeasures Ship <i>Avenger</i> (MCM 1) <i>Defender</i> (MCM 2) <i>Guardian</i> (MCM 5) <i>Patriot</i> (MCM 7)
Guam	
	Los Angeles-class submarine <i>City of Corpus Christi</i> (SSN 705) <i>Houston</i> (SSN 713) <i>Buffalo</i> (SSN 715)
	Submarine Tender <i>Frank Cable</i> (AS 40)

Source: U.S. Navy, 7th Fleet: <http://www.c7f.navy.mil/forces.htm>

The 7th Fleet has 60-70 ships, 200-300 aircraft, and 40,000 Sailors and Marines at any given time. Eleven ships are based in Yokuska, Japan including the aircraft carrier *USS George Washington* (CVN 73), the 7th fleet command ship, *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19), two Guided Missile Cruisers, and nine guided missile destroyers. Other vessels are based in Sasebo, Japan, and attack submarines along with other support units are based in Guam. Finally, the USN has a regional commander of U.S. Naval Forces Korea (CNFK). The CNFK has no ships assigned to the command but does have approximately 300 personnel who work on planning and executing operations. The CNFK also serves as a liaison to the South Korean Navy, U.S. commanders in Korea, and the 7th Fleet.

ROK-US Maritime Cooperation Activities

South Korea and the United States conduct numerous maritime cooperation activities, either on a bilateral basis or as part of multilateral endeavors. The level of cooperation as demonstrated by exercises, operations, intelligence sharing, and other activities is very good, but there are always possibilities for new ventures as occurred with ROK-US cooperation on anti-piracy activities. The following sections describe some of the current dimensions of ROK-US maritime cooperation.

a. Exercises.

Key Resolve/Foal Eagle

One of the important elements of deterring an attack on South Korea is demonstrating U.S. capability and resolve to come to South Korea's defense should deterrence fail. Key Resolve/Foal Eagle is the annual joint bilateral exercise that demonstrates U.S. determination to come to South Korea's aid if attacked, in addition to improving operational readiness and enhancing interoperability of U.S. and ROK forces. The exercise was formerly called RSOI (Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and Integration), and, before that, Team Spirit but was changed in 2008 to Key Resolve to reflect the changes that will occur in the upcoming OPCON transfer scheduled for 2012. The two joint exercises are conducted in February and March to rehearse how the United States would come to South Korea's aid, if attacked. Key Resolve is a command post exercise, and Foal Eagle conducts field exercises. In addition to U.S. troops based in South Korea and South

Korean forces, over 14,000 U.S. troops from outside the peninsula also participate in the exercises.

The two navies conduct the exercise to improve coordination of the operations necessary to defend South Korea and support its ground forces. The U.S. 7th Fleet represents the United States and for the past few years, the *USS Blue Ridge* (LCC 19) has acted as the command and control center. In 2009, the United States Navy sent an aircraft carrier and two Aegis-class destroyers among other ships to Key Resolve. The 2009 exercise focused on rehearsing a large-scale amphibious operation, and Lieutenant General Richard Zilmer, commanding general of the U.S. Marine Force that participated, noted, “The Sailors of the U.S. 7th Fleet, the Marines and Sailors of the III Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) and our great ROK Navy and Marine Corps partners have clearly demonstrated that we are the only nations and services capable of conducting a combined, joint forcible-entry operation of this scope and magnitude.”⁴⁶ Vice Admiral John Bird, the U.S. combined naval component commander who oversaw U.S. and ROK forces during the exercise, maintained, “Amphibious operations are a critical part of our overall mission to defend the Republic of Korea. Working hand in hand with our Korean and U.S. Marine counterparts, we seek to synchronize all maritime activities in support of the combined landing force by preparing the battle space, moving the Marines safely ashore and supporting them from the sea as they carry out combat operations.”⁴⁷ As part of Foal Eagle, U.S. and ROK units also participated in a bilateral mine countermeasures exercise off of the southern coast of South Korea.⁴⁸

At the conclusion of Key Resolve/Foal Eagle, ROK and U.S. commanders signed a new operations plan (OPLAN) for the naval forces, should war break out. The OPLAN came about after 18 months of extensive cooperation and planning by ROK and U.S. Navies in preparation for the transfer of wartime OPCON. By 2012, the U.S. 7th fleet will be in a supporting role, and the ROK Navy will be in the lead. Captain Park Sung-bae, the South Korean signer of the OPLAN, observed “the close cooperation between the 7th Fleet and ROK Fleet is represented in the detailed planning and coordination that is described in this comprehensive plan of action,” and Vice Admiral Bird maintained “even though our operational control roles may reverse, our commitment to working together to defend Korea has not changed one bit.”⁴⁹

Ulchi Guardian Freedom (UGF)

Begun in 1976, Ulchi Guardian Freedom is a large, annual command post exercise that uses computer-generated scenarios to train for possible contingencies in defending South Korea from attack. The command and control exercises seek to evaluate and improve coordination, plans, and combat and intelligence systems for conducting operations in South Korea. Conducted in August and September, over 10,000 personnel from all the services participate in UGF. The exercise was formerly named Ulchi Focus Lens but changed its name in 2008 because for the first time, the South Korean military assumed the lead in the exercise in anticipation of the 2012 OPCON transfer.

Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) Exercise

RIMPAC is a biennial naval exercise held in June and July off the coast of Hawaii and is hosted by the navies of the United Kingdom and the United States. It is the largest international maritime exercise, and, in 2008, included participants from ten countries. RIMPAC was first held in 1971 and included forces from the United States, Canada, and Australia. The most recent RIMPAC exercise in 2008, the 21st such exercise, included Australia, Canada, Chile, Japan, the Netherlands, Peru, South Korea, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The exercise included 35 surface combat ships, six submarines, 150 aircraft, and 20,000 personnel. Other navies including Indonesia, India, Mexico, Russia, and Thailand, among others, participated in 2008 as observers.⁵⁰ Observers do not contribute ships, but their representatives are involved in the operations. The exercise provides an opportunity for countries to work together on maritime operations, improve tactical competence, build trust, and improve interoperability. In addition, the 2008 exercise included a project to bring scientists from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Duke University, Cascadia Research, and other groups to share information about marine mammals.⁵¹

South Korea participated in its first RIMPAC exercise in 1990 and has been part of the exercise ever since. In 2008, South Korea sent two destroyers, *Munmu the Great* and *Yangmanchun*, a LYNX anti-submarine helicopter, and a submarine. *Munmu the Great* commanded a three-country battle group during the exercise.⁵² In 2010, ROKS *King Sejong the Great* will join the RIMPAC exercise and participate in the Combat System Ship Qualifications Trials (CSSQT) which is likely to be

a ballistic missile defense drill. To improve the *King Sejong's* capabilities, it will be outfitted with the Standard Missile-6 and the Standard Missile-2 Block IV, both surface-to-air missiles that are an improvement over its current missile system.⁵³

Other Exercises and Events

In 2007, South Korea participated in *Pacific Reach*, a large multinational exercise hosted by Australia. The exercise was intended to improve submarine rescue capabilities and cooperation while helping participants familiarize themselves with each other's submarine rescue techniques and equipment. *Pacific Reach 2007* is the fourth such exercise with the first hosted by Singapore in 1999 and subsequent events hosted by Japan (2002) and South Korea (2004). The ROKN sent the *Chang Bogo* 209-class submarine *Lee Eokgi* to the exercise that included Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Singapore, China, and Malaysia. Others attended as observers including Chile, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Peru, Russia, and South Africa.⁵⁴

In October 2008, the ROKN hosted the International Fleet Review in commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea. The event hosted the navies of 13 different countries under the banner, "All in One To the Sea, To the World." South Korea hosted its first Fleet Review in 1998.⁵⁵

Finally, ROKN and USN forces also conduct small scale bilateral exercises such as the Counter Special Operations Forces Exercise (CSOFEX) in May 2009. In the exercise, 16 ROKN ships joined the *USS John S. McCain* and *USS Mustin* in a series of exercises to address the threat North Korea poses with its ability to deliver special operations units by sea and improve the interoperability of ROK-U.S. forces. According to a USN spokesman, "Our helicopters are doing air control events with their helicopters, we're doing a lot of anti-submarine warfare training, a lot of anti-surface training and we're practicing simulated missile engagements overland and at sea."⁵⁶

b. Operations

Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)

In May 2003, the United States started the PSI to prevent the transfer and sale of nuclear technology, material, or weapons along with delivery systems from states such as Iran and North Korea to other state and non-

state actors. On May 26, 2009, South Korea endorsed the “Statement of Interdiction Principles,” that committed Seoul to full participation in the PSI. South Korea had expressed an interest in joining the PSI after the April 2009 missile test but did not commit, citing the delicate nature of North-South relations due to the North’s detention of a South Korean worker at the Kaesong Industrial Complex.⁵⁷ Following the April 2009 missile test, North Korean officials blasted the Lee Myung-bak government and characterized “any pressure to be put upon it [North Korea] through ‘total participation’ in the PSI as a declaration of undisguised confrontation and a declaration of war against the DPRK.”⁵⁸ However, after the nuclear weapon test the following month, South Korea formally declared its intention to join, becoming the 95th country to endorse the PSI principles. Initially, South Korea refrained from joining PSI but supported its underlying principles and pledged to participate when it could. ROK-U.S. military exercises incorporated a WMD interdiction component, and South Korea acted as an observer at five PSI exercises.⁵⁹ South Korea under President Roh Moo-hyun was reluctant to participate in PSI for fear of upsetting relations with the North. However, after the May 2009 nuclear test, President Lee decided that South Korea needed to join the PSI, regardless of its impact on North-South relations.

Piracy Operations in the Gulf of Aden

In 2008, the ROK National Assembly approved South Korea’s first foreign deployment of naval forces for an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden and off the coast of Somalia. The KDX-II destroyer, *Munmu the Great*, commanded by Captain Jang Sung-woo, was dispatched in March 2009 with 300 personnel on board for a six-month deployment to the region. The ship participated in the U.S.-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 along with the navies of 16 other countries including Canada, Germany, Japan, Russia, the Netherlands, Spain, and India. CTF 151 is a multinational force organized to protect the shipping lanes and conduct counter-piracy operations around the Horn of Africa.

While in the Gulf, ROKS *Munmu the Great* guarded 325 commercial vessels, 140 of which were Korean ships. Over 450 South Korean ships use this shipping route each year, and one-third of these are particularly slow, making them vulnerable to pirate attack. Increasingly, ROK commercial vessels are becoming targets for pirates in the region. While in the Gulf of Aden, *Munmu the Great* participated in 22 missions and

repelled seven piracy attacks, including one against a North Korean ship, the *Dabkasol*. In one operation, *Munmu the Great* responded to a distress call from an Egyptian ship on its way from the Red Sea to India, and the South Korean commander sent a helicopter with a team of snipers to rescue the vessel. Soon after, the ROKN helicopter was joined by a U.S. Navy helicopter to carry out the first joint ROK-U.S. naval operation since participating in CTF 151.⁶⁰ According to Captain Jang, “Allied forces gave high marks to the Korean Navy’s capabilities and assigned us the most pirate-infested area of northern Bosaso off Somalia. We are proud to raise Korea’s reputation in the international community.”⁶¹ *The Munmu the Great* has since returned home and was relieved by another ROKN KDX-II destroyer, *Daejoyeong*. In November 2009, a third KDX-II destroyer, *Chungmugong Yi Soon-shin*, left to relieve the *Daejoyeong*. The new contingent of the *Cheonghae* unit will carry an anti-submarine Lynx helicopter and a 30-man underwater demolition unit.⁶² Despite the considerable distance from South Korea, ROKN participation played an important role in protecting its commercial interests. Moreover, its presence also helped to deter attacks on other ships in the region.

c. Arms Sales/Ballistic Missile Defense

South Korea, already a major commercial ship builder, is increasing its indigenous warship building capability, producing a significant portion of the ships in domestic shipyards such as Hyundai, Daewoo, and Hanjin among others. However, an important element of ROK-U.S. naval cooperation has included purchases of ship designs and weapons systems. The level of cooperation in this area has led to increased interoperability between South Korean and U.S. forces. One of the current cooperation projects is the acquisition of standard missile (SM) systems for the South Korean Aegis-class ships. South Korea’s Aegis ships, such as *King Sejong the Great* and *Yulgok Yi I*, are armed with the SM-2 Block III A/B. This version of the SM-2 is an improved model of earlier versions but not as capable as the improved SM-2 Block IV and SM-2 Block IV A. The various SM-2 missiles, built by Raytheon, are short to medium range missiles, designed for area air defense for ships at sea and during ground force insertion operations. The advanced version of the SM-2 Block IV A is on U.S. Ticonderoga-class Aegis cruisers and Arleigh Burke-class Aegis destroyers. In June 2009, South Korea announced that it was going to purchase 84 SM-2 Block IV missiles, one

notch below the Block IV A version, for its Aegis-class ships but improvements over current missile systems. South Korea has also expressed interest in outfitting some of its future Aegis-class ships with the SM-6 missile. The SM-6 provides longer range, over-the-horizon capability, than the SM-2 missiles because it has its own, on-board radar, allowing the SM-6 to track its target in the last stage before it strikes. As a result, the missile can be launched from longer ranges when the target is over the horizon with the ability to adjust course in ways the SM-2 models cannot.

Implications for Regional Security

ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation is significant, positive, and the level of cooperation continues to grow. Seoul and Washington conduct many important exercises to improve cooperation, and intelligence sharing continues to be an important strength. The maritime environment poses serious challenges for the global maritime community. Piracy remains a challenge off the coast of Somalia and in the Straits of Malacca, and a rash of bad weather and earthquakes in Southeast Asia once again demonstrated the need for disaster relief that is led by the navies in the region. Maritime activities are part of a broader ROK-U.S. security alliance that has been largely focused on deterring an attack by North Korea, particularly a ground assault across the DMZ. There has always been a maritime component to this relationship, but it has usually been secondary to the needs on the ground. While the North Korean threat remains, the list of challenges to South Korean and U.S. security is changing and increasing. Some of these challenges —piracy, ensuring the free flow of commerce, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and humanitarian assistance/disaster relief— are important maritime concerns shared by Washington, Seoul, and the larger global community.

In addition to the United States and South Korea's sharing a broader, more global set of security concerns, the ROKN has also made significant advancements in its naval capabilities with the construction of state-of-the-art destroyers, a large-deck amphibious ship, and extensive plans for further expansion of ROK naval capabilities. Consequently, South Korea is simply able to do more by taking on a larger array of roles and missions while still maintaining a careful watch on Korean coastal waters. As a result of these changes in the security environment and increased ROK naval capability, maritime cooperation is broadening

the base of the ROK-U.S. alliance with a greater global footing that can address common security concerns beyond those on the peninsula.

While maritime cooperation between Seoul and Washington remains strong, there are three areas that need continued, more immediate, attention to improve ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation. First, South Korea will need further training to improve its participation in the U.S.-led PSI. South Korea has been a relatively new participant in this effort and needs to continue work on its ability to contribute to these operations. Second, countering special operations forces remains a complicated mission, one that requires continued training and exercises with the United States. When South Korea assumes the lead for this mission in 2012, it will require increased training and exercises between the ROKN and USN to ensure the capability to block the insertion of DPRK's special operations forces along the thousands of miles of ROK coastline. Finally, North Korea's submarine fleet remains a serious problem. South Korea continues work on its plans to improve its submarine force, but, in the near term, Pyongyang's submarines remain a problem. Consequently, greater cooperation and attention to anti-submarine warfare is an important priority in maintaining ROK maritime security.

An important factor in the growth of the ROKN's capabilities will be the ability to generate the resources and defense budgets to sustain ship construction and modernization plans. The global economic crisis has been a serious problem for South Korea; the crisis has hurt economic growth rates and has put significant pressure on the ROK government's defense budget. As a result, the ship building program may be delayed as Seoul works its way out of the economic difficulties shared by many around the world. In addition, South Korean officials, analysts, and the general public will need to continue the discussion of the proper division of defense resources among the Army, Navy, and Air Force. All three services have important tasks and future needs that will require funding; careful consideration will be necessary to set the necessary budget priorities, based on security needs and not interservice rivalry.

As ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation expands and increases the scope of the alliance, it will be important for the two allies to develop a maritime strategic vision and strategy that will help to guide future cooperation. The roles and missions of the two navies will evolve, but they must be based on a common set of goals and understanding of the roles each will play in the maritime domain. Thus, it will be important to

develop a joint maritime strategy. The maritime strategy should also include planning regarding the actions that might be taken should North Korea implode or become sufficiently unstable that it requires some type of response. These discussions should be part of a larger effort to plan for such contingencies and should include China to ensure that there are no misunderstandings and to better coordinate the responses that might be taken in the chaos of a North Korean collapse.

An important dimension of the sustainability of the alliance is the level of public support within partner countries for the alliance. While the presence of ground forces can be problematic, because of the large footprint they create, maritime cooperation creates a far smaller footprint and makes it easier to sustain ROK domestic political support for this type of endeavor. The South Korean public has recognized the need to protect its sea commerce and maritime interests. As one indication, the commissioning ceremony of *King Sejong the Great* at the Hyundai Heavy Industry shipyard was a television event covered widely by most stations. Thus, there is fairly broad public support in South Korea for an expanded maritime force and for maritime involvement.

While increased ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation can achieve some important goals, there are dangers that must be considered. First, South Korea's ship acquisition program and overall expansion of its naval capabilities addresses important concerns Seoul has for the future security environment in the region. However, the growth of the ROKN is part of a larger regional expansion and modernization of naval forces in Asia. According to the U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) report that speculates on the security environment for 2025:

Maritime security concerns are providing the rationale for a series of naval buildups and modernization efforts in the region [Persian Gulf to East and Southeast Asia], such as China's and India's development of 'blue-water' naval capabilities, to protect critical economic assets and secure access to energy resources. Other national navies in the Middle East and Asia will not be able to replace the US Navy's role in protecting strategic sea lines of communication in 2025, but the buildup of regional naval capabilities could lead to increased tensions, rivalries, and counterbalancing.⁶³

While these increasing naval capabilities can help to police the commons and address a number of maritime problems, care must be

taken by all in the region that the predictions of the NIC report do not come to fruition, producing a naval arms race and a more tenuous security environment. More specifically, China's rise and military modernization program are likely to continue, and, for many in the region, hedging is the strategy of the day as states attempt to cope with an uncertain future security environment. However, there is a danger that Beijing will perceive the growing naval capabilities of South Korea, Japan, and others in the region as an effort to contain Chinese maritime interests. Efforts must be made to draw in and include China in the efforts to increase maritime security.

Finally, South Korea's increasing maritime capabilities and ROK-U.S. cooperation point to the potential for trilateral maritime cooperation between South Korea, the United States, and Japan. Yet, the legacies of history and the dispute over Dokdo [Takeshima to the Japanese] continue to impede greater cooperation. Indeed, South Korea's maritime capabilities are, in part, an effort to counter any possible Japanese pressure to relinquish Seoul's claim to the islands. While these concerns remain an issue, solutions need to be explored to overcome these obstacles for more robust trilateral cooperation between the United States, South Korea, and Japan. Both Seoul and Tokyo have bilateral alliances with Washington that could be the foundation for greater efforts between these three navies. There is much potential in this relationship, as demonstrated by the cooperation displayed in CTF-151 operations between these three countries and others. Somehow, a solution to these lingering tensions must be found to allow these three allies to work together more closely in maritime activities. There are positive signs from Japan's new Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio that he is interested in resolving some of these historical legacies and moving forward.⁶⁴ Hopefully, there can be some new efforts to create the necessary basis for improved trilateral cooperation between Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo.

Conclusion

The ROK-U.S. alliance has been a long term relationship that has undergone numerous changes and has evolved, based on a number of factors. It should be no surprise that a relationship lasting close to 60 years will be modified from time to time, particularly as the power configuration and security assessments of the partners change. Maritime

cooperation has been an important dimension of the alliance but has received less attention as a part of the overall workings of the alliance. However, ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation has been growing, holding out an important opportunity for further expansion and broadening of the alliance into what Presidents Lee and Obama have called “a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral, regional and global scope.” Increasing agreement on a broader set of security concerns that go beyond solely the threat posed by North Korea and South Korea’s continued efforts to expand its naval capability have been important factors for the growth in ROK-U.S. cooperation. In turn, this has expanded the foundation of ROK-U.S. relations. Future challenges remain that need to be overcome to continue broadening the maritime dimension of the alliance. Yet, cooperation in the maritime arena and maintaining peace and stability in the maritime commons are likely to be growth areas that will, in turn, also be significant drivers in the continued importance and viability of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

Notes:

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² See Patrick M. Morgan, “Re-Aligning the Military and Political Dimensions of the ROK-US Alliance: The Possibilities,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* XI, no. 2 (Fall 2007), pp 67-93; David C. Kang, “Inter-Korean Relations in the Absence of a U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *Asia Policy*, no. 5 (January 2008), pp. 25-41; Jae-Jung Suh, “Transforming the US-ROK Alliance: Changes in Strategy, Military and Bases,” *Pacific Focus* XXIV, no. 1 (April 2009), pp. 61-81; Bruce Klingner, “Evolving Military Responsibilities in the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* XII, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2008), pp. 25-42; James Przystup and Kang Choi, *The U.S.-ROK Alliance: Building a Mature Partnership*, Institute for National Strategic Studies (March 2004) available at http://www.ndu.edu/inss/Strforum/SR_04/SR_04.htm (accessed November 20, 2009).

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¹⁰ Han Yong-sup, "Analyzing South Korea's Defense Reform 2020," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, XVIII, no. 1 (Spring 2006), p. 112.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

¹² Taewoo Kim, "ROK Military Transformation and ROK-US Security and Maritime Cooperation," *International Journal of Korean Studies*, Vol XII no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2008), p. 48.

¹³ Jin Dae-woong, "Lee backs plan for blue-water Navy," *Korea Herald*, March 19, 2008, available at <http://www.koreaherald.co.kr/archives> (accessed October 3, 2009).

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the Northern Limit Line issue, see Terence Roehrig, *Korean Dispute over the Northern Limit Line: Security, Economics, or International Law*, Maryland Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, no. 3 (Baltimore, MD: University of Maryland School of Law, 2008).

¹⁵ Paul J. Smith, "China-Japan Relations and the future of geopolitics in East Asia," *Asian Affairs: An American Review* (January 2009), pp 230-256.

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¹⁸ *Military Balance 2008*, p. 390.

¹⁹ Gordon Arthur, "South Korean Armed Forces: Watching Across the DMZ," *Asian Military Review* (September/October 2009), available at <http://www.asianmilitaryreview.com/CurrentIssue/index.php?hCurrentIssue=640&hContent=509> (accessed September 24, 2009).

²⁰ Much of the information that follows on ROK naval forces came from *The Military Balance 2008*; The Republic of Korea Navy (<http://www.navy.mil.kr/english/main/main.jsp>); Global Security (www.globalsecurity.org); and *Military Today* (<http://www.military-today.com/>).

²¹ This class of ship is also identified as the Okpo-class.

²² The *Chungmugong Yi Sunshin* broke ground by being the first warship constructed to accommodate female sailors with specific facilities built for them. However, women have yet to serve on a South Korean warship. See "KDX-II Chungmugong Yi Sunshin Destroyer," *Global Security.org*, available at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/rok/kdx-2.htm> (accessed August 23, 2009).

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