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THESIS

**THE IMPACT OF THREAT PERCEPTION DISPARITIES
ON ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE COHESION: SHIFTS
BETWEEN SELF-RELIANCE AND TROOP
DISPATCHES IN THE PARK AND ROH
ADMINISTRATIONS**

by

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December 2017

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DISPATCHES IN THE PARK AND ROH ADMINISTRATIONS**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis compares the Park Jung Hee and Roh Moo Hyun governments' threat awareness and alliance policies, particularly with regard to self-defense and troop dispatches in support of the United States. It finds that during the Roh administration, domestic political factors led to a deflation of security threats, leading Roh to shift from self-reliance to U.S. support via dispatch of troops in order to gain more leverage in pursuing the Republic of Korea's diplomatic preferences. Meanwhile, the Park government, influenced by threats to the U.S. alliance, amplified its threat perception, leading to an opposite shift from troop dispatch to self-reliance. The thesis concludes that in both cases, gaps in threat perception deteriorated the alliance's solidarity. These findings suggest that while Korea is a small power in an asymmetric alliance, its domestic factors have the power to significantly impact the alliance's performance. When this results in the two countries' drifting apart, it could affect the alliance's ability to deter North Korea.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADD	Agency for Defense Development
CFC	Combined Forces Command, Korea
DAPA	Defense Acquisition Program Administration
DMZ	demilitarized zone
DOD	Department of Defense
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCI	Heavy and Chemical Industrialization
JSDF	Japanese Self Defense Forces
JCS	Joint Chief of Staff
KIA	killed in action
MBC	Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation
MCM	military committee meeting
MND	Ministry of National Defense
NMS	National Military Security
NSS	National Security Strategy
NK	North Korea
NPT	Treaty on the Nonproliferation of Nuclear Weapons
OPCON	operational control
PRC	People's Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
UNCMAC	United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission
U.S.	United States
USFK	United States Forces, Korea
WAC	World Affairs Council
WIA	wounded in action
SCM	security consultative meeting
S.K.	South Korea

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

The Republic of Korea (ROK) has allied with the United States (U.S.) for the past 60 years; the ROK–U.S. alliance has played critical roles in terms of deterring a war on the Korean peninsula and balancing power in Northeast Asia. However, since the ROK–U.S. alliance is intrinsically an asymmetric relationship, the two states sometimes struggle with each other to maintain the alliance.

South Korea has dispatched significant numbers of troops in support of the United States two times, both during the Vietnam War and the Iraq War. Even though South Korea has yielded to the United States in response to the security guaranteed by U.S. presence, the relationship between the two states has not always been stable.

With its asymmetric position in mind, South Korea has not only supported the United States through dispatches of troops, but also, in contrast, declared self-reliance defense strategies around the times of these dispatches, including during the Park Jung Hee and Roh Moo Hyun administrations. But these two administrations did so in opposite ways: Park first dispatched troops in support of the U.S. and then declared a self-reliance strategy, while Roh declared a self-reliance policy but *then* dispatched troops in support of the U.S. This thesis will investigate connections between the dispatch of troops and declarations of self-reliance strategies in South Korea, and ask the following question: why did these two administrations change direction (and in different directions)?

B. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The ROK–U.S. alliance is an asymmetric relationship. The Republic of Korea, which does not have its own military capabilities to deter North Korea, has assured its national security through the alliance mechanism. In the absence of deterrence capability, South Korea has gained security commitments from the United States and tried to build independent deterrent capabilities to handle its North Korean threat.

Previous studies on the ROK's self-reliance defense strategy and dispatch of troops within the ROK-U.S. alliance context focus primarily on alliance security dilemmas: fears of entrapment and abandonment, tradeoffs between autonomy and security, and the patron-client relationship. Although some scholars deal with South Korea's changes of attitude toward the alliance and the issue of threat perception under the Roh Moo Hyun government, there has been no systematic demonstration of how gaps in threat perception are reflected in alliance cohesion. Furthermore, with regard to the dispatch of soldiers in support of the U.S. during both the Park and Roh administrations, numerous studies describe a causal relation with economic growth, but none addresses the correlation (or contradiction) between the dispatch of troops and a self-reliance defense strategy.

Identifying the factors that explain shifts between declarations of self-reliance defense policies, on the one hand, and the dispatch of troops, on the other, during the Park and Roh administrations might provide South Korea with reference points to help it objectively determine and resolve the North Korean threats.

C. LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis analyzes how the threat perception of South Korea, which is a weaker state within an asymmetric alliance, affected ROK-U.S. alliance cohesion, with a focus on the Park Jung Hee and Roh Moo Hyun administrations, and with an assumption, for the purposes of this thesis, that the U.S. threat perception toward North Korea is essentially constant – in other words, that movements by the ROK toward or away from the U.S. position in themselves constitute the narrowing or widening, respectively, of any gap in ROK-U.S. threat perception. To this end, the thesis reviews literatures on the policy patterns of both the Park and Roh governments, the definition of alliance, the ROK-U.S. alliance's cohesion and the definition of alliance cohesion, the asymmetry of the ROK-U.S. alliance and factors explaining the ROK's self-reliance defense strategies and dispatches of troops in support of the U.S. during both the Park and Roh administrations.

1. Changes of Policy Patterns in the Park Jung Hee and Roh Moo Hyun Administrations

The Park Jung Hee government had a unusual pattern: a dispatch of troops, followed by a self-defense policy line. President Park's primary concerns after creating his government through a military coup in 1961 were the establishment and consolidation of the ROK-U.S. alliance. From 1962 on, the USFK withdrawal plan under the Kennedy administration had continued; and this was a huge security threat to South Korea, which considered itself to be in military confrontation with North Korea. Consequently, Park Jung Hee's regime first proposed to send its troops to the Vietnam War in order to stop the USFK withdrawal. As Kyeong Eun Shin argues, the presence of Korean combat troops alongside U.S. ground troops in the Vietnam War in 1965 blocked the U.S. withdrawal plan on the Korean peninsula.¹ Shin further mentions that South Korea's dispatch played a decisive role in blocking the withdrawal of the U.S. troops in South Korea, which had been a constant agenda item under the Johnson administration.²

However, in 1968, as the United States declared the end of the Vietnam War, the need for the ROK's troops was reduced, and discussions on the reduction of U.S. forces in Korea began again. Moreover, after North Korean armed guerillas staged the Blue House raids on January 21³ and the Pueblo incidents occurred on January 23,⁴ South Korea began to develop considerable threat perception toward North Korea. As Shin mentions, however, the Johnson administration concluded that while North Korea was conducting an intense South Korean provocation, it had no intention of causing a war.⁵

¹ Kyeong Eun Shin, "The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration: Korean Combat Troops' Dispatch to Vietnam and Management of Alliance Security Dilemma," (master's thesis, Seoul National University, 2013), 54, http://www.riss.kr/search/detail/DetailView.do?p_mat_type=be54d9b8bc7cdb09&control_no=7626b78992c7bd0dffe0bdc3ef48d419#redirect.

² Shin states that with the deployment of Korean troops, the debate on the withdrawal of the USFK was postponed indefinitely. Shin, "The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration," 32.

³ The Blue House raid was an incident in which 31 North Korean armed military guerilla were trying to assassinate President Park Jung Hee and the Korean government officials on January 21, 1968.

⁴ The Pueblo incident occurred when on January 23, 1968, the U.S. intelligence ship 'Pueblo' on the high seas off the coast of Wonsan was kidnapped by the North Korean Navy.

⁵ Shin, "The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration," 66.

As a result, the United States sought to resolve the issue quietly through negotiations with North Korea, without prior coordination with South Korea. This caused considerable tension with South Korea, which insisted on a hard response to North Korea, such as a total war. President Park, as cited by Sang Chul Cha, stated in a speech at the graduation ceremony of Seoul National University on February 26, 1968:

In order for us to live, we must keep this nation with our power. When we lack our power, it is natural to get help from others. However, you should not expect that other keep you. I call this the subjectivity of national defense. We must cultivate the subjective capability to pioneer the destiny of our nation.⁶

President Park's speech, as Chul Ho Cho emphasizes, was the first step toward promoting South Korea's independent self-defense policy.⁷ In late 1968, as North Korea's provocations increased unprecedentedly, the security crisis in South Korea reached its peak. However, in 1969, new U.S. President Nixon proclaimed the Guam doctrine (better known as the Nixon Doctrine), arguing that Asian countries should take responsibility for their own security, and the U.S. sought to further accelerate the withdrawal of their military in Korea.

The Nixon Doctrine, alongside the repeated and widespread provocations of North Korea, created a great security crisis for Park's regime. In particular, Nixon's unilateral move toward withdrawal of the USFK, which had functioned as a deterrent "trip wire" on the Korean peninsula, made Park concerned about abandonment by the U.S. As Cho states, distrust toward the United States led Korea to foster its own defense industry and self-defense policy, and further prompted South Korea to envision nuclear development, starting in the early 1970s.⁸ Although some scholars identify different causes of Park's self-defense policy, the Park government's policy direction seems to have shifted from alliance loyalty to securing autonomy.

⁶ Sang Chul Cha, "President Park Chung-hee and the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 1970s," (author's translation) *Military History* 75 (June 2010): 337, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06508716>.

⁷ Chul Ho Cho, "President Park Chug Hee's National Defense Policy of Self-Reliance and the Development of Nuclear Weapons," (author's translation) *Critical Review of History* 80 (August 2007): 359, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00873706>.

⁸ Cho, "President Park Chug Hee's National Defense Policy of Self-Reliance and the Development of Nuclear Weapons," 363.

In the Roh Moo Hyun administration, the reverse policy direction can be seen, and the reversal occurs over a fairly short period of time. As Jae Young Hur and Ki Hong Eom put it, President Roh Moo Hyun expressed his strong commitment to South Korea's self-defense from the time of his presidential candidacy in 2002.⁹ Roh emphasized an equal standing with the United States and expressed his desire for the return of wartime operational control (OPCON) and establishment of self-defense.¹⁰ Moreover, as Hur and Eom further highlight, he officially revealed his willingness to pursue self-defense through the National Liberation Day celebration of August 15, 2003.¹¹

In the midst of self-defense initiative, in April 2003, the Roh government dispatched 673 medical support and engineering troops to Iraq. Since this first dispatch was a small unit composed of only non-combatants, it cannot be considered equivalent to the Park regime's dispatch of combat soldiers. Yet according to Samuel Len, as the Iraq War continued longer than expected, the Roh government, at the request of the United States, dispatched 3,000 soldiers, including "combat-ready special forces and marines," to Iraq in February of the following year.¹² It was the third largest military force in Iraq, after the United States and United Kingdom. Thus, under the Roh administration, South Korea pursued the opposite reversal: from self-defense policies to the dispatch of soldiers in support of the US.

Some scholars, however, assess that self-defense policies persisted during his tenure. Young Ho Kim states that President Roh proposed a concept of "cooperative self-reliant defense" and continued to pursue South Korea's own defense capabilities along

⁹ Jae Young Hur and Ki Hong Eom, "The Perception of President Roh Moo Hyun on Self-Reliant National Defense: Content Analysis of Presidential Speeches," (author's translation) *Journal of East and West Studies* 24, no.4 (2012): 39–40, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3119380.

¹⁰ Hur and Eom, "The Perception of President Roh Moo Hyun on Self-Reliant National Defense," 39–40.

¹¹ Hur and Eom, 42.

¹² Samuel Len, "South Korea Approves 3,000 Troops for Iraq," *New York Times*, last updated February 14, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/14/news/south-korea-approves-3000-troops-for-iraq.html?_r=0.

with the development of the ROK–U.S. Alliance.¹³ Since this can be a controversial issue, this thesis will deal with this problem in greater detail by analyzing Roh’s alliance policy patterns.

2. Definition of Alliance

The definition of an alliance should be the first step in the thesis because it defines alliance cohesion and provides implications for the cracking of the asymmetric alliance.

Generally, an alliance is a political promise to actively respond to common threats by ensuring that a sovereign state is provided military cooperation by other countries. In previous studies, many scholars have defined an alliance. This thesis, rather than selecting one of them, makes an operational definition of an alliance based on the claims of existing scholars. According to Stephan Walt, “an alliance is a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states.”¹⁴ Walt emphasizes that the purpose of forming an alliance is to overcome common potential threats with “aggregate power” in a security crisis.¹⁵ In the same context, George Liska argues that an alliance “associates like-minded actors in the hope of overcoming rivals.”¹⁶ Glenn Snyder defines alliances as “formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specific circumstances, against states outside their own membership.”¹⁷ Snyder further argues that “an alliance can be a result of a formal

¹³ Young Ho Kim, “Hyuprukjeock Jajugukbangua Han-Mi Dongmaeng: Jaengjeomgua Guaje,” 협력적 자주국방과 한·미동맹: 쟁점과 과제 [Cooperative Self-Defense and The ROK-U.S. Alliance: Issues and Challenges] (author’s translation) in *Korea Institute for National Unification Conference Edition* (May 2004): 119–120, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE01386383>; On October 1, 2003, unlike before, President Roh made his first mention of “Cooperative Self-reliant defense” in the Korean Armed Forces Day. Hun Chul Shin, “Roh Jajugukbang Jaegangjo Baekyung.” 노 자주국방 재강조 배경 [Background of Roh’s Re-emphasis on the Self-National Defense] (author’s translation) *Daily Business Newspaper*, last updated October 1, 2003, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=100&oid=009&aid=0000318961>; Jae Young Hur and Ki Hong Eom, “The Perception of President Roh Moo Hyun on Self-Reliant National Defense,” 42.

¹⁴ Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12.

¹⁵ Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, 22.

¹⁶ George Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1968), 3.

¹⁷ Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 4.

agreement of some sort that makes explicit the contingencies in which military cooperation will occur.”¹⁸

On the other hand, as James Morrow’s critique describes, states “form alliances to increase their security by massing their capabilities against a common enemy.”¹⁹ Morrow emphasizes that “the common interest [of an alliance] is generally to be the deterrence or defeat of a mutual threat.”²⁰ Robert Osgood defines the alliance more strictly as

a formal agreement that pledges states to co-operate in using their military resources against a specific state or states and usually obligates one or more of the signatories to use force, or to consider (unilaterally or in consultation with allies) the use of force, in specified circumstances.²¹

Morrow further emphasizes that the alliance should not hesitate to use illegal forces to counter common threats in terms of a “collective security” agreement.²² As a whole, one can define an alliance as a collective partnership between two or more countries to ensure their security based on mutual robust military support in response to a common enemy.

a. *Abandonment- Entrapment Dilemma*

However, as Snyder argues, once an alliance is formed, the security dilemma - entrapment and abandonment— between allies takes place because of opportunity costs between security benefits and autonomy costs.²³ To put this another way, as Snyder describes, since the national interests expected in an alliance differ, whether each state can be convinced of the other’s security commitment is a key issue in an alliance’s

¹⁸ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 4.

¹⁹ James D. Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances,” *American Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 4 (November 1991): 904, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111499>.

²⁰ Morrow, “Alliances and Asymmetry,” 905.

²¹ Robert E. Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1967), 17.

²² Osgood, *Alliances and American Foreign Policy*, 17.

²³ Glenn H. Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” *World Politics* 36, no.4 (July 1984): 466, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2010183>.

management.²⁴ In some sense, both defense commitments and substantial military assistance between allies are critical factors to consolidate it.

Assuming a state is a rational actor aiming to maximize its own national interests, allies' policies that harm another's national interests can sway an alliance. In this sense, as Snyder mentions, entrapment and abandonment badly hamper an alliance's cohesion.²⁵ According to Snyder, entrapment is

being dragged into a conflict over an ally's interests that one does not share, or shares only partially...Entrapment occurs when one values the preservation of the alliance more than the cost of fighting for the ally's interests. It is more likely to occur if the ally becomes intransigent in disputes with opponents because of his confidence in one's support. Thus, the greater one's dependence on the alliance and the stronger one's commitment to the ally, the higher the risk of entrapment.²⁶

More specifically, in an asymmetric alliance in which a kind of "client-patron" relationship is formed due to a difference of national power, small powers are dependent on major powers in terms of security benefits. In this sense, the burdens of entrapment imposed on powerful states are relatively high. On the other hand, a weaker country can pursue its own national interests by utilizing entrapment. As a result, as James Morrow's argument implies, unwanted security costs for great powers' allies motivate them to disconnect their ties with weaker countries.²⁷ In a sense, since an alliance is a trade relationship that exchanges desired national interests, a loss of benefit on either ally's preference can disrupt the transaction.

At the same time, the danger of abandonment can also exacerbate an alliance's solidarity. According to Snyder, abandonment is

worry about being deserted by one's ally. The worry arises from the simple fact that the ally has alternative partners and may opt for one of them if it becomes dissatisfied with present company. There are two

²⁴ Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 466.

²⁵ Snyder, 466.

²⁶ Snyder, 467.

²⁷ James D. Morrow, "Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances," 916. In addition, Glenn Snyder explains that "[as] the cost of abandonment is a serious loss of security, the cost of entrapment is an extreme form of lost autonomy." Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 181.

components in this fear of abandonment: the subjective probability that the partner will defect and the cost to oneself if it does.²⁸

In some sense, one can interpret the fear of defection as psychological anxiety about an alliance relationship in the future. As Snyder further explains, since the fear of abandonment, which weaker countries feel in asymmetric alliances, is possibly equated with their security crises, small powers show loyalty to great powers to avoid defection.²⁹ However, responding to the probability of defection, weaker countries also choose a risky option, like threatening “to defect oneself unless the ally becomes more supportive.”³⁰ Above all, as Snyder puts it, since the ambiguous or unclear security commitments of great powers aggravate the security unrest of weaker countries, small powers more often tend to take such a risk.³¹ Hence, a lack of strong commitment by major powers can deteriorate an alliance.

Similarly, due to the paradoxical relationship between abandonment and entrapment, an alliance experiences constant conflict over the long term. Above all, alliance conflict based on this security dilemma is more severe in an asymmetric alliance. Because an asymmetric alliance can impose too strong a fear of abandonment on weaker countries, they make an effort to balance their relations with stronger states. However, since this can conflict with the national interests of great powers, these efforts can deepen tensions in alliance politics. Taken together, the actions of allies who want to reduce a single particular peril create other risks in the process, entrapment and abandonment can be the “security-autonomy trade-off”³² in alliance management rather than a dilemma. Since entrapment and abandonment are incessant between allies, it is eventually impossible to eradicate the dilemma. As a result, we should handle the security dilemma in an alliance in terms of alliance management.

²⁸ Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 181.

²⁹ Snyder, 183.

³⁰ Snyder, 184.

³¹ Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics,” 473.

³² Snyder, *Alliance Politics*, 180.

b. Threat Perception’s Role in Alliance Cohesion

Threat perception can affect a relationship between allies. As Janice Stein argues, since threat perception can shape a country’s foreign and domestic policies, it naturally alter the country’s international relations.³³ A country’s threat perception is largely determined by four elements: self-threat perception, the capabilities and intentions of its enemies, and the security commitment of its allies. Stein suggests that while enemies’ military capabilities are an objective risk, the remaining factors are subjective risks based on emotional and psychological estimations.³⁴ In other words, the latter three factors play more decisive roles in forming a country’s threat awareness. Table 1 breaks down the determinants of threat perception in an ally.

Table 1. Threat Perception Subdivision in an Alliance³⁵

Index	Element	Determinants	Nature	Remarks
Internal	Self-Threat Perception	Change of Identity	Subjective	Psychological Factor
External	Enemy	Military Capability	Objective	Physical Factor
		Intentions	Subjective	Psychological Factor
	Alliance	Security Commitment	Subjective	Psychological Factor

The work of Robert Jervis, as discussed by Janice Stein, argues that “[if] the sender’s commitments are not credible to the receiver, the receiver may not perceive their meaning and consequently choose an inappropriate course of action.”³⁶ To be more

³³ Janice Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, ed. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013): 20, doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199760107/013.0012.

³⁴ Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 18.

³⁵ Adapted from Kyeong Eun Shin, “The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration: Korean Combat Troops’ Dispatch to Vietnam and Management of Alliance Security Dilemma,” 11.

³⁶ Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 3.

specific, the degree of credibility in the security assistance of an alliance, combined with external threats, influences a state's fears and provides motivation to seek changes in alliance policies. Thus, threat awareness can not only violate the other party's diplomatic preferences but also impact its solidarity.

Similarly, taking an asymmetric alliance as an example, the fear of abandonment can deepen small powers' threat perception against adversaries. As Snyder illustrates, since "the costs and risks of abandonment will outweigh the costs and risks of entrapment," small powers conduct multi-dimensional efforts toward major powers.³⁷ In terms of deterrence, for weaker countries that rely on the security umbrella of great powers, isolation from the security mechanism implies an imminent and direct exposure to the military threats of enemies. As a result, the possible breakdown of an alliance can create existential threat perception for small powers. This perception might lead to inadequate behavior by small powers, such as attempts to disconnect an alliance with great powers despite the weaknesses of their military capabilities. Ultimately, a shift of threat perception, originating from the fear of abandonment, can impact an alliance's cohesion.

3. The ROK–U.S. Alliance's Cohesion and Definition of Alliance Cohesion

This thesis will discuss the ROK–U.S. alliance cohesion interchangeably with the dispatch of combat troops and self-defense policy, since each represents a degree of loyalty to the US. In this section, based on the definition of the alliance, this thesis investigates the ROK–U.S. alliance's cohesion and what alliance cohesion means. Previous studies mainly argue that elements such as U.S. commitment and threat perception are important factors in determining the ROK–U.S. alliance's cohesion, and South Korea's influence on alliance cohesion tends to be neglected. Generally, anti-American sentiment in South Korea creates tension in the ROK–U.S. alliance, but there is no direct correlation with South Korea's self-defense policy.

³⁷ Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," 472.

Scholars have different opinions on the factors that determine ROK–U.S. alliance cohesion. First, Victor Cha states that although the ROK–U.S. alliance had held, “drawing its strength and cohesion from a clear combined mission and a commonly perceived threat,” through the political conflicts between the Bush and the Roh Moo Hyun administration in the process of resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis in the early 2000s, the alliance could be “at worst destroyed.”³⁸ Cha points out that if the United States does not provide commitment through visible means, alliance cohesion can be significantly weakened.³⁹ From a viewpoint opposite to that of this thesis, Kwang Il Noh insists that “dominant U.S. threat perception drives the strength of the alliance.”⁴⁰ Noh argues that through four variables, the cohesion of the ROK–U.S. alliance has changed depending on the degree of security threat that the United States feels.⁴¹ Conversely, Dong Woo Kim analyzes the alliance solidarity based on “the U.S. military spending,” but he concludes that “there is no causal relationship between the two variables.”⁴² Kim emphasizes that even if the U.S. cuts off its military expenditure for the alliance, the ROK does not need to feel an alliance security dilemma.⁴³ Although these studies analyze the alliance bond through objective indicators, the failure to address Korea’s influence as a variable remains a limitation.

On the other hand, Bon Cheol Koo argues that shared political, economic, and cultural identities between Korea and the U.S. are the factors that reinforce the alliance’s

³⁸ Victor D. Cha, “Shaping Change and Cultivating Idea in the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” in *The Future of America’s Alliance in Northeast Asia*, ed. Michel H. Armacost and Daniel I. Okimoto (Stanford, CA: Asia Pacific Research Center, 2004), 122.

³⁹ Cha, “Shaping Change and Cultivating Idea in the U.S.-ROK Alliance.” 125.

⁴⁰ Kwang Il Noh, “The Impact of Changes in Dominant U.S. Threat Perception on the Cohesion of the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), 98, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/44633>.

⁴¹ Noh, “The Impact of Changes in Dominant U.S. Threat Perception on the Cohesion of the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” 98.

⁴² Dong Woo Kim, “The Relationship between U.S. Military Spending and the Cohesion of the ROK-U.S. Alliance,” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 77–78, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51557>.

⁴³ Kim, “The Relationship between U.S. Military Spending and the Cohesion of the ROK-U.S. Alliance,” 77.

cohesion.⁴⁴ Koo also holds that although the economic growth and ideational changes of South Korea caused partnership tension with the US, the alliance has developed into a more equal and mature relationship through these conflicts.⁴⁵ However, Koo's study is not very different from previous research, as it depends on how much Korea shares US-centric identities.

Moreover, given existing studies on alliance cohesion, it is necessary to redefine the term. Since an alliance is not a one-sided subordinate relationship, weaker states can also influence the strength of an alliance. Scholars explain cohesion as follows. First, Holsti et al. explain that alliance cohesion is “the ability of alliance partners to agree upon goals [: deter and overcome a common enemy], strategy, and tactics, and to coordinate activities directed toward those ends.”⁴⁶ They further analyze five elements that impact alliance cohesion: “threat, decision making structure, [alliance] size, [military] capabilities and the credibility of deterrence, and national attributes.”⁴⁷ Of these factors, when just focusing on the external threat and credibility of deterrence, as Holsti et al. suggest, “external pressure tends to create internal cohesion.”⁴⁸ In addition, they argue, the credibility of an ally's commitments to protect in a security crisis has significant impact on alliance persistence.⁴⁹

On the other hand, Friedman et al. hold that “an alliance derives its solidarity from its common purpose.”⁵⁰ Moreover, they explain that “what weighs most heavily for unity in an alliance is agreement on matters directly bearing on alliance, such as those concerned with identification and treatment of opponents before and after hostilities.”⁵¹

⁴⁴ Bon-cheol Koo, “The Impact of Changes in State Identity on Alliance Cohesion in Northeast Asia,” (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), 113, <http://hdl.handle.net/10945/4412>.

⁴⁵ Koo, “The Impact of Changes in State Identity on Alliance Cohesion in Northeast Asia,” 113.

⁴⁶ Ole R. Holsti, Terrence P. Hopmann and John D. Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances: Comparative studies in behavioral sciences* (New York: Wiley, 1973), 16.

⁴⁷ Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan, *Unity and Disintegration in International Alliances*, 16–24.

⁴⁸ Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan, 17.

⁴⁹ Holsti, Hopmann and Sullivan, 17.

⁵⁰ Julian R. Friedman, Christopher Bladen and Steven Rosen, *Alliance in International Politics* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc., 1970), 288.

⁵¹ Friedman, Bladen and Rosen, *Alliance in International Politics*, 288.

In this sense, alliance cohesion can reach optimum performance when allies recognize and respond to external threats identically and consistently. If one ally departs from the collective direction, enemies impose hostilities to test the resistance of the alliance.

Similarly, in investigating alliance stability, George Liska holds that since all alliances have fragile factors, allies must show their commitment to prevent the alliance from wavering, providing benefits and trust to its partners.⁵² In other words, if the alliance is asymmetric, a relatively small state should demonstrate stronger commitments to maintain cohesion. Accordingly, within an asymmetric alliance, coerced policy decisions can appear, and, above all, the weaker state is more likely to suffer inconsistency in alliance politics based on the intensity of the threat and self-determined threat perception. Contradictions of alliance policy caused by threat recognition directly reveals that the alliance drifts.

Based on these researchers' discussions of alliance cohesion, this research argues that threat perception disparity between allies, in particular that caused by the weaker state's threat perception, could be a determinant factor of the alliance's cohesion. Furthermore, the thesis redefines alliance cohesion as consistency of general foreign policy. The inconsistency of alliance policies, which is particularly a phenomenon in an asymmetric relationship, directly reveals that the alliance drifts.

4. Asymmetry of the ROK–U.S. Alliance

Asymmetric alliances, as Young Joon Kim suggests, are similar to general alliances “regardless of types, purpose [and performance].”⁵³ However, conflictual factors are contained within the relationship because national strategies and interests and common enemies are differently recognized.

Robert Rothstein defines a small power as

a state which recognized that it cannot obtain security primarily by use of its own capabilities, and that it must rely fundamentally on the aid of other

⁵² Liska, *Nations in Alliance: The Limits of Interdependence*, 108.

⁵³ Young Joon Kim, “Appeasing the Fear of Abandonment in Asymmetric Alliance: The ROK-U.S. Alliance Case,” (author's translation) *Institute of East and West Studies of Yonsei University* 11, no.4 (December 2014): 81, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=3322953.

states, institutions, processes, or developments to do so; the Small Power's belief in its inability to rely on its own means must also be recognized by the other states involved in international politics.⁵⁴

In this sense, since Korea does not have its own military capabilities to deter and defeat North Korean threats—in particular, nuclear attacks—it should be considered a small state. Furthermore, in terms of national power, as Woo Tae Lee emphasizes, “the ROK–U.S. alliance is an asymmetric tie between a powerful and a weak country in which there is a marked difference in national power among allies.”⁵⁵ In particular, since Korea historically did not have options to choose its ally, the ROK–U.S. alliance is fundamentally an asymmetric relationship. Lee further argues that

Korea, which had to depend on the survival issue of the nation in the course of the Korean War, handed over the ROK military's operational control to the United States, and after the Korean War, Korea established the ROK–U.S. alliance based on the ROK–U.S. mutual defense treaty with the U.S., in order to ensure its [national] security. In this process, Korea was not in a position to choose an ally, but rather in a position to wait for U.S. choice in order to secure its security and survival ... In addition to the situation in which the alliance was established, the ROK–U.S. alliance was basically an asymmetric alliance between the great power and small power where the differences in national power between the allies were remarkable.⁵⁶

Moreover, some scholars explore alliances in terms of the balance of power. As cited by Lee, Michael Handel states that “cracks arising from asymmetric alliances are exacerbated when a powerful state, for the purpose of maintaining their global balance of power, does not compete with common enemies and proceeds to cooperative relations with them.”⁵⁷ Thus, as Lee further states, from the standpoint of South Korea,

the national security and survival arising from the North Korean military threats are the greatest national interests and a fundamental reason for

⁵⁴ Robert L. Rothstein, *Alliances and Small Powers* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 29.

⁵⁵ Woo Tae Lee, “The Strengthening of the Korea-U.S. Alliance and Its Asymmetry,” (author's translation), *The Journal of Political Science & Communication* 19, no.1 (February 2000): 62, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06616402>.

⁵⁶ Woo Tae Lee, “The Strengthening of the Korea-U.S. Alliance and Its Asymmetry,” 62.

⁵⁷ Lee, 62–63.

Korea to establish the ROK–U.S. alliance, but the alliance between the two countries cannot be symmetrical and horizontal in that the United States maintains its political, economic and military influence at the global level, while it pursue the balance of power [on the Peninsula].⁵⁸

In a similar vein, Professor Su Hyong Lee argues that “an asymmetric alliance is not only unequal in the sense of gain and loss, but also imbalanced in responsibility and expectation toward its partner.”⁵⁹ Since national strategies and interests are different within an asymmetric alliance, interpretations about the external environment surrounding the alliance could be dissimilar, or conflictual. As a whole, through existing studies of weak countries and asymmetric alliances, the ROK–U.S. alliance is seen as a typical asymmetric alliance. Despite the expansion of Korea’s national power since the end of the Cold War, the alliance’s structural character still remains unchanged.

5. Causes of Self-Reliant Defense Strategies and Dispatch of Troops for the U.S. during Both the Park and Roh Administrations

Most previous studies of the Park Jung Hee and Roh Moo Hyun governments on self-defense and dispatching policies largely took independent approaches to the causes of each policy. In particular, the argument that the alliance security dilemma was a main factor in determining the policy of a weaker state within the asymmetric alliance is weak, in terms of overly limiting the autonomy attributed to a small state in international relations.

With regard to self-reliance defense policies, existing studies focus primarily on the purpose of overcoming the asymmetric alliance dilemma. Overall, previous research shows that Park’s self-reliance policy was based on the fear of abandonment induced by the unilateral diplomacies of the United States after the 1960s: the USFK reduction plan, conflicts in the Pueblo case, and the Nixon Doctrine. Scholars including Su Hyong Lee, as presented by Kyung Soo Lee, state that “a fundamental framework of Korean security policies is the ROK–U.S. alliance, and the self-reliance defense policy [in both regimes]

⁵⁸ Lee, 63.

⁵⁹ Soo Hyong Lee, “Restructuring Arrangements of the ROK-U.S. Security System,” (author’s translation), *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 40, no.3 (November 2000): 383, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00992135>.

is a result of self-help efforts to overcome the alliance security dilemma in the asymmetric alliance.”⁶⁰ In this sense, Noh Soon Chang and Dong Joon Jo also assert that the alliance security dilemma has a direct impact on self-reliance defense policies.⁶¹

In a slightly different view, Chul Ho Cho compares the two governments’ policies. Cho holds that Park and Roh’s self-defense policies showed great differences in terms of U.S. support and the role of the ROK–U.S. alliance.⁶² Cho argues that Park’s policy direction was closer to an independent defense, while Roh tended to be cooperative with the U.S.⁶³

While existing research on Park’s self-reliance policy focuses on security issues, previous discussions on Roh’s policy argue that a changed security identity, weakened threat perception toward the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and reinforced military capabilities led South Korea to try to gain independent deterrent power. In particular, Hyun Soo Kim argues that “conflicts of identity that share a threat were formed and predicted changes in alliance relations, leading to the self-defense policy to get autonomy [in the Roh administration].”⁶⁴ In a different context, Young Ho Kim and Sun Won Park argue that Roh’s self-reliance policy was an attempt not to

⁶⁰ In his doctoral dissertation, Lee concludes that besides the security issues, “the philosophy and personal characteristics of leaders, such as President Park’s anti-communism and the out-sider rhetoric of President Roh Moo Hyun, were also one of the main factors in defense policies.” Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” (author’s translation) (Ph. D dissertation, Sungkyunkwan University, 2007), 35, [http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00991861](http://www.riss.kr/search/detail/DetailView.do?p_mat_type=be54d9b8bc7cdb09&control_no=388cf07ab5abbd4effe0bdc3ef48d419#redirect; Su Hyong Lee, “Alliance Security Dilemma and the Cycle of Abandonment-Entrapment,” (author’s translation) <i>The Korean Journal of International Studies</i> 39, no.1 (September 1999), <a href=).

⁶¹ Noh Soon Chang, “Trade-Off in the ‘Autonomy-Security Trade-Off Model’: The Case of Asymmetric U.S.-South Korea Alliance,” (author’s translation) *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 36, no.1 (October 1996), <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00994020>; Dong Joon Jo, “The Oxymoron of Defense Self-Reliance in the Inter-Korean Relationship,” (author’s translation) *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 44, no.3 (August 2004), <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00997899>.

⁶² Chul Ho Cho, “President Park Chung Hee’s National Defense Policy of Self-Reliance and the Development of Nuclear Weapons,” 359.

⁶³ Chul Ho Cho, 359.

⁶⁴ Hyun Soo Kim, “Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government’s Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study: Laying Stress on National Security Environment and National Security Identity,” (author’s translation) (master’s thesis, Yonsei University, 2004), 144, http://www.riss.kr/search/detail/DetailView.do?p_mat_type=be54d9b8bc7cdb09&control_no=681a198028b2ade9.

construct independent military deterrence that completely excluded the ROK–U.S. alliance, but to establish a symmetrical alliance with the United States.⁶⁵ As for a concept of ‘independence’ in the Roh government’s defense policy, there is controversy between schools. Thus, more investigation is needed in this thesis.

Taken together, the background and causes for each government’s decision on military aid for the United States can be divided into two broad categories. First is the idea that as a result of the asymmetric alliance dilemma, South Korea supported American wars to ensure its own security and manage the security dilemma within an asymmetric alliance. Second is the argument that economic compensation through military support was the main cause of the dispatch of troops.

Initially, citing Princeton Lyman’s argument, Dong Ju Choi claims that South Korea decided to dispatch its troops to Vietnam to ensure its security on the Korean peninsula.⁶⁶ Tae Il Chung claims that Roh’s government used the dispatch to overcome limitations of coordination with the United States in resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis.⁶⁷ Chung further argues that the Korean administration sent troops to prevent the strategic flexibility of the USFK and enhance Korea’s strategic value.⁶⁸ President Roh Moo-Hyun’s remarks, which emphasized that dispatching troops was to fulfill the duty of the alliance and resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis peacefully, can also be put in the same context. Overall discussions are linked to security issues coming from the fear of abandonment and entrapment.

⁶⁵ Young Ho Kim, “Hyuprukjeock Jajugukbangua Han-Mi Dongmaeng: Jaengjeomgwa Guaje,” 협력적 자주국방과 한·미동맹:쟁점과 과제 [Cooperative Self-defense and The ROK-U.S. Alliance: Issues and Challenges]; Sun Won Park, “ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict during the Roh-Bush Administrations, 2003–2007,” (author’s translation) *Critical Review of History* 86 (February 2009), <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Journal/ArticleDetail/NODE01151729>.

⁶⁶ Princeton Lynman, “Korea’s Involvement in Vietnam and Its Impact,” *Asian Survey* 6, no.10 (June 1970), quoted in Dong Ju Choi, “The Background to Korea’s Involvement in the Second Indochina War,” *Korean Political Science Review* 30, no.2 (August 1996), <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00763965>.

⁶⁷ Tae Il Chung, “A Study of Korea-U.S. Security Relation under Noh’s Government in Korea,” (author’s translation) *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies* 12, no. 45 (December 2007): 152, http://www.knea96.kr/html/sub04_04.asp.

⁶⁸ Chung, “A Study of Korea-U.S. Security Relation under Noh’s Government in Korea,” 161.

In a different approach, Kwan-Ok Kim analyzes the South Korean dispatch diplomacy through Putnam's "two level game theory."⁶⁹ According to Kim, Korea's absolute security dependence on the U.S. led to the decision to dispatch its troops to Vietnam.⁷⁰ Moreover, in the case of sending troops to Iraq, Kim asserts, in common with Hun Jang, that the diversification of domestic political systems and the weakening of security dependence on the U.S. made it more difficult to dispatch troops.⁷¹ From a different view, Tae Gyun Park asserts that the Park Jung Hee regime decided to send its troops to Vietnam to block the USFK withdrawal.⁷² Park points out that the fundamental reason for the Korean government to dispatch troops to the Vietnam War was to fill the security gap on the Korean peninsula.⁷³ Hence, security dependence on the United States is one of the reasons for the two governments' dispatch policies.

On the other hand, Dong Ju Choi, citing Kyu Dok Hong's dissertation, argues that the Korean government deployed soldiers mainly for economic benefits.⁷⁴ Choi writes that the regime, "who knew better than the fact that the Korean War provided a decisive opportunity for Japan's economic growth, was unlikely to dispatch the troops to Vietnam without economic motivation."⁷⁵ In addition, Choi mentions that as a typical

⁶⁹ Putnam argued that the "win-sets" of the nation is determined through the interaction of domestic political institutions and international relations, which reflects to the foreign policy of the state. Based on this, Kim analyzes what determined Korea's dispatch diplomacies based on these hypotheses. Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no.3 (Summer 1988), 435–437, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2706785>.

⁷⁰ Kwan Ok Kim, "An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach: A Comparative Analysis of Dispatching Policies of the Korean Troops toward Vietnam and Iraq," (author's translation) *Korean Journal of Political Science* 13, no.1 (March 2005): 359–371, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?name=kiss2002&key=2452506.

⁷¹ Kim, "An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach," 379; Hun Jang, "An Analysis of the Decision Making Process of Sending Troops to Iraq (2003~2004): Changing Roles of the President, the Parliament and Civil Society," *Dispute Resolution Studies Review* 13, no.2 (2015): 129, doi: 10.16958/drsr.2015.13.2.105.

⁷² Tae Gyun Park, "Between Memory and Oblivion: The Dispatch of Korean Combat Troops to Vietnam," (author's translation) *Critical Review of History* 80 (August 2007): 292, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00873704>.

⁷³ Tae Gyun Park, "Between Memory and Oblivion," 292.

⁷⁴ Kyu Dok Hong, "Unequal Partners: ROK-US Relations During the Vietnam War," (Ph. D dissertation, University of South Carolina, 1991), quoted in Dong-Ju Choi, "Impact of the Vietnam-Dispatch upon Korean Economic Industrialization," (author's translation) *Southeast Asian Studies* 11 (March 2011): 205–206, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/DlibViewer.do?cn=KINX2001049808&sysid=nhn>.

⁷⁵ Choi, "Impact of the Vietnam-Dispatch upon Korean Economic Industrialization," 205–206.

developmental state, Korea decided to send its troops to Vietnam absolutely for economic growth.⁷⁶ As Tae-ho Kang argues, existing research dealing with this economic motivation say that “removing the fear of collapse of the Korean financial market in response to the North Korean bombing [by the U.S.]” was a major factor of the decision to deploy soldiers to Iraq.⁷⁷ In addition to Kang’s comments, Bo Hyuk Suh argues that the economic benefits that could be gained “through participation in postwar Iraq reconstruction projects” were one of the decisive factors behind sending troops to Iraq.⁷⁸ Unlike the aforementioned research, though, some scholars like Se Jin Kim and Heon Chul Kwon argue that the economic benefits were merely the results of participation in both wars, not a fundamental reason.⁷⁹ Consequently, another school insists that economic growth and stability were driving factors for the two governments to deploy soldiers to the wars.

Despite contradictions of alliance policies within each government, the fact that scholars recognized the two policies as individual phenomena, and that no research was done to define the correlation, can be taken as a limitation of existing research. Although some studies explore a causal relationship between the Korean government’s threat perception and self-defense policies, and there exist comparative studies of the Roh Moo Hyun and Park Jung Hee governments on self-defense policies based on security identity and threat recognition, existing studies overlook the contradiction between the two policies.

⁷⁶ Dong-Ju Choi, “The Background to Korea’s Involvement in the Second Indochina War,” (author’s translation) *Korean Political Science Review* 30, no.2 (August 1996): 270–273, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE00763965>.

⁷⁷ Tae Ho Kang, “Iraq Pabyungua Han-Mi Guangye: Haek-Pabyung-Juhanmiguneui Samgakhamsu,” 이라크 파병과 한미관계: 핵·파병·주한미군의 삼각함수 [Iraq Dispatches and the ROK-U.S. Relations: Nuclear · Dispatch · USFK’s Trigonometric functions] (author’s translation) *Memory and Views* (Fall 2004): 96, <http://dlps.nanet.go.kr/DlibViewer.do?cn=KINX2004118178&sysid=nhn>.

⁷⁸ Bo Hyuk Suh, “The Rationality of Decision: Revisiting the Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy toward the Dispatch of Troops to Iraq,” (author’s translation) *The Korean Journal of International Studies* 55, no.3 (September 2015): 247, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06519100>.

⁷⁹ Se Jin Kim, “South Korea’s Involvement in Vietnam and Its Economic and Political Impact,” *Asian Survey* 10, no. 6 (June 1970), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2642884>; Heon Chul Kwon, “The Effect to the World and the Korean Economy by the Iraq War,” (author’s translation) *National Defense Studies* 46, no.2 (December 2003), http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2612255.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

This literature review suggests that

- The assessment of Korea's diplomatic autonomy within its asymmetric alliance is too limited.
- No previous studies take an analytical approach to the contradiction of foreign policies within each government.
- When a North Korean threat appeared that the ROK could not afford to control, South Korea always wanted to utilize the ROK–U.S. alliance.

In addition to these findings, assuming that the alliance dilemma is an apparatus to optimize the alliance's performance by restricting a small state's action, if the weaker country is not constrained by the policies and strategies of the great powers, alliance performance could be degraded. Put differently, without the common threat perception crucial to forming an alliance, inconsistent alliance policies could occur.

Based on these findings, this thesis makes the following hypotheses:

First, if its threat perception falls either below the common threat or above the level of an existential threat, the ROK will take action to show or withdraw its commitment in response to a relatively small increase of the threat recognition. Thus, an unpredictable security threat could have been a critical factor that put Roh Moo Hyun's administration back into the framework of the ROK–U.S. alliance, since his government had very different threat perception than that of the United States.

Second, if South Korea faces an existential threat, it tends to pursue an independent defense policy, since it doubts the U.S. willingness to protect it. Hence, the Park Jung Hee administration tended to break away from the alliance mechanism and seek other means to guarantee its national security.

The thesis begins with the assumption that although U.S. foreign policy in the ROK–U.S. alliance can be divided into hard and soft lines, its threat perception is relatively stable. Analyzing the U.S. National Security Strategy published from 1987 to 2006, the United States recognizes North Korea as a significant threat to security on the Korean peninsula, and it consistently states that the ROK–U.S. alliance should deter

North Korea through the robust presence of U.S. forces.⁸⁰ The National Military Strategies published between 1992 and 2004 also describe North Korea and the North Korean nuclear program as immediate threats to U.S. Asian allies.⁸¹ Furthermore, a Gallup survey shows that since 2000, Americans have recognized North Korea as the U.S. greatest enemy, and the trend is unchanged.⁸² As a whole, the United States essentially defines North Korea as a dangerous enemy, and this is quite different from Korea, which sometimes takes a favorable position toward North Korea. In this regard, the thesis presumes that the U.S. maintains a consistent perception of the North Korean threat and the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

⁸⁰ Since the NMS and the NSS were published in 1986 after “the Goldwater-Nichols Act” was enacted, it was not possible to pinpoint the previous U.S. threat perception, but considering that it was during the Cold War, there might no change over the threat; Ronald Reagan, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1987), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1987.pdf>; Ronald Reagan, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1988), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1988.pdf>; George H.W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1990), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1990.pdf>; George H.W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1991), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1991.pdf>; George H.W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1993), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1993.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1994), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1994.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1995), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1995.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1996), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1996.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1997), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1997.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 1998), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/1998.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2000), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2000.pdf>; Bill Clinton, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2001), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2001.pdf>; George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2002), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2002.pdf>; George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2006), <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2006.pdf>.

⁸¹ Colin Powell, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1992), <http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nms/nms1992.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-123420-723>; John M. Shalikashvili, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1995), <http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nms/nms1995.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-123428-503>; John M. Shalikashvili, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997), <http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nms/nms1997.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-123438-080>; Richard Myers, *National Military Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2004), <http://history.defense.gov/Portals/70/Documents/nms/nms2004.pdf?ver=2014-06-25-123447-627>.

⁸² The hostility of Americans to North Korea is between 65–87%, and there has been no big change of the number recently. Justin McCarthy, “Americans’ Ratings of North Korea Remain Highly Negative,” *Gallup*, February 23, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/poll/181667/americans-ratings-north-korea-remain-highly-negative.aspx?g_source=american+view+of+north+korean+threat&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles.

E. RESEARCH DESIGN

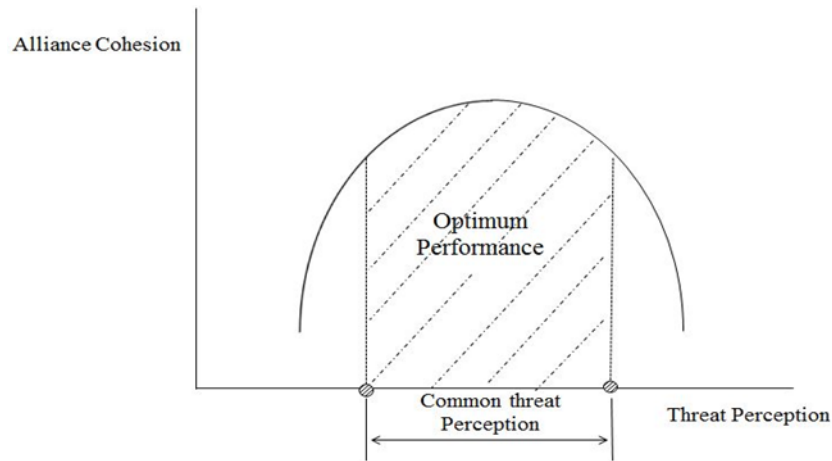
In this thesis, the independent variable (IV) is the threat perception of South Korea, and the dependent variable (DV) is contradiction in alliance policies, redefined as the alliance's cohesion. This thesis will undertake a comparative case study of the apparently reverse changes in alliance policies between the Roh Moo Hyun and Park Jung Hee administrations.

The research will examine the presidents' memoirs, press interviews, and policy analysis of major issues in order to analyze the threat recognition of the two governments. In addition, to investigate the correlation between the self-reliant defense policy and dispatch of troops, this thesis pays attention to diplomatic documents and existing scholars' analyses. Above all, by paying attention to the emergence of threats and the timing of policy announcements, a particular pattern might be discovered.

To compare each government, the thesis utilizes the Yerkes–Dodson Law (Inverted U model).⁸³ The theory suggests that individual stress and performance have an inverted U-type correlation. In political economy, the inverted-U model is frequently used to analyze the relationship between competition and innovation. Given that the two terms are respectively fitted to pressure and performance, the model is worthy of use in deriving the relationship between threat perception and alliance cohesion between the ROK–U.S. alliance. Figure 1 shows a visualized reference to the Yerkes-Dodson Law.

⁸³ Defining the Yerkes-DODson Law, Elizabeth Duffy states that “In general, the optimal degree of activation appears to be a moderate one, the curve which expresses the relationship between [arousal] and quality of performance taking the form of an inverted U.” Elizabeth Duffy, “The Psychological Significance of the Concept of ‘Arousal’ Or ‘Activation,’” *Psychological Review* 64, no. 5 (September 1957): 268, doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/h0048837>; According to Francesca Gino, the Yerkes-DODson law explains that “performance increases with physiological or mental arousal (stress) but only up to a point. When the level of stress becomes too high, performance decreases.” Francesca Gino, “Are You Too Stressed to Be Productive? Or Not Stressed Enough?” *Harvard Business Review*, last modified April 14, 2016, <https://hbr.org/2016/04/are-you-too-stressed-to-be-productive-or-not-stressed-enough>.

Figure 1. The ROK–U.S. Alliance Analysis Tool



As emphasized earlier, this thesis assumes that U.S. threat perception is relatively constant. Furthermore, the thesis defines a common threat as a threat shared between South Korea and the United States about security circumstances in North Korea and outside of the Korean peninsula. Taking into account that consistent and strong alliance policies are possible when South Korea and the United States share threat perception, common threat perception, which can lead to optimum alliance performance, can be prompted by mid-level pressure. The model can be useful for analyzing the correlation between South Korea's threat perception and ROK–U.S. alliance cohesion.

F. THESIS OVERVIEW

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapters II and III will discuss how the Roh and Park administrations' threat perceptions changed, respectively, in response to domestic and international factors. Chapter IV discusses implications for South Korea and limitations of the thesis, and suggests research directions that can complement the points overlooked in this study.

II. THREAT PERCEPTION IN THE ROH MOO HYUN ADMINISTRATION AND THE ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE COHESION

The Roh Moo Hyun government took over the Sunshine Policy of its predecessor administration and treated North Korea with brotherhood. Unlike past South Korean governments, which traditionally regarded North Korea's military power as a means of a southward invasion or hostile intention, Roh acknowledged and tolerated North Korea's military threat as rights of self-defense. South Korea's low threat awareness led to contradictory alliance policies: a self-reliance defense policy alongside deployment of troops to Iraq. Above all, this resulted in considerable alliance conflicts with the Bush administration during President Roh's presidency. This chapter will examine the Roh Moo Hyun government's threat perception regarding North Korea and the security environment surrounding the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, the chapter will investigate how South Korean threat perception can impact the ROK-U.S. alliance's cohesion. In exploring the consistency of Korea's alliance policies, this chapter will find a significant connection between the Korean government's perceived threat to its security environment and the ROK-U.S. alliance's solidarity. First, the thesis explores the Roh administration's self-reliance defense policy and dispatch of troops to Iraq.

A. SELF-RELIANCE DEFENSE POLICY

President Roh Moo Hyun's willingness for South Korea's self-defense was revealed through his presidential election campaign. According to the 16th Presidential Election Pledge, Roh aimed to reinforce Korea's advanced self-defense system by transforming South Korean forces from a troop-intensive force to a technology-intensive military, establishing an independent defense posture by increasing its defense budget.⁸⁴ More than anything else, his belief in self-defense initiated the transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) in the Korean peninsula from the United States to South Korea. As Kyung Soo Lee illustrates, President Roh, in the most significant step of

⁸⁴ "16Dae Daesungongyak - Kungbangbunya," 16 대 대선공약- 국방분야 [The 16th Presidential Election Pledge - National Defense Field] (author's translation) Policy Department, last updated December 20, 2012, http://knowhow.pa.go.kr/roh/vision_1/policy/view.asp?bid=3&pid=181&cp=1&num=15.

implementing his self-reliance defense policy, constantly questioned the OPCON handover, which the commander of the United States Forces of Korea (USFK) exercised, from his days in the 2002 presidential election.⁸⁵ Taken together, three factors can define the Roh Moo Hyun regime's self-defense policy: the OPCON transfer, military reform and defense budget increase.

1. The Transfer of Wartime Operation Control

In general, self-reliance in national defense implies that a country has the capabilities to conduct its own military operations. South Korea's OPCON, which it conceded to the U.S. after the Korean War in 1950, has to date been delegated to the USFK commander. As Young Ho Kim puts it, Roh Moo Hyun had issues with the fact that as supreme commander of the armed forces of South Korea, he could not employ the authority of operational command in wartime on the Korean peninsula.⁸⁶ In a sense, the transfer of OPCON was closely related to the military sovereignty of South Korea.

The OPCON transfer was discussed officially within the ROK-U.S. alliance when Presidents George W. Bush and Roh Moo Hyun agreed on its principles at the ROK-U.S. summit on September 16, 2006. However, as Jong Seok Lee describes, Roh instructed the Ministry of National Defense to prepare a blueprint for independent national defense with the promise of the OPCON transfer as soon as he took office in 2003.⁸⁷ Roh strongly insisted on the OPCON transfer despite intense opposition within Korean military and political circles. According to Jong Seok Lee's memoir, since "independent national defense means equipping with the ability to carry out ones own war, and this can be done only by possessing operational planning and operation capability, the OPCON transfer became a prerequisite for the nation's self-defense."⁸⁸ The expected effect of the OPCON

⁸⁵ Kyung Soo Lee, "A Comparative Study on 'Self-Reliant Defence' Policy of Park & Rho's Regimes," 152.

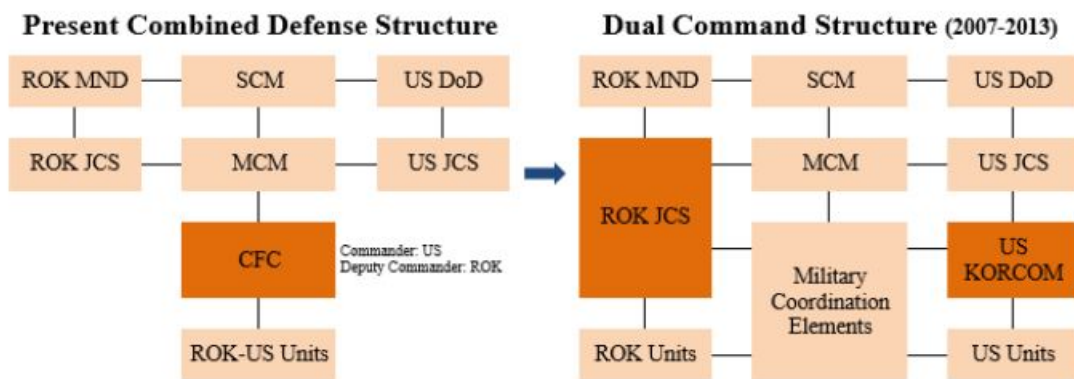
⁸⁶ Young Ho Kim, "Hyuprukjeock Jajugukbangua Han·Mi Dongmaeng" 협력적 자주국방과 한·미동맹 [Cooperative Self-defense and The ROK-U.S. Alliance], 128.

⁸⁷ Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnal wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade] (author's translation) (Gyeonggi Province: Kaemagowon, 2014), 81. Jong Seok Lee participated in the Commission on the 16th Presidential Transition and set up a strategic underpinning for President Roh Moo Hyun's national defense as well as foreign policies, and completed the South Korean National Security Council (NSC) system.

⁸⁸ Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnal wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade], 80.

transfer would be to dismantle the ROK–U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC). It essentially implied forming a new military cooperation system led by the ROK military and supported by the U.S. military. Figure 2 illustrates the situation before and after OPCON transfer. More specifically, it illustrates that the USFK’s commander led all military operations in the Korean peninsula before the transfer, but that the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff commander took over the primary leadership role after.

Figure 2. Comparison of before and after the OPCON Transfer⁸⁹



One can interpret the dismantlement of the CFC, which symbolized the ROK–U.S. alliance, as the withdrawal of the USFK and furthermore the dissolution of the ROK–U.S. alliance. As a result, the President’s initiative conflicted with not only the Blue House but also top military commanders. For example, as Jong Seok Lee describes, on January 16, 2003, the Ministry of Defense ruled out the term “self-defense” in the agency report, which was delivered to the Commission of the Presidential Transition.⁹⁰ Lee further mentions that on May 6, 2003, while reporting on its vision of self-defense to President Roh, the Ministry of Defense did not even mention wartime operational

⁸⁹ Source: Hyung Joon (Joshua) Byun, “Explaining South Korean Policy Toward the United States, 1987–2014,” E-International Relations Students, last updated July 12, 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/12/explaining-south-korean-policy-toward-the-united-states-1987-2014/>.

⁹⁰ Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnai wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade], 81.

control.⁹¹ This led to continuing conflicts between President Roh and decision-makers in Korea's national defense policy.

However, the objective security situation both at home and abroad made President Roh confident about the OPCON transfer. These included South Korea's overwhelming economic power, its military spending, and intimate diplomatic relations with China. As a result, as Jong Seok Lee recalls, the Roh government, through the establishment of the Korean National Security Council (NSC), drove a strong reform effort toward self-defense represented by the return of OPCON.⁹² President Roh emphasized that self-reliance defense was compatible with the ROK-U.S. alliance and that the OPCON transfer did not constitute a demand for the USFK withdrawal. However, as described by Sang Hun Choe, inconsistency within Roh's remarks, such as "What's wrong with being anti-American?," and the actual alliance policies of the government caused security anxiety in South Korea.⁹³ This political stance led to an ongoing struggle with the United States and further amplified South Korean security concerns over North Korea's military threats. In a sense, the OPCON transfer issue counterbalanced South Korea's objective power superiority over North Korea in terms of politics, economy and diplomacy.

2. Defense Budget Increase

The Roh Moo Hyun administration in its early stages wanted to secure deterrence capabilities against the North Korean threat and desired progress toward an independent defense policy. In particular, the Korean government set a goal of securing sufficient military capabilities to deter North Korea by 2010 by replacing much of its reliance on the United States with South Korean military power. The work of the National Security Council, cited by Hyun Soo Kim, illustrates that the Roh administration, in its March 4, 2004, National Security Initiative, emphasized the necessity of securing independent surveillance and reconnaissance means at an early stage and increasing Korea's defense

⁹¹ Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnal wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade], 82

⁹² Lee, 83–84.

⁹³ Sang Hun Choe, "Despair Overwhelmed Former South Korean Leader Embroiled in Scandal," *New York Times*, last updated May 23, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/24/world/asia/24roh.html>.

spending to boost the ROK military’s preparedness for the future.⁹⁴ To achieve this goal, according to Jong Seok Lee, the ROK Ministry of Defense demanded the government spend about 3.2% of the annual GDP on defense.⁹⁵ As Lee further puts it, at that time, the government was allocating a great deal of money for the overall welfare of the people, so it was impossible to increase the defense budget, but President Roh Moo Hyun reduced the budgets of other departments and increased defense expenditures to more than 8% in 2004 and 2008; astonishingly, this was the largest increase in the Korean defense budget since the 1980s.⁹⁶ Figure 3 shows this trend of increases in defense expenditures before and after the Roh Moo Hyun administration.

Figure 3. National Defense Budget Progress, Compared to Previous Year⁹⁷



Particularly, in order to equip Korea’s information and reconnaissance assets and precision strike system, in which areas the ROK had highly depended upon the U.S. in military operations on the Korean peninsula, the Roh administration demanded

⁹⁴ National Security Council, *PyeonghwaBeonyeongwa Guggaanbo* 평화번영과 국가안보 [Peace, Prosperity and National Security] (Seoul: National Security Council, 2004), quoted in Hyun Soo Kim, “Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government’s Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study,” 115-116.

⁹⁵ Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnal wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade], 87.

⁹⁶ Lee, 87-88.

⁹⁷ Source: ROK Ministry of Defense, “GukbangYesanChui,” 국방예산추이 [National Defense Budget Progress] (author’s translation), ROK Ministry of Defense, http://www.mnd.go.kr/mbshome/mbs/mnd/subview.jsp?id=mnd_010401020000.

astronomical resources. According to Sung Jin Park, the Defense Research Institute expressed considerable concern that the Korean government's acquisition of new weapon systems could lead to massive purchases of arms from the U.S.⁹⁸ However, as Hyun Soo Kim argues, Roh made considerable efforts to secure the ROK's military forces to carry out his own operations with a long-term perspective.⁹⁹ These efforts increased the overall national defense budget.

3. Military Reform: Defense Reform 2020

Apart from the expansion of the defense budget, the Roh administration worked out a roadmap for reforming the ROK's military structure. According to the National Defense Reform Act passed on December 28, 2006, the Ministry of Defense aimed to gradually reduce the standing army by securing the cutting-edge power of the ROK Army, Navy and Air Force, ultimately to "convert the troop-intensive quantitative military structure into the technology-intensive military structure based on information and knowledge."¹⁰⁰ The so-called Korea Ministry of National Defense's "Defense Reform 2020" envisioned the construction of self-reliance military forces within a security environment in which the ROK-U.S. alliance had shifted because of issues such as the gradual reduction of the USFK and the transition of wartime operational control.¹⁰¹

Defense Reform 2020, as elaborated by the ROK Ministry of National Defense, consisted of several actions to upgrade Korean military forces. Structurally, the Department of Defense planned to dismantle field army commands, integrate them as a ground operation command, and convert the ROK Army to a maneuvering infantry

⁹⁸ Sung Jin Park, "[JuhanMigun] Jaju Gukbangeui HeowaSil," [주한미군] 자주 국방의 허와 실[[USFK] Truth and Falsity of Self-reliant Defense Policy], *Kyunghyang Newspaper*, last updated May 23, 2004, http://m.khan.co.kr/view.html?artid=200405231831031&code=910302&utm_campaign=share_btn_click&utm_source=kakaotalk&utm_medium=social_share&utm_content=mkhan_view&utm_campaign=share_btn_click&utm_source=kakaotalk&utm_medium=social_share&utm_content=mkhan_view.

⁹⁹ Kyung Soo Lee, "A Comparative Study on 'Self-Reliant Defence' Policy of Park & Rho's Regimes," 120.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute] (author's translation), accessed August 6, 2017, http://www.mnd.go.kr/mbshome/mb/mnd/subview.jsp?id=mnd_010501000000.

¹⁰¹ Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute]

system.¹⁰² In addition, according to the Defense Reform plan, the department set up a plan for the ROK Air Force that replaced 500 mid-low class fighters with 420 high-low aircraft, including the F-15K and FX, and secured air superiority with the ROKAF for a potential war in the Korean peninsula.¹⁰³ Similarly, the plan emphasizes that the department shifted the ROK's Navy to a structure suitable for a three-dimensional operation simultaneously on sea, land, and air.¹⁰⁴ More importantly, as Defense Reform 2020 illustrates, the Roh government gradually tried to expand its civilian control in the Ministry of Defense and to improve the efficiency of weapons acquisition and operation through the establishment of the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA).¹⁰⁵ Taken together, the Roh Moo Hyun administration tried to regain some measure of the military sovereignty that was handed over to the ROK-U.S. alliance through the transfer of wartime operational control. Above all, the ROK government strived to reform military structures and procure defense spending to a considerable extent in order to achieve self-defense. Roh's independent defense policy continued throughout his tenure (2003-2007), and he established an institutional framework that the next regime could follow through various laws and regulations.

B. DISPATCH OF TROOPS FOR THE IRAQ WAR

The dispatch of troops to Iraq ran counter to the Roh Moo Hyun government's self-defense doctrine highlighted in the previous section. This is because dispatching troops generally represents the highest level of defense commitment to one's ally. President Roh sent troops to Iraq two times. As Kwan Ok Kim notes, "South Korea received a request from the United States for [military] assistance on November 20, 2002,

¹⁰² Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute]

¹⁰³ Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute]

¹⁰⁴ Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute]

¹⁰⁵ Ministry of National Defense, "Gukbang Gaehyuk; Gaenyum mit Gwanryunbupryung." 국방개혁; 개념 및 관련법령 [Defense Reform; Concept and Related Statute]

four months before the United States attacked Iraq.”¹⁰⁶ One cannot judge South Korea’s first dispatch to Iraq in March 2003 as an independent political decision on the part of the Roh administration, because it was conducted during the transition period between the Kim Dae Jung and Roh Moo Hyun governments. Therefore, this section focuses on the second additional dispatch.

1. The Additional Dispatch to the Iraq War

On December 17, 2003, as Samuel Len describes, the Roh administration decided to dispatch the Zaytun Division, which was approximately 3000 composite soldiers, to the Iraqi Arbil region.¹⁰⁷ As Kwan Ok Kim argues, “the United States declared the end of the war on May 1, 2003, but as the security situation in Iraq became unstable due to continued terrorism even under U.S. military occupation, allies’ military support became more and more necessary.”¹⁰⁸ Particularly, as Tae Il Chung describes, since the U.S. independently conducted the war in Iraq despite the United Nations’ opposition, the U.S. government faced a considerable financial burden.¹⁰⁹ Chung further mentions that although some countries in Asia and Eastern Europe, including Japan, pledged their military support for the United States, they were not ideally suited for U.S. military operations in Iraq; not only were they unable to provide enough military forces to the U.S., but they had also established political and economic interests in Iraq before the conflict.¹¹⁰ Therefore, South Korea’s additional dispatch enabled the U.S. not only to justify its cause for the Iraq War but also to reduce its military burden.

¹⁰⁶ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 372.

¹⁰⁷ The ‘Zaytun Division’ was the name of South Korean troops dispatched to Iraq for the second time, following the ‘*Seohee*’ and ‘*Jema*’ Units dispatched for military engineering and medical support for the Iraqi people, on April 30, 2003. As Samuel Len describes, much of the Division consisted of special operations units and marines. Samuel Len, “South Korea approves 3,000 troops for Iraq,” *New York Times*, last updated February 14, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/02/14/news/south-korea-approves-3000-troops-for-iraq.html?mcubz=0>.

¹⁰⁸ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 374.

¹⁰⁹ Tae Il Chung, “A Study of Korea-U.S. Security Relation under Noh’s Government in Korea,” 152.

¹¹⁰ Chung, 152–153.

On the other hand, the Roh government conflicted considerably with the Bush administration of the United States over the scale and timing of the dispatch. As Sun Won Park argues, from September 2003 to early 2004, “since the ROK and U.S. had to deal with the three core agendas: dispatching troops to Iraq, the reduction of the USFK and the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue simultaneously, the tension between policy decision making groups became high.”¹¹¹ In particular, the two countries’ positions on the size of the dispatch greatly differed. Per Jong Seok Lee’s memoir, on September 4, 2003, the U.S. officially requested the dispatch of division-sized combat troops, between 3000 to 5000 soldiers, through Assistant Secretary Richard Rollis.¹¹² Lee further mentions that “the U.S. hoped that South Korea would send as many troops as possible [as soon as practical].”¹¹³ This put political pressure on the Korean government to send sizable combat forces.

However, since the international community did not recognize the Iraq War as just, the South Korean government felt a considerable political burden about the large-scale deployment of combat troops to Iraq. For example, Lee recalls that “while the United States expected South Korea to dispatch its division headquarters and two or three infantry brigades [to carry out local combat against terrorists], South Korea wanted to send just one or two brigades [composed of between 2000 to 3000 soldiers] to conduct local stabilization operations.”¹¹⁴ In addition, as Lee further states, since the national schism surrounding the dispatch, as well as negative Korean public opinion on the deployment of troops to Iraq, were both severe, President Roh “stressed that [Korea] should have enough time to review the decision of deploying troops.”¹¹⁵ In this vein, one can say that the Korean government’s decision to dispatch its troops to the Iraq War was carried out under considerable pressure.

¹¹¹ Sun Won Park, “ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict during the Roh-Bush Administrations, 2003–2007,” 194.

¹¹² Jong Seok Lee, *Kalnal wieui Pyunghwa* 칼날위의 평화 [Peace on the Blade], 202.

¹¹³ Lee, 202.

¹¹⁴ Lee, 227.

¹¹⁵ Lee, 202–205.

Ultimately, as Lee describes, the decision to send troops to Iraq on December 17, 2003 was finalized based on the following instructions from President Roh Moo Hyun:

- Do not exceed 3,000 soldiers with regard to the additional dispatched military units.
- Prepare two plans in the Ministry of National Defense:
 1. Local management plan
 2. Reconstruction support-oriented plan
 - Review advantages and disadvantages of the above measures.
- If Korea is in charge of an area, let the Iraqi military and police organizations take charge of security. Review ways to train the Iraqi military.
- If Korea is in charge of an area, try to find an operation area where we can flexibly perform security and reconstruction support functions while avoiding large areas and important and dangerous areas (avoid big cities like Mosul).
 - Discuss organizing the headquarters on a small scale.
- Establish independent armies separate from other countries' army units as the Ministry of National Defense estimates.¹¹⁶

As seen in these details, the South Korean government approached the deployment of its additional military units in attempts to avoid further diplomatic friction with the United States and to accept the domestic public opinion against the war. Interestingly, as Sun Won Park puts it, the Roh government agreed to extend the dispatch twice during his tenure, and South Korea consented to withdraw the Zaytun Unit in phases and station it in Arbil by the end of 2008.¹¹⁷ On the whole, the Roh administration's aggressive military support for the U.S. contradicted his self-reliance defense.

¹¹⁶ Lee, 231.

¹¹⁷ Sun Won Park, "ROK-U.S. Cooperation and Conflict during the Roh-Bush Administrations, 2003–2007," 195–196.

C. THE ROH ADMINISTRATION'S THREAT PERCEPTION

Applying the first hypothesis set out in this thesis, the low threat perception of the South Korean government can be found at the base of its inconsistent alliance policies, as manifested through its self-defense and dispatch policies. Yet U.S. apparent consideration of war with North Korea increased the Roh administration's anxiety. This then raised its threat perception, and South Korea took further actions to reinforce the alliance. To explore this dynamic further, this section first examines the political position of the Roh administration on North Korea. Then, the section investigates the causes of the Roh administration's "threat deflation"¹¹⁸ by exploring the political philosophy of the leader and the composition of the administration, which directly affected the government's foreign policy. More important, it infers the Korean government's diplomatic preferences.

1. President Roh's Position toward North Korea

The Roh administration's stance on North Korea aligned with the preceding administration's Sunshine Policy. The 2004 Unification White Paper of South Korea encapsulates the policy as "peace on the Korean peninsula" and the "common prosperity of North and South Korea."¹¹⁹ More importantly, the South Korean government gave shape to its roadmap toward becoming a center of Northeast Asian prosperity based on the unification of the Peninsula. Also, as the White Paper illustrates, the Roh administration presented four principles to achieve its policy goals:

1. all issues should be resolved through dialogue;

¹¹⁸ The work of Yong Sup Han, as cited by by Dong Sun Lee, argues that after the democratization, the Korean government showed a strong tendency to pursue nationalistic policies. In addition, as Lee further states, since South Korea deflated the North Korean military threats, it produced a considerable gap between the threat assessment of Seoul and Washington. Yong Sup Han, "For a better Management of the ROK-US Alliance Relationship," (thesis presented at the Prospects for the U.S. Policy toward the Korean peninsula in the Second Bush Administration, Washington, DC, May 2005), quoted in Dong Sun Lee, "Democratization and the US-South Korean Alliance," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 7, no.3 (December 2007): 480, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S159824080002599>.

¹¹⁹ Ministry of Unification, *Tongil Baekseo 2004*, 통일백서 2004 [Unification White Paper 2004] (author's translation) (Seoul: Office of Unification Policy, Ministry of Unification, 2004), 24. <https://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1494>.

2. priority should be placed on building mutual trust and “upholding reciprocity”;
3. inter-Korean issues should be resolved by South and North Korea in cooperation with the international community; and,
4. Seoul will strive to ensure transparency, expand citizen participation, and secure “bipartisan support” in implementing North Korea policy.¹²⁰

As a whole, the Roh Moo Hyun government’s policy toward North Korea ultimately aimed at achieving permanent peace on the Korean peninsula based on peaceful coexistence and reconciliation between the two Koreas, away from consumptive ideological conflicts and confrontations in the past. As Hak Nam Kim puts it, at that time, the South Korean government was focused on “reconciliation through economic cooperation” with North Korea.¹²¹ In addition, the White Paper on Unification was issued in February 2004, after North Korea had already withdrawn from Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the North Korean nuclear crisis was on the rise. This meant, as seen in the President’s remarks described by Choong Nam Kim, that the Roh administration prioritized a favorable relationship with North Korea over any other foreign policy, including the ROK–U.S. alliance.¹²² Taken together, it could be speculated that President Roh’s policy viewed North Korea as a partner of his initiative toward Northeast Asian peace.

The President’s remarks concretely revealed this diplomatic stance toward North Korea. On January 24, 2003, in an interview with Mike Chinoy¹²³ after the North Korean NPT withdrawal, Roh stated, “I think the best means of peaceful solution is dialogue,

¹²⁰ Ministry of Unification, *Tongil Baekseo 2004*, 통일백서 2004 [Unification White Paper 2004] 28–29; Hong Nak Kim summarized its principles well. Hong Nak Kim, “South-North Korean Relations under The Roh Moo-Hyun Government,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 10, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2006): 37, http://www.icks.org/data/ijks/1482457576_add_file_2.pdf.

¹²¹ Hong Nak Kim, “South-North Korean Relations under The Roh Moo-Hyun Government,” 38.

¹²² According to Choong Nam Kim, President Roh once said, “He would not mind the failures of all other policies only if the North Korea policy were successful.” Choong Nam Kim, “The Roh Moo Hyun Government’s Policy toward North Korea,” *International Journal of Korean Studies* 9, no.2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 14, <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/system/tdf/private/PSwp011.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=32083>.

¹²³ Mike Chinoy was CNN’s correspondent for East Asia and wrote a book called *Meltdown: The inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* through close coverage and interviews on the first and second North Korean nuclear crises.

rather than unilaterally demanding North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambition...[the North Korean nuclear program is] a political card to secure their political regime and to secure economic assistance for implementing reforms and opening up.”¹²⁴ Similarly, in a November 12, 2004 speech to the World Affairs Council (WAC) in Los Angeles, Roh proclaimed that “There was some validity to North Korea’s position that its nuclear and missile programs were intended to deter outside threats.”¹²⁵ However, Roh’s remarks radically leaned towards supporting North Korea in a meeting with Koreans in Mongolia: “Fundamental legitimacy issues, not making concessions on these matters, I would like to give institutional and material support [to North Korea] without conditions...I am fully open to North Korea. Let’s talk about anything at anytime and anywhere.”¹²⁶ Such statements by Roh demonstrate that during his presidency, the South Korean government perceived the North Korean threat as a trivial one.

Even during his state visit to Australia in December 7, 2006, after the first nuclear test by North Korea, Roh’s statement remained exactly in this same line. According to *Chosunilbo*, President Roh said, “even though North Korea has nuclear weapons, ‘South Korea’s military is maintaining a superior weight against the North...What’s more, it’s impossible for Pyongyang to conquer and the idea of its ruling is even more impossible.’”¹²⁷ In short, during the presidency of Roh Moo Hyun, South Korea inherited the Sunshine Policy from the preceding Kim Dae Jung regime. One can say that it employed an active engagement policy toward North Korea, based on a significantly low threat perception of North Korea.

¹²⁴ Mike Chinoy, *Meltdown: The Inside Story of the North Korean Nuclear Crisis* (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2009), 155.

¹²⁵ Chan Ho Kang and Brian Lee, “Washington Wants Explanation for Roh’s Comments,” *Korea Joongang Daily*, last updated November 17, 2004, <http://korea Joongangdaily Joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2493900>.

¹²⁶ Jae Hun Jung, “Roh Moo Hyun, ‘Bukhanye Maneungut Yangbo,’” 노무현, ” 북한에 많은 것 양보” [Roh, “Yiedling Many Things to North Korea”] (author’s translation), YTN, last updated May 10, 2006, <http://news.naver.com/main/read.nhn?mode=LSD&mid=sec&sid1=115&oid=052&aid=0000116729>.

¹²⁷ “Roh Says S.Korea ‘Can Win’ Against Nuclear-Armed North,” *Chosunilbo*, last updated December 8, 2006, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2006/12/08/2006120861012.html.

2. Root Causes of the Roh Administration's Low Threat Perception

Why did the Roh government's perception of the North Korean threat significantly decrease? A change in the perception of the other party in international relations can lead to a change in the foreign policies of a country. As Robert Putnam puts it, a foreign policy is a result of the interaction of the domestic politics of a country and the international environment.¹²⁸ While the international environment as a structural factor is difficult to change, domestic politics can be influenced by various factors. Domestic political conditions were a driving factor behind the Roh administration's international relations.

a. Political Philosophy of President Roh Moo Hyun

President Roh Moo Hyun was one of the most progressive politicians in South Korea. As described by Nam Chin Heo, the fact that he rejected the imperial presidential model of South Korea and adhered to the principle of separation of party and politics, the decentralization of political power, indicates this quite well.¹²⁹ According to Yong Hee Yoon's analysis, prior to joining the political world, Roh's career as a human rights lawyer from a poor peasant family, representing the interests of ordinary people, naturally led to his progressive political tendencies.¹³⁰ In practice, based on Roh Moo Hyun's memoir, from his presidential election until his retirement, his primary political objective was to establish peace through dialogue and compromise in both domestic politics and diplomacy.¹³¹ To be more specific, President Roh aimed at ending the confrontation between right and left ideologies and regional factionalism, which traditionally dominated South Korean politics. Above all, as Hyun Soo Kim argues, Roh was eager to get Korean politics "to accept the change of the security environment through fighting off

¹²⁸ Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics," 430–432.

¹²⁹ Nam Chin Heo, "[OUTLOOK] Roh-Style Presidency is Flawed," *Korea JoongAng Daily*, last updated July 6, 2005, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=2590444>.

¹³⁰ Yong Hee Yoon, "Ideology of 16th President Election and Policy Comparative Analysis," (author's translation) *Korean Journal of Political Science* 10, no. 3 (2003): 130, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2008427.

¹³¹ Roh Moo Hyun, *Sungongwa Jwajeol: Roh Moo Hyun Daetongryungeui Motdasseun Hoigorok*, 성공과 좌절: 노무현 대통령의 못다 쓴 회고록 [Success and Frustration: President Roh Moo Hyun's Incomplete Memoir] (author's translation) (Seoul: Hakgojae, 2009), 216–220.

the existing [excessive] anti-communism culture.”¹³² Evidently, Roh perceived that deep-rooted ideological controversy was a fundamental obstacle to progress in South Korean politics.

His attempt to abolish the National Security Law and the elimination of the concept of “primary enemy” showed Roh Moo Hyun’s political philosophy of ending ideological confrontation in Korean politics. To begin with, as Hyun Soo Kim explains, the term “primary enemy” was first used in 1988 by the ROK Ministry of Defense.¹³³ Kim further mentions that it was then changed in 1994 to “neighboring potential adversary” under the new military strategy of the Roh Tae Woo regime.”¹³⁴ However, as Kim puts it, in the book *Peace, Prosperity and National Security* of the Roh Moo Hyun administration, published on March 4, 2004, North Korea was not portrayed as the main enemy, but, rather, the term was replaced by “North Korea’s military threat.”¹³⁵ Roh Moo Hyun’s tenure was a period during which antagonistic emotion against North Korea considerably weakened, influenced by the improvement of inter-Korean relations in the previous Kim Dae Jung administration and following the end of the Cold War. However, the removal of the concept ‘main enemy’ caused a great shock in Korean political circles and significant controversy over the political identity of the Roh government. President Roh’s strong will to end the ideological controversy appeared particularly prominently in the defense and security arenas.

In the same vein, in late 2004 the Roh administration tried to abolish the National Security Law, which had strongly influenced the build-up of hostility against North Korea. As Diane Kraft argues, the Security Law “had been enacted in 1948 in response to threats from communist North Korea.”¹³⁶ Kraft further mentions that its primary purpose

¹³² Hyun Soo Kim, “Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government’s Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study,” 78.

¹³³ Kim, 79.

¹³⁴ Kim, 79.

¹³⁵ Kim, 79.

¹³⁶ Diane B. Kraft, “South Korea’s National Security Law: A Tool of Oppression in an Insecure World,” *Wisconsin International Law Journal* (2006): 627, http://uknowledge.uky.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1494&context=law_facpub.

was “to prevent anti-state acts from threatening the security of South Korea.”¹³⁷ However, per Kraft’s argument, not only had the law degenerated as a political tool for suppressing democratization and student movements during the military regimes from 1961–1992, but South Korea’s threat perception toward North Korea had also changed, as the reconciliation mood characterizing inter-Korean relations posed considerable doubt about the rationale of its presence.¹³⁸ As Kraft notes, in an interview with announcer Ki Young Eum of Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) in *Sisa Magazine 2580*, a Korean current affairs program, on September 5, 2004, President Roh said, “It [the law] would be better sent to the museum sealed.”¹³⁹ More than anything else, as described by Hyun Soo Kim, through the effort to eradicate the National Security Law, President Roh showed that “[he] was aware of North Korea as a partner to cooperate for peaceful unification, being away from the perception of the anti-state group that prevailed in the Cold War period.”¹⁴⁰ Thus, Roh tried to eliminate ideological conflicts in Korean society through these two institutional reforms.

Overall, President Roh Moo Hyun’s political philosophy was to break away from the ideological confrontation of a divided nation, and eventually to attain peaceful coexistence and harmony with North Korea. However, amid increasing North Korean military threats, his persistent political convictions caused considerable conflicts among South Korean political parties. South Korean threat perception, which remained at a fairly low level during the Roh administration, served to weaken the strength of the ROK–U.S. alliance, the main security mechanism responding to North Korea.

b. Composition of Bureaucrats in the Roh Administration: 386 Generation

In addition to Roh Moo Hyun’s governing ideology, Roh’s government bureaucrats also played a decisive role in lowering threat awareness about North Korea. As Il Pyong Kim addresses, President Roh “drew many of his first and second cabinet

¹³⁷ Kraft, “South Korea’s National Security Law,” 628.

¹³⁸ Kraft, 633.

¹³⁹ Kraft, “South Korea’s National Security Law,” 636.

¹⁴⁰ Hyun Soo Kim, “Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government’s Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study,” 81.

members from a younger generation of administrators.”¹⁴¹ He further mentions that as the so-called “386 Generation” played a central role in the Blue House and cabinet, “some observers fear[ed] that Mr. Roh’s government [was] moving too fast toward left-wing socialism.”¹⁴² Above all, as Jong Ryn Mo argues, since most of this generation had a more pro-North Korean mindset, it can be inferred that Roh Moo Hyun government’s way of thinking about North Korea was considerably influenced by them.¹⁴³ Because of this structure, as Ho Keun Song notes, the Roh’s administration was generally called a “386 regime.”¹⁴⁴

Indeed, the 386 generation played a locomotive-like role in Roh Moo Hyun’s victory in the 16th presidential election. As a result, per Hayam Kim and Uk Heo, these young politicians were introduced to South Korean politics as new political forces.¹⁴⁵ As Kim and Heo’s describe, the 386 generation means:

the group of people who were in their 30s in the 1990s, went to universities in the 1980s, and were born in the 1960s. While this generation was in college, the democracy activist movement was most intense, eventually leading to the transition to democracy ...Many of the 386-generation democracy activists successfully entered the political arena as legislators, party leaders, lawyers, judges, policy makers, and government officials, bring about different [more or less radical]

¹⁴¹ Ilpyong J. Kim, “Key Milestone in the ROK Political Development and Historical Significance of 2002 Presidential Election,” in *A Turning Point: Democratic Consolidation in the ROK and Strategic Readjustment in the U.S.-ROK Alliance*, ed. Alexandre Y. Mansourov (Honolulu: Daniel K. Inouye Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2005), 46, <http://apcss.org/Publications/Edited%20Volumes/turningpoint/CH2.pdf>.

¹⁴² Ilpyong J. Kim, “Key Milestone in the ROK Political Development and Historical Significance of 2002 Presidential Election,” 46; According to Ho Keun Song, President Roh appointed “the 386 generation to middle-ranked secretariat in the Blue House.” Ho Keun Song, “Politics, Generation, and The Making of New Leadership in South Korea,” *Development and Society* 32, no.1 (June 2003), 116, <http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.nps.edu/stable/deveandsoci.32.1.103>.

¹⁴³ Per Jong Ryn Mo’s analysis, “36 percent of the 386ers say that they do not like the United States, while 72 percent say that they do not dislike North Korea.” Jong Ryn Mo, “Grassroots Influences on the U.S.-ROK Alliance: The Role of Civil Society,” Center for U.S.-Korea Policy and the East Asia Institute, February 22, 2010, 5, <http://asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/JongrYNMoROKCivilSociety.pdf>.

¹⁴⁴ Mo, “Grassroots Influences on the U.S.-ROK Alliance,” 5.

¹⁴⁵ Hayam Kim and Uk Heo, “What Affects Korea-US Relations?” *Pacific Focus* 31, no.1 (April 2016): 42, doi: 10.1111/pafo.12064

perspectives in politics, including [relationship with North Korea and] South Korea-U.S. relations.¹⁴⁶

Above all, this 386 generation was speculated to assist President Roh Moo Hyun closely and drive many changes in his ideology and policies. Jong Ryn Mo argues that:

the rise of the 386 generation meant a shift in ruling ideology [of the Roh's regime]. The leaders of the 386 generation, the 386 politicians, can be best described as left-wing nationalists. Nationalism and socialism were the two leading ideologies of the student movement of the 1980s when most of the 386 politicians started their political careers. They were...naturally attracted to opposite political values, anti-Americanism, pro-North Korean nationalism, and progressivism.¹⁴⁷

Consequently, the political and administrative bureaucratic systems of the Roh Moo Hyun government, which consisted mainly of the 386 generation, contributed to that government's continued engagement policy toward North Korea. The Roh Moo Hyun regime's devaluation of North Korean military threats, including its nuclear weapons, was due to changes in perception that equated North Korea with its compatriots. In a sense, that the 386 generation took considerable control of the played a major role in South Korea's remarkably low threat perception against North Korea at that time.

D. ANALYSIS OF ROK-U.S. ALLIANCE COHESION

The undervaluation of the North Korean threat and the resulting compatriotism toward the North Korean people constantly provoked the South Korean government to adhere to the principle of peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. Inversely, as Dong Sun Lee describes, the United States "depicted North Korea as part of 'an axis of evil' in [President George W. Bush's] 2002 State of the Union address and pointed to [North Korea's] missiles and weapons of mass destruction as serious security threats."¹⁴⁸ Washington also reviewed war scenarios to remove North Korean military risks. The mismatched policy preferences of the ROK-U.S. alliance led to serious conflict. Figure 4 illustrate how the Roh government's lack of shared threat perception

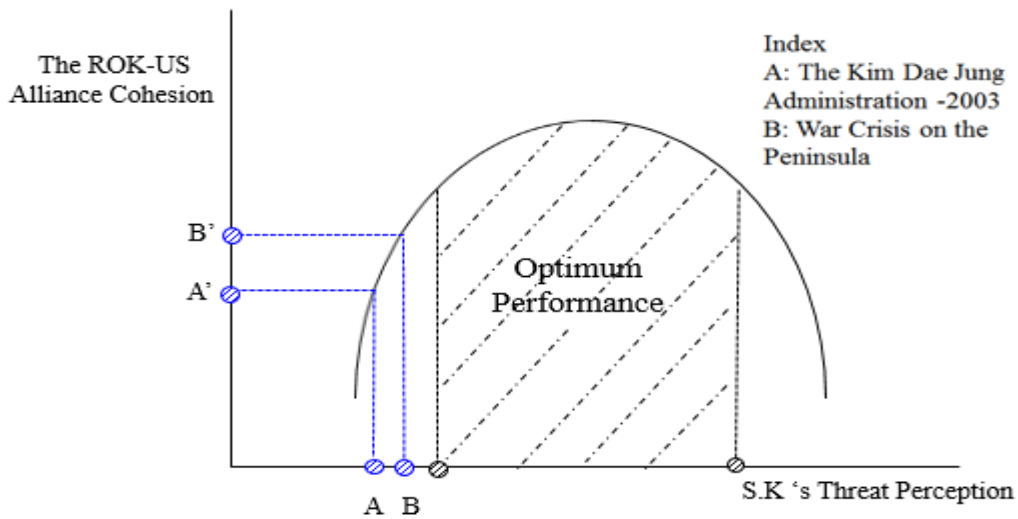
¹⁴⁶ Kim and Heo, "What Affects Korea-US Relations?" 42-43.

¹⁴⁷ Mo, "Grassroots Influences on the U.S.-ROK Alliance," 5.

¹⁴⁸ Dong Sun Lee, "Democratization and the US-South Korean Alliance," 480.

with the United States might yield weak alliance solidarity. Points A and A' refer to the Roh government's initial threat perception and the alliance's solidarity, respectively. On the other hand, point B illustrates the Korean government's threat recognition concerning the Peninsula based on a perceived war crisis led by the US, and B' indicates the resulting alliance cohesion.

Figure 4. The Roh Administration's Alliance Cohesion



As noted in the previous chapter, the common threats between the ROK-U.S. alliance are the security circumstances both surrounding North Korea and outside of the Korean peninsula. In this vein, the Roh administration defected from the common threat awareness of the alliance. However, the possibility of war between North Korea and the U.S. heightened the Roh administration's sense of crisis concerning the security situation on the Korean peninsula, and this utterly conflicted with Roh's preference for peacefully resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. Thus, as Tae Il Chung argues, despite policy inconsistencies, the Roh government sought, through the Iraq War troop dispatches, to gain leverage to sustain the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.¹⁴⁹ In this vein, Korea's decision to dispatch its military to Iraq was to preserve Roh's policy preferences against U.S. pressure.

¹⁴⁹ Chung, "A Study of Korea-U.S. Security Relation under Noh's Government in Korea," 154.

More specifically, the Roh administration, directly affected by North Korean military threats, wanted to take the lead and resolve the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully. As Tae Il Chung states:

the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue in South Korea [required] U.S. cooperation. South Korea [was able to] accommodate the U.S. position on the dispatch and to make a turning point in recognizing the North Korean nuclear issue in the United States, using the international public opposition to the war in Iraq. South Korea considered sending troops to Iraq as [a strategic] opportunity to take the initiative in the ROK–U.S. alliance, as it had a justifiable cause to persuade the United States from the standpoint of stability and peace in Northeast Asia. Namely, in a sense, by resolving the ROK–U.S. alliance’s dilemma surrounding the North Korean nuclear issues, [the Roh government] sought to fulfill the equal position between the ROK and U.S. in the nuclear issues.¹⁵⁰

In addition, Kwan Ok Kim, citing Min Jo’s report on the 2003 Forum of Unification Strategy, states that President Roh considered five elements surrounding the troop dispatches to Iraq: “the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, domestic public opinion, international trends, security situations in Korea and internal situations in Iraq.”¹⁵¹ As Kim further emphasizes, this reflects the Korean government’s desire to maintain leverage over the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis while strengthening the ROK–U.S. alliance through the dispatch.¹⁵²

In sum, the Roh Moo Hyun administration’s perception of security threats on the Korean peninsula was generally low. However, the U.S. threat of war appeared to threaten the peace and stability in Northeast Asia that President Roh pursued. Therefore, the South Korean government strategically chose to dispatch its troops to Iraq, even while keeping with its self-defense line, in order to adhere to its diplomatic preferences. Nevertheless, President Roh’s official statements, which advocated for the North Korean

¹⁵⁰ Chung, “A Study of Korea-U.S. Security Relation under Noh’s Government in Korea,” 155.

¹⁵¹ Min Jo, “Tongiljeonlyagpoleom Bogoseo: Iraqpabyeong-gwa Hanmidongmaeng,” 통일전략포럼 보고서: 이라크파병과 한미동맹 [Unification Strategy Forum Report: Iraq Dispatch and the ROK-U.S. Alliance] (author’s translation) *Far Eastern Studies of Kyungnam University* 29 (2003): 11–15, quoted in Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 375.

¹⁵² Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 375.

regime, prompted the U.S. to maintain its hardline policies against North Korea and further blocked the ROK–U.S. alliance’s ability to reach optimal cohesion. In a sense, Korea’s threat deflation about North Korea further widened the alliance with the US.

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the Roh Moo Hyun administration’s threat perception and alliance solidarity with the United States. The case study showed that domestic political factors lowered the perception of North Korean threats and decisively influenced the administration’s adoption of non-coherent alliance policies. Specifically, the Roh administration inherited Kim Dae Jung’s ‘Sunshine Policy’ and fully embraced North Korea. South Korea consistently insisted on the peace and prosperity of the Korean peninsula even as the North Korean nuclear crisis grew after that country’s NPT withdrawal in 2003. Moreover, the Roh administration held that even North Korea’s efforts to develop nuclear weapons represented an exercise of its right of self-defense. The Roh government’s policy toward North Korea was rooted in its low perception of security threats. In addition to the Sunshine Policy, President Roh’s personal pro-North Korean political ideology and the influence of 386 generation staff members on foreign policy decisions drove the government’s alliance policies. As a result, despite the seriousness of the North Korean nuclear crisis, South Korea adhered to the principle of peaceful resolution, and a self-defense policy gradually materialized in the Roh administration. This situation significantly decreased the ROK–U.S. alliance’s solidarity, resulting in political and diplomatic conflicts between the two countries. In some aspects, the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear crisis and diplomatic autonomy from the ROK–U.S. alliance became the diplomatic hallmarks of the Roh administration.

Yet from its strategic viewpoint, the U.S. recognition of North Korea as an imminent military threat, and its review of pre-emptive and preventive attack options for North Korean nuclear facilities, heightened the war crisis on the Korean peninsula, which alarmed the Korean government. Since this situation did not coincide with the diplomatic preferences of the Roh administration, South Korea decided on a somewhat different alliance policy from its original stance toward the United States in order to maintain its

preferred foreign policies. Thus, the Korean government dispatched its troops to the Iraq War. Considering that conducting a war as an allied force shows a particularly high level of security commitment to an alliance, it seemed considerably paradoxical that the Roh government, which strongly expressed anti-American sentiments, decided to send its military to Iraq. But amid its pursuit of autonomy, the Roh administration utilized the dispatch policy as political and diplomatic leverage to help manage the North Korean nuclear issue. In conclusion, ROK–U.S. disparity in threat perception drove South Korea’s inconsistent alliance policies.

III. THREAT PERCEPTION IN THE PARK JUNG HEE ADMINISTRATION AND THE ROK–U.S. ALLIANCE COHESION

The previous chapter discussed the Roh government’s self-reliance defense policy and dispatches to the Iraq War. The South Korean government’s low threat perception and President Roh’s diplomatic preferences directly led to such contradictions within alliance policy. This chapter explores the Park Jung Hee administration’s alliance policies and their contrast with the policy directions of the Roh government. To be more specific, the chapter investigates the Park government’s troop dispatches to the Vietnam War and its self-reliance defense policy, and it explores how the Korean government’s perception of its security environment at that time affected these policy decisions.

A. THE DISPATCH TROOPS FOR THE VIETNAM WAR

In practice, as seen in the 1961–3 *Memorandum of Conversation* of the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), the South Korean government voluntarily proposed the dispatch of its military forces to Vietnam.¹⁵³ To be more specific, according to the document, in the November 14, 1961, summit between the U.S. and ROK, the Chairman Park Jung Hee¹⁵⁴ stated that:

as a firm anti-Communist nation, Korea would do its best to contribute to the security of the Far East. North Viet-Nam had well-trained guerrilla forces. Korea had a million men well trained in this type of warfare. These men had been trained in the regular forces and were now separated. With U.S. approval and support, Korea could send to [Vietnam] its own troops or could recruit volunteers if regular troops were not desired.¹⁵⁵

However, as Jeong Woo Lee and Jae Hung Chung argue, because the United States “opposed the professed input of military power to Vietnam,” President Kennedy,

¹⁵³ United States Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. XXII (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 1996), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d247>.

¹⁵⁴ After the military coup on May 16, 1961, Park Jung Hee was elected as the formal President of the Republic of Korea in 1963, after fulfilling the Chairman of the National Reconstruction Supreme Council from 1961 to 1962 and the role of the Acting Presidency from 1962 to 1963.

¹⁵⁵ United States Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. XXII.

who insisted on a limited war against Vietnam, rejected Park's proposal to send troops.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, as the two authors further mention, the Korean government showed its willingness to send troops to South Vietnam through special diplomats and trained the First Division of the Marine Corps for the potential war in preparation for the U.S. request for the dispatch.¹⁵⁷ As a whole, the Park regime wanted to actively participate in the war in Vietnam, and it had a political purpose as well: to strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance through troop dispatch. This section explores the dispatch process chronologically from 1964 to 1966 and the evolving the ROK-U.S. alliance.

1. The Process of Dispatching Troops to Vietnam

The Park Jung Hee government dispatched its military to the Vietnam War four times from September 1964 to November 1966. Until ROK troops withdrew in 1972, around 300,000 soldiers were sent to the war and about 5,000 were killed.¹⁵⁸ One can say that through the dispatches, the ROK and U.S. had a honeymoon in their relationship. However, despite the South Korean government's security commitment through combat troop support, the debate on the withdrawal of the USFK in the context of the East Asian security strategy did not strengthen the solidarity of the ROK-U.S. alliance as expected.

a. The First Dispatch

The Park Jung Hee administration's dispatches of troops to Vietnam began in 1964 after the U.S. fully engaged in the conflict. As Kwan Ok Kim illustrates, the direct cause of the Korean government's troop dispatches to Vietnam originated from the U.S. 1964 "More Flags" strategy, in which the Johnson administration asked its allied powers

¹⁵⁶ Jeong Woo Lee and Jae Hung Chung, "Hankukeui Betnam Pabyung Gwajungwa Pyunga," 한국의 베트남 파병 과정과 평가 [The Process and Evaluation of ROK Army Dispatch to Vietnam] (author's translation), *Northeast Asian Studies in the Institute Social Chosun University* 29, no.2 (2014): 76, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?name=kiss2002&key=3293630.

¹⁵⁷ Lee and Chung, "Hankukeui Betnam Pabyung Gwajungwa Pyunga," 한국의 베트남 파병 과정과 평가 [The Process and Evaluation of ROK Army Dispatch to Vietnam], 78.

¹⁵⁸ Steven Borowiec, "Allegation of S. Korean Atrocities Arising 40 years after Vietnam War," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2016, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-korea-vietnam-20150516-story.html>.

to join the Vietnam War.¹⁵⁹ He further cites Robert McNamara's retrospect statement that "after China's communization, the United States, which recognized the danger of the spreading of the communist world in accordance with the domino theory, reconsidered the effectiveness of its limited intervention policies and eventually turned to the full-blown intervention policy with the emergence of the Johnson administration."¹⁶⁰ The Vietnam War was the U.S. government's strategic choice to block the expansion of communism in East Asia.

In addition, faced with domestic antagonism to the Vietnam War, the United States called for direct and indirect military support from its twenty-five allies to secure domestic and foreign support for its intervention. As Kwan Ok Kim argues, the Park government, which received an official request for the dispatch of troops from the US, proposed to send its "combat troops to Vietnam," but the Johnson administration rejected this.¹⁶¹ After this first proposal, Kim further states that "on May 21, 1964, the Korean government held the 5th National Security Council to decide on dispatching a field hospital unit and *Taekwondo* instructors as requested by the United States."¹⁶² The troop dispatch was unanimously passed by the consent of the National Assembly. Table 1 shows the Korean government's dispatching pattern to Vietnam.

¹⁵⁹ Kwan Ok Kim, "An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach," 364.

¹⁶⁰ Kim, 365.

¹⁶¹ Kim, 365.

¹⁶² Kim, 365.

Table 2. Korean Troop Dispatches to the Vietnam War¹⁶³

	Date	Remark
The 1 st Dispatch	Sep 11, 1964	The 7th Evacuation Hospital (The 1st Mobile Hospital): 130 <i>Taekwondo</i> instructors: 1 major officer, 9 company grade officers
The 2 nd Dispatch	Mar 10, 1965 (Dove Unit)	Army Engineers, Engineer Field Maintenance, Army Transportation Company, Marine Engineer Company, One LST(Landing Ship Tank) : 1,022 Added two LSTs and volunteering forces: Approximately 950
The 3 rd Dispatch	Oct 3, 1965 (<i>Cheongryong</i>) Oct 16, 1965 (<i>Backhoe</i>)	Capital Divisions: 13,672 The 2nd Marine Regiment: 4,310
The 4 th Dispatch	Sep 25 – 30, 1966	Capital Divisions (The 26 th , 28 th , 29 th and 30 th Regiment) The 9 th Division
	August 1967	Marines and support units: 2,963 Increased number of infantry battalions (975 in the 5th battalion) Marines brigade reorganized as marine divisions
The 5 th Dispatch	Scheduled for summer 1968	Canceled dispatch due to the 1968 security crisis

As seen in the process of the first dispatch, the Korean government actively intended to participate in the Vietnam War through its proposal to send combat troops. In addition, the Park administration fulfilled its security commitment as an ally by sending the U.S. requested troops. The process of dispatching troops progressed smoothly.

b. The Second Dispatch

Due to the *Tongkin Gulf* incident¹⁶⁴ that took place between August 2 and 4, 1964, the Vietnam War changed from a Vietnamese civil war to an international war, and

¹⁶³ Source: Tae Gyun Park, “Between Memory and Oblivion: The Dispatch of Korean Combat Troops to Vietnam,” 295.

¹⁶⁴ According to Robert McNamara’s memoir, on August 2 and 4, 1964, U.S. destroyers were attacked twice by North Vietnamese patrol boats, and the United States used these incidents as chances to secure its justification for the involvement in the Vietnam War. Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 128.

the United States demanded further dispatches from its allies, including South Korea. According to Kwan Ok Kim, the Johnson administration “requested South Korea to deploy additional engineer units, which could fulfill independent operations in Vietnam.”¹⁶⁵ He further states that “in response to this U.S. proposal, President Park suggested sending two other army divisions, instead of sending additional units of military engineers, but the U.S. also rejected his proposal.”¹⁶⁶ This was because the U.S. worried that China and North Korea would re-invade the Korean peninsula after the Korean combat forces deployed in Vietnam. Although there were considerable differences between South Korea’s willingness to dispatch combat troops and the strategic calculations of the United States, the Park government decided to send its combat support troops, including its engineers and transport units, to Vietnam. Accordingly, a construction support group of about 2,000 soldiers called ‘Dove Unit’ was deployed to Vietnam.

However, unlike the first dispatch, South Korea faced political opposition domestically while pursuing the second deployment of its military forces. In leading Korean political circles, there were divided opinions about the dispatch policy. In addition, according to Kwan Ok Kim, the Korean National Assembly emphasized prudence over sending troops to Vietnam and demanded the revision of the ROK–U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, in which it secured the automatic intervention of the United States as a condition of the dispatch; in response, the U.S. pressured the Korean government politically while suggesting the possibility of the U.S. troop withdrawal from Korea.¹⁶⁷ In practice, as Kyeong Eun Shin argues, since 1962, the United States had reviewed the reduction of U.S. troops in Korea as part of its new containment policy, but it did not inform the South Korean government of this plan.¹⁶⁸ Ultimately, the dispatch policy and the reduction of the USFK resulted in divisions in Korean domestic politics,

¹⁶⁵ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 367.

¹⁶⁶ Kim, 367.

¹⁶⁷ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 368.

¹⁶⁸ Kyung Eun Shin, “The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration,” 24–32.

and the second dispatch was carried out despite the political strife among the ruling and opposition parties.

c. The Third and Fourth Dispatches

Around February 1965, when the situation in Vietnam continued to deteriorate, the U.S. seriously worried about the communization of Vietnam. This situation required the U.S. to increase its troops. However, the work of Dong Ju Choi, as cited by Kwan Ok Kim, holds that “as the additional input of the U.S. troops became difficult domestically, the United States requested its allies to send their combat troops and officially requested the South Korean government to dispatch division-sized combat troops.”¹⁶⁹ As a result, in October 1965, the Korean government deployed sizable combat forces to Vietnam for the third time.

Yet the ratification of the third dispatch by the Korean National Assembly did not progress as quickly as the U.S. wanted. As Kwan Ok Kim argues, “although the Park government was aware that the United States urgently wanted Korea to send its troops to the war, [it] held off the final [decision] while suggesting its willingness to dispatch.”¹⁷⁰ As a result, as Kim further states, negotiations for deploying combat soldiers between Korea and the U.S. took place at a summit meeting during President Park’s official visit to the U.S. on May 17–18, 1965.¹⁷¹ According to the *Memorandum of Conversation* of this visit, at the bilateral summit, the United States asked South Korea to send additional combat troops at the scale of a division, and President Park agreed in principle with this request.¹⁷² However, as the Memorandum states, “President Park repeated that it was his personal feeling that Korea could make larger commitments of troops to [Vietnam], but this would have to be studied by his Government, and he could not make a commitment

¹⁶⁹ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 369.

¹⁷⁰ Kim, 369.

¹⁷¹ Kim, 369.

¹⁷² United States Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d48>.

on it at this time.”¹⁷³ One can say that the President [would have] held a highly advantageous position in negotiations for the dispatch, despite the Korean National Assembly’s delays.

In fact, through the Korea-U.S. summit, the Korean government achieved its desired political outcome. As the *Memorandum of Conversation* on May 17, 1965 describes, the United States promised the presence of the USFK in the Korean peninsula “in accordance with the 1954 [ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Agreement]” and financial aid for Korean economic development.¹⁷⁴ Through this bargaining, as Kwan Ok Kim emphasizes, the U.S. earned Korea’s reinforcements, and Korea dispelled the discussion of U.S. troop reduction from the Peninsula and ultimately strengthened its security and economic interests.¹⁷⁵ In October 1965, the South Korean government deployed about 20,000 combat troops, including the capital division, the *Cheongryong* unit, and the 2nd Marine Corps, the *Backhoe* unit, to the Vietnam War.¹⁷⁶ Considering that other U.S. allies were lukewarm toward additional dispatches, one can say that, in a sense, the combined ROK–U.S. forces fought the Vietnam War.

Additionally, the Park administration further deployed its combat soldiers to the war in September 1966 for the fourth time. South Korea also considerably struggled with the U.S. in negotiations over the fourth dispatch. As Jeong Woo Lee and Jae Hung Chung describe, despite its allies’ military support, the Vietnam War, which turned into guerrilla warfare, created an increasingly adverse situation for the United States.¹⁷⁷ They further state that as a result, in December 1965, the United States officially asked Korea, which

¹⁷³ United States Department of State, *Memorandum of Conversation, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX.

¹⁷⁴ United States Department of States, *Memorandum of Conversation, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX.

¹⁷⁵ Kwan Ok Kim, “An Analysis of Dispatch Diplomacy of the Korean Troops from the Two-Level Approach,” 370.

¹⁷⁶ Tae Gyun Park, “Between Memory and Oblivion: The Dispatch of Korean Combat Troops to Vietnam,” 295.

¹⁷⁷ Jeong Woo Lee and Jae Hung Chung, “Hankukeui Betnam Pabyung Gwajungwa Pyunga,” 한국의 베트남 파병 과정과 평가 [The Process and Evaluation of ROK Army Dispatch to Vietnam] 82–83.

attended the UN General Assembly meeting, to deploy additional combat units to Vietnam.¹⁷⁸ However, according to Lee and Chung's analysis, the Korean government:

created the unfavorable public opinion toward the U.S. through media manipulation in order to take the lead in the dispatch negotiations. First, Korea disclosed the negotiations with the U.S. about the Korean military's salary, breaking the principle of non-disclosure. Another was that Korea did not gain any advantage from its dispatch. In other words, the Korean government created a rumor that Korea sent its army to the war, but Japan [rather] gained economic gains from [the Korean military's sacrifice]. Dealing with the [relationship] issue with Japan could fulfill both the role of turning the domestic criticism against the Park Jung Hee government and the role of raising the voice in negotiations with the United States.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Lee and Chung argue that the U.S. persuaded the Korean government to dispatch more combat soldiers to Vietnam while promising to modernize Korea's army.¹⁸⁰ As a result, as the two authors note, the Korean government dispatched additional sizable fighting forces from the Army Division and the Marine Corps and was tasked with air transportation behind enemy lines through the Air Force, the *Eunma* unit.¹⁸¹ Taken together, the Park Jung Hee government fully dispatched troops to Vietnam four times after the United States intervened in the Vietnam War. In the negotiation process for the additional dispatches, the South Korean government suffered domestic political conflicts and struggles with the U.S., but overall, it accepted American demands and positively responded to its requests for military deployments. One might say that the Park administration, through its dispatch policy, stabilized ROK-U.S. relations, which had drifted due to the discussion of USFK troop reduction.

B. SELF-RELIANCE DEFENSE POLICY

Alongside its dispatch of troops to the Vietnam War, from 1968 the Korean government otherwise converted its alliance policy to one of self-reliance. President Park

¹⁷⁸ Lee and Chung, 82–83.

¹⁷⁹ Lee and Chung, 83.

¹⁸⁰ According to Lee and Chung's article, the United States sent the "Brown Memorandum" to the Korean government, through Winthrop G. Brown, the U.S. ambassador in Korea, and it promised South Korea's military modernization. Lee and Chung, 83.

¹⁸¹ Lee and Chung, 84.

began specifically to look at ways in which South Korea could secure its own national security by moving away from security dependence on the ROK–U.S. alliance. Given that the Korean military still had forces stationed in Vietnam, one can say that South Korea formulated a more or less contradictory foreign policy. The Park administration materialized its autonomous national defense plan with two elements: force improvement and nuclear weapons development. This section explores the detailed plans for self-defense that the Park Jung Hee government pursued.

1. The Force Improvement

President Park wanted Korea to have its own autonomous national security system. However, as Kyung Soo Lee argues, since U.S. grant aid constituted much of Korea’s defense expenditures after the Korean War until the early 1980s, the Park government was unable to achieve its goal of self-defense.¹⁸² He further emphasizes that although President Park directly referred to Korea’s self-reliance defense in a 1968 speech, his policy began in earnest in the 1970s after the 1969 Nixon Doctrine, since no specific governmental plan was laid down at that time.¹⁸³ In this vein, this section further focuses on the 1970s’ Korean government’s blue print for self-defense.

a. Securing Operational Control

To begin with, the Park administration strongly wanted to secure operational control as a means to reinforce its independent national defense. In particular, the fact that the ROK military could not employ independent military operations in response to North Korean provocations, which had rapidly increased since 1966, further increased the perceived need for the ROK government to secure operational control. As Hyun Soo Kim holds, after the North Korean surprise attack on the Blue House in 1968, the Park government demanded that the United States revise the exercise of military operational control so that ROK troops could directly counter the North’s military threat without the

¹⁸² Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 87.

¹⁸³ Lee, 87.

United Nations Forces Commander (the USFK Commander)'s approval.¹⁸⁴ He further argues that since the United States handed over operational control to the ROK military during the Vietnam War, considering the effectiveness of the combined force's military operations and the Korean armed forces' morale, it did not reject the transfer.¹⁸⁵ As a result, per Kim's emphasis, the U.S. accepted the Korean government's request at the ROK–U.S. summit meeting in April 1968 and transferred some of its operational control in counter-guerilla operations to the Park government.¹⁸⁶ Above all, North Korea at that time created security crises that threatened the Korean government's regime survival, and thus securing the operational control over counter-espionage operations was a starting point for building Korea's independent security system.

More important, South Korea clearly learned lessons about its defense weaknesses from the Korean War and the Cold War, so it planned to gradually secure its military operational authority in the Korean peninsula. More specifically, as Hyun Soo Kim claims, the Korean government acknowledged the reality that it could not resolve its national security issues with its own political and military capabilities.¹⁸⁷ As he further illustrates, based on this awareness, South Korea delegated its security to the ROK–U.S. alliance in response to potential communist forces' attacks from countries such as the Soviet Union and China, and President Park restricted the goal of national self-defense to countering North Korean threats.¹⁸⁸ The Park government pragmatically approached its independent national defense, and, further, it concentrated on securing its gradual autonomy from the ROK–U.S. alliance.

b. Defense Improvement Projects

Besides securing operational control, the Park Jung Hee administration reinforced its independent defense capabilities through several military initiatives. To begin with, as

¹⁸⁴ Hyun Soo Kim, "Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government's Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study," 62.

¹⁸⁵ Kim, 64.

¹⁸⁶ Kim, 64.

¹⁸⁷ Kim, 65.

¹⁸⁸ Kim, 65.

a means of reinforcing its military strength, the Park Jung Hee government founded the ROK Homeland Reserve Forces in 1968. In addition, as discussed by Kyung Soo Lee, “since 1971, the Park government began a project to militarize its local reserve forces.”¹⁸⁹ He further mentions that “at this time, Korea’s self-defense policy concentrated more on the mobilization of reserve power in case of emergency [in the Korean peninsula] than the actual power increase such as the strengthening of the regular army or the defense industry.”¹⁹⁰ This suggests that even though President Park wanted the ROK military to have its own defense capability, U.S. military power still took charge in the ROK military’s operational scheme.

On the other hand, the Korean government activated a self-defense policy in earnest through the localization of defense weapons. Kyung Soo Lee argues that the Park and Johnson administrations agreed on fostering Korea’s defense industry in May 1968 at the ROK–U.S. Defense Ministers’ Meeting, and, based on this consensus, Korea embarked on a full-fledged effort to modernize the ROK military.¹⁹¹ As a result, as Hyun Soo Kim describes, in order to foster the foundation of its defense industry, the Korean government pursued the localization of basic firearms, such as ammunition and guns, and promoted the early force integration of cutting-edge weapons based on its own research and development.¹⁹² Kim further states that South Korea institutionalized an independent defense system through the establishment of government organizations, including the Agency for Defense Development (ADD).¹⁹³ As Kyung Soo Lee claims, from South Korea’s position, since the defense industry not only allowed South Korea to reduce its security dependence on the United States but also gave it diplomatic leverage, the Park government strongly insisted on the need for its own defense industry.¹⁹⁴ One can say

¹⁸⁹ Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 88.

¹⁹⁰ Lee, 89.

¹⁹¹ Lee, 89.

¹⁹² Hyun Soo Kim, “Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government’s Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study,” 71.

¹⁹³ Kim, 71.

¹⁹⁴ Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 90.

that the Park government's self-defense policy was to retrieve national defense sovereignty through its own military and technological capabilities.

The Park government also carried out its self-defense posture by fostering its own defense industry, namely the *Yulgok*¹⁹⁵ project. According to Kyung Soo Lee, on April 19, 1974, President Park directed the Ministry of National Defense regarding the first *Yulgok* project through the 8 Year Plan (1974-1981).¹⁹⁶ He further describes that the Korean government specifically segmented the plan in order to realize its goal of a self-reliant military early: first was the "imitation development and technology introduction production" phase (1974-1976), and second was the "complete localization of basic weapons and development and production of advanced strategic weapons" phase (1977-1981).¹⁹⁷ As a result, as Lee illustrates,

since producing the M101 105mm gun in 1971, South Korea improved its defense industry's capability to the level of production of the Bell Heli for the transport in 1977, and production of the MD 500, assembly of the Fiat 6114 armored vehicle and fighter in 1978. In particular, the remodeling and production capacity of the M-48 A2 type tank secured basic weapon performance improvement and some precision weapons production at the end of 1970s, establishing the ROK military's self-sufficiency of basic weapons and mass production of precision weapons.¹⁹⁸

Above all, as Peter Banseok Kwon further emphasizes, through President Park's initiatives for Korea's independent national defense, "[*Yulgok*] was founded as an independent military project under the auspices of the ROK government, apart from any

¹⁹⁵ The Project "*Yulgok*" was a plan for the military modernization of South Korea. According to Jong Chul Choi, "South Korea [carried] through an ambitious long-term plan, code-named the *Yulgok* Project, with the aim of qualitative improvements in its operational capability while accepting quantitative reductions. It was initiated by President [Park Jung Hee] in 1974 to redress the serious imbalance between North and South Korean defense capabilities." Jong Chul Choi, "South Korea," in *Arms Procurement Decision Making Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand*, ed. Ravinder Pal Singh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 182, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI98Singh/SIPRI98Singh06.pdf>.

¹⁹⁶ Kyung Soo Lee, "A Comparative Study on 'Self-Reliant Defence' Policy of Park & Rho's Regimes," 92.

¹⁹⁷ Hyun Soo Kim, "Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government's Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study," 71-72.

¹⁹⁸ Hyun Soo Kim, "Park Chung-hee Government and Roh Moo-hyun Government's Self-Reliant National Defense Policy Comparative Study," 72.

[U.S.] input and funded by the Korean people.”¹⁹⁹ As described by Kyung Soo Lee, before the *Yulgok* project, “in April 1973, President Park directed the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to increase Korean military power as a specific implementation plan for his self-defense.”²⁰⁰ More specifically, Kwon states that President Park ordered the ROK JCS to conduct the following four tasks:

- Formulate military plans for participation in [a] self-reliant national defense policy and military buildup.
- Formulate long-term military strategy to prepare for the transfer of [U.S.] Operation Control (OPCON) to South Korea.
- Based on heavy and chemical industrialization (HCI), indigenize the production of necessary weapons and military equipment except for advanced fight jets and missiles.
- With the expectation that no [U.S.] troops will remain in South Korea by the 1980s, the JCS must develop South Korea’s independent military strategy and “Force Improvement Plan”²⁰¹

As a result, as described in the Korea National Archive, including increasing the army’s defense capabilities, the ROK Navy and Air Force introduced new weapons to replace the aging combat forces.²⁰² Thus, through this modernization project, the Park government strengthened the ROK military’s operational capability. Table 2 shows major changes in the ROK military in line with the *Yulgok* project.

¹⁹⁹ Banseok Kwon, “The Autonomy of Chaju Kukpang: Military-Civilian Convergence in the Development of the South Korean Defense Industry under Park Chung Hee, 1968–1979” (Ph. D dissertation, Harvard University, 2016), 232, <https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/33493338/KWON-DISSERTATION-2016.pdf?sequence=1>.

²⁰⁰ Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 96.

²⁰¹ The Ministry of National Defense, *Yulogok Saopui Ojewa Onul Grigo Naeil* *올곡 사업의 어제와 오늘 그리고 내일* [Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow of the Yulgok Project] (Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 1994), 22, quoted in Kwon, “The Autonomy of Chaju Kukpang,” 231–232 (Kwon’s translation).

²⁰² According to the National Archive in the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, the ROK Navy and Air Force respectively “concentrated on increasing its combat ships and guided missiles,” and introducing “new aircrafts,” such as F-4D and F-5E/F. Ki In Baek, “The *Yulgok* Project,” The National Archive in the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, last modified December 1, 2007, <http://www.archives.go.kr/next/search/listSubjectDescription.do?id=006406&pageFlag=>.

Table 3. Major Activities of Force Improvement Plan, 1974–1994²⁰³

Classification	1st stage (1974–81)	2nd stage (1982–86)	3rd stage (1987–94)
Investment expenditure	3 140.2	5 328.0	19 353.0
Percentage of total defence expenditure	31.2	30.5	33.3
Major activities	Replacement of old equipment Construction of military bases in the front area Construction of fast attack craft Purchase of F-4 fighter aircraft	Development of self-propelled artillery ^a Joint development with the USA of tanks and armoured vehicles Construction of major surface combatant Licensed production of F-5 fighter aircraft	Mass production of tanks, armoured vehicles, self-propelled artillery Licensed production of helicopters, submarines, F-16 fighter aircraft

Figures are in the current Korean won.

As a whole, the Park administration laid a solid foundation for building an independent national defense system through the expansion of reserve forces, localization of basic weapons, and improvement of defense capabilities. However, the South Korean government's self-defense policy was somewhat limited in that it still did not provide for an ability to independently produce advanced military weapons. Ultimately, the Park regime sought a way to reinforce its defense vulnerability in the short term, and it embarked on a nuclear weapons development project.

2. Nuclear Weapons Development

More than anything else, the Park Jung Hee government sought to complete its self-reliant national defense policy through a nuclear weapons development program. As Sang Chul Cha mentions, President Park strongly wanted to have sufficient independent military capabilities to defeat North Korea without U.S. military assistance.²⁰⁴ Cha further mentions that through this self-defense policy, the Park government

²⁰³ Source: South Korean Ministry of National Defense, *Defense White Paper, 1995–1996* (Ministry of National Defense: Seoul, 1996), 94, quoted in Jong Chul Choi, "South Korea," in *Arms Procurement Decision Making Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand*, ed. Ravinder Pal Singh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 183, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/files/books/SIPRI98Singh/SIPRI98Singh06.pdf>.

²⁰⁴ Sang Chul Cha, "President Park Chung-hee and the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 1970s," 342.

fundamentally sought strategic military assets such as nuclear weapons, which President Park believed could let Korea overcome the inferiority of its conventional military power against North Korea.²⁰⁵ The Korean government decided to develop nuclear weapons that could suppress the North Korean military threats without the U.S. security umbrella as a final step toward establishing its own independent defense system.

The Park administration officially declared its plan for developing nuclear weapons on June 12, 1975. However, its actual plan was established in the early 1970s. Taik Young Hamm argues that as the United States “reduced its military aid to [South Korea] in the early 1970s as a warning against the authoritarian rule and human rights abuses of the Park regime, [President Park] sought self-sufficiency in defense, budgeting [his own] arms production and [a] covert nuclear weapons [program].”²⁰⁶ As Kyung Soo Lee mentions, the Korean government organized a nuclear weapons development plan centered on The Ministry of National Defense (MND) and ADD on May 10, 1972 and launched full-fledged nuclear development in December of that year.²⁰⁷ According to Sang Chul Cha, although the Park regime secretly pursued nuclear development, after India successfully conducted its nuclear test in May 1974, the United States, concerned about the nuclear domino effect in East Asia, carried out nuclear weapons inspections in developing countries, and the U.S. discovered Korea’s nuclear weapons development projects in the process.²⁰⁸

This discovery brought about significant conflict in the ROK–U.S. alliance, since the U.S. did not want Korea to have a nuclear capability, fearing its potential loss of control over South Korea. However, as Cha argues, Park Jung Hee officially proclaimed the development of nuclear weapons despite the political pressure and opposition of the United States in June 1975 because he had a strong desire to move away from the U.S.

²⁰⁵ Cha, 342.

²⁰⁶ Taik Young Hamm, “The Self-Reliant National Defense of South Korea and The Future U.S.-ROK Alliance” (presentation, the Seoul-Washington Forum, Washington, DC, May 2006): 5, https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/20060502_taikyung.pdf.

²⁰⁷ Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 97–98.

²⁰⁸ Sang Chul Cha, “President Park Chung-hee and the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 1970s,” 344.

nuclear umbrella and develop Korea into a military sovereign nation.²⁰⁹ Yet South Korea ultimately gave up its nuclear development plan as a result of U.S. pressure, and the ROK–U.S. alliance faced a crisis. Taken together, the Park regime’s self-reliant military policy was for resolving its increasing security threats, but it rather aggravated Korea’s security crisis by undermining the solid ROK–U.S. alliance. As a small power in an asymmetric alliance, the ROK faced considerable restrictions on securing its diplomatic autonomy.

C. THE PARK ADMINISTRATION’S THREAT PERCEPTION

In contrast to the Roh administration, in the Park administration it was *high* threat perception that drove contradictory alliance policies. To be more specific, South Korea further heightened its concerns over its national security in response to a combination of three factors: 1) the inferiority of conventional forces responding to North Korea, 2) the surging North Korean invasion, and 3) the USFK’s withdrawal plan. This psychological uneasiness provoked the South Korean government to convert its alliance policies from ones exemplified by troop dispatches to Vietnam to ones exemplified by an independent self-reliance policy. Above all, the proclamation of the Nixon Doctrine imposed an existential threat on the Park government. To investigate this systemic conversion of Korea’s foreign policies, this section first explores the South Korean government’s attitude toward North Korea. Through this, one can understand the Park regime’s threat perception toward North Korea. It will then analyze the domestic and international events that decisively impacted Korea’s threat perception.

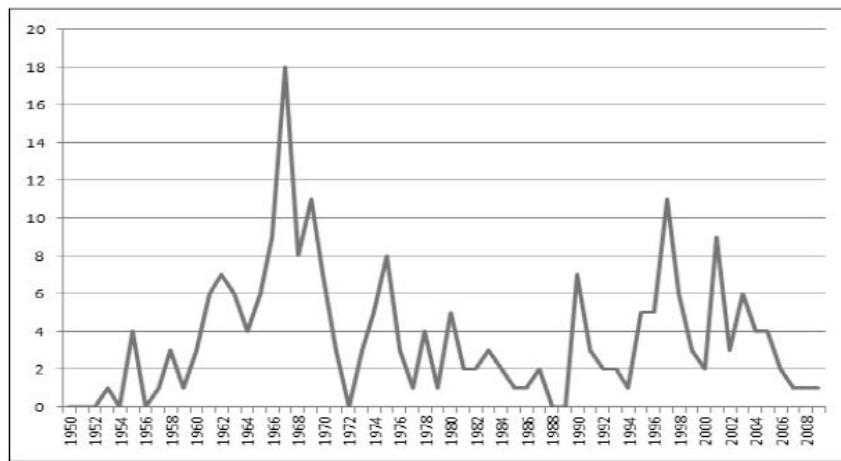
1. South Korea’s Position toward North Korea: Anti-Communism after the Korean War

After the Korean War, anti-communism became a principle of South Korean governments, particularly Park Jung Hee’s administration. Naturally, the government regarded North Korea as a primary threat to South Korea’s security. In the 1950s, post-

²⁰⁹ Cha, 345–346; As cited by Kyung Soo Lee, President Park stated that even without U.S. military support, South Korea will positively respond to North Korea’s military threats by developing nuclear weapons; Kyung Soo Lee, “A Comparative Study on ‘Self-Reliant Defence’ Policy of Park & Rho’s Regimes,” 101.

war reconstruction and the United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC)'s surveillance underestimated North Korea's attempts to infiltrate South Korea. However, as Yoon Gyu Lee argues, in the 1960s, North Korea, exploiting the political turmoil of the South Korean government, launched more intensive local provocations to unify the Peninsula under communism.²¹⁰ Figure 5 shows the trend of North Korean military provocations by year, and one can infer that Korea had a considerable security crisis on its hands in the 1960s.

Figure 5. The Trend of North Korean Provocations after the Armistice²¹¹



Axis 'X' and 'Y' stand for year and number of provocations, respectively.

Particularly in the late 1960s, as Robert Lauler illustrates, South Korea felt that the “threat of attack from North Korea was as high as ever and even likened the drastic rise in North-South Clashes along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) as a possible harbinger of an invasion.”²¹² Above all, since the conventional capabilities of the North

²¹⁰ In the early 1960s, South Korea was in a considerable political crisis due to the illegal election of the Rhee Syngman government and the military coup of Park Jung Hee. Yoon Gyu Lee, “A Case Study on the Provocations by North Korea,” *Military* 91 (June 2014): 76, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06507575>.

²¹¹ Source: Sang Beom Yoo, “The Trend of North Korean Military Provocations and Alliance Cooperation,” *National Defense Studies* 57, no. 1 (March 2014): 64, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?name=kiss2002&key=3213727.

²¹² Robert Lauler, “Divergent Perspectives: The U.S. - South Korean Disagreement over the Northern Limit Line in the mid-1970s,” *International Journal of Korean History* 18, no.2 (August 2013): 101–102, <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE02258186>.

Korean military were superior to South Korea's at that time, the North's apparent attempts to invade aggravated the Park administration's unrest. As a whole, the North Korean threat produced considerable psychological fear for the Park administration in terms of regime security. Above all, the South Korean government defined North Korea as an immediate threat, and this necessitated a strong military power to deter North Korean attempts to unify the Korean peninsula under communism. From this perspective, the ROK-U.S. alliance was an essential tool for Korea's national security.

2. Root Causes of the Park Administration's High Threat Perception

Apart from the Park administration's alliance policies, this section explores what determined the South Korean government's threat perception regarding the Korean peninsula. In the Park administration, unlike in Roh's case, international factors drove its threat perception. To be more specific, as Sung Joo Han argues, since South Korea heavily relied upon the U.S., particularly in terms of security, certain changes in U.S. alliance policies fostered Korea's anxiety.²¹³ In particular, the Korean government connected potential USFK's withdrawal to South Korea's ability to survive. Thus, this section explores the Park administration's threat perception in the context of alliance security dilemmas.

a. Impact of the North Korean Provocations

Rapidly increasing North Korean provocations in the late 1960s aggravated Park Jung Hee government's security crisis. In fact, as seen above in Figure 5, the number of North Korean southward provocations increased sharply after the Park regime dispatched its soldiers to Vietnam, from 1965 to 1968. As described in *the Memorandum of Alfred Jenkins of the National Security Council the President's Special Assistant* on July 26, 1967, both the ROK and U.S. regarded North Korea's provocations as attempts to subvert

²¹³ Sung Joo Han, "South Korea 1977: Preparing for Self-Reliance," *Asian Survey* 18, no.1 (January 1978): 45, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2643183>.

the South Korean regime.²¹⁴ President Park was particularly afraid of the possibility that North Korean guerilla activities would develop into a destructive military conflict.²¹⁵ Table 2 shows the number of inter-Korean collisions and casualties at that time.

Table 4. The North Korean Attacks and Casualties²¹⁶

Index	1965	1966	1967 to Date
DMZ Incidents	42	37	286
Firefights (DMZ plus interior)	29	30	132
NK, KIA	34	43	146
NK, captured after firefights	Not comparable	35 (excludes police pick-ups)	N/A
ROK/[U.S.], KIA	40	39	75
ROK/[U.S.], WIA	49	34	175

On January 23, North Korea captured the USS *Pueblo*, which was gathering information off the coast of Wonsan. This incident showed that the ROK and the U.S. faced serious disagreements over responses to North Korean provocations. In some aspects, the ROK–U.S. alliance began to deviate from its “comfortable nest.”

To be more specific, the two countries were apparently unified, but had different outlooks in terms of responding to North Korea. As illustrated in the *Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State* on February 12, 1968, the South Korean government was “charged with [a] deep conviction that [Pyongyang was] on the path of

²¹⁴ United States Department of State, *Memorandum from Alfred Jenkins of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow), Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d123>.

²¹⁵ United States Department of State, *Memorandum from Alfred Jenkins of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow)*.

²¹⁶ Source: United States Department of State, *Memorandum from Alfred Jenkins of the National Security Council Staff to the President’s Special Assistant (Rostow), Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d123>.

war.”²¹⁷ Accordingly, while Seoul, which felt the threat of a North Korean invasion, strongly insisted on retaliation against North Korea, as Kyung Eun Shin’s analysis shows, Washington recognized that the intense provocations of North Korea did not signal an all-out war, but rather that it wanted to divert U.S. attention concentrated in Vietnam to the Korean peninsula in order to help the expansion of the Communist forces in North Vietnam.²¹⁸ As noted in the *Memorandum to Holders of Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 14.2–67* on February 29, 1968, the United States believed that the Soviet Union and China not only were reluctant to intervene in the new war on the Peninsula but also would restrain the North’s invasion attempts.²¹⁹ Taken together, while the United States objectively judged the situation on the Korean peninsula from a global strategic point of view, South Korea perceived a crisis in the South-North confrontation. Furthermore, threat perception between the ROK and the U.S. toward North Korea significantly diverged. This strained alliance cohesion.

In addition, the U.S. secret deal with North Korea to repatriate the crews of the *Pueblo* catalyzed the ROK–U.S. alliance’s split. As Kyeong Eun Shin argues, the ROK viewed the U.S.–North Korea negotiations as a reflection of Washington’s lukewarm attitude towards South Korean security.²²⁰ As shown in the *Memorandum from Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson*, the South Korean administration “doubted both the resolve of the United States and [its] commitment in Korea...[President Park] also felt that the discussions infringed on ROK sovereignty.”²²¹ Also, in the process of resolving the two security crises of 1968, although the United States pledged to provide weapons to the

²¹⁷ United States Department of State, *Telegram from the Embassy in Korea to the Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d176>.

²¹⁸ Kyeong Eun Shin, “The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration,” 66.

²¹⁹ United States Department of State, *Memorandum to Holders of Special National Intelligence Estimate Number 14.2–67, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d184>.

²²⁰ Kyeong Eun Shin, “The Reasons of Ceasing and Resuming Discussions on Withdrawal of U.S. Forces in Korea during the Johnson Administration,” 68.

²²¹ United States Department of State, *Memorandum from Cyrus R. Vance to President Johnson, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964–1968*, vol. XXIX (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2000), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d181>.

Korean government for military modernization in order to alleviate South Korea's dissatisfaction, South Korea's existential threat perception, which originated from the fact that its government could be subverted by the North at any time, outweighed the U.S. security commitment. As Tae Gyun Park puts it, despite South Korea's dispatch of its combat troops for the United States, the psychological gaps between the ROK and the U.S. were sufficient to prompt the Park regime's defection.²²² Ultimately, U.S. actions induced South Korea's fear of abandonment. This was definitely "the calm before the storm" of the ROK-U.S. alliance's rift.

b. D tente between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC)

In addition to inter-Korean situations, the international political environment outside the Korean peninsula further aggravated Korea's threat perception. In particular, the U.S. plan to withdraw the USFK, which was revealed in 1969 by the United States in the Guam Doctrine Declaration and the 1971 the U.S.-PRC secret talks, overlapped with North Korea's military provocations and provided Korea with an existential crisis. This section investigates these international factors in details.

(1) The 1969 Guam Doctrine and South Korea's Anxiety

The so-called "Guam Doctrine" announced by President Richard Nixon on July 25, 1969, accelerated South Korea's anxiety about its security shield. As Richard Thornton mentions, the United States strategically conceived of rapprochement with the PRC to restrain the Soviet expansionism that emerged through the Sino-Soviet border dispute in January 1969 and tried to regain its hegemony, lost during the Vietnam War.²²³ In this aspect, as Thornton further notes, Nixon withdrew American forces by declaring the "Vietnamization" of the Vietnam War, permitting China to "counter the large Soviet border buildup."²²⁴ However, the U.S. initiation of the armistice deal for

²²² Tae Gyun Park, "Changes in Korean-U.S. Relationship during the Vietnam War," *Military History* 89 (December 2013): 345. <http://www.dbpia.co.kr/Article/NODE06507776>.

²²³ Richard C. Thornton, *The Nixon Kissinger Years: The Reshaping of American Foreign Policy*, (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House, 2001), 3-5.

²²⁴ Thornton, *The Nixon Kissinger Years*, 3-5.

ending the Vietnam War after the “Tet offensive” resumed the USFK’s withdrawal in the Korean peninsula, halted during the war. With this Vietnamization, Nixon announced that:

the United States would honor its treaty commitments, but [he] added “that as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States is going to encourage and has a right to expect that this problem will be handled by, and responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.”²²⁵

Simultaneously, according to Tae Gyun park, Nixon withdrew some U.S. troops stationed in East Asia, including Vietnam.²²⁶ However, as Park argues, Nixon’s action put the Park administration in the middle of the security crisis.²²⁷ Park further emphasizes that not only did the U.S. not notify the South Korean government about the withdrawal until the concrete plan for the reduction of U.S. troops in late 1969, but Nixon was also considering the complete withdrawal of the USFK from the Korean peninsula.²²⁸ As he notes, in 1966, since the U.S. mutually agreed upon policy coordination for the USFK, the Nixon Doctrine undermined confidence in the ROK–U.S. relationship.²²⁹ Thus, the doctrine became a turning point for South Korea’s determination to reduce its dependence on the alliance and consider its own defense measures.

(2) The 1971 Secret Meetings and Shanghai Communique between the U.S. and PRC

Crucially, before the Shanghai Communiqué on February 28, 1972, two secret meetings between the U.S. and the PRC on July 9 and October 22, 1971, further

²²⁵ United States Department of State, *Editorial Note, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vol. I (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Press, 2004), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v01/d29>.

²²⁶ According to the Tae Gyun Park’s work, the United States planned to reduce the number of the USFK by about 20,000. He further mentions that the unilateral USFK withdrawal gave a great shock to South Korea, which had dispatched the second largest troops, as an ally. Tae Gyun Park, “Changes in Korean-U.S. Relationship during the Vietnam War.” 349–350.

²²⁷ Park, 350.

²²⁸ Park, 351.

²²⁹ Park, 352.

provoked South Korean government suspicions about the U.S. defense commitment. As Jeong Kyung Seo describes, because the U.S. did not disclose the results of the talks to the Park regime, this fundamentally aggravated South Korea's fear about its security and the distrust of the U.S. protection.²³⁰ To be more specific, as Sang Chul Cha argues, since the reduction of the USFK progressed from July 1970 to June 1971 and the Park government expected that the issue of the USFK's withdrawal could be treated as a major agenda item in the U.S.-PRC meeting, the secret talks themselves created a fear of abandonment.²³¹ South Korea was subordinate within the U.S. security architecture. This situation prompted the Park administration to consider escaping the shade of the ROK–U.S. alliance.

In fact, diplomatic documents written by Winston Lord state that in the first and second secret meetings between National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and Premier Zhou Enlai on July 9, 1971 and October 22, respectively, the two sides discussed largely Taiwan's sovereignty, the withdrawal of U.S. forces in Vietnam, and security issues on the Korean peninsula.²³² According to the secret documents "*Korea, Japan, South Korea, Soviet Union, Arms Control*" and "*Memcon of Your Conversation with Chou En-lai*" reproduced by the National Security Archives, among these issues, China put pressure on the United States, referring to the withdrawal of the USFK.²³³ The PRC, as the documents illustrate, especially emphasized the immediate withdrawal of the USFK in South Korea and its opposition to the presence of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in the South after the withdrawal of the USFK.²³⁴ More importantly, Kissinger replied that "[the U.S. is] willing to sign an agreement with [the PRC] on the basis of the

²³⁰ Jeong Kyung Seo, "Korea's Security with the Sino-U.S. Relationship: Focusing on the Détente between U.S. and China in the 1970s," *The Journal of Modern China Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011): 176, http://kiss.kstudy.com/journal/thesis_name.asp?tname=kiss2002&key=2933193.

²³¹ Sang Chul Cha, "President Park Chung-hee and the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 1970s," 341–343.

²³² Winston Lord, "Korea, Japan, South Asia, Soviet Union, Arms Control," (official memorandum, Washington, DC: White House, 1971), <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB70/doc13.pdf>; Winston Lord, "Memcon of Your Conversation with Chou En-lai," (official memorandum, Washington, DC: White House, 1971), <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-34.pdf>.

²³³ Lord, "Korea, Japan, South Asia, Soviet Union, Arms Control,"; Lord, "Memcon of Your Conversation with Chou En-lai,"

²³⁴ Lord, "Korea, Japan, South Asia, Soviet Union, Arms Control,"; Lord, "Memcon of Your Conversation with Chou En-lai,"

Five Points of Peaceful Principle of Coexistence.”²³⁵ As Jeong Kyung Seo analyzes, however, the U.S. did not inform the Park administration about the withdrawal agreement, which was in the vital interests of South Korea.²³⁶ Seo further mentions that in the ROK–U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) on July 12, 1971, held two days after the U.S.-PRC secret talks, Washington restated its strong defense commitment for South Korea, but at the same time, it denied Park’s official requests for summit talks to discuss the contents of the secret meeting.²³⁷ This dual attitude of the United States possibly reinforced South Korea’s existing distrust about the alliance and created the extreme security tension of the Park regime.

Moreover, although the U.S. did not disclose the content of the 1971 U.S.-PRC secret meeting, the Shanghai Communique announced on February 28, 1972, gave South Korea a deep impression that the United States thoroughly managed the Cold War through pragmatism. For example, as Victor Cha notes, through the communique, “[the U.S. and the PRC] agreed that allies and enemies need not be defined by ideology but by the content of their foreign policy and consequently recognized their shared interests in avoiding a disruption of the status quo.”²³⁸ Cha further states that “[Washington] did not challenge Beijing’s ‘one-China’ principle, and [Beijing] tacitly accepted the U.S. need to maintain some form of defense commitment to Taipei.”²³⁹ Although the U.S. could pursue its national interests through this strategic ambiguity, the cracks and conflicts of the ROK–U.S. alliance gradually reached an unmanageable level. As a result of the rapprochement between the U.S. and the PRC, the South Korean regime became convinced that the U.S. willingness to protect South Korea was only an ideational commitment.

²³⁵ Lord, “Korea, Japan, South Asia, Soviet Union, Arms Control,”; Lord, “Memcon of Your Conversation with Chou En-lai,”

²³⁶ Jeong Kyung Seo, “Korea’s Security with the Sino-U.S. Relationship,” 176.

²³⁷ Seo, 176.

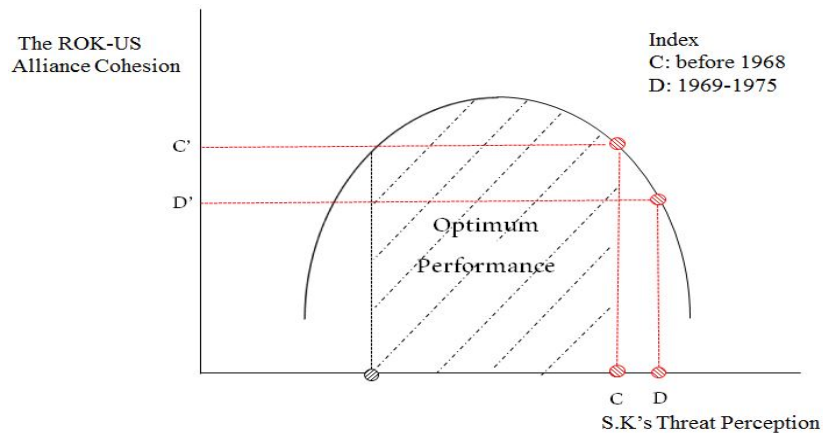
²³⁸ Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The US-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 102.

²³⁹ Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism*, 102.

D. ANALYSIS OF ROK–U.S. ALLIANCE COHESION

As mentioned above, the ROK and the U.S. showed a relatively strong alliance through deploying soldiers to Vietnam. However, the USFK’s withdrawal plan and North Korean attempts to overthrow the South made President Park perceive an existential crisis over a potential military invasion by Pyongyang. According to Janice Stein, “[states] strongly prefer consistency...they consequently deny or discount inconsistent information to preserve their existing beliefs...exposure to contradictory information frequently results in the strengthening of [the existing perception].”²⁴⁰ U.S. threat awareness and alliance policies, which contradicted the existing Park regime’s threat recognition system, exacerbated South Korea’s anxiety and functioned as a centrifugal force, pushing the ROK away from the alliance. Based on this analysis, Figure 6 shows the transition of the ROK–U.S. alliance cohesion in the Park administrations. Points C and D indicate the deterioration of the Korean government’s threat perception, and Point C’ and D’ indicate changes in the cohesiveness of the ROK–U.S. alliance.

Figure 6. The Park Administration’s Alliance Cohesion



As a result, President Park declared a self-reliant defense plan, which contradicted the troop dispatches. In August 1970, per Sang Chul Cha’s analysis, South Korea

²⁴⁰ Stein, “Threat Perception in International Relations,” 10.

established the Agency for Defense Development (ADD) to advance its own capabilities for weapons development, fundamentally aiming at escaping security dependence on the United States.²⁴¹ In addition, Cha mentions that after December 1971, the Park administration “began developing strategic missiles and nuclear weapons,” and officially declared its nuclear weapons development program in 1975.²⁴² However, as Cha puts it, since the U.S. was concerned that South Korea’s nuclear weapons program could not only lead to the “nuclear domino” phenomenon in East Asia but also provoke the alliance systems led by America to break, Washington impeded Seoul’s independent actions through its coercive power.²⁴³ Cha further emphasizes that the ROK–U.S. alliance finally reached the crisis of the alliance’s dissolution in 1976, following the declaration of the unilateral withdrawal of the USFK by President Jimmy Carter.²⁴⁴ Taken together, the Park Jung Hee regime’s existential threat perception dramatically converted South Korea’s alliance policies from one exemplified by troop dispatches to one rooted in self-reliant defense. Furthermore, in this process, the ROK–U.S. alliance lost its original function to deter North Korea. In short, the alliance’s cohesion considerably weakened.

E. CONCLUSION

This chapter showed that in the case of the Park government, in contrast to that of the Roh government, international factors such as North Korean provocations and a change in U.S. alliance policies exacerbated Korea’s threat perception. Since the Korean government did not have military power competitive enough to counter North Korea in the 1960s and 1970s, both increasing North Korean attempts to invade the South and the Korean distrust of the U.S. security umbrella, which was based on the reduction of the USFK, raised Korea’s psychological attention to an impending existential threat. Above all, the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, the 1971 U.S.-China secret talks, and the withdrawal plan of the USFK drove the Park government’s security threat perception through the roof. Then, as Cha suggests, from the South Korean perspective, the 1972 Shanghai

²⁴¹ Sang Chul Cha, “President Park Chung-hee and the ROK-U.S. Alliance in the 1970s,” 342.

²⁴² Cha, 344–346.

²⁴³ Cha, 344–346.

²⁴⁴ Cha, 348–349.

Communique catalyzed the Korean government's gradually worsening security unrest.²⁴⁵ Thus, external factors fundamentally exacerbated the Korean government's perception of the security environment on the Peninsula.

In addition, this chapter illustrated that this shift in the Park government's threat perception led to a change of its alliance policies, from the troop dispatch to Vietnam to a self-reliance defense policy. When analyzing each policy on a chronological basis, the Park administration, like the Roh government, implemented incoherent foreign policies. As mentioned in this chapter, the Korean government's threat awareness was the root cause of these inconsistent alliance policies. Korea and the U.S. participated in the Vietnam War based on their common threat perception regarding communist forces. Although South Korea sought to strengthen its diplomatic ties to the United States through its dispatches, the plan to reduce the USFK, which created a disparity of threat perception between the two countries, did not create the optimal alliance that Korea wanted. Above all, the Korean government's plan to develop its own nuclear weapons damaged U.S. strategic interests on the Peninsula, significantly furthering the ROK-U.S. relationship's rift. It is no exaggeration to say that the ROK-U.S. relations in the 1970s depended on U.S. attitudes and foreign policies about South Korea. From a structural viewpoint, South Korea, a small power within the asymmetric ROK-U.S. alliance, had no diplomatic autonomy to achieve its desired diplomatic preferences.

²⁴⁵ Cha, 344.

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IV. CONCLUSION

A. SUMMARY

This thesis has explored the Roh Moo Hyun and Park Jung Hee governments' threat perception regarding North Korea and their surrounding security environments on the Korean peninsula and investigated how these helped shift Korean governments' alliance policies. In particular, the thesis focused on these governments' shifts between troop dispatches and self-reliance defense policies. Through this process, the thesis demonstrated an 'inverted U relationship' between South Korea's threat perception and ROK-U.S. alliance cohesion, based on the two hypotheses of the thesis: first, if Korea's threat perception falls either below the common threat shared with the U.S. or above the level of an existential threat to Korea, the ROK will take action to show or withdraw its commitment in response to a relatively small increase in threat perception. Second, if South Korea meets an existential threat, it tends to pursue an independent defense policy, since it doubts the U.S. willingness to protect it.

The Roh Moo Hyun government overall maintained a low perception of security threats, which increased the distance between the two countries. The government addressed North Korean military threats and even that country's possession of nuclear weapons based on its pro-North foreign policy line. Above all, South Korea aimed to peacefully resolve North Korean nuclear issues and adopted the 'peace and prosperity' stance on the Peninsula as its ideal of foreign policy. In a sense, this approach distorted the security environment of the Korean peninsula into something appearing quite stable. In the end, Korea's threat deflation and consequent engagement stance toward North Korea made the ROK-U.S. relationship considerably remote.

Meanwhile, from the beginning of the Roh administration, the ROK government paved the way for South Korea's independent defense capability by promoting the return of wartime operational control and the 2020 defense reform plan. However, as the United States observed imminent threats connected to North Korea's withdrawal from the NPT and its nuclear weapons development and created a war-crisis environment on the Korean

peninsula, this became a significant obstacle for the South Korean government's attempts to maintain its diplomatic preferences. As the United States gradually created the possibility of war, this increased Korea's threat perception. Based on this awareness, the Roh administration decided to transact its preferences and autonomy with the U.S. in order to maintain its favored policies. The exchange led South Korea to send its troops to the Iraq War. Overall, then, the Roh government showed an inconsistent pattern in its foreign policies. The Korean government's threat deflation was at the core of this contradiction, and this devolved the ROK-U.S. alliance into crisis.

In contrast, the Park government had perpetual tension in its national security policy and adhered to a relatively high threat perception. South Korea, which directly faced ideological confrontation through the Korean War, considerably feared the expansion of communist forces, including North Korea. Above all, it was afraid of North Korea's southward invasion and the unification of the Peninsula under communism. Amid the Cold War, the Korean government in the 1960s and 1970s basically shared the anti-communism ideology of the U.S. and was able to maintain a relatively friendly relationship with the U.S. as an axis of the liberal camp. In this vein, one can say that a certain level of military tension within the inter-Korean relationship created a favorable environment for Korea and the U.S. to optimally perform as an alliance.

Yet the issue of USFK troop reduction gradually marginalized the ROK-U.S. alliance's optimal performance. This situation provoked the Park Jung Hee administration to dispatch its military to the Vietnam War in 1964. Through the dispatches, South Korea aimed to stabilize its relationship with the U.S., but the U.S. continued its plan of rebalancing its military forces on the Peninsula even during the Vietnam War. Therefore, the Korean government became distrustful about the U.S. security commitment, and dissonance between the ROK and U.S. gradually grew. In other words, contrary to South Korea's expectations, increasing security threats fairly weakened the ROK-U.S. alliance's solidarity.

Simultaneously, the alliance and North Korea created a hazardous international environment that worsened the Park government's anxiety regarding its security. The

South Korean regime came to believe that its security was more threatened than ever before through the Blue House raid in January 1968. Moreover, the United States response to the Pueblo incident in February 1968, apparently rooted only in its national interests, led South Korea to fear that the U.S. would actually abandon it. In addition, a chain of international events – the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, the 1971 U.S.-China secret talks, and the withdrawal plan of the USFK – exacerbated the Park government’s worries over the U.S. security commitment. Ultimately, this resulted in psychological panic on the part of the South Korean government.

As a result, South Korea strongly proceeded with its self-reliance defense policy to ensure its security without U.S. military support. Among the smaller policies that emerged from this, through its nuclear weapons development project, Korea ultimately desired to break from its structural dependence on the ROK–U.S. alliance. However, since this policy conflicted with U.S. strategic interests, it was interrupted by U.S. coercive power. This ultimately undercut the ROK–U.S. alliance. Taken together, the security crises in and out of the Korean peninsula gradually deteriorated the Park Jung Hee government’s threat perception, and this helped bring about the contradictory shift of its alliance policies. In contrast with the Roh government, the Park administration’s threat inflation catalyzed the ROK–U.S. alliance’s strain.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH KOREA

Through a comparative study between the Roh and Park administrations, this thesis found that since Korea is a small power in an asymmetric alliance, it is structurally difficult for the Korean government to shape its foreign relations with the U.S. and its desired national defense mechanism. This suggests that the external security environment of Korea can shape the ROK–U.S. alliance mechanism. For instance, the Roh Moo Hyun government dispatched its troops to Iraq to defend its diplomatic preferences while maintaining its independent national defense and anti-American stance, but this was ultimately based on Korea’s recognition that the United States could decisively influence the Korean peninsula security issue. The United States has significantly impacted Korea’s threat perception and decision-making.

1. Influence of Domestic Factors on the ROK–U.S. Alliance

But the domestic politics of South Korea have also influenced its alliance policies and international relations. Since South Korea is in an asymmetric alliance with the United States, it generally falls in line with U.S. perceptions and policy intentions regarding the international security environment. However, as Sung Hoon Lee asserts, at least in the Roh administration, the ROK–U.S. alliance “was not simply a by-product of the U.S. [East Asian] strategy and foreign policies.”²⁴⁶ In this line, the South Korean government showed that decision makers, including presidents, could influence the ROK’s alliance policy toward the United States based on Korea’s political beliefs and situational awareness regarding the international environment.

Korean politicians should remain impartially aware of the security environment on the Korean peninsula. In order to deter North Korea’s military threats, it is important to strengthen the ROK–U.S. alliance’s cohesion and establish a common threat perception about the security environment on the Peninsula. Currently, North Korea’s possession of nuclear weapons and inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) imposes an existential threat on the security of the United States as well as South Korea. If South Korea, like the Roh government in the past, blindly embraces North Korea, then the cracks in the ROK–U.S. alliance will deepen. The ROK–U.S. alliance is still an important security mechanism for South Korea. Considering that South Korea’s political stance toward Pyongyang can considerably impact the performance of the alliance, South Korean political leaders and bureaucrats should objectively recognize the security situation on the Korean peninsula.

2. Impact of Imbalanced Threat Awareness on the ROK–U.S. Alliance

The ROK–U.S. alliance is a typical asymmetric relationship. Therefore, the views of the two countries regarding the security situation on the Peninsula have diverged. In particular, South Korea, which directly confronts North Korean military threats through

²⁴⁶ Sung Hoon Lee, “Bidaeching Dongmaenghaeseo Yaksogukeui Yunghyangruke Gwanhan Yeongu,” 비대칭 동맹하에서 약소국의 영향력에 관한 연구[A Study on the Influence of the Small Power under an Asymmetric Alliance] (author’s translation) *National Strategy* 23, no. 2 (May 2017): 30, http://www.sejong.org/board/bd_news/1/egoread.php?bd=15&seq=3780.

the DMZ, cannot make an representative and neutral judgment on the security crisis on the Korean peninsula. Considering that the Korean War has not yet ended legally, the South Korean government can see North Korea's intense local provocations as reinitiating the war. With this in mind, the U.S. security commitment to South Korea, which utilizes the ROK-U.S. alliance as its main deterrence mechanism against North Korean threats, importantly determines the ROK's threat perception.

However, South Korea still doubts U.S. defense commitments regarding current North Korean nuclear issues. While South Korea has requested substantial defense assistance from the U.S. against the North's nuclear weapons, Washington has only deployed its strategic air force assets temporarily to the Peninsula. This suggests a huge gap between the ROK and U.S. in terms of interpreting North Korean nuclear threats. Above all, the more sophisticated North Korean nuclear weapons become, the more acute South Korea's threat perception will be, and the ROK could begin to consider dissolving the alliance as it had in the past. Therefore, in order for Korea to avoid cracks and conflicts in the alliance, it should remain clear-eyed in recognizing North Korean threats and the security environment on the Peninsula. In a sense, South Korea should strive to balance its threat awareness with the U.S.

C. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis explored how the Korean government's psychological factors influenced the ROK-U.S. alliance's cohesion, and how subjective elements in the alliance's politics can drive the relationship between the two states. However, the thesis has four limitations that should provoke scholars to conduct additional study on the ROK-U.S. alliance's future status.

First, the author did not objectively analyze the two Korean governments' threat perceptions. The thesis relied on a qualitative analysis of the presidents' official statements, officials' memoirs, and historical records to evaluate their perceptions. This might detract from the credibility of the thesis. Therefore, future research needs to secure evidence to more objectively verify Korea's threat perception. This would reinforce the reliability of supplementary studies.

Second, while discussing Korean governments' self-defense policy, the author broadly illustrated this through concrete case studies, but did not precisely define the type of autonomy pursued by the Roh and Park governments. Since the newly-emerged Moon Jae In administration has also been seen to be pursuing an independent national defense for South Korea, future in-depth analysis of this could provide lessons on the viability of South Korean security autonomy.

Third, the thesis began with the premise that Korea employs the ROK–U.S. alliance as its most important security mechanism. However, among various policies that can strengthen the alliance, the author did not clearly state why Korea focused upon the political burden of sending troops to war, as opposed to other tools to this end. Future research might more deeply explore why (or whether) troop dispatch represents an alliance-strengthening mechanism strong enough to counterbalance other, alliance-weakening policies pursued at the same time. Such a study could better establish small powers' ability to manage diplomatic relations with great powers.

Fourth, the thesis mainly took a realist approach to the ROK–U.S. alliance, ignoring other points of view in the process. The author argued that domestic political factors and the security environment in Korea during the Roh and Park administrations fundamentally impacted their threat awareness. However, since norms and institutions of the international community greatly affect international relations, it is also necessary to approach the Korean government's threat recognition from a constructivist point of view. A future, more comprehensive analysis that combines realism and constructivism might further refine the correlation between Korea's threat perception and ROK–U.S. alliance cohesion.

All in all, from a psychological point of view, this thesis analyzed how a small power's threat recognition can influence relations with a great power, using the ROK–U.S. alliance as its case study. If future studies complement the above limitations, we might identify more diverse elements, including but not limited to psychological factors, that might affect the ROK–U.S. relationship.

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