

## Original Paper

# Research on the U.S.-ROK Alliance from the Perspective of Alliance Dilemma —Taking the Government of Yoon Seok-youl as an Example

Ziheng Zhou<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> School of International Studies, Dalian University of Foreign Language, Dalian, China

\* Zhou Ziheng, School of International Studies, Dalian University of Foreign Language, Dalian, China

Received: January 10, 2025

Accepted: January 20, 2025

Online Published: January 31, 2025

doi:10.22158/wjssr.v12n1p14

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjssr.v12n1p14>

### Abstract

*This article explores the formation, development, current status, and future direction of the U.S.-ROK alliance from the perspective of the alliance dilemma theory. By analyzing the changes in the U.S.-ROK alliance under the leadership of the Yoon Seok-youl government, this article delves into factors such as asymmetry, deepening military cooperation, trilateral cooperation under the threat of North Korea, as well as the impact of competition between China and the United States, imbalanced public opinion and economic cooperation in South Korea on the alliance relationship. The article believes that although the U.S.-ROK alliance is closely cooperating strategically, it still faces complex challenges, and its future direction will depend on the interweaving and game of multiple factors.*

### Keywords

*U.S.-ROK alliance, alliance dilemma, military cooperation, Yoon Seok-youl government, economic cooperation*

### 1. Introduction

One of the purposes of establishing the U.S.-ROK alliance was as part of the US global strategy during the Cold War, with the original intention of ensuring security and stability on the Korean Peninsula through military cooperation. After the end of the Cold War, the global geopolitical landscape underwent profound changes, and the nature and function of the U.S.-ROK alliance also adjusted accordingly. With the intensification of competition between China and the United States, the future development of the U.S.-ROK alliance faces new challenges. The United States is gradually shifting its strategic focus from the Korean Peninsula to a broader Indo-Pacific region, hoping to expand the

U.S.-ROK alliance beyond security issues on the Korean Peninsula and demand that South Korea play a more important role within the US strategic framework. South Korea prefers to maintain the focus of the alliance on the Korean Peninsula to avoid being caught up in the vortex of competition between China and the United States. The asymmetric nature of the U.S.-ROK alliance further exacerbates South Korea's passive position in the alliance relationship. As the stronger party in the alliance, the United States bears the main responsibility for security, while South Korea, as the weaker party, needs to provide resources and cooperation to support the United States' global strategy. After taking office, the government of Yoon Seok-young adopted a more pro-American foreign policy, actively cooperating with the US Indo-Pacific strategy, and responding to the North Korean threat by strengthening military cooperation between the US and South Korea. This one-sided policy not only triggered a public backlash in South Korea, but also put South Korea at risk of being entrapped in the competition between China and the United States. In the economic field, there is a high degree of correlation between South Korea and China, while the United States has been promoting manufacturing return and economic protectionism in recent years, attempting to weaken China's economic influence through mechanisms such as the Indo-Pacific economic framework. This has led South Korea to a dilemma in the economic competition between China and the United States: on the one hand, it needs to maintain economic cooperation with China to ensure the stability and development of its own economy; on the other hand, it is necessary to cooperate with the strategic requirements of the United States to consolidate the alliance relationship. Therefore, the core question of this article is: Against the backdrop of increasingly fierce competition between China and the United States and constantly changing global patterns, how can the U.S.-ROK alliance achieve balance in multiple fields? How did the policies of the Yoon Seok-young government reshape the U.S.-ROK alliance? What kind of problems does the U.S.-ROK alliance still face, and what is the future direction of the alliance?

Glenn H. Snyder (1984) used the concepts of abandoned and entrapped to conduct an in-depth analysis of the game between allies in *The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics*. James D. Morrow (1991) mentioned in *Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances* that the reason why asymmetric alliances can be maintained is because both parties in the alliance will reach an exchange of interests that is beneficial to their own strategic goals or national needs, and the ability changes of the weaker party in the alliance have less impact on the breakdown of the alliance. In recent years, scholars both domestically and internationally have conducted more in-depth discussions and research on this topic. Zhu Xupeng (2015) believes that the future internal interest game and changes in the external international environment of the U.S.-ROK alliance will cause greater uncertainty in the alliance. Ma Zhenxing (2018) stated in *Research on National Autonomy in the Alliance Crisis* that the exercise of national autonomy will affect the ultimate direction of the alliance—whether it can be maintained or completely collapsed. Song Zhiyan (2022)

believes in Analysis of the US Understanding of South Korea and the Trend of the U.S.-ROK alliance that South Korea's security strategy often falls into a dilemma between seeking strategic autonomy and dependence on the United States. Lyv Liangjiu (2017) wrote in *The Abandonment Involvement Dilemma of the U.S.-ROK alliance: Taking the Development of South Korea's Missile Development Policy as an Example* that for the United States, the U.S.-ROK alliance is aimed at ensuring its strong political and military influence in Northeast Asia; South Korea, on the other hand, uses the U.S.-ROK alliance, especially through the U.S.-ROK alliance joint defense system, to suppress North Korea's military threat. Zhao Yihei and Zheng Hua (2020) emphasized the impact of the U.S.-ROK alliance on South Korea in *The Dilemma of the U.S.-ROK Alliance from the Perspective of Power Change*, and Shen Wenhui and Wang Jinyang (2020) in *An Analysis of the Impact of the U.S.-ROK Asymmetric Alliance on the Korean Nuclear Dilemma—Taking the Moon Jae-in Government as an Example*. The former points out from the perspective of power transition that the cost of forming an alliance with the United States decreases and the benefits increase, while the cost of forming an alliance with South Korea increases and the benefits decrease; The latter directly focuses on the asymmetry of the U.S.-ROK alliance, pointing out that South Korea's subordinate position in the alliance has led to its policy towards North Korea being influenced by US strategy, hindering the establishment of military mutual trust between North Korea and South Korea. This has overlapping effectiveness and logical contradictions with the construction of a permanent peace mechanism on the peninsula, becoming a key factor hindering peace on the peninsula. Lyv Yuemeng and Jia Fuqiang (2024) wrote in their article *The Alliance Dilemma, Behavioral Choices, and Future Trends of South Korea in the U.S.-ROK alliance* that South Korea's adherence to the logic of seeking autonomy under the premise of following the United States may lead to concerns about being entrapped. Liang Lichang (2020) believes in *Policy Disputes, Alliance Coordination, Relationship Adjustment, and Their Impact in the New Era of the U.S.-ROK alliance* that the North Korean factor remains the main driving force for the future development of the U.S.-ROK alliance. Yoon Seok-young government's adjustment in foreign policy is mainly to strengthen US relations. The relationship between China and South Korea, as well as the relationship between North and South Korea, will become an important part of peace and stability in Northeast Asia (Tian, 2022; Li, 2022; Yang & Wang, 2024).

## **2. The U.S.-ROK Alliance under the Abandonment-Entrapment**

### *2.1 The Development History of the U.S.-ROK Alliance*

The establishment of the U.S.-ROK alliance can be traced back to the early 1950s. On June 25, 1950, the Korean War broke out, and just one day later, the United States decided to intervene militarily to contain the spread of communism. After three years of war, on July 27, 1953, all parties signed the Korea ceasefire entente in Panmunjom, dividing the Korean Peninsula into two parts: north and south.

The stability and security of the peninsula have become a key point in the strategic layout of the United States in the Asia Pacific region. In order to cope with the continuous threat from the north, the United States has decided to establish close military cooperation with South Korea to ensure that the security of the south is not breached by communist forces. On August 8th, representatives from both the United States and South Korea, Dulles and Rhee Syngman, signed the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea in Seoul. Subsequently, on October 1st, South Korean Foreign Minister Pyun Yeong-Tae and US Secretary of State Dulles officially signed the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea in Washington (Chen, 2021). The treaty came into effect on November 17, 1954, and is valid indefinitely. This treaty marks the formal establishment of a military alliance between the United States and South Korea. Afterwards, the United States began to assist South Korea in post-war reconstruction and provided significant military and economic aid. The United States has promised to continue to station troops in South Korea and assume responsibility for countering North Korea and other potential threats; South Korea, on the other hand, accepted military assistance and strategic leadership from the United States during the Cold War to ensure its own security from the threat of communist countries. South Korea has become an important part of the United States' global military strategy and an important pawn in the Asia Pacific region, maintaining and strengthening the US military presence in the region.

The deepening of the Cold War intensified ideological confrontation, and the cooperation between the United States and South Korea was further deepened. The common goal of the two countries in the anti-communist struggle made this natural strategic cooperation relationship even closer. In 1961, Park Chung-hee came to power through a coup, and as a soldier, he became more aware of the importance of the US South Korea alliance in ensuring national security and stability under the threat of North Korea and the Cold War situation. Therefore, the military cooperation of the US South Korea alliance reached a new peak during this period. The intensification of the Vietnam War and the continuous escalation of North Korea's military provocations also directly affected the strategic deployment of the United States in South Korea in the 1960s. During the Vietnam War, South Korea was the country with the largest number of troops sent by the United States among its allies in the Asia Pacific region, with a total of 300 thousand troops (Sun & Yao, 2023). In early 1968, North Korea took the initiative to provoke two incidents within three days, further intensifying the North South conflict. On January 21st, a 31-member armed force from North Korea stormed into the Blue House in an attempt to assassinate Park Chung-hee, but failed. Then on January 23rd, the North Korean navy arrested and hijacked the US Navy intelligence ship Pueblo on the grounds of illegal invasion of its territorial waters. The US and South Korea quickly responded and publicly condemned, North Korea violates the Armistice Agreement and international law...If North Korea persists in this movement that will only endanger peace in the region, the consequences will be borne by the North Korean regime (Foreign Relations of

the United States, FRUS, n.d.). To resolve the crisis, the United States and North Korea held a total of 28 negotiations in Panmunjom. North Korea demanded that the US government recognize the intrusion of the Pueblo intelligence ship into North Korean territorial waters for espionage activities, apologize to North Korea, and promise not to violate North Korean territorial waters again. However, the US insists that the ship is located in international waters and will not apologize for anything it has not done. After the crisis was resolved, the Nixon administration continuously strengthened its security support for South Korea, and both the United States and South Korea reached a consensus that there must be a balanced military force on the Korean Peninsula. This means that the South Korean Air Force and Navy are half of the North Korean military, and a joint US-South Korean mobile combat unit should be established (FRUS, n.d.).

The U.S.-ROK alliance experienced a brief downturn in the 1970s. The purpose of the One and a Half Wars proposed by the Nixon administration was to reduce large-scale military personnel and expenditures in order to alleviate domestic financial pressure (Xia, 2009). Due to concerns that the United States would not be able to face the threat from the north alone after its withdrawal, South Korea even resorted to political means to exert influence to prevent the withdrawal, which led to the Koreagate in October 1976. South Korean Special Agent Park Dong-sun and other South Koreans in Washington bribed members of the United States Congress in order to prevent the United States from withdrawing its troops from South Korea by voting. At the same time, the human rights issues caused by Park Chung-hee's dictatorship have attracted the attention of the United States, which is attempting to force the South Korean government to improve the human rights situation by reducing aid to South Korea. The widening differences between the two sides ultimately led to the outbreak of the anti-American movement in South Korea in the 1980s (Sun, 2007). In the Gwangju Incident of 1980, the Carter administration, which had always advocated democracy, freedom, and human rights, chose to support the right-wing military in suppressing the democratization movement of the South Korean people on the grounds of political and social stability in South Korea (Yan, 2024). The South Korean people have come to a clear understanding of the essence of the United States' foreign policy towards South Korea - supporting the authoritarian government of South Korea rather than genuine human rights diplomacy, which has completely shattered their illusions about the United States (Chen, 2021). Under the rule of Park Chung-hee, South Korea did indeed create the Miracle on the Han River, which rapidly enhanced the overall strength of the country and provided anti American primitive capital. However, it cannot be denied that the South Korean military has always been controlled by the United States in both wartime and peacetime command. Even though there were many frictions and confrontational emotions in South Korea in the 1980s, South Korea still has a serious dependence on the United States.

In the 1990s, South Korea showed an overall easing trend towards North Korea. Roh Tae-woo's Northern Policy and Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy greatly eased North South relations, but the United States listed North Korea as a country that supports terrorism and imposed sanctions in 1998; In 1999, North Korea was designated as a rogue state; In 2000, it was also known as a failed state and targeted North Korea for attack, isolation, and evolution (Liu, 2004). After the September 11 attacks, the main threats faced by the United States were terrorist attacks, weapons of mass destruction, and the emergence of regional powers (Gao, 2013). The United States regards North Korea as an Axis of evil and seeks to accelerate the denuclearization process on the peninsula, while Roh Moo-hyun's Peace and Prosperity opposes any attempt to use force or the threat of force to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue (Pang, 2007). The relationship between the United States and South Korea is gradually becoming estranged. Some South Korean citizens and politicians have also begun to call for a more independent defense policy. During the Roh Moo-hyun era, South Korea proposed the independent defense policy, attempting to reduce its dependence on US military support and develop a more independent defense system. After taking office, Lee Myung-bak focused on repairing the damaged US South Korea relations of his predecessor, and cooperation in responding to the military threat from North Korea became the focus of the military alliance between the two sides during the Lee Myung-bak administration. The military cooperation foundation of the US South Korea alliance became more solid during this period (Song, 2012). In May 2009, South Korea joined the US led Non-Proliferation Security Initiative. In October 2010, South Korea and the United States officially signed multiple agreements such as the Strategic Alliance 2015, Defense Cooperation Policy, and Strategic Planning Policy. The US and South Korea have also held multiple exercises to cope with the escalating situation on the Korean Peninsula. In 2016, THAAD was deployed in South Korea, and South Korea was officially included in the anti-missile system constructed by the United States (Sun, 2018). Moon Jae-in places the theme of the development of the U.S.-ROK alliance and strategic cooperation with neighboring countries at the top of his list (Li, 2022), South Korea also realizes that only by continuing to maintain and rely on the alliance can it ensure its national security (Zhang, 2020). The US South Korea relationship has significantly improved during this period. During Moon Jae-in's term of office, he also strengthened dialogue and cooperation with China and the North Korea, and promoted the two Koreas to jointly form a team to participate in the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics. The situation on the peninsula has gradually developed in a better direction.

## *2.2 Asymmetric U.S.-ROK Alliance*

James Morrow (1991) proposed that the reason why asymmetric alliances can be maintained is because both sides of the alliance will reach an exchange of interests that is beneficial to their own strategic goals or national needs, and at the same time, changes in the capabilities of the weaker party in the alliance have less impact on the breakdown of the alliance. Specifically, it can be understood as: in

asymmetric alliances, the stronger party usually provides security guarantees, while the weaker party provides concessions that enhance the stronger party's freedom of action. Meanwhile, as security is mainly provided by the stronger party, the benefits obtained by the weaker party from the alliance will not significantly change due to changes in their own capabilities, so these changes are unlikely to lead to the breakdown of the alliance. Asymmetric alliances, on the other hand, are more likely to continue providing net benefits to their members when facing changes in their abilities due to the different benefits obtained by both parties, which increases the stability and persistence of asymmetric alliances. Professor Tang Shiping believes that if one of the member states has significantly stronger material power than the other countries, then the alliance is an asymmetric alliance; and if the material power between member states is evenly matched, then the alliance is a symmetric alliance. According to information released by the World Bank, South Korea's GDP for 2023 is approximately 1.71 trillion US dollars, with a per capita GDP of 33121.37 US dollars; The GDP of the United States in 2023 is approximately 27.72 trillion US dollars, with a per capita GDP of 82769.41 US dollars (World Bank Group, n.d.). According to Professor Tang Shiping's standard, When the product of a country's total GDP and its per capita GDP is twice or more that of another country, the alliance is asymmetric; and if it is less than twice, the alliance is symmetric (Su & Tang, 2012). It can be concluded that the product of the total GDP and per capita GDP of the United States in 2023 is about 40.5 times that of South Korea. Therefore, the US South Korea alliance belongs to a typical asymmetric alliance, and both the US and South Korea exhibit an asymmetric position of US led and South Korean subordinate. As a stronger party, the United States mainly undertakes the responsibility of ensuring the security of South Korea, providing core support including military protection, nuclear deterrence, and strategic defense; South Korea has enhanced the United States' freedom of action in the Asia Pacific region by providing military bases, regional influence, and support for the United States' global strategy.

Glenn Snyder's abandonment-entrapment model describes the security dilemma in alliance politics. The strategic choices of a country in an alliance will be constrained by the fear of being abandoned or entrapped. Abandoned refers to a country's concern that its allies may not provide the expected support or assistance at critical moments for various reasons; Entrapped refers to a country's concern that it may be involved in conflicts with its allies that are not entirely aligned with its own interests, and these actions may trigger conflicts with third parties, thereby involving all allies in the war (Snyder, 1984). In today's complex and profoundly changing geopolitical landscape in Northeast Asia, South Korea's dual concerns of being abandoned and entrapped are particularly prominent. In the dimension of being abandoned, the strategic focus of the United States is gradually shifting from the Korean Peninsula to the broader Indo-Pacific region, especially in order to contain and respond to China's rise. The United States is gradually redefining the U.S.-ROK alliance as a global strategic alliance that goes beyond the Korean Peninsula, and tends to define the North Korean threat as a regional or South Korean led issue

that requires South Korea to bear more economic costs and political burdens (Zheng, 2012). South Korea, on the other hand, prefers to keep the focus of the alliance on the Korean Peninsula while maintaining direct military intervention by the United States in potential conflicts on the peninsula. In terms of strategic flexibility of the US military stationed in South Korea, the US wants to ensure flexibility in troop deployment. Compared to the Korean Peninsula, when a crisis situation with higher priority ranking occurs, the US military stationed in South Korea can always maintain a flexible and responsive combat readiness (Song, 2022). The functions of the US military stationed in South Korea have also been adjusted as a result, shifting from traditional deterrence against North Korea to a broader global response, which has raised concerns about sovereignty and security guarantees within South Korea. The improvement of North Korea US relations may also raise concerns about South Korea being abandoned. North Korea uses the improved relationship between North Korea and the United States as a bargaining chip to negotiate with South Korea. This policy of connecting with the United States and sealing off the South will create a sense of distrust in South Korea when facing the United States, which will put it at a disadvantage in confrontation with North Korea and cause damage to its national interests (Zhu, 2015). The dilemma of South Korea being entrapped has become even more prominent since Yoon Seok-young took office. After taking office, Yoon Seok-young will strengthen the alliance as one of the core foreign policies, while actively cooperating with the US Indo-Pacific strategy. The close dependence on the United States poses a risk for South Korea to be involved in the competition between China and the United States. The United States has adopted a more aggressive strategic posture towards China, engaging in comprehensive confrontation in multiple fields and demanding its allies to take sides. As a country at the forefront of strategic competition between China and the United States, South Korea cannot completely break away from its economic dependence on China, nor can it refuse the strategic demands of the United States. This dilemma has forced South Korea to bear more pressure in areas such as economy, military, and diplomacy. The most important security challenge for South Korea is not China, but North Korea. Participating in the containment of China by the United States and the competition between China and the United States will affect South Korea's effective resolution of the North Korean issue (Zhao & Zheng, 2020). On the issue of the Korean Peninsula, the government of Yoon Seok-young maintains a high degree of consistency with the United States' policy towards North Korea. The United States' tough policy towards North Korea greatly increases the possibility of South Korea becoming a target of retaliation from North Korea, and even being entrapped in a larger military confrontation by the United States.



### 3. The Reshaping of the U.S.-ROK Alliance since Yoon Seok-youl Took Office

#### 3.1 Deepening Alliance Relations: Strengthening Cooperation in the Military Field

Compared with Moon Jae-in, Yoon Seok-youl's policy towards the North Korea is more rigid. Since Yoon Seok-youl took office in 2022, the relationship between the North and the South has turned sharply, and military frictions in border areas have continued to occur. On November 22, 2023, South Korea announced a proposal to suspend the partial effectiveness of the Panmunjom Declaration. In response, the North Korean Ministry of National Defense issued a statement on the same day stating that North Korea would no longer be bound by the Panmunjom Declaration. On January 8, 2024, South Korea announced that there would no longer be a buffer zone between South and North Korea. On January 15, North Korea stated that the relationship between North and South Korea is no longer a homogeneous one, but a completely hostile one. On October 15, 2024, North Korea blew up a section of the Gyeonggi Line and Donghai Line connecting North and South Korea north of the military demarcation line, while South Korean troops fired in response south of the military demarcation line. The outbreak of military conflicts will weaken future diplomatic cooperation, while also leading to a reduction in cooperation opportunities and the continuation of conflicts, which will have long-term negative impacts on future diplomatic cooperation (Kim & Liu, 2016). Therefore, in order to respond to possible military provocations from North Korea, South Korea will inevitably choose to deepen the U.S.-ROK alliance to ensure national security, with the most important being cooperation in the military field. After taking office, Yoon Seok-youl immediately resumed and strengthened the joint military exercises between the United States and South Korea. In August 2024, the United States and South Korea held the largest ever joint military exercise of the Ulchi Freedom Shield. The spokesperson of the South Korean Joint Staff Headquarters, Lee Seung-joon, called the US South Korea exercise a necessary factor in maintaining a strong defense posture to protect the Republic of Korea (Li, 2024). In modern war, UAVs are no longer the supporting role of war, but become the key factor that can influence the outcome of war. Drones can bring fear of being attacked at any time to enemy forces, and their captured videos can also be shared in real-time through social media, influencing public opinion and psychological warfare. Small unmanned aerial vehicles are difficult to detect by enemy air defense systems and can also be used for monitoring, obtaining enemy dynamics, or obtaining artillery coordinates. They are a cost-effective warfare tool that can destroy high-value targets at low cost (Park & Kim, 2024). On November 1, 2024, the United States and South Korea held their first joint live fire drone exercise to strike a hypothetical enemy attack point, aiming to strengthen military cooperation and collaborative combat capabilities between the two countries and address regional security challenges.

The cooperation between the United States and South Korea in the field of defense is a core part of deepening the alliance. The government of Yoon Seok-youl has promoted cooperation between the

United States and South Korea in high-tech defense equipment such as missile defense systems, tactical nuclear weapons, and high-altitude zone defense in war zones. In September 2022, the United States and South Korea resumed the EDSCG meeting at the deputy ministerial level of Foreign Affairs + Defense. Both sides stated that they would use all available means to counter the North Korean threat and make an overwhelming and decisive response to any nuclear attack by North Korea. The South Korean government has also made it clear that it will strengthen cooperation with the United States through technology exchange and joint research and development to enhance South Korea's air defense capabilities (Li, 2022). On November 18, 2022, the defense departments of South Korea and the United States officially launched the CMWG, with the aim of further deepening cooperation between the two countries in missile response policies and policy cooperation on alert posture (Yoon, 2022). On April 26, 2023, Yoon Seok-youl stated in an interview that the two countries have decided to establish NCG to jointly address North Korea's nuclear deterrence, plan and implement a joint operational plan that combines South Korea's cutting-edge conventional combat capabilities with the United States' nuclear capabilities (Jang, 2023). By strengthening strategic transparency, ensuring that the military of both countries can maintain a high degree of consistency in information flow, decision-making feedback, and other aspects, further enhancing collaborative operations and emergency response capabilities of both sides.

### *3.2 Responding to the Threat from North Korea: A Trilateral Cooperation Framework among the United States, Japan, and South Korea*

After World War II, the United States signed alliance treaties with South Korea and Japan, but historical reasons between Japan and South Korea led to little substantive progress in the trilateral alliance that the United States wanted to promote. Even though Japan and South Korea normalized their diplomatic relations under the leadership of the United States in 1965, the two countries were unable to reach a true reconciliation and lacked the political mutual trust required for the alliance. This has resulted in a lack of direct mechanism docking between the US Japan and South Korea alliances for a long time, and trilateral cooperation mainly relies on the central role of the United States to maintain. Japan's military and economic strength is clearly stronger than South Korea, so the cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea is mainly based on the US-Japan Alliance, consolidating the US -South Korea Alliance and promoting the improvement of Japan-South Korea relations (Wang & Huang, 2022). The United States has described Japan and South Korea as representatives of democratic countries in previous administrations, emphasizing common values of democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The Biden administration specifically pointed out that the cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea is not only regional, but also global, and through joint efforts, it can shape a free and open Indo-Pacific region (Sajnovic, 2023). Yoon Seok-youl regards repairing relations with Japan and improving security cooperation to respond to North Korea's military threat as a diplomatic priority,

even sacrificing South Korean interests for the improvement of South Korean Japanese relations. At the same time, she comprehensively adjusts the diplomatic priority order, changing the original US, China, Japan, Russia to US, Japan, China, Russia to further accelerate the promotion of trilateral cooperation among the United States, Japan, and South Korea (Dong, 2023). In August 2023, the heads of state of the United States, Japan, and South Korea held the Camp David Summit and decided to establish a permanent cooperation mechanism among the three countries, including regular high-level dialogues and joint military exercises, aimed at enhancing their joint cooperation capabilities in Northeast Asia and laying a more solid foundation for trilateral cooperation. Yoon Seok-youl emphasized that South Korea is not only a protected country in the cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea, but should also become a contributor. South Korea should enhance its international status through more active diplomatic and military actions. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken also said that for the United States, Japan and South Korea are regarded as the core allies of the United States, whether in Northeast Asia or the world (Cho, 2023). In June 2024, the United States, Japan, and South Korea conducted their first joint military exercise. In August 2024, the leaders of the three countries held another meeting, reaffirming their commitment to enhancing security relations, deepening economic and technological cooperation, and safeguarding common interests, and announcing the establishment of the Trilateral Security Cooperation Framework mechanism (Zhao & Qiu, 2024). In November, the three parties held another joint military exercise, which means that the scope and scale of the exercise are no longer limited to local activities within the alliance, and its impact has spread to the entire Northeast Asia region.

### *3.3 Global Pivot Countries : Participating in the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework*

A pivot state is a country located in an overlapping area of influence among multiple major powers, while possessing military, economic, or ideological strategic assets coveted by these powers. The changes in the connections between hub countries and major powers have significant impacts on regional and global security. They are not only the focus of major power actions, but also the intersection of major power interest conflicts and possible cooperation, to the extent that changes in the position of hub countries may affect the military deployment of major powers or create new military strategic boundaries (Knowles et al., 2014). Since taking office, Yoon Seok-youl has focused on building South Korea into a Global Pivot State. South Korea is located at the center of Northeast Asia, at the forefront of competition between China and the United States. At the same time, it has strong scientific research capabilities and technological levels in high-tech fields such as semiconductors. The Korean culture has a huge global influence, and South Korea was first listed as a developed country by the UNCTAD in 2021, all aspects have strengthened South Korea's demand for national status enhancement (Policy Briefing of the Republic of Korea, 2021). Yoon Seok-youl's proposal of a global pivot country policy better meets the public's expectations for South Korea to exert greater

international influence (Tian, 2022). The South Korean government recognizes the need for a comprehensive strategy that goes beyond the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, and the establishment of a stable maritime transportation line between the Indian Ocean-Pacific Ocean-Seoul is crucial for the survival and prosperity of the country. Therefore, the South Korean government has formulated the Indo-Pacific strategy to improve its foreign policy as a global hub country. On December 28, 2022, the Office of the President of South Korea released the final version of the Indo-Pacific Strategy for Freedom, Peace, and Prosperity, marking the first time that the South Korean government has independently developed a regional diplomatic strategy. South Korean National Security Office Director Kim Sung-han also stated that South Korea will work with the United States to promote freedom, peace, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region based on the principles of inclusiveness, trust, and reciprocity. South Korean Foreign Minister Park Geun also stated that South Korea's future diplomatic focus will no longer be limited to resolving the Korean Peninsula issue, but will shift towards a broader regional strategy (Yoon, 2022).

In the Indo-Pacific strategy, South Korea also explicitly stated that it will deepen bilateral security cooperation in regional waters based on the recognition of the importance of national cooperation in maritime areas. Specifically, the South Korean government has officially announced its participation in international discussions on establishing a Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) system to promote real-time maritime monitoring and information sharing cooperation, and to work with ASEAN countries to ensure free and secure maritime communication routes, as well as to strengthen cooperation in maritime security, marine economy, and marine environment. In terms of maritime security, South Korea has also announced plans to actively participate in international cooperation with maritime management agencies, meaning that no specific agency (such as the Coast Guard or Navy) can lead the MDA system at the national level. The Coast Guard will focus on establishing and collaborating with the MDA system through platform development, while the Navy will focus on policy implementation and development planning, systematically promoting the development of the MDA system and improving the management efficiency of South Korea and countries along the Indian Ocean Pacific coast (Wu et al., 2024). In fact, as early as July 9, 2015, MDA was listed as one of the eight plans formulated by the United States to maintain national maritime security (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, n.d.). From this, it can be seen that South Korea's so-called independent Indo-Pacific strategy is still based on the US Indo-Pacific strategy, emphasizing mutual respect and reciprocity based on international rules and norms, while the actual rules are only based on US rules (Zheng, 2023). It can be said that South Korea's Indo-Pacific strategy is entirely aimed at pleasing the United States, consolidating the U.S.-ROK alliance, and enhancing South Korea's voice in the Indo-Pacific region and even global issues (Zhan, 2023).

#### **4. The Current Problems and Future Direction of the U.S.-ROK Alliance**

##### *4.1 Competition and Strategic Focus Contradictions between China and the United States*

When dealing with the threat from North Korea, successive South Korean governments have usually made consistent strategic choices towards China and the United States—strengthening relations with China and reducing dependence on the United States (even to varying degrees), which can maximize South Korea's strategic choices. At the same time, against the backdrop of intensified competition between China and the United States, the United States increasingly sees its bilateral alliances in Asia, including the U.S.-ROK alliance, as tools to address China's challenges. The United States hopes that South Korea will join the new security cooperation model it is promoting with other allies and partners in the region, and continuously exert pressure on South Korea to align its security and foreign policies in the region with those of the United States. However, South Korea's main competitor is not China, and its biggest security challenge does not come from China but from North Korea. Applying a large amount of resources to cooperate with the United States in containing China's rise will greatly damage the relationship between China and South Korea. But South Korea needs to establish good relations with China, because without China's support, the reunification of the peninsula that South Korea seeks cannot be achieved. Yoon Seok-young leaned towards a America First foreign policy after taking office (Lee, 2022), promoting the foreign policy consistent with Washington at the center of Seoul's priorities, and abandon the strategic ambiguity pursued by Moon Jae-in, so as to show the consistency of values between the United States and South Korea, and then consolidate the U.S.-ROK alliance and South Korea's relations with Western countries, so as to highlight the strategic clarity of South Korea (Zhan, 2023), enhancing South Korea's international status (Maduz, 2023). For South Korea, in order to ensure security and economic prosperity, it is necessary to consolidate the U.S.-ROK alliance. South Korea's economic development and international status are built on close relations with the United States. But at present, China is also an important partner for South Korea, and China's rapid rise in the region and increasing discourse power make it necessary for South Korea to consider China as an unavoidable factor in the U.S.-ROK alliance. Both China and the United States have significant influence on South Korea, which has been striving to maintain good relations with both major powers and has a no choice option. Therefore, how to balance the influence of China and the United States on the country, and how to make a choice between the two countries under the increasing competition between China and the United States, will be one of the most important and urgent foreign policies of the South Korean government.

##### *4.2 Public Opinion and Attitude towards the U.S.-ROK Alliance in South Korea*

The promotion of democratization has increasingly influenced public opinion in the formulation of South Korea's foreign policy. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and South Korea in 1992, the South Korean people's views on China have become more positive, while their

views on the United States and the US South Korea alliance have become more negative. The transformation occurred after the official deployment of THAAD in South Korea in 2016, and the relationship between China and South Korea rapidly deteriorated. China also took a series of sanctions measures in response to South Korea. According to a survey, in 2016 (before the THAAD problem occurred), 38% believed that China was a competitor and 56.9% believed that China was a partner (Yoo, 2023). However, in 2017 (after the THAAD problem occurred), 52.7% believed that China was a competitor but only 38% believed that China was a partner. The changes in China South Korea relations also mean an improvement in US South Korea relations. As the survey, the overall attitude of the South Korean people towards China has shown a downward trend from 2019 to 2023, while their attitude towards the United States has declined from 2019 to 2020 and reached a relatively balanced state after 2021 (Li & Jin, 2024).

The reason for the decrease in South Korean people's favorability towards the United States from 2019 to 2020 is largely due to the Trump administration's demand for the South Korean government to bear more military expenses for the stationed US troops in South Korea. Since 1991, the United States and South Korea have reached a Special Agreement on Defense Cost Sharing to share the military expenses of the US troops stationed in South Korea. The 9th Sharing Agreement expired at the end of 2018, but the two sides had significant differences in the signing of the 10th agreement. Trump accuses South Korea of failing to fulfill its obligations as an ally, demands that South Korea bear a higher proportion of the US military spending in South Korea, and threatens South Korea with the reduction of troops. According to the agreement, South Korea's military spending on the US military stationed in South Korea in 2018 was approximately 960.2 billion Korean won (about 813 million US dollars). However, in the negotiations for the 10th agreement, the United States demanded that South Korea bear more than 1 billion US dollars (about 1.1 trillion Korean won) in military spending and that the agreement be signed annually. In response, South Korean lawmaker Song Yong-gil (who became the leader of the South Korean Democratic Party in 2021) stated that South Korea has no reason to share more military expenses, criticized the US for not paying salaries to South Korean employees, and urged an immediate stop to using the livelihoods of the South Korean people as a threat and putting pressure on South Korea in negotiations on military spending. The 10th agreement was ultimately drafted by both parties on February 10, 2019. South Korea bears 1.0389 trillion Korean won (approximately 923.5 million US dollars). The South Korean side accepted the US request that the agreement be valid for one year, while the US side accepted the South Korean request that the share not exceed 1 billion US dollars (Jeon, 2019). In the negotiations for the 11th agreement that began at the end of 2019, the United States demanded that South Korea bear a military expenditure of up to \$5 billion. In 2021, Biden took office and believed that negotiations on defense cost sharing should become an opportunity to repair the South Korea US alliance and restore reciprocal relationships among allies (Li, 2021). The United States

has also changed its previous tough stance and actively promoted the achievement of the agreement. Finally, the two sides signed the 11th agreement on April 8, 2021, which is valid until 2025. South Korea will bear 1.1833 trillion Korean won (approximately 1.043 billion US dollars), a year-on-year increase of 13%. Therefore, during this period, the US South Korea alliance was repaired and the goodwill towards the United States within South Korea warmed up.

Yoon Seok-youl's one-sided policy of leaning towards the United States has been criticized by the South Korean people, and her advocacy for reconciliation with Japan on the comfort women issue has caused dissatisfaction among the South Korean people. The First Lady of South Korea, Kim Keon-hee, has also been deeply embroiled in political scandals, leading to a gradual decline in Yoon Seok-youl's approval rating for various reasons. The emergency martial law storm on the night of December 3, 2024, directly led to the extreme tolerance of the public towards Yoon Seok-youl. Under the leadership of opposition party leader Lee Jae-myung, the South Korean Constitutional Court will officially hear the impeachment case of whether to dismiss President Yoon Seok-youl on the grounds of the December 3 emergency martial law incident from January 14, 2025 (Byeon, 2025). Under the hype of the media and hostile parties, the South Korean people may attribute this farce to Yoon Seok-youl's overly pro American policies, and then blame the United States and the U.S.-ROK alliance. Some scholars believe that the U.S.-ROK alliance is more of a violation of the US sovereignty over South Korea, including trade sovereignty and defense sovereignty. The future trend of the U.S.-ROK alliance remains a matter of concern.

#### *4.3 The Imbalance of Economic Cooperation and the Dependence of Industrial Chains*

South Korea has a high degree of asymmetric dependence on China's industrial chain, and a deterioration of relations with China will inevitably lead to a heavy blow to the already fragile industrial chain in South Korea. South Korea's technology exports to China are bound to be further suppressed, increasing the political cost of tapping into the potential of the Chinese market (Lyv & Jin, 2022). South Korea's exports to China mainly take the form of intermediate products, and there is a high supply chain connection between China and South Korea; South Korea's exports to the United States are mainly in the form of final consumer goods, and the supply chain connection between the two countries is relatively low. The economic ties between South Korea and China are higher than those between South Korea and the United States (Bai, 2022). According to the data, South Korea's imports from China decreased by over 20% in 2023 (Korean Statistical Information Service, n.d.). In response to the impact of the Chinese market, South Korea actively responded to the US economic security strategy, participated in the US led Indo-Pacific economic framework, and attempted to use the opportunity of US economic protectionism and collectivization to develop South Korea's own industries and economy (Jiang, 2023). But in recent years, the United States has focused on promoting the return of manufacturing, and the rapid development of its semiconductor manufacturing industry

has posed a huge substitution crisis for South Korea's proud electronic information industry. Traditional industries represented by the shipbuilding industry are facing challenges from the impact of China's industrial upgrading and the increase in financing costs caused by the US dollar interest rate hike. The automotive industry is also facing substitution pressure from both China and the United States - China's domestically produced electric vehicle technology is developing rapidly, with much higher cost-effectiveness and market share than Korean cars. The Biden administration is also providing strong support and subsidies to the country's new energy vehicle industry. In 2025, when Trump takes office again, he has clearly stated that he will increase import tariffs and support domestic American car brands, which is undoubtedly a major blow to Korean cars.

## 5. Conclusion

In the increasingly complex global geopolitical landscape, the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance will be deeply influenced by the strategic competition between China and the United States. The United States hopes to further transform the U.S.-ROK alliance into a global strategic alliance as an important component of its Indo-Pacific strategy to contain China's rise, but South Korea's strategic core is stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula. The focus of the United States is gradually shifting from the Korean Peninsula to the wider Indo-Pacific region, demanding that South Korea assume more regional and global roles, which may exacerbate concerns about South Korea being entrapped. After taking office, Yoon Seok-young adopted a more pro-American foreign policy. In response to the threat from North Korea, the military cooperation of the U.S.-ROK alliance continued to deepen, with increasing cooperation in military exercises, missile defense, drone technology, and nuclear deterrence. This is an important step in the transformation of the U.S.-ROK alliance into a 'global strategic alliance'. The U.S.-ROK alliance is also facing the problem of asymmetric dependence in the industrial chain. Although South Korea actively participates in the U.S. led Indo-Pacific economic framework and has proposed its own version of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, its severe economic dependence on China has put it in an awkward position in the competition between China and the United States. The policy of leaning towards the United States has also triggered a rebound in public opinion in South Korea. In the future, the South Korean government needs to find a dynamic balance between maintaining stability on the peninsula and meeting domestic needs in South Korea. At the same time, how to maintain balance between the two major powers of China and the United States will be a key challenge for the future U.S.-ROK alliance.

## Fund support

General Project of the Liaoning Provincial Social Science Planning Fund in 2024: Research on the Role Orientation of South Korea in the Asia-Pacific Expansion Process of NATO and Its Impact on



China (Project Number: L24BGJ001).

## References

- Bai, M. (2022). Research on Changes in Korean Industrial Chain and Supply Chain Policies and Their Impact. *Price Theory and Practice*, 1, 54-60.
- Byeon, L. Z. (2025, January 3). The pre-trial conference procedure for the impeachment of Yoon Seok-young has ended, and the formal trial will begin on the 14th. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20250103004100881?section=search>
- Chen, L. (2021). *Historical Review and Prospect of the Korean American Alliance*. Unpublished master's thesis, Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai.
- Cho, J. H. (2023, August 17). US summit seen as potential milestone for Japan, South Korea relations: ANALYSIS. *ABC News*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://abcnews.go.com/International/us-summit-potential-milestone-japan-south-korea-relations/story?id=102333930>
- Dong, X. (2023). Strengthening the Alliance between the United States, Japan, and South Korea: Motivation, Performance, and Prospects. *Contemporary World*, 7, 44-49.
- Foreign Relations of the United States. (n.d.). *Memorandum of Conversation*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v19p1/d5>
- Foreign Relations of the United States. (n.d.). *Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Korea*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1964-68v29p1/d216>
- Gao, X. (2013). *The Challenges of the US Korea Alliance in the Post 9/11 Era and South Korea's Strategic Choices*. Unpublished master's thesis, Shanghai Jiao Tong University, Shanghai.
- Jang, L. L. (2023, April 27). Yoon Seok-young said that the leaders of South Korea and the United States will immediately communicate and respond to the North Korean nuclear attack. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20230427001000881>
- Jeon, Y. Q. (2019, February 10). South Korea and the United States draft military spending agreement, with South Korea's share increasing by 8.2%. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20190210001400881?section=search>
- Jiang, X. (2023). Adjustment, Motivation, and Impact of South Korea's Industrial Chain and Supply Chain Policies under the Background of Global Supply Chain Restructuring. *Contemporary Korea*, 4, 29-46.
- Kim, H. M., & Liu, Z. X. (2016). A Study on the Interaction between Diplomatic Cooperation and Military Conflict. *Social Science Research*, 31(2), 77-102.

- Knowles, E., Sweijts, T., Oosterveld, W. T., & Schellekens, M. (2014). *Why are Pivot States so Pivotal? The Role of Pivot States in Regional and Global Security*. The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies.
- Korean Statistical Information Service. (n.d.). *Statistical Database: Trade and Balance of payment*. Retrieved January 4, 2025, from [https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=301&tblId=DT\\_301Y015&vw\\_cd=MT\\_ETITLE&list\\_id=301\\_B\\_B03&scrId=&language=en&seqNo=&lang\\_mode=en&obj\\_var\\_id=&itm\\_id=&conn\\_path=MT\\_ETITLE&path=%252Feng%252FstatisticsList%252FstatisticsListIndex.do](https://kosis.kr/statHtml/statHtml.do?orgId=301&tblId=DT_301Y015&vw_cd=MT_ETITLE&list_id=301_B_B03&scrId=&language=en&seqNo=&lang_mode=en&obj_var_id=&itm_id=&conn_path=MT_ETITLE&path=%252Feng%252FstatisticsList%252FstatisticsListIndex.do)
- Lee, Z. H. (2022, March 11). South Korean President elect Yoon Seok-youll will reshape the diplomatic tone of the top four countries. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20220311005700881?section=search>
- Li, H. (2024). Analysis of the US South Korea 2024 Ulchi Freedom Shield Military Exercise. *Tank and Armored Vehicles*, 20, 16-22.
- Li, J. (2021). Negotiations on the Sharing of Defense Costs between the United States and South Korea: From Quarrels during the Trump Era to Resonance during the Biden Era. *Public Diplomacy Quarterly*, 2, 81-87.
- Li, J. (2022). The Measures and Impact of the Yoon Seok-youll Government in Building the South Korea US Global Comprehensive Strategic Alliance. *Peace and Development*, 6, 94-111.
- Li, J. H., & Jin, L. S. (2024) Understanding South Korean People's Perception of China from South Korean Polls on China. *Dongjiang Journal*, 41(1), 63-72.
- Li, K. (2022). *The Moon Jae-in Government's Policy Transformation and Motivation of the U.S.-ROK Alliance*. Unpublished master's thesis, Shandong University, Jinan.
- Liu, J. (2004). The Origin and Development of the North Korean Nuclear Issue. *Proceedings of Korean Studies*, 183-199.
- Lyv, P., & Jin, X. D. (2022). Policy Adjustment of South Korea's Foreign Economic Cooperation under the Strategic Game Pattern of China and the United States: An Analysis from the Perspective of a Middle Power. *International Forum*, 24(4), 136-154.
- Maduz, L. (2023). Explaining Korea's Positioning in the US-China Strategic Competition. *China-US Competition Impact on Small and Middle Powers' Strategic Choices*, 247-273.
- Morrow, J. D. (1991). Alliances and Asymmetry: An Alternative to the Capability Aggregation Model of Alliances. *American Journal of Political Science*, 35(4), 904-933.
- Pang, Y. (2007). *Research on Roh Moo-hyun's Policy of Peace and Prosperity and the Development of Relations between South and North Korea*. Unpublished master's thesis, Yanbian University, Yanji.
- Park, Y. G., & Kim, H. R. (2024). The Role of Drones in the Russo Ukrainian War and Our Military's Future Combat Capability Building Plan. *National Defense and Technology*, 539, 126-139.

- Policy Briefing of the Republic of Korea. (2021, July 5). *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, South Korea changes from Developing country to Developed country ... for the first time in its 57-year history*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://korea.kr/news/policyNewsView.do?newsId=148889700>
- Sajnovic, E. M. (2023). *Are They Part Of "Us" Or The "Other"? A Discourse analysis examining how the U.S. perceives itself in East Asia region in relation to the disputes between two important allies: Japan and South Korea*. Unpublished bachelor's dissertation, Swedish Defence University, Stockholm.
- Snyder, H. G. (1984). The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics. *World Politics*, 36(4), 461-495.
- Song, Y. (2012). *Research on the U.S.-ROK Alliance during the Lee Myung-bak Administration*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, China Foreign Affairs University, Beijing.
- Song, Z. (2022). Analysis of the US Understanding of South Korea and the Trend of the U.S.-ROK Alliance. *Dongjiang Journal*, 39(2), 83-90.
- Su, R. L., & Tang, S. P. (2012). Mutual Constraints: The Core Mechanism of Alliance Management. *Contemporary Asia Pacific*, 3, 5-38.
- Sun, J. (2007). The Impact of Carter's Withdrawal Plan on US-Japan-South Korea Relations. *Journal of Tangshan Normal University*, 6, 67-70.
- Sun, J. (2018). *Research on the Strengthening of the Korean American Alliance during the Park Geun-hye Period*. Unpublished master's thesis, Shandong Normal University, Jinan.
- Sun, R., & Yao, D. W. (2023). 70 Years of the US South Korea Alliance: Towards a Global Comprehensive Strategic Alliance. *Northeast Asia Journal*, 6, 1-18.
- Tian, D. (2022). Identity Cognition, Status Anxiety, and the Construction of the Yoon Seok-youll Government as a Global Hub Country. *Contemporary Korea*, 4, 22-41.
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security. (n.d.). *National Strategy for Maritime Security*. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.dhs.gov/national-plan-achieve-maritime-domain-awareness>
- Wang, P. F., & Huang, Z. (2022). A Study on the Process of Japan South Korea Security Cooperation during the Cold War. *Journal of Beihua University (Social Sciences Edition)*, 23(6), 38-46.
- World Bank Group. (n.d.). *World Bank Open Data*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?end=2023&start=2019&view=map>
- Wu, J. Y., Lin, J. H., Li, S. Y., & Kim, Z. H. (2024). Korean-style Maritime Domain Awareness Development Plan for Promoting reciprocity of Republic of Korea. *Journal of the KNST*, 7(3), 327-334.
- Xia, Y. (2009). Nixon Doctrine and the Adjustment of US Foreign Policy. *Research on the History of the Communist Party of China*, 4, 46-56.

- Yan, J. (2024). The Origin and Practice of Carter Administration's Human Rights Foreign Policy: Taking South Korea as an Example. *Contemporary Korea*, 3, 73-91.
- Yang, S. E., & Wang, S. (2024). Research on the Follow-Autonomy Diplomatic Model of the Yoon Seok-young Government in South Korea under the Competition between China and the United States. *Contemporary Korea*, 2, 49-65.
- Yoo, H. (2023). *The Image of China in International Relations: Changes in China's Image in South Korea, Japan, and Russia*. Unpublished master's thesis, Peking University, Beijing.
- Yoon, H. J. (2022, December 28). The South Korean government announces the Korean version of the Indo-Pacific strategy, emphasizing the spirit of freedom and unity. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 4, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20221228002100881?section=search>
- Yoon, H. J. (2022, November 18). The South Korea US Missile Policy Consultation Mechanism Formally Launched. *Yonhap*. Retrieved January 2, 2025, from <https://cn.yna.co.kr/view/ACK20221118001500881?section=search>
- Zhan, D. (2023). From the New South to the Indo-Pacific: The Continuation and Changes of South Korea's Indo-Pacific Strategy. *International Forum*, 25(5), 118-137.
- Zhang, B. (2020). *Adjustment and Influence of the U.S.-ROK Alliance in the Trump—Moon Jae-in Period*. Unpublished master's thesis, Jilin University, Changchun.
- Zhao, M. H., & Qiu, J. C. (2024). Alliances in the Trilateral Relations between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. *Strategic Decision Research*, 15(6), 36-44.
- Zhao, Y. H., & Zheng, H. (2020). The Dilemma of the U.S.-ROK Alliance from the Perspective of Power Change. *International Forum*, 22(4), 35-59.
- Zheng, X. (2012). The Unipolar System and the Changes in the U.S.-ROK Alliance. *Korean Political Studies*, 21(1), 231-254.
- Zheng, Y. (2023). Korean version of Indo-Pacific strategy: a replica. *World Knowledge*, 3, 34-36.
- Zhu, X. (2015). *Research on the U.S.-ROK Strategic Alliance from the Perspective of Alliance Dilemma Theory*. Unpublished master's thesis, Liaoning University, Shenyang.