

Joint U.S.-Korea Academic Studies

**NAVIGATING
TURBULENCE**

IN NORTHEAST ASIA:

**THE FUTURE OF THE
U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE**



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**DIVERGENT CONSENSUS:
MEETING THE NEEDS OF BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN:
A YOUNG LEADERS' PERSPECTIVE ON
U.S.-ROK RELATIONS**

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I. From Alliance to Relationship

The relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea is unique; the challenges it faces are not. Next-generation views of the ties between Seoul and Washington do not challenge the idea that the U.S.-ROK relationship continues to make up one of our most valuable and valued alliances. However, we do realize that, as in any relationship, the United States and the ROK need to continue to keep it fresh—a relationship requires both parties to work continuously at keeping the alliance relevant and beneficial. This is challenging not in spite of the depth and magnitude of our relationship but, rather, because of these qualities.

The U.S.-ROK alliance is defined by the mutual defense treaty. This implies a military bond that, while solid, tends to overshadow broader economic, social, and political ties. The military alliance is in need of realignment while the relationship, as a whole, should be further emphasized in order to bolster ties between Seoul and Washington. In particular, the post-Cold War era requires us to transform the military realm of the alliance from one focused on the defense of South Korea through deterrence of North Korean aggression to one focused more on the comprehensive security of the Korean peninsula and the Asian region. Furthermore, not only has South Korea's role in support of conventional military operations grown, with President Roh Moo-hyun's dispatching of the third-largest contingent of troops to support U.S. operations in Iraq and sending troops to other international operations, including Afghanistan and peacekeeping operations on the African continent, but U.S. forces' increased flexibility and South Korean support for operations off the peninsula will also allow the two to work more closely in response to nontraditional security threats.¹

The goals are ambitious, but at least sights have been set. The challenge to the relationship, too often absent during discussions among experts, is how to get there. In efforts to provide a next-generation perspective of the future of the U.S.-ROK relationship as well as of the issues raised in the Korea Economic Institute's 20th annual academic symposium, "Navigating Turbulence in Northeast Asia: The Future of the U.S.-ROK Alliance," two American and two South Korean members of the Pacific Forum, CSIS Young Leaders Program, each with

¹ This was evidenced in 2009 during the ASEAN Regional Forum Voluntary Demonstration of Response, hosted by the Philippines during 4–8 May, and the Proliferation Security Initiative, in which South Korea announced full participation on 26 May. South Korea's revised Defense Plan 2020, signed on 18 June 2009 by President Lee, reflected the content of Washington's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, which articulated the U.S. military's desire to expand its sights in Korea. Seoul has also embarked on a path of increasing joint cooperative capabilities and updating command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I) capabilities.

extensive experience in, and ties with, both the United States and the ROK, offer a joint perspective addressing the priorities of the relationship.² By examining how the Young Leaders view and envision the U.S.-ROK relationship, one can glimpse what type of ideas and momentum may be in force when this generation takes its place in society. This perspective first provides an assessment of the U.S.-ROK relationship as the American Young Leaders view it, followed by how the Korean Young Leaders view the relationship. Next, this paper examines points of convergence and divergence in the two views in order to highlight opportunities for the U.S.-ROK relationship to achieve and maximize synergetic effects. Last, this paper concludes with an action plan, or “flight plan,” to help navigate the relationship through the turbulence discussed in the symposium.

II. U.S.-ROK Alliance: How the Next Generation Sees It

When President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama met in Washington and agreed to the 16 June joint vision statement, the two ensured the world that “our open societies, our commitment to free democracy and a market economy, and our sustained partnership provide a foundation for the enduring friendship, shared values, and mutual respect that tightly bind the American and Korean peoples. . . . Together, on this solid foundation, we will build a comprehensive strategic alliance of bilateral regional and global scope.”³ The biggest challenge for the alliance is not salvaging a Cold War relic but, rather, living up to the lofty expectations and visions for the future. This has not been lost on those of us, regardless of age or experience, who follow U.S.-ROK relations. Our next-generation perspectives on roles and priorities may, however, separate us from your average conference crowd as we view the relationship less from an ideological standpoint and more in a functionalist manner.

We realize that, although the alliance is not a relic, its foundation is. The 1954 mutual defense treaty was designed to put boots on the ground: to defend against North Korean, Soviet, or Chinese offensives. The U.S.-ROK military alliance still serves as the strongest pillar of the relationship, but the rate of growth of the economic and social realms now outpaces that of the military. Washington and Seoul worked out agreements to make the alliance more mutually beneficial by broadening the relationship and increasing its comprehensiveness. Agreements and timelines on the transfer to South Korea of wartime operational control of its forces, a visa-waiver program for South Koreans visiting the United States,

² For an overview of the Pacific Forum CSIS Young Leaders Program, as well as a list of Young Leader publications, see <http://csis.org/program/young-leaders-program>.

³ “The United States–Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty remains the cornerstone of the U.S.-ROK security relationship, which has guaranteed peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia for over fifty years” (White House 2009).

and negotiations regarding the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA, the largest bilateral FTA either country has ever negotiated) all reflect the broadening of the relationship or the creation of a comprehensive alliance.

Despite the efforts—and successes—in broadening the relationship to include cultural, social, economic, educational, and other realms, the security threat emanating from North Korea remains a core issue, and differences in policies regarding the North have played a significant role in shaping the post-Cold War alliance. With the end of the Cold War, the democratization and growth of South Korea, and the U.S. shift in scope of focus from North Korean security challenges to broader regional economic influence and trade and political stability, there has arisen the need for the relationship to evolve, yet the U.S.-ROK alliance remains squarely centered on the 1954 mutual defense treaty (White House 2009).

How will the U.S.-ROK relationship evolve? The alliance handlers appear to be aware of the need for change and are working in the right direction; future efforts need to concentrate on increasing public awareness of the benefits as well as the realities of the growing alliance and the continued shift away from defense-centric security toward a broader aim of maintaining regional stability and a platform for growth. An allied approach to China as well as increased ties with Japan, be it trilaterally or only through the channels provided by U.S. bilateral relationships, will be instrumental in ensuring that the U.S.-ROK alliance maximizes benefits for both Washington and Seoul.

The U.S.-ROK alliance has outgrown its original patron-client relationship, and the ROK is especially eager to claim its status in the international community. We see this as an opportunity to take the U.S.-ROK relationship from its old alliance-focused mold to a more comprehensive relationship that takes advantage of synergetic qualities to address issues of global scope. As global leaders recently recognized the limitations of the Group of Eight (G-8) and challenged the Group of 20 (G-20) to play a more dominant role in shaping the world economy,⁴ we see South Korea's role as host in 2010 to be an opportunity for the U.S.-ROK alliance to project its ambitions on other economic players in the international community.

President Lee Myung-bak has set as a goal for his administration the repair of relations with Washington, and President Barack Obama has acknowledged the need to rebuild U.S. diplomatic influence throughout the world. U.S. interests

⁴ In his statement, President Obama called the exclusion of emerging but relevant economies “wrong-headed” and called for expansion of the G-8 (Barry and Raum 2009).

and foreign policy aims tended to focus, rightly, on a global stage; and, although the alliance with South Korea was—and is—valuable, the question must be answered: Are issues at hand challenges *for* the alliance, or *to* the alliance? Cold War “givens” are gone. South Korea has been calling for more equality; here is its chance to step up.

III. The U.S. View

We, as American Young Leaders, recognize the potential for continued growth in the U.S.-ROK alliance relationship, but we believe that the prioritization of the following issues (and potential roadblocks) is necessary to prevent the loss of the current momentum. In this section, we touch on concerns we have regarding actions being taken by both Washington and Seoul, and we recognize that both allies need to improve cooperation. To do this, one issue that runs through all other cooperative efforts is the need for greater public diplomacy and the building of public consensus. We are concerned by nationalistic sentiment in Korea that has led to large-scale public outcry over Seoul’s role in the relationship on a number of occasions over the past several years and that has kept the two governments from working toward a better relationship largely because of misperceptions.

Although many issues and variables need to be addressed by both the United States and the ROK, the following points stand out as priorities in the efforts of Washington and Seoul to modernize the alliance that has served them both so well:

Fill in the details. Create detailed road maps for projects named in the 16 June 2009 joint vision statement (White House 2009).

In the post–Cold War era, the ups and downs of the alliance tend to follow election cycles. The alliance was born in the fires of the Korean War and founded on the common perception of a North Korean threat. As a result, who was in charge in either Seoul or Washington was of less consequence prior to the end of the Cold War. As the Cold War threats have subsided and the plethora of issues and interests has divested, the alliance has become more susceptible to less-deep public sentiment. Here, tasks are our friend. Broad visions for the future of the alliance are certainly valuable, but, to maintain focus, concrete, measurable plans need to be adopted and publicized. Many potential projects were named in the joint vision statement, including but not limited to environmental protection, research on clean and sustainable energy, coordination on pandemic outbreaks and natural disaster response, humanitarian assistance, and support for

peacekeeping operations. While dialog has been ongoing between Washington and Seoul on most of these issues, political and academic discourse has driven away practical discussion on the particulars of the projects. Developing detailed and transparent goals and strategies, including specific milestones, will help to guide the relationship down a path relevant to the issues of today as well as build support for the alliance not only in our two countries but throughout the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. We urge Washington and Seoul not to delay in creating working groups and exploring public- and private-sector opportunities and assets.

Put the issue of North Korea in perspective. In addressing the future of the alliance, North Korea must be one of the issues, not the only issue.

Deterrence of North Korea can serve as a basis for cooperation both on and off the peninsula, and South Korea's concerns and national interests must be recognized and respected, both in the realm of influence and in the realm of responsibility. The United States needs to remain firm that a solution to the North Korean nuclear issues comes through multilateral diplomacy within the framework of six-party talks and that South Korea's national interests are not the only interests driving negotiations with Pyongyang. Washington understands the threat felt by South Korea, but both countries must keep an eye on how decisions regarding North Korea will affect other denuclearization and nonproliferation efforts throughout the world.

On other regional and global issues, Seoul must not be driven by how North Korea is expected to react. During successive administrations prior to President Lee's election, North Korea perfected the art of manipulating the fears, nationalism, and hopes for unification of the South Korean public. This has allowed Pyongyang to pressure Seoul indirectly not only on peninsular issues but also on or because of decisions ranging from cooperation in global nonproliferation efforts to the import of U.S. beef. So far, President Lee has been much more firm with North Korea than his predecessors, and to realize his ambitions for a larger regional and global role for South Korea, this needs to continue. It appears that the younger South Korean generation is less inclined to push for unification at any cost, but at the same time it has proven to be very susceptible to Internet rumors and unfounded fear mongering. This means that North Korea will continue to incite and steer opposition to policies it sees as detrimental. Through increased transparency and public diplomacy, the South Korean government must continue to garner support for its strategy of broadening South Korea's ties with, and impact in, the region and the international community.

Clarify the issue of nuclear power for South Korea. South Korea and the United States need to reach a consensus on the future of the ROK nuclear fuel cycle.

This should be done before the upcoming Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review in 2010, but it most definitely needs to be resolved before the expiration of the U.S.-ROK nuclear licensing agreement, which runs out in 2012. As signatories to the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership Statement of Principles (GNEP 2007), the United States and South Korea agree to “develop and demonstrate, *inter alia*, advanced technologies for recycling spent nuclear fuel for deployment in facilities that do not separate pure plutonium” and to “take advantage of the best available fuel cycle approaches for the efficient and responsible use of energy and natural resources,” while recognizing that “states participating in this cooperation would not give up any rights.”

South Korea is pushing for what Japan and other partners of the United States have now; nuclear scientists from South Korea have already initiated discussions with Washington explaining their need to compete with other regional states developing exportable nuclear energy and their interest in becoming a supplier state using pyroprocessing techniques that do not separate plutonium from uranium. Yet Washington continues to block Seoul’s moves to process spent fuel that originated in the United States (Nikitin, Andrews, and Holt 2009, 35). If Washington insists that Seoul not reprocess, then we need to offer an alternative; if Washington concedes, South Korea needs to offer an explanation as to why it would be more capable than other countries of successfully handling the reprocessing.

Maintain good relations and adequate troop levels. Washington recognizes that it has been successful in fostering a strong, self-determinant democratic ally, but it needs to more effectively and convincingly show its commitment; Seoul needs to clarify its demands.

As Seoul continues to meet expectations regarding its obligations for troop dispatch in support of U.S. campaigns, Washington needs to ensure that the South Korean people do not live under fear of attack from the North. At the same time, Washington and Seoul need to more concretely define what they mean by deterrence and defense and, in particular, issues such as the U.S. prerogative of first response, preemptive strike, or other strategies. Seoul has asked for a more thorough explanation of the deterrent offered by Washington, but, for Washington to provide the answers to Seoul’s questions, the Lee administration first needs to do some soul-searching: At what level and for what threat is what

response deemed acceptable by the South Korean people? Concerns over the intent and commitment of China, Japan, or the United States play a decisive factor in the South's ability to aggressively drive reorganization or realignment of the alliance, especially with the scheduled transfer of operational control, but there appears to be no consensus in Seoul on what is needed from Washington to alleviate these anxieties. Washington deserves to know that it can rely on the South Korean government to be clear and unwavering, in both its demands and its commitment to the alliance. In return, Seoul deserves concrete, demonstrable support from the United States.

IV. The Korean View

The key to understanding South Korea's mentality toward the alliance is based on confidence. The first issue is South Korea's wavering confidence in the United States. There is a definite, though clouded, distinction between trust and confidence. While trust is almost an instinctive, unquestioning belief set against values, confidence is a conscious reliance on abilities and capabilities based on past achievements and interaction. Although the younger generation of South Koreans may trust that the United States would fulfill its duties as the South's key ally, its confidence has been shaken because of the perception of a decline in relative U.S. capabilities, which has raised doubts over whether it can fulfill those duties to the extent that it could in the past.

This has become enmeshed with a second phenomenon: South Korea's increasing confidence in its own ability to play a more effective role in the international community. The result for South Korea has been an unrelenting focus on the future, with an unshakeable desire to become a pioneer for framing the agenda and setting an example for issues deemed to become key components in ensuring a nondestructive future. In 2010, the priority for South Korea will center on how to fashion the alliance so that it adds, rather than detracts, from Seoul's ambitions of becoming an early adopter of future-oriented technologies (nuclear power and green growth) and exercising behavior accordant with its economic, political, and diplomatic development (overseas development aid). The following represents several examples of such priorities:

Set up future-oriented projects. Use the 16 June 2009 joint vision statement to detail creative, future-oriented projects for bilateral cooperation.

Official development assistance (ODA) in the specific area of poverty reduction may serve domestically as a less politically combustible issue, while globally ODA could be a *sine qua non* for future global prosperity requiring ROK-U.S.

bilateral cooperation. For Seoul, the timing is fortuitous given that South Korea is an emerging donor that has been inducted into the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Seoul also announced at the October 2009 ASEAN Plus Three summit in Thailand that it would double the size of its ODA to ASEAN by 2015. Yet, South Korea has experienced obstacles in overseas development, perhaps owing to the fact that it is still learning to do some of these things. For instance, Daewoo Logistics negotiated in November 2008 for a 99-year lease on approximately 3.2 million acres of farmland in Madagascar, but eventually the deal fell through after the Populist Malagasy leader ousted the president with the support from the military and scrapped the deal. Similarly, the United States has vested interests in Africa, as evidenced by the United States African Command (AFRICOM) established in 2007.

In a similar vein, ROK-U.S. space cooperation could become a future-oriented project that could serve as an additional pillar for the alliance. In October 2009, the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) signed agreements to exchange experts and space-related science and technology. Moreover, the Obama administration is planning to expand space cooperation with its allies, and the ROK has indicated an interest in joining the NASA-led International Lunar Network, a series of space explorations, including lunar missions, in a multilateral dimension.

Bolster the U.S.-ROK bilateral relationship. Appeal to the necessity of future cooperation to gain consensus within each nation on the need to bolster the bilateral relationship, including the military alliance.

For the future to not be hostage to the past, the legitimacy of the alliance must be gained anew from diverse sources, rather than based just on military cooperation. For the younger generation, there is unfortunately an inverse correlation between the lapse in time since the outbreak of the Korean War and the strength of the alliance. In other words, the further we get from the mid-1950s, the weaker the inherent legitimacy of the alliance appears. Meanwhile, the year 2010 marks the 60th anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War. Although both South Korea and the United States established ad hoc committees in 2008 to initiate various commemorative projects for the occasion, an April 2009 survey conducted by the ROK Ministry of Public Administration and Security targeting 1,000 adults over the age of 19 revealed that 56.6 percent of those in their 20s could not give an answer when asked when the war had occurred (Jung 2009). It is no wonder, then, that appealing to the past in order to legitimize the

alliance may not be as convincing for a generation that has an extremely hazy recollection of that history.

The appeal should be on the future, and how the United States can help South Korea achieve its future objectives. Even the military field, which is often regarded as somewhat antiquated in the context of the alliance, could serve to highlight the trajectory of constructive bilateral cooperation. A South Korean company, C.N.O. Tech, was the first to develop environmentally friendly practice grenades made out of dirt. If green growth could be infused into the military realm, there would certainly be a greater motivation for Seoul and Washington to cooperate.

Make more use of the abilities of South Korea. Take advantage of South Korea's capabilities while keeping within the framework and spirit of the larger rubric of nonproliferation.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference, which is held every five years, will be held again in 2010. Although it is ambitious for Seoul to declare its intent to export 80 nuclear reactors by 2030 and establish itself as the world's third-largest exporter of atomic energy technology (Cho 2010), Seoul must carefully balance its need to explore its advantages in nuclear energy with the risks of attempting to ignore the disadvantages involved in testing the boundaries of nonproliferation. For now, Seoul should not aggressively push for autonomous reprocessing capabilities, especially when diplomacy regarding the North Korean nuclear issue has yet to show tangible results. The past has shown that the failure to renegotiate with the United States has not prevented South Korea from engaging in bilateral cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, as is evident from the January 2010 memorandum of understanding forged between state-run Korea East-West Power Co. and India's largest private-sector power utility, Tata Power. Thus, it could be the surge in South Korea's own confidence mixed with nationalism that may be influencing a logic detached from facts for those espousing an autonomous reprocessing capability.

In keeping with the spirit of nonproliferation but also advancing inter-Korean relations, South Korea may want to explore "science diplomacy," an underutilized but valuable tool of statecraft, especially given the focus on future-oriented technologies. Considering that the scientific community in the North is tasked with addressing issues such as famine, malnutrition, and various diseases and illnesses and owing to the lack of ideological baggage carried by science, engaging the scientists in the North can lead to significant alleviation of unhealthy conditions in the North while remaining relatively resistant to charges from the

Kim Jong-il regime of cultural infiltration. Moreover, working collaboratively on virus-resistant potatoes or insect-resistant corn and rice may be replicated in other parts of the world, thus allowing the North to become both a consumer and producer-disseminator of a technology—a refreshing change from the one-way giving from South to North (and, at the same time, aiding Seoul in bolstering its position on the front lines of future technologies). Given the track record of the United States also engaging the scientific community in the North, such as Syracuse University or the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the two countries can collaborate to engage the North within the framework of nonproliferation.

Make South Korea indispensable. Forge an indispensable role for South Korea in facilitating regional cooperation, with particular focus on enhancing U.S.-China relations.

Building Seoul into a vital constant, rather than a fickle variable, in the shaping of the Northeast Asia region is another way that could help South Korea lead the future instead of being led by it. It is true that South Korea is often categorized as a middle power, one that may often exercise persuasive influence but rarely exert a deciding force. Seoul will now chair and host the G-20 summit in 2010, the first non-G-8 country to be given such a privilege and responsibility. For South Korea to not become irrelevant or forgettable, Seoul must translate its middle-power complex into middle-power activism. In other words, instead of perennially comparing its capability in relation to neighbors such as China or Japan, South Korea must carve out its own niche and demonstrate “take-chargeism.” This also signifies expanding the terrain in which to utilize its niche through a conceptual shift from exclusive to inclusive: embedding the somewhat exclusive alliance that the ROK has with the United States in a more inclusive collaborative architecture. Contingency planning of scenarios from regime or state collapse in North Korea to post-reunification relations requires critical and continual attention.⁵ South Korea should lead discussions, if not by the virtue of its geohistorical ties, then because South Korea in any given scenario would feel the biggest brunt of any change.

Moreover, the ROK may wish to leverage its potential clout with the United States and relative cordiality with China in playing a facilitating role in reinforcing U.S.-China relations (this may be of particular importance given the cooperation between the two of the BRIC [Brazil, Russia, India, and China] nations—China

⁵ South Korea’s younger generation perceives even Japan to be an important country with which the ROK should further deepen cooperation in order to enhance regional security (Chae and Kim 2008).

and Brazil—in naval training in 2009, which could add unnecessary heat to U.S.-China relations). Seoul might focus on, for example, mediation in trade frictions between Washington and Beijing. The Korean Commercial Arbitration Board, a member of the Asia Pacific Regional Arbitration Group, specializes in arbitration and mediation of trade and commercial disputes. If South Korea can provide such positive momentum, it will not only increase the value of South Korea in the eyes of both the United States and China, but eventually create a favorable environment in terms of promoting stability in Northeast Asia.

V. Convergence, Divergence, and Synergy

The younger generations in both the United States and the ROK understand the need for a newly defined relationship. The June 2009 joint vision statement provides the impetus for this new relationship by demonstrating that the future of U.S.-ROK relations should go beyond issues of North Korea. While the joint statement lays out the broad conceptual framework of a reinvigorated U.S.-ROK alliance, concrete policy action needs to follow in order to ensure its realization. To that end, Young Leaders from the ROK and the United States display different points of view regarding future U.S.-ROK relations.

The younger generations in both countries agree on the importance of the joint vision statement but interpret it in different ways. The ROK insists on clear and action-oriented signals from Washington that the United States will remain committed to denuclearization; however, definitions of, and actions toward, deterrence have not been agreed on by the two countries. As mentioned in the U.S. Young Leaders' view, what action deemed acceptable by the ROK with regard to deterrence is questionable. Expressing U.S. commitment in the way of first response or preemptive strike would not be acceptable in the ROK, particularly among the younger generation. Given their hazy recollection of the Korean War and the downplay of the North Korean threat, such U.S. action would not be considered legitimate by its alliance partner.

In the regional and global architecture, other issues also need to be clarified for a more comprehensive and broader alliance. The United States tries to focus on a global nonproliferation regime, restricting reprocessing, and enrichment technology. This, coupled with increasing ROK demands for the right to peaceful nuclear energy development, already creates tension; the two countries need to reach a consensus before the U.S.-ROK nuclear licensing agreement expires in 2012. Meanwhile, the ROK watches cautiously how the United States deals with other issues in the nonproliferation domain. Pyongyang's expectation of a deal based on the past process between the United States and India or the possibility

of a future deal with Iran would have an impact on North Korea's behavior. If the way the United States deals with the issue is far from North Korea's calculation, the consequences would be negative, affecting peace on the Korean peninsula and challenging the global nonproliferation regime. Hence, how the United States prioritizes the North Korea issue and whether it firmly upholds the objective of denuclearization is important in advancing inter-Korean relations, and the ROK expects the United States to make the right choice; yet the ROK has not clearly or consistently identified what it considers the right choice to be.

In spite of different points of view of Young Leaders from the two countries regarding the U.S.-ROK relationship, opportunities for convergence exist in several areas. First, the Young Leaders from both countries agree that increasing public consensus is an important task to ensure the future of the relationship. In recent years in South Korea, on the basis of political orientation and other issues, the younger generation has shown inconsistent opinions toward the U.S.-ROK partnership. There has been both positive and negative sentiment regarding the United States, yet it should be interpreted as a productive discussion to find a forward-looking trajectory of the relationship. Fostering dialogue can help to build the necessary foundation for the alliance. To cultivate consensus building in new contexts, cooperation in nontraditional and security-related issues—for example, climate change and sustainable energy, pandemic outbreaks, ODA, peacekeeping missions, and space cooperation—have been suggested.

Moreover, new institutional approaches would be helpful for gaining support for future allied cooperation. NATO's parliamentary assembly has fostered a broader base of mutual understanding of the U.S.-NATO relationship. Dialogue among legislative members in each country has contributed to consensus building by facilitating awareness and understanding of key issues. Given that nongovernmental dialogues of the U.S.-ROK relationship have been managed mostly by military, think-tank, or lobbyist groups, a NATO parliament assembly type of legislators' interaction would increase cooperation between the two countries and enhance public awareness of each other.

Second, cooperation in multilateral settings should be maintained and expanded. The ROK is apprehensive about new developments in the Asia-Pacific region and is also privileged to host the G-20 summit in 2010 as the first non-G-8 country to do so. Seoul tries to exert its activism as a middle power in the region, and the younger generation supports the ROK's need to facilitate cooperation with neighboring countries, such as Japan and China, in order to shore up regional security and economic development. The United States also remains committed to resolving North Korean nuclear issues through multilateral and bilateral

dialogue, centered on the framework of the six-party talks. In addition, the June 2009 joint vision statement advocates the U.S. role in enhancing security and economic prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, supporting cooperative regional efforts to promote mutual understanding. Hence, the two countries need to develop a collaborative and favorable framework for Asia-Pacific cooperation that is based on utilizing the U.S.-ROK relationship and expanding partnerships with other countries in the region.

VI. The Road Ahead

Young Leaders agree with mainstream views on the importance of relations, but they see the preferred focus of discussion to be the road to be traveled, rather than the destination. Although both South Korean and American Young Leaders agree that we need more discourse on concrete plans of action, we are not in complete agreement as to which plans of action should be prioritized. Concentrating now on flight plans to help navigate the turbulence that surrounds U.S.-ROK relations is the next step in realizing the ambitious goals set out in the joint vision statement. This should be done in a functionalist manner, ensuring that the issue is the target and the broader alliance is the tool, not the other way around. By immediately tackling those issues that both Seoul and Washington agree can be best approached jointly and at the same time coordinating and discussing the issues on which the two allies have divergent views will create a healthy and productive 21st-century alliance relationship equipped to pursue the interests of both countries on both regional and international stages.

It is also worth reiterating that, while there were different perspectives on the relative importance of some issues, those of us in the United States and in the ROK recognize the need for more transparency as well as the need to build public consensus for the relationship by sufficiently publicizing the benefits to be had and the means through which they can best be achieved. The United States and the ROK have much to gain through cooperation on myriad issues, and the benefits to be gained far outweigh those that the two would be able to achieve on their own. The U.S.-ROK relationship, including but not limited to the military alliance, is worth preserving. The joint vision statement of June 2009 sets lofty goals for the future of the relationship, displaying the confidence our leaders have in us to come up with innovative and cooperative efforts that, when successful, will benefit not only the United States and South Korea but also the international community as a whole. Now we need to step up; live up to the expectations of our presidents; and create concrete, realistic, and pragmatic plans of action to move forward with our cooperative efforts.

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