

### **China's Approach to the US-ROK Alliance— Background, Status, Outlook<sup>1</sup>**

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Among China's neighbors in Asia, Chinese leaders have given highest priority to relations with the governments of northeast Asia, Japan and the administrations of North and South Korea. The salient reasons have included the strategic location of these nations close to the economic centers of China's modernization, their economic, political, and military power and importance to China, and their close involvement with the United States. In terms of the last factor, Chinese leaders have long recognized the central importance of the US alliances with Japan and South Korea, and the related importance of the US military presence in both countries as enabled by the respective alliances.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, the Chinese administration has shown a very conflicted attitude about these US alliances.<sup>3</sup> On the one hand, it has long worked against efforts by a great power like the United States to use alliances and other means to establish and maintain strong military positions along China's periphery. It has seen such efforts as a security danger that must be blocked, reduced or eliminated. During the period of intense Sino-Soviet confrontation from the late 1960s until the early 1980s, China did welcome the strong US alliances as security buffer against what China then perceived as its main security threat, the Soviet Union. It also saw the alliances as useful in thwarting possible moves by Japan or the governments on the Korean peninsula that would endanger regional stability and Chinese security and development.

In the first decade of the post cold war period, Chinese officials in general were sharply critical of US foreign policy and particularly US alliances and military relations in Asia, devoting special criticism to US efforts to strengthen the US-Japan alliance. An exception was Chinese treatment of the US-South Korean alliance, which was rarely criticized by Chinese officials. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Chinese leaders made an

exception in the case of the US-ROK alliance because the security situation on the Korean peninsula was so delicate that disrupting the US alliance with South Korea could endanger Korean peace which was so important to Chinese development and stability.

Beginning in mid-2001, China dramatically moderated its public criticism of US foreign policy, including US alliance relations and military presence in Asia. By 2003, China had changed to the point that it emphasized that China's "peaceful rise" in Asia would not challenge and would be compatible with existing US and other security, political, and economic arrangements, so long as they did not infringe on core Chinese interests, mainly Taiwan. This trend reinforced Chinese reticence to criticize the US-South Korean alliance. The new moderation in Asia did not apply to Japan, however. The deterioration in China-Japan relations in recent years has added to reasons for continued Chinese criticism of the Japan-US alliance, albeit much less criticism than prevailed prior to mid-2001.

Meanwhile, the record of Chinese foreign relations in northeast Asia in the post cold-war period is very mixed. Chinese management of relations with Japan represents arguably the most significant failure in Chinese diplomacy in this period. The causes of this failure lie on both the Chinese and Japanese sides, but the result by mid-2006 was that Chinese relations with Japan had reached their lowest point since the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1972. In contrast, Chinese leaders have shown great skill in managing very difficult and often contradictory imperatives coming from North and South Korea, sustaining China's position in Pyongyang and markedly advancing China's relations with Seoul. Chinese officials are widely perceived in South Korea and elsewhere to be endeavoring over time to weaken the South Korean alliance relationship with the United States and thereby reduce the security danger to China posed by US forces and American military influence so close to China's periphery. But they appear to recognize that China's strong interest in continued stability on the peninsula and South Korea's strong interest in continuing the alliance with the United States means that China is better off

pursuing a long term incremental effort to improve relations with South Korea without directly challenging the ROK-US alliance.

Dramatic developments in northeast Asia in late 2006<sup>4</sup> saw a major crisis precipitated by North Korea's nuclear weapon test on October 9. China joined with the United States and other concerned powers in a concerted effort to press North Korea to return to the Six Party talks and to refrain from further provocative acts. It supported a strong UN Security Council resolution passed on October 14 that imposed sanctions on and restricted trade with North Korea, and called on Pyongyang to resume negotiations on ending its nuclear weapons program. In this context, Chinese interest seemed well served with sustaining existing US-South Korean alliance relations and avoiding significant changes in the Washington-Seoul relationship that would risk further instability on the Korean peninsula.

A concurrent dramatic change occurred in Chinese-Japanese relations. The coming to power of a new Japanese prime minister, Shinzo Abe, in September occasioned compromises by both China and Japan that led to a bilateral summit in Beijing that brought a halt to the downward direction of bilateral political relations. In this context, official Chinese commentary played down previous criticism of Japan's defense policies and the US-Japan alliance, though there appeared to be no fundamental change in China's opposition to the alliance and its perceived negative implications for Chinese interests.

### **China's Relations with the Korean Peninsula**

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the demise of East-West and Sino-Soviet competition for influence in the Korean peninsula after the cold war, Beijing adjusted Chinese relations to take advantage of economic and other opportunities with South Korea, while sustaining its position as North Korea's most important foreign ally. The international confrontation caused by North Korea's nuclear weapons program and related ballistic missile programs, and the sharp decline in economic conditions and the rise of political uncertainty there following the sudden death of Kim Il Sung in 1994 raised uncertainties in China about the future stability of the peninsula. In general, Chinese officials used economic aid and continued military and

political exchanges to help stabilize and preserve Chinese relations with the North, while working closely with South Korea and at times the United States in seeking a peaceful resolution to tensions on the peninsula. In response to the crisis created by North Korea's provocative nuclear proliferation activities, missile tests and other actions during 2002-2006, China was even more active, taking a leading role in international efforts to seek a diplomatic solution that would preserve China's influence and interests on the peninsula.<sup>5</sup>

South Korean officials along with US and other outside observers often concluded that China has a longer term interest in seeing a growth of Chinese influence and a reduction of US and Japanese influence on the peninsula.<sup>6</sup> However, Beijing was careful not to be seen directly challenging US leadership in Korean affairs or specifically the US-ROK alliance. It apparently judged that Chinese interests were best met with a broadly accommodating posture that allowed for concurrent improvements in China's relations with South Korea and management of China's sometimes difficult relations with North Korea. The net result was a marked increase in China's relations with South Korea and continued Chinese relations with North Korea closer than any other power, without negatively affecting Beijing's relations with the United States. During the 2002-2006 crisis over North Korea's nuclear program, China's cooperation with the United States, South Korea, and other concerned powers in seeking a negotiated solution to the problem enhanced overall positive development in China's relations with these countries, while endeavoring to manage tensions over the North Korean program in ways that avoided conflict or instability on the peninsula.

### **China's Relations with South Korea**

A careful review of the gains China has made in improving relations with Asian countries and elsewhere in recent years shows South Korea to be the area of greatest achievement. The Chinese advances also have coincided with the most serious friction in US-South Korean relations since the Korean War. Thus, China's influence relative to the United States has grown on the Korean peninsula. All of this has happened coincident

with a very low-keyed Chinese public (and apparently private) profile regarding the US-ROK alliance. For the most part, Chinese leaders have refrained from interfering in US-ROK alliance matters.

Meanwhile, US policy has evolved in dealing with North Korea, working much more closely with China to facilitate international talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program. North Korea has preferred to deal directly with the United States on this issue. While such bilateral interchange with North Korea presumably would boost US influence relative to that of China in peninsula affairs, the US government has seen such US-North Korean contacts as counterproductive for US interests in securing a verifiable end of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. China has seen its influence grow by joining with the United States in the multilateral efforts to deal with the North Korean nuclear weapons issue on the one hand, while sustaining its position as the foreign power having the closest relationship with the reclusive North Korean regime on the other.<sup>7</sup>

Against this background, China's relations with South Korea have improved markedly.<sup>8</sup> China is South Korea's leading trade partner, the recipient of the largest amount of South Korean foreign investment, the most important foreign destination for South Korean tourists and students, and a close and like-minded partner in dealing with issues posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons program and related provocations, and the Bush administration's hard line policy toward North Korea. South Korea's trade with China in 2004 was valued at \$79 billion, with a trade surplus for South Korea of \$20 billion. In 2005, South Korean exports to China were valued at \$62 billion in total trade of \$100.6 billion, resulting in a trade surplus for South Korea of \$24 billion. South Korean investment in China in 2004 amounted to \$3.6 billion, almost half of South Korea's investment abroad that year. In 2005, over 20,000 South Korean companies were in operation in China, 380 passenger flights took place each week between China and South Korea, three million reciprocal visits occurred annually, and 38,000 South Korean students were studying in China.

China's economic importance for South Korea was accompanied by some trade disputes and concerns by South

Korean manufacturers about competition from fast-advancing Chinese enterprises. Other differences focused on nationalistic concerns over the implications of competing Chinese and Korean claims regarding the scope and importance of the historical Goguryeo kingdom, China's longer-term ambitions in North Korea, and Chinese treatment of North Korea refugees in China and of South Koreans endeavoring to assist them there.

#### **Converging PRC-ROK foreign policy interests, 1992-2004**

Converging South Korean-Chinese foreign policy interests supported economic and other trends to greatly enhance China's position in South Korea. By the early twenty-first century, China enjoyed a much more positive image than the United States in South Korean elite and public opinion. South Korean government officials also welcomed the improved ties with China as a means to diversify South Korean foreign policy options, reduce dependency on the US alliance, secure South Korean interests on the Korean peninsula, and enhance South Korea's economic development. China's moderate stance regarding the US-ROK alliance reinforced positive South Korean attitudes toward China.

South Korean motives for good relations with China often included foreign policy concerns. At times in the 1990s and later, South Korean officials viewed better relations with China as a useful way to preclude possible Chinese expansion or pressure against South Korea as China grew in wealth and power during the twenty-first century. They also saw good relations with China as providing protection against possible pressure from Japan against South Korea in the future. (Such continued South Korean suspicion of Japan notably complicated U.S. policy in the region, which relied on U.S. alliance relations with both Japan and South Korea. The suspicion of Japan continued although President Kim Dae Jung had helped to ease this suspicion with a landmark visit to Tokyo in late 1998 that involved notable steps toward South Korean-Japanese accommodation).<sup>9</sup>

Officials in Seoul were careful to add that relations with China also broadened South Korean foreign policy options, allowing South Korea to appear to break out of the constraints

imposed by what they saw as a U.S.-centered foreign policy dating to the 1950s, a trend quietly welcomed by Chinese officials as in their long-term interests. South Korean opinion leaders judged that with better relations with China, Seoul could afford to be more assertive and less accommodating in relations with the United States, although South Korean officials and knowledgeable scholars also often asserted that relations with China or other foreign policy options provided no substitute for the essential South Korean alliance relationship with the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, given continued difficulties in U.S.-China relations in the 1990s, South Korean officials sometimes expressed an interest in boosting South Korea's international stature as a "mediator" between these two powers, both of which had friendly ties with Seoul. South Korean officials also asserted that Seoul wanted to avoid a situation where it might have to choose between Washington and Beijing if U.S.-Chinese tensions in Asia were to rise sharply. They said that they urged Beijing as well as Washington to try harder to maintain good relations with one another, and claimed that PRC officials "appreciated" what the Republic of Korea (ROK) had to say.

According to South Korean experts, China also viewed good relations with Seoul as a possible hedge against Japanese power, although Chinese officials emphasized that their interests focused on regional peace and stability and on setting a good example in relations with a smaller neighbor, South Korea, in order to reassure China's other neighbors about Beijing's foreign policy intentions. More broadly, Chinese intentions were said by some South Korean experts to reflect a desire to use better relations with South Korea against perceived U.S. efforts to "contain" or hold back China's growing power and influence in Asian and world affairs. Some Chinese strategists also were forthright in saying that China hoped to use improved relations with South Korea and other countries around China's periphery as a strategic buffer against a possible resurgence of US-led efforts to contain or pressure China. In particular, Chinese specialists and officials voiced concern from time to time that the United States might use its alliance relationships with Japan and South Korea in order to check or build a barrier against the

allegedly expanding "China threat" in northeast Asia. Closer China-South Korean relations would complicate any such U.S. strategic scheme.<sup>11</sup>

In this context, South Korea and China markedly increased cooperation in Asian regional groups.<sup>12</sup> China's greater willingness in the 1990s and 2000s to cooperate more closely with and play a more active role in Asian multilateral organizations assisted this trend. Previously, Chinese officials had viewed Asian multilateral groups with more wariness and skepticism. Thus, China's greater willingness to cooperate with South Korea and others in the economic deliberations of APEC and in the security-related interchanges in the ARF enhanced China-South Korean relations.

The two powers also participated actively in regional forums that excluded the United States. The biannual Asia-Europe (ASEM) meetings initiated in 1996 saw both South Korea and China play significant roles in this body that encouraged greater cooperation between East Asia and the developed countries of Europe, in part as a counterweight to the US-led APEC. The Asian economic crisis of 1997 prompted stronger regional cooperation efforts led by South Korea and China under the ASEAN Plus Three rubric. This group, including the ten ASEAN states plus Japan along with China and South Korea, became the paramount regional grouping in East Asia, with frequent meetings of senior ministers and state leaders that occasioned major economic and some political and security initiatives, notably proposals by China, South Korea, Japan and others for free trade agreements in the region and security plans dealing with East Asia.

These actions reflected strong interest in China and South Korea in deepening intraregional cooperation, first in economic areas but then in political and security areas, in order to ease longstanding mutual suspicions among East Asian states and enhance prospects for peace and development in the region. China's public stance focused on its New Security Concept (NSC) announced in 1997, a reworking of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence that had been the mainstay of moderate and accommodating phases in Chinese foreign policy for 50 years. The NSC was well received in South Korea and, along

with other Chinese policies and behavior, provided vague but sufficient basis for many in South Korea and elsewhere in Asia to deal with China's rising power and influence in constructive ways.

When the NSC was initially proposed, Chinese foreign policy strongly competed with the United States and Chinese officials repeatedly used the NSC to counter the US-favored alliance structure in Asian and world affairs. Following the moderate turn in China's public posture toward the United States in 2001, Chinese officials and commentary generally avoided calling on Asians to choose between China's NSC and the previously emphasized "cold war thinking" and "power politics" exemplified by the US insistence on maintaining and strengthening US-led alliance structures in Asia and elsewhere. This more positive Chinese approach, which Chinese officials said would lead to a "win-win" situation in Asia for all concerned powers including the United States as well as South Korea and China, was well received in South Korea and helped to strengthen Sino-South Korean relations.

#### **South Korea Re-Calibrates Relations with the US and China**

Private interviews with South Korean, Chinese, and US officials, and extensive public and private consultations with non-government elites, in Seoul and Beijing in mid-2004 and mid-2006<sup>13</sup> underscore published reports of South Korean government efforts to reposition South Korean foreign policy in ways that challenged China's rising influence and strengthened the US-ROK alliance in order to allow South Korea to deal more effectively with China's rise. Taken together, the efforts represented the most serious challenge to China's post cold war ascendancy in South Korea. The Chinese government reacted with little change in policy toward South Korea. It persisted with ongoing efforts, including a continued moderate approach toward the US-ROK alliance, as in the best overall interest of the Chinese administration.

The year 2004 marked a high point of pro-China "fever" in South Korea, and was also a period of widespread friction and varied differences in the US-ROK alliance relationship. South Korean leaders at that time publicly sought a role as regional

"balancer" between the United States and Japan on one side and China on the other, seemingly undermining the importance of the US-ROK alliance. Chinese officials publicly supported this South Korean position.

Since then, significant public and private differences have developed between China and the South Korean government. These have prompted South Korean officials to view China more warily and have reinforced South Korean government efforts to establish closer ties with the United States in the ROK-US alliance framework and in other ways, in order to protect South Korean independence and interests as China rises in prominence in regional affairs.

The implications of this shift for South Korean policy include the following:

- They suggest that Seoul will be less inclined to follow the practice of 2004 in emphasizing foreign policy independence of the United States and affinity with China; and,
- They suggest that Seoul will be more inclined to seek cooperation and mute friction with the United States despite ongoing US and ROK differences on how to deal with North Korea and other issues. Such cooperation and the muting of friction support South Korea's interests in strengthening the US-ROK alliance—seen as essential in preserving South Korean independence as China rises in Asia.

#### **South Korean Views, 2004**

Consultations in 2004 with South Korean government officials concerned with China, and South Korean academic and other specialists dealing with Chinese affairs, underlined a positive assessment in South Korea of China's approach toward the Korean peninsula. Beijing's emphasis on China's peaceful development and peaceful rise in Asia was warmly welcomed. South Korean government officials pointed to the discussion of South Korean-Chinese relations in the May 2004 National Security Strategy of the Republic of Korea entitled *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security*.<sup>14</sup> The section of the document dealing with South Korean-Chinese relations was full

of positive statements. It highlighted the July 2003 summit between President Roh Moo-Hyun and President Hu Jintao, which upgraded the bilateral relationship to a “comprehensive cooperative partnership.” South Korean officials welcomed consolidated relations with China as providing a “firm foundation” for regional cooperation and peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

Assessing the very positive trends in bilateral political, economic, military and other kinds of relations, the summit’s joint statement on July 8, 2003, pledged to increase the already very active exchanges of personnel and political party leaders, to see South Korea play an important role in China’s efforts to develop western China, and to seek a bilateral trade volume of \$100 billion by 2008. (That level was reached in 2005). Both sides also pledged to expand military exchanges and enhance transparency in military policies.<sup>15</sup>

In the view of South Korean officials, South Korea and China also seemed to have a common interest in multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia and elsewhere. South Korean government officials noted that they would work hard to promote cooperation with China and others in the United Nations and ASEAN Plus Three, and that South Korea would seek to work with China to develop multilateral security dialogue in Northeast Asia and Asia more broadly. South Korean officials judged that China continued to play a critically important role in promoting dialogue for the peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, and they pledged to work closely with China to speed up the process seen in the six party talks. China’s role in other aspects of inter-Korean cooperation also was seen as centrally important, from the vantage point of South Korean officials.

South Korean government officials and non-government specialists believed that China’s emphasis beginning in 2003 on China’s peaceful rise and peaceful development reflected a long term trend of moderate Chinese behavior in Asian and world affairs. In their view, Chinese leaders were too preoccupied with internal issues and difficulties to consider a more assertive or disruptive posture in Asia. China was seen as in no position to confront the United States, and Chinese leaders were seen by the

South Korean officials and specialists as eager to avoid confrontation with American power. This overall situation was seen as likely to persist for many years.

In private, the view from a number of South Korean government officials in 2004 reflected about what they saw as a “China fever” among large portions of the South Korean people and among many of the recently-elected legislators in South Korea’s National Assembly. China was becoming more popular among these important groups at a time when tensions in the US-South Korean alliance continued as a result of various bilateral and other issues. The salient issues in US-South Korean alliance relations had to do with differences over policy toward North Korea and reaching agreement on deployment and reduction of US forces in South Korea in line with an altered US global military strategy that allowed for stationing fewer US soldiers overseas, and using those soldiers flexibly, in response to a variety of possible contingencies.

In addition, South Korean government officials privately said they continued to believe that the United States was far more important for South Korea than was China, and they were concerned to preserve a healthy alliance relationship with the United States despite repeated crises and differences in recent years. Nonetheless, they said they faced a difficult challenge in achieving these tasks in the face of widespread South Korean public opinion, and the opinion of recently-elected legislators, that gave China the top priority in South Korean foreign policy and took a dim view of the United States and the US-South Korean alliance. There also was a good deal of publicity in South Korea about the cultural and historical affinities that prompted many in South Korea to see closer alignment with China as a natural and comfortable stance for South Korea. South Korean government officials nonetheless said that they were less sanguine that such an alignment or position within China’s “sphere of influence” would be good for South Korea, especially without the counterweight of the South Korean alliance with the United States.

Reflecting angst on preserving the alliance with the United States while improving relations with China, officials emphasized that the US-Republic of Korea alliance should allow

for positive US and South Korean relations with China and should avoid friction with China. Against this background, officials noted Seoul's unwillingness to follow the United States in pursuing policies opposed by China, including US efforts to criticize China's human rights practices, US development of ballistic missile defenses, and, most importantly, US support for Taiwan. It was broadly held among South Korean and US observers in Seoul that one of the main reasons South Korea was reluctant to agree to allow US forces in South Korea to be deployed to other areas was that those forces might be deployed to the Taiwan area in the event of a US-China military confrontation in the Taiwan Strait. Some officials said such a deployment would meet very strong South Korean opposition and would prompt a major crisis in the US-South Korean alliance.

Officials tried to put the upsurge in positive South Korean attention to China, in 2004 in a more balanced context. They judged that burgeoning economic ties, China's central role in dealing with North Korea, and the very attentive and accommodating Chinese political approach toward South Korea were major reasons the recent positive trend would continue. China "respects" South Korean pride, they said, noting how important this was for China's good public image in South Korea. At the same time, officials saw serious issues in China-South Korean relations and advised that South Korean opinion was volatile and could turn against China if a sensitive issue were to emerge.

### **Recent cooling in South Korea-China Relations**

As earlier predicted by South Korean officials, the South Korean popular and elite opinion on China showed a tendency to be volatile. The positive "China fever" that reached a high point in South Korea in mid-2004 subsided and significant differences emerged that increased South Korean public and elite wariness about China's rise and strengthened South Korean interest in preserving a close alliance relationship with the United States. These developments occurred for several reasons:

- South Korean opinion reacted negatively to continued disputes with China regarding Korean claims

regarding the historical Goguryeo kingdom. The disputes had an important negative impact on Seoul's views of China's ambitions and their implications for South Korean interests.

- Territorial disputes between Korea and China over the so-called Gando region emerged, while differences continued to fester over trade and refugee disputes.
- China's increasing economic influence in North Korea far surpassed that of South Korea and appeared to many government and non-government representatives in South Korea to compromise and complicate South Korean efforts to use a gradual asymmetrical engagement policy to facilitate reunification of Korea under South Korea's leadership. Chinese economic engagement and support of North Korea were seen as designed to perpetuate the North Korean state and the prevailing division on the Korean peninsula—goals opposed by South Korean government policy.
- Some South Korean officials privately were pleased that Asian governments—led by Japan—had rebuffed initial Chinese efforts to take the leading role in the 2005 Asian Leadership Summit. They privately advised that a "strong Japan" as well as a strong US-ROK alliance were essential for preserving South Korea's independence and interests as China rises in prominence in Asia.

South Korean government officials generally remained focused on seeking an advantageous position for their government and country in the prevailing fluid international situation surrounding the Korean peninsula. On the one hand, Seoul continued to try to avoid a situation in which it might have to choose between Washington and Tokyo on one side, and Beijing on the other, if U.S.-Japanese-Chinese tensions in Asia were to rise. Reflecting ongoing angst by South Korean government officials to preserve a proper balance in maintaining the alliance with the United States while improving relations with China, South Korean officials still emphasized that the US-Republic of Korea alliance should allow for positive US and South Korean relations with China and should avoid friction

with China. Against this background, officials remained unwilling to follow the United States in pursuing policies opposed by China.

Since 2004, however, South Korean officials have endeavored to improve relations with the United States and thereby seek to preserve an advantageous balance in South Korea's relations with the United States, along with other powers, while pursuing closer ties with China. Thus, they played down past rhetoric that was opposed by many in the US and supported by the Chinese government that emphasized South Korea's role as a "balancer" between the United States and China and Japan and China. They undertook and sustained important sacrifices, notably sending 3,000 combat troops to Iraq, a move opposed by most of the legislature and South Korean public opinion, in order to strengthen the alliance with the United States. They agreed to various high-level dialogues with US officials in order to deal effectively with alliance issues. They also took the risk of pushing for a bilateral free trade agreement with the United States that, if enacted, is sure to alienate many South Korean constituents. These steps accompanied South Korean efforts to sustain a working relationship with Japan despite differences over territorial and historical issues, and South Korea's independent approaches to Russia, the European Union, and others. South Korean officials were privately explicit that these measures helped to insure, among other things, that South Korea would maintain its nationalistic ambitions for a greater international role and would not come under the dominant sway of neighboring and growing China.

Even during the high point of anti-US feeling and pro-China fever in South Korea in 2004, South Korean government officials continued to tell Americans privately that they believed that the United States remained more important for South Korea than China. As China has become more prominent in South Korea's calculus, the officials have judged that the US alliance has remained an important reason China would continue to treat South Korea in a very friendly manner. Without a healthy US-ROK alliance, they judged, China would have less incentive to be so accommodating of South Korean interests and concerns.

### **China's Reaction and Outlook**

Interviews in Beijing in mid-2006 indicated that Chinese officials were not surprised by the maneuvers of South Korean officials to strengthen the US-ROK alliance. Chinese officials acknowledged that many Asian governments were taking steps to improve relations with one another and with the United States in order to preserve their independence of action as their neighbor, China, rose in prominence and power. The process was seen to involve a natural seeking of interests in a fluid international environment. Chinese officials said that China would deal with this trend by continuing its gradual effort to emphasize compatibility with Asian neighbors and to build trust with them over time. This effort combined with China's growing overall "weight" and importance in Asian and world affairs would insure that Chinese interests were served in relations with South Korea and other neighbors, according to Chinese officials.

As a result, the outlook in 2007 appears to be more of the same in China's approach to the US-ROK alliance. China seeks over the long term to reduce US military influence along China's periphery. For the foreseeable future, however, an assertive Chinese stance against the alliance would damage China's growing relations with South Korea. The crisis posed by North Korea's nuclear weapon test on October 9, 2006, appeared to reinforce Chinese caution in seeking significant change in the US-South Korean alliance that might add to instability on the Korean peninsula. Stability on the Korean peninsula remains a primary Chinese concern and disrupting the US alliance is widely seen to jeopardize security on the peninsula in ways contrary to Chinese interests.

### **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first presented at the annual meeting of the International Council on Korean Studies, George Washington University, Washington DC, October 6, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> John Garver *The Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993); Denny Roy *China's Foreign Relations* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).



<sup>3</sup> Robert Sutter *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> See the quarterly reviews of these developments provided by *Comparative Connections* at [www.csis.org/pacfor](http://www.csis.org/pacfor)

<sup>5</sup> Samuel Kim, "The making of China's Korea policy in the era of reform," in Lampton ed., *The making of Chinese foreign and security policy*, 371-408; David Shambaugh, "China and the Korean Peninsula," *Washington Quarter* 26:2 (spring 2003), 43-56. Denny Roy, *China and the Korean peninsula* (Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies 3:1 (January 2004); Jae Ho Chung, "From a special relationship to a normal partnership?" *Pacific Affairs* 76:3, 549-568; You Ji, "Understanding China's North Korea policy," (Jamestown Foundation) *China Brief*, March 3, 2004; Ming Liu, "China and the North Korean crisis," *Pacific Affairs* 76:3 (fall 2003), 347-373; Samuel Kim, "Chinese-North Korean relations at a cross-roads," *International Journal of Korean Studies* vii:1 (spring-summer 2003), 39-56; Andrew Scobell, "China and North Korea," *Current History* (September 2002), 278-279; Eric McVadon, "China's goal and strategies for the Korean peninsula," in Henry Sokolski ed., *Planning for a peaceful Korea* (Carlisle PA: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute), 134-135.

<sup>6</sup> Taeho Kim, "China's Evolving Bilateral Ties in Northeast Asia," in Jaushieh Joseph Wu ed. *Rising China* (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, 2001), 205-206; Roy *China and the Korean peninsula* Fei-ling Wang *Tacit acceptance and watchful eyes: Beijing's views about the US-ROK alliance* (Carlisle, Penn: US Army War College, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Samuel Kim, "The changing role of China on the Korean peninsula," *International Journal of Korean Studies* viii: 1 (fall/winter 2004), 79-112.

<sup>8</sup> Taeho Kim, "Sino-ROK relations at a crossroads: Looming tensions amid growing interdependence," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* XVII:1 (spring 2005), 129-149. Trade and other figures in this section are taken from Kim's article. For up to date reviews of Sino-South Korean relations, see the articles by Scott Snyder in the quarterly e-journal *Comparative Connections* available at <http://www.csis.org/pacfor>.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Sutter, *Chinese Policy Priorities: Implications for the United States* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield 2000), 101.

<sup>10</sup> *Korea: Improved South Korean-Chinese Relations* (Washington DC: The Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, Report 97-681F, July 1997), 4.

<sup>11</sup> Roy *China and the Korean peninsula*.

<sup>12</sup> Scott Snyder, "Sino-Korean relations and the future of the US-ROK alliance," *NBR Analysis* 14:1(June 2003) 55-59.

<sup>13</sup> The 2004 interviews and consultations are reviewed in Robert Sutter, *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005). The 2006 interviews and consultations are reviewed in a forthcoming Atlantic Council of the United States Issue Brief on China's Rise and US Leadership in Asia, and in testimony by the author before The US China Economic and Security Review Commission, August 3, 2006, [www.uscc.gov](http://www.uscc.gov).

<sup>14</sup> *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security* (Seoul: National Security Council, Republic of Korea, May 1, 2004), 61-63.

<sup>15</sup> *Peace, Prosperity, and National Security*, 62.