

# Deepening South Korea-China Relations

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## I. Park's China Policy and South Korea-China Relations

### 1. Current SK-China relations

- ◆ A initial honeymoon between South Korea and China under Park Administration
  - Both countries exchanged special envoys respectively right after Lady Park won the Korean presidential election.
  - Successful Summit in June, 2013 in which favorite impression of both countries has been elevated
  - Both countries strengthen cooperation on the 3<sup>rd</sup> North Korea's nuclear test
  - Strategic consultation and cooperation become more comprehensive
- ◆ South Korea's strategic value to China has been elevated.
  - Strong economic cooperation up to the trading volume of 300 billion dollars by 2015.
  - In spite of their low level of trust and bumpy relations in the past few years since 2010, mutual strategic interests elevated due to changing international security environment. At the regional level, power shift between China and Japan in progress, and at the global level, between the US and China
  - Sympathy shared in the sea territorial disputes against Japan due to similar historical experiences under Japanese imperialism
  - China regards Korea as a “swing state”
  - If Korea were sided with Japan and the US against China, China would be likely beleaguered and forced to live in a Cold War-like-environment.
  - South Korea's critical role in maintaining stability on the Korean peninsula
  - As a result, agreement on establishing the high-level of strategic dialogue in foreign affairs and security area between the BH and the SLGFA during the Summit

### 2. Park's China policy

- Seeking a “materialization of the strategic cooperative partnership” with China
- Pursuit of the so-called “allying with the U.S & harmonizing with China (聯美和中) strategy reported
- Strategic Partner in “Trustpolitik” in dealing with North Korea nuclear issue as well as North Korean issue itself
- Strategic Neighbor in the “Ideas on Establishment of Peace in Northeast Asia” : → Establishment of trilateral strategic dialogues among South Korea-the US-China

- Objective of “middle power foreign policy”

### **3. Strategic differences between SK-China**

- ◆ China-NK special relations vs. SK-US alliance
  - North Korea has been successful of cultivating priority differences of Korea-China, engulfing the schism, forming a new Cold war-like security environment in Northeast Asia under which North Korea can harvest fruits most.
  - The future of South Korea and China are not necessarily optimistic
- ◆ NK Nuclear Issues: South Korea as an imminent threat to his security & very existence; China as less imminent threat
  - Policy priority on NK nuclear issues: SK - assurance of denuclearization vs China – stability in NK as well as Korean peninsula
- ◆ The issue of harmonizing the “US-ROK alliance” with the “strategic cooperative partnership” with China in the long run
  - Introduction of MD issue

## **II. South Korea’s middle power foreign policy**

### **1. Launching SK’s middle power foreign policy**

- South Korean FM Yoon, Byungse, joined the MIKTA(Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, Australia) middle power cooperative mechanism on September 26, 2013 in the 68<sup>th</sup> UN General Assembly
- SK will strengthen its middle power foreign policy in the future.

### **2. Functions of Middle Powers**

- ◆ Initiate/Promote Cooperation
  - Help Ensure Strategic Stability between the US and China/ China-Japan
  - Promote Peaceful Resolution and Regional Cooperation
  - Help North Korean Regime adopt Reform and Opening-up Policies
  - Further Economic Cooperation and Cultural & Personal Exchanges
- ◆ Mitigate Tension and Conflicts
  - Mitigate the US-China/ China-Japan Rivalries
  - Mitigate Regional Conflicts and Disputes
  - Manage International Crisis in the Region
  - Help the Six-Party Talks achieve denuclearization of North Korea
- ◆ Mediate Disputes
  - Help Convert the Six-Party Talks into Regional Security Dialogue Mechanism
  - Mediate Conflicts among Great Powers
  - Mediate Regional Disputes and induce Compromise

◆ Secure Common Interests

- Prevent Great Power(s) from taking Excessive approaches
- Promote Pan-Regional Economic Cooperation and Security Mechanism
- Build Community of Peace & Prosperity for the New Era of East Asia

### **III. Implication of South Korea's Middle Power Foreign Policy to SK-China Relations**

- ◆ SK's foreign policy will be influenced by the regional configuration of international relations; most importantly by power transition between the U.S.- China, and currently China-Japan.
- ◆ Given the circumstances, SK's China policy orientations vary from “Allying with the U.S & Communicating with China well (聯美通中)”, to “Allying with the U.S & Harmonizing with China (聯美和中),” to “Allying with the U.S & Cooperating with China (聯美協中),” and to “Concerting with the U.S. & China (聯美聯中).”
  - Park's China policy stays in between to “Allying with the U.S & Harmonizing with China (聯美和中)” and “Allying with the U.S & Cooperating with China (聯美協中).”
- ◆ SK no longer takes a single-minded one-side policy between the U.S.- China.
  - Under the threat of North Korean nuclear weapons and military provocations, SK-US alliance must be the pillar for SK's security architecture for the next coming decades.
  - However, given the rise of China, South Korea's foreign policy should be more complicated and multi-dimensional, seeking cooperation from neighboring countries. SK must work with China to harvest fruits from China's economic development, to promote further cooperation on North Korea and to maintain peace and stability on the Korean peninsula as well as in this region.

**Table 1.** South Korea's Policy Options

	Allying with the U.S & Communicating with China well (聯美通中)	Allying with the U.S & Harmonizing with China (聯美和中)	Allying with the U.S & Cooperating with China (聯美協中)	Concerting with the U.S. and China (聯美聯中)
Temporal Domain	Lee Administration	Park Administration	2018~2030	2031~2045
Power Balance	U.S. Superiority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S Superiority in Military</li> <li>• Balance in Economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• U.S Superiority in Military</li> <li>• China Superiority in Economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance in Military</li> <li>• China Superiority in Economy</li> </ul>
The US-China Relations	Competition	Complex Relations of Competition, Coordination, and Cooperation	Strategic Cooperation & Mutual Hedging	Strategic Balance & Consortium
South-North	Competition	Searching for Mutual	Strengthening	Unification

Korea Relations		Trust	Coordination & Cooperation	
Rise of China and Uncertainty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening Alliance with the U.S</li> <li>• Promotion of Regional Cooperation</li> <li>• Common Interests First Policy with China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No Sided Diplomacy</li> <li>• Reducing Differences with China</li> <li>• Building Regional &amp; Multilateral Security Mechanism</li> <li>• Searching for Middle-Power Cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthening Cooperation with China</li> <li>• Institutionalizing Regional &amp; Multilateral Security Mechanism</li> <li>• Institutionalization of Middle-Power Cooperation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dissolution of Alliance System</li> <li>• Regional &amp; Multilateral Security Mechanism</li> <li>• Active Roles of Middle Power Mechanism</li> </ul>

- ◆ As a middle power, SK cannot play a balancing role in this region. we are fully aware that it will be difficult to achieve stability, prosperity, and peace alone.
  - However, SK may have a bridging role by promoting further cooperation, initiating a new cooperative mechanism, and seeking to mitigate tension between/among great powers in this region.
  - SK will strengthen a middle-power cooperative mechanism in this region. Middle powers in this region face a similar international milieu and can promote common interests through establishing such a middle-power cooperative mechanism.
  - It needs to formulate measures to avoid alienation from Korean peninsula issues as a result of US-China strategic cooperation or consortium. It also needs to issue a strong message that it would be the failure of the US/China foreign policy if it forces South Korea to choose either.

#### IV. Policy Suggestions

With stronger economic interdependence as a foundation, SK works to broaden the scope of its political, social, cultural and military relations with China in order to promote mutual trust between the two countries. Bilateral relations must be enhanced on all fronts so as significantly to weaken the causal link between the aforementioned issues of potential discord and mutual animosity. To do so, I suggest as follows:

1. Design the high level of strategic dialogue as practical mechanism to enable all the critical issues discussed and coordinated
2. Establish a research committee for crisis-prevention/management mechanism
3. Resolve the difference of jurisdictional demarcation in the south sea of Korea during the Park-Xi era