

North Korea's Fourth Nuclear Test and the U.S.-ROK Alliance

Yonho Kim

The U.S.-Korea Institute, Johns Hopkins SAIS

Abstract

North Korea's nuclear tests in 2016 rekindled a stronger voice for independent nuclear armament among South Korean conservatives. It is noteworthy that the pro-nuclear view is mainly driven by feelings of profound frustration and helplessness over North Korea's growing nuclear threat. To assuage concerns, Washington should start seeking new methods of reassuring its partner of its intention to honor its security commitments. The challenges to the U.S.-ROK alliance sparked by North Korea's nuclear test also came from the liberals' fierce criticism of the Park government's decision to start talks with Washington on THAAD deployment. Opponents of THAAD emphasized potential "security anxiety" associated with THAAD deployment, which they argued would escalate regional tensions and introduce a new Cold War, endangering peace on the Korean Peninsula. The THAAD issue has become a political hot potato that could easily entrap major presidential candidates. To avoid any backlash, the candidates will refuse to choose between China and the U.S. while placing the alliance with the U.S. at the center of South Korea's foreign policy.

Keywords: South Korea, North Korea, nuclear test, nuclear armament, THAAD, U.S.-ROK alliance

This paper is an expression of the author's own view and does not represent that of any organizations.

Introduction

South Korea and the U.S. responded to North Korea's fourth nuclear test and subsequent long-range rocket launch with strong coordinated measures. First and foremost, the two allies worked together with other like-minded states, including Japan and the United Kingdom, for tougher sanctions on North Korea. This cooperation for a tougher approach

towards North Korea bore fruit when the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2270 on March 2, 2016. The resolution contained the most stringent sanctions on North Korea to date. Resolution 2270's provisions focused not only on further curbing Pyongyang's nuclear and missile programs, but also on significant economic pressure on the regime by prohibiting the import of North Korean mineral resources such as coal and iron ore.¹

The U.S. reaffirmed its firm commitment to the defense of the Republic of Korea (ROK) by dispatching its strategic assets in response to North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. In a continuing show of force, a U.S. B-52 bomber from Andersen Air Force Base in Guam flew over South Korea in response to the North's nuclear test, and four F-22 stealth fighters flew from Okinawa to Osan in response to the North's long-range rocket launch. In addition, the two allies conducted joint military drills, Key Resolve in March and Foal Eagle, from March to April. The military drills were the largest joint exercises since the sinking of the ROK's *Cheonan* in 2010,² mobilizing hundreds of thousands of troops and employing the latest high-tech weaponry. As might be expected, Seoul reaffirmed its unwavering confidence in the U.S. nuclear umbrella against Pyongyang's possible nuclear attacks.

Seoul decided to make a bold move to strengthen the U.S.-ROK alliance by departing from its strategic ambiguity on the U.S.-made Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system. Immediately after North Korea's long-range rocket launch on February 7, 2016, the Park government made an official announcement that the two allies had agreed to begin negotiations for the "earliest possible" deployment of the advanced missile defense system to South Korea. Despite China's vehement opposition, THAAD deployment is expected to have political significance in terms of U.S. strategic reassurance for the defense of South Korea and significantly improve joint U.S.-ROK early warning capabilities through a sophisticated radar system, allowing South Korea to be part of a joint U.S.-Japan-ROK theater missile defense system.

Although North Korea's fifth nuclear test was also followed by the similar pattern of joint responses by the U.S. and South Korea, it is also true that North Korea's nuclear tests in 2016 evoked new calls in South Korea for the development of an independent nuclear option. It is ironic that South Korean conservatives, who are supposed to be ardent supporters of the U.S.-ROK alliance, voiced their endorsement of nuclear option. Their move basically demonstrated the lack of confidence in the

durability of American security commitments, including the extended deterrence against North Korea. Not only *Chosun Ilbo*, the most influential conservative daily newspaper in South Korea, but also the ruling Saenuri Party's leadership, including Won Yoo-chul, then-floor leader, led the call for nuclear armament.

In addition, the THAAD deployment issue has returned to the center of public debate in South Korea, generating fierce criticism of the Park government. South Korean liberals, and even some centrist conservatives, have opposed the idea that THAAD is indispensable for the security of the country. Opponents of THAAD have questioned its military utility and emphasized potential "security anxiety." They have argued that the THAAD deployment is an invitation for diplomatic troubles with China and Russia, escalating regional tensions, bringing about a new Cold War, and endangering peace on the Korean Peninsula.

One may ask whether North Korea's nuclear tests in 2016 strengthened the U.S.-ROK alliance or has thrown aspects of the alliance into doubt. The growing, although still minor, voice for nuclear armament by South Korean conservatives could undermine the alliance in the long term. Seoul's decision to have talks with the U.S. on THAAD deployment has not eased the "security anxiety" within South Korea. These concerns were especially amplified by the political schedule of the National Assembly election in April, which demonstrates the growing significance of the relationship between North Korea's nuclear test and the alliance. Thus, the political developments right after the fourth nuclear test will be the focus of this article. This article summarizes the debates on nuclear armament and THAAD deployment and illustrates the significance of the debates following North Korea's fourth nuclear test. This article then characterizes the political undercurrent of the debates and describes how the National Assembly election in April impacted the debates. Finally, the article discusses the remaining controversies over nuclear armament and THAAD deployment.

North Korea's Fourth Nuclear Test and South Korea's Nuclear Options

Renewed Debates

North Korea's fourth nuclear test on January 6, 2016, came as a major blow to stability on the Korean Peninsula, causing shock, frustration and outrage in South Korea.³ The test evoked new calls among South Koreans for the ROK to pursue independent nuclear

options. The strongest voice among those calling for an independent ROK nuclear deterrent was Won Yoo-chul, then-floor leader for the ruling Saenuri Party. Won wasted no time in urging the government to consider becoming a nuclear state, calling for such measures the day after the North's fourth nuclear test. At the party's Supreme Council meeting he minced no words, plainly stating, "North Korea has been pointing a gun at our head for years. It's time we stop defending ourselves with a mere sword and have nuclear weapons to challenge its destructive nuclear weapons."⁴

He justified the idea of an ROK nuclear option for self-defense as "peaceful" as opposed to the North's nuclear program, which he called, "fearful and self-destructive." Won, a former chairman of the National Assembly's Defense Committee, had made similar comments before, but never had he voiced such an opinion as the ruling party's floor leader.⁵ His argument was echoed by other senior party officials, including Kim Jung-hoon, the party's chief policy maker, and Kim Eul-dong, a Supreme Council member.

Won reiterated his call for South Korea's nuclear armament during a speech at the National Assembly in his official capacity as floor leader on February 15, 2016. He opined, "We cannot borrow an umbrella from a neighbor every time it rains. We need to have a raincoat and wear it ourselves."⁶ He also underscored the need for the redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula, which were withdrawn from the ROK following the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Won proffered a return of U.S. nuclear weapons to the ROK as an alternative to the development of an indigenous ROK nuclear capability. The party's chief policy maker Kim backed up Won's argument by calling for South Korea to develop the capability to reprocess spent nuclear fuel, a procedure banned under the U.S.-ROK Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement. Kim stated that, "[i]n preparation against Pyongyang's possession of nuclear arms, South Korea should at least have capabilities sufficient enough to build nukes at any time."⁷

Conservatives voiced their endorsement of an ROK nuclear option through newspaper editorials and op-eds. In a January 28, 2016 editorial, *Chosun Ilbo*, the most influential conservative daily newspaper in South Korea, contended that, "If the public wants the country to arm itself with nuclear weapons, the government will simply have to scrap a joint declaration from 1991 to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and initiate

talks with the U.S. to obtain the right to enrich uranium and reprocess its own spent nuclear fuel rods.”⁸ In an op-ed for *Chosun Ilbo*, Kim Jin-ho, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, reported that a group of former military commanders came up with an idea to start a national campaign to support nuclear armament.⁹

Recent polls show that more than half of the South Korean public consistently supports the development of an indigenous nuclear arsenal. A January 12, 2016 poll by Gallup Korea showed that 54 percent of respondents supported South Korean nuclear weapons possession. A February 15 survey by *JoongAng Ilbo*, one of the top three daily newspapers in South Korea, found that 68 percent were in favor of the independent nuclear option. *Yonhap News Agency’s* poll on February 14 showed 52 percent of South Koreans favored indigenous production of nuclear weapons.¹⁰ The public’s fear following North Korea’s fourth nuclear test and continued rocket launches has enhanced support for bolder security options. In addition to domestic pressure, international factors have also contributed to South Korea’s increased interest in obtaining an independent nuclear deterrent. The U.S. Republican presidential nominee, Donald Trump, has stated that he would let South Korea arm itself with nuclear weapons to reduce U.S. security burdens. Such proclamations only add fuel to the increasing fire of calls for a nuclear-armed South Korea.

Support for a nuclear-armed South Korea has several rationales. First, gaining a credible, symmetric nuclear deterrence capability is the only way to restore the balance of power on the Korean Peninsula, which has been disrupted by North Korea’s nuclear weapons capability. Second, nuclear weapons could possibly give South Korea the upper hand in negotiations with North Korea, compelling Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons. China would put much more pressure on North Korea lest South Korean proliferation lead to a Japanese desire for nuclear weapons. Third, the credibility of American extended deterrence, nuclear and conventional, is in question. For example, the U.S. would not risk Los Angeles to save Seoul. Finally, it is unwise for South Korea to remain a non-nuclear state in a region where China, Russia, and North Korea already have nuclear weapons and Japan has the capability to develop them in a matter of just months.¹¹

Of course, pro-nuclear armament is still a minority view, and faced strong opposition in both South Korea and the U.S. A South Korean nuclear weapons arsenal is not feasible due to severe political, legal, and

institutional barriers. If Seoul emulates Pyongyang and leaves the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), South Korea would face harsh UN and international sanctions led by the U.S. The export-driven South Korean economy would severely falter; its nuclear power industry, which provides a third of the country's electricity, would no longer be able to procure foreign nuclear fuel, leading to a disastrous power shortage. The so-called nuclear "balance of terror" with the North may not be tenable under the young, unpredictable leader Kim Jong-un; there always remains a risk of a war triggered by miscalculations and misperceptions. Furthermore, redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons would not only be unrealistic due to U.S. fiscal constraints, but the return of U.S. nuclear weapons would add little to the existing deterrence. It would also give Pyongyang a pretext to further its nuclear weapons program, and move China closer militarily to the North.¹²

What Is Different This Time?

The resurgence of concerns about the reliability of U.S.-extended deterrence is understandable and even predictable considering the previous pattern of some conservatives' reactions to North Korea's earlier nuclear tests. In response to North Korea's second nuclear test in 2009, some politicians started to break a decades-old taboo by broaching the idea of a nuclear-armed South Korea. If the North's first nuclear test shocked and dazed the South Korean public, their second test made the threat of a nuclear North Korea vividly clear, leading to serious concerns about the South's ability to deter against a North Korean nuclear attack. Pyongyang's third nuclear test in 2013 served as yet another wake-up call and prompted a small but growing number of politicians and newspaper columnists to reiterate calls for South Korea's own nuclear arsenal.¹³

The pro-nuclear group stressed military and/or peaceful nuclear sovereignty. Proponents of military nuclear sovereignty urge the government to acquire nuclear weapons for the purpose of self-defense. These so-called nationalists doubt the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrence capability, believing the U.S. failed to prevent Pyongyang from testing its nuclear devices. They state the South is no longer bound by the 1992 Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, noting repeated violations by the North. The idea of peaceful nuclear sovereignty, which has been discussed since the conclusion of

the 1992 declaration, entails a complete nuclear fuel cycle (from mining to used fuel disposal), and peaceful use of nuclear energy. Supporters of peaceful nuclear sovereignty contend that South Korea is entitled to peaceful enrichment and reprocessing of nuclear materials parallel to Japan for economic and strategic reasons. Otherwise, South Korea has no choice but to keep importing nuclear fuel and to accumulate a huge stockpile of spent fuel. In a strategic sense, enrichment and reprocessing facilities will provide the South with a virtual nuclear deterrent against the North that would drive Pyongyang's nuclear dismantlement.¹⁴

Then what is different this time? The scope and scale of discussion was expanded with greater media attention than the previous tests. Some of the same politicians, including Won, had made similar arguments following North Korea's 2013 nuclear test. Although the number of politicians who made public statements (eight) supporting South Korea's nuclear option remained the same as it was in 2013, five of the eight making pro-nuclear statements after the fourth test were first-time public supporters. This could indicate that the political risks of coming out with pro-nuclear view have, or at least are perceived to have been, diminished.¹⁵ Notably, it was the ruling Saenuri Party's leadership that led the chorus of nuclear armament for self-defense immediately after the fourth nuclear test. Their call for nuclear armament led to news articles headlined, "The ruling party's leadership raised the need for self-nuclear armament" by some major news media, including *Yonhap*, South Korea's largest news agency.¹⁶ The public reaction was sharp and the media coverage was extensive. With strongly worded editorials and op-eds in conservative newspapers, including *Chosun Ilbo*, endorsing a nuclear option, the issue immediately emerged as a hot topic for the political parties gearing up for the upcoming National Assembly election in April. As a result, media coverage of the nuclear debate doubled in 2016 compared to 2013. Of course, the liberal opposition parties that consistently favored engagement with the North, universally opposed any nuclear option. Of note, pro-and anti-nuclear views were relatively evenly split.¹⁷

A long-time pro-engagement scholar, Cheong Seong-chang, made another small but noticeable change. A senior research fellow at Sejong Institute, Cheong told *Yonhap*:

Up until North Korea's third nuclear test, my position had been that there are more losses than benefits should Seoul go nuclear.

I used to support non-nuclearization—of the Korean Peninsula—but the North’s fourth nuclear test has confirmed that it is an unattainable goal. There is the high possibility that the North would succeed in developing H-bombs within several years. It is the time to seek a fundamental change to Seoul’s security policy, beyond stopgap measures against the North’s nuke threats.¹⁸

He further stated in the *Yonhap* interview that, “[i]f South Korea possesses nuclear weapons, the country can cut the massive defense budget needed to buy conventional weapons over the long haul.”¹⁹ Cheong’s change of position was perceived as an extremely rare case, considering that discussing an independent nuclear option had long been a taboo among North Korea experts in South Korea. However, his actions could lead more experts to make similar statements if Pyongyang conducts further—and possibly more powerful—nuclear tests that overshadow the prospects for the resumption of nuclear dialogue with the North.

Explaining the Ruling Party’s Initiation

Although understandable, the heated political debate surrounding the fourth test requires more explanation than the debate surrounding previous tests. As is true for other political hot-topics, a major ruling party politician like Won does not make politically controversial remarks without good reason. Some Korean newspapers suspected that his remarks were deliberate and carefully coordinated with, or at least implicitly blessed by, the Blue House. Supporting this suspicion is the fact that President Park Geun-hye neither publicly admonished nor discouraged Won’s call for a nuclear arsenal. Quite to the contrary, Park expressed understanding for those who support an indigenous nuclear weapons arsenal, leaving space for the nuclear debate to continue. Reaffirming South Korea’s non-proliferation commitments at a news conference, Park further stated, “I fully understand why some go so far as to argue that we should have tactical nuclear weapons.”²⁰

However, there remains no clear evidence of close coordination between Won and the Blue House. Rather, Won explained that his pro-nuclear argument was a personal idea. Furthermore, he was criticized by then-party chairman Kim Moo-sung, the leader of anti-Park Geun-hye faction within the Saenuri Party, as well as representative Yoon Sang-hyun, Won’s influential pro-Park faction comrade. Kim dismissed Won’s

pro-nuclear stance as a personal opinion and denied any related discussion among the party leadership right before Won's speech at the National Assembly on February 15. Yoon characterized the proposal for an independent nuclear option as an irresponsible statement, which would lead to South Korea's self-isolation.²¹ In part, these conflicting positions on nuclear armament among the major politicians within the ruling party show its disorderly situation. However, Won's "disagreement" with the Blue House and the party could also be seen as a division of labor to make sure the public discussion of nuclear armament will not cross over the invisible red line with the U.S.

Considering the timing and political context, President Park and the ruling Saenuri Party might have aimed to signal to Washington and Beijing that more powerful measures should be taken against North Korean nuclear advances.²² Seoul may seek more visible, frequent demonstrations of extended deterrence from the U.S. Frustrated by China's initial lukewarm response to Seoul's call for more pressure on North Korea in the wake of Pyongyang's fourth nuclear test, President Park may have wanted to push Beijing by highlighting radical thoughts that go against China's interest. Seoul's calculus might have been that, at this stage, the diplomatic costs would not be that high. The fact that the nuclear statements provided no readily achievable options and that Washington and Seoul concluded an agreement on peaceful nuclear cooperation in mid-2015 support this hypothesis.²³

For the domestic audience, the nuclear debate could provide cover for President Park's sudden policy change toward North Korea, including her decision to shut down the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC). The KIC remained open in the wake of North Korea's torpedo attack on the ROK's *Cheonan*, as well as the North's artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island; both attacks occurred in 2010. Liberals heavily criticized her decision as a relentless move to close all channels of communication with the North, leaving the fate of the two Koreas to the hands of the surrounding powers. However, her determination on the fate of KIC would not seem that draconian compared to the publicly discussed nuclear options. Indeed, at the party's January 7 Supreme Council meeting, Won said that, "Although a peaceful solution of the North Korean nuclear problem is most desirable, it is time to make a fundamental review of the existing approach."²⁴

More importantly, considering the timing and political context, the debate over nuclear armament may have more to do with the upcoming

National Assembly election.²⁵ The pro-nuclear politicians' strategy might have been to secure solid support from the voters by drawing media attention and giving the impression of acting tough against North Korea's growing nuclear threat. For the Saenuri Party and the conservative media, keeping the public debate focused on threats from North Korea, the so-called *buk-poong*, or "northern wind," may be a traditionally useful tool to turn the voters against the liberal opposition parties. However, media attention waned as party nominations for the parliamentary election became the most controversial election issue. The results of the election, where the ruling Saenuri Party lost its majority in the National Assembly, proved that the "northern wind" is no longer blowing hard enough to favor the conservative candidates.

Remaining Challenges: What can we do about it?

Neither the pro-nuclear politicians nor the alleged "expert" commentators tend to have realistic plans to improve South Korea's security and strengthen deterrence against North Korea with a nuclear option. They are unable to suggest reasonable ways to avoid or minimize the economic and security costs associated with going nuclear. Aside from abstract rhetoric emphasizing the need for Koreans to make sacrifices—or preventing North Korea from becoming a nuclear-armed state at all costs—the pro-nuclear group has not offered practical means to implement their ideas. Their main drivers are a profound frustration and a feeling of helplessness that North Korea's coercive and opportunistic use of nuclear threats has not abated, and the U.S. plan to outsource the North Korean nuclear problem to China has failed.²⁶

The pro-nuclear camp is preoccupied with concerns about how to offset the North's threat, but they do not necessarily believe South Korea's nuclear weapons are the only solution. They simply believe South Korea should start acting more independently in regards to its self-defense. Chung Mong-joon, for example, argued, "[w]e must consider 'every policy option' available including arming ourselves with nuclear weapons, in order to accomplish our ultimate goal of denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula."²⁷ In this sense, the pro-nuclear camp's frustrations can be characterized as a pro-nuclear 'sentiment' that emerges in response to North Korea's nuclear tests, as opposed to an organized school of thought relating to national security.²⁸

One should also keep in mind that public opinion portrayed by surveys is only a snapshot of the people's "emotion" in response to North

Korea's nuclear tests. Respondents are rarely informed of the magnitude of the economic and energy costs associated with going nuclear. If asked about their willingness to host storage facilities for a nuclear arsenal in their home cities, which would be North Korea's top military targets in the South, the public support for nuclear weapons would likely plummet.²⁹ The contents and structure of survey questionnaires reflecting these potential concerns could result in different levels of public support for nuclear options.

However, it is unrealistic to simply wait and hope for pro-nuclear sentiment in the ROK to fade away. The profound frustration and feeling of helplessness over North Korea's growing nuclear threat will persist barring a significant breakthrough in the North Korean nuclear problem. Indeed, after North Korea's fifth nuclear test in September 2016, the idea of a nuclear-armed South Korea has become a serious security agenda within the ruling Saenuri Party, not confined to the existing small segment of pro-nuclear lawmakers. With regard to the nuclear armament issues, Saenuri Party Chairman Lee Jung-hyun said, "We need to think of far tougher measures in response to North Korea's provocations than we have now. We need to be bold and start bringing issues to the discussion table that we've always treated as exceptions."³⁰

Should the North conduct another nuclear test, an even stronger pro-nuclear sentiment in the South would likely re-emerge. Calls for collective action, including a referendum on nuclear armament, would likely grow stronger among South Koreans. If such a series of events were to happen in the period leading up to the next U.S. presidential election—and were U.S. politics to tilt toward Trump's views on foreign policy—the Korean people would question the reliability of U.S. extended deterrence. Indeed, *Chosun Ilbo* has already questioned the durability of American security commitments, pointing to Washington's inaction in the military crises in Ukraine and Syria. The country's most influential conservative newspaper opined that in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack against South Korea, "the U.S. would respond only after Seoul has been turned into a pile of smoldering ashes."³¹

To assuage South Korean concerns, Washington should start seeking new methods of reassuring Seoul that its security commitments are solid. Existing methods, including temporarily dispatching strategic assets to South Korea combined with Seoul's official position of "unwavering confidence" in the U.S. nuclear umbrella, have become less and less effective in addressing ROK concerns. One reassuring measure that

Washington could immediately take is, as Admiral Dennis Blair stated, to make an authoritative statement that warns Pyongyang of the military realities it faces: “It would be suicidal for the Kim regime to initiate either a major conventional attack across the DMZ or to use any kind of weapon of mass destruction against the Republic of Korea.”³²

The permanent deployment of U.S. strategic submarines in the waters near the Korean Peninsula is another option suggested by some South Korean experts for the U.S. to lend credibility to its security guarantees.³³ They argue that even an announcement of such a deployment would produce a potent psychological effect, reinforcing the credibility of the U.S. nuclear umbrella.³⁴ While this option does have the political value of providing an extra measure of assurance to the ROK, it is not very compatible with President Obama’s aspiration of “a world without nuclear weapons.” It also fails to address the fundamental problems described above regarding the redeployment of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons. Some suggest an alternative that maintains the prohibitions on South Korea’s independent nuclear armament while allowing the deployment of U.S. nuclear weapons onto the Peninsula until the North Korean nuclear problem is solved. Arguments for the redeployment of U.S. nuclear weapons will keep resurfacing as the North Korean nuclear threat continues to grow.

Seoul and the ruling Saenuri Party should make a combined effort to marginalize pro-nuclear views in the ROK through a rigorous information campaign that drives home the point that South Korean nuclear armament will only justify North Korea’s nuclear development. Meanwhile, South Korea has to reinforce its non-nuclear conventional military forces, including its precision striking warfare capabilities and missile defense in alliance with the U.S. In addition, when the time is right, Seoul must begin to consider the resumption of long-term diplomatic efforts for a comprehensive security settlement with North Korea. In the end, this is the ultimate solution to the frustration over North Korea’s growing nuclear threat.

North Korea’s Fourth Nuclear Test and Debate on THAAD Deployment

Seoul’s Decision on THAAD Deployment

South Korea’s military strategy against the North Korean missile threat has been centered on the Korean Air and Missile Defense

(KAMD) system. The KAMD, created in 2006, was developed solely to protect South Korea and therefore aimed at defeating North Korea's lower-altitude short-range Scud missiles. The ROK has been reluctant to join the U.S.-led regional missile defense plan, expressing concerns that the U.S.-developed THAAD and SM-3 systems, designed to provide upper-tier protection, are beyond its needs.³⁵ Instead, South Korea has been using its indigenous technology to develop its own THAAD alternative: long-range surface-to-air missiles, which are due for deployment after 2020.

In 2014, the ROK Defense Ministry acknowledged that South Korea's missile defense system was not able to intercept the North's mid-range Nodong missiles. In March of that year, North Korea test-fired two Nodong missiles at a higher than usual launch angle in order to shorten their maximum range. Seoul believed this tactic was intended to evade South Korea's existing missile defense capabilities. According to Defense Ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok, "The Nodong missiles flew at altitudes of more than 160 kilometers and with a top speed of over Mach 7.0. In that case, it is not easy for PAC-3 missiles to shoot them down."³⁶ However, referring to the uncertainty surrounding Pyongyang's capability to develop nuclear-tipped Nodong missiles, the spokesman reaffirmed Seoul's earlier stance that it will not purchase the U.S.-made THAAD battery.

In spite of the Park government's reluctance, the U.S. military did not hide its hope that South Korea would join the U.S. and Japanese missile defense networks with its THAAD system. On top of that, Seoul suggested it would allow United States Forces Korea (USFK) to deploy its own THAAD battery and requested information on THAAD from the U.S. in 2013. This led to serious debates within South Korea over the wisdom and utility of a USFK THAAD deployment. In the face of this major controversy, Seoul's consistent position was the "3 No's": (1) no request from the U.S., (2) no consultation with the U.S., therefore, and (3) no decision made on THAAD deployment. Seoul's strategic ambiguity was intended to avoid alienating neighboring countries, including China, which strongly opposed the deployment.

Seoul no longer maintained its strategic ambiguity and revealed its preference for THAAD after North Korea's fourth nuclear test and subsequent launch of a long-range rocket in early 2016. One week after the nuclear test, President Park said, "[t]aking the North's nuclear and missile threats into consideration, I will review the issue of deploying

THAAD here based on security and national interests.”³⁷ Immediately after North Korea’s long-range rocket launch on February 7, 2016, South Korea and the United States made an official announcement that the two allies had agreed to begin negotiations for the “earliest possible” deployment of THAAD to counter North Korea’s emerging missile threats. In March, Seoul started formal talks with Washington, focusing on the feasibility of a possible THAAD deployment.³⁸ After North Korea’s seemingly successful test-fire of Musudan mobile intermediate-range missiles in late June, Defense Minister Han Min-koo justified continued interest in THAAD, based on the system’s perceived ability to intercept Musudan missiles.³⁹ On July 8, the two allies made a final decision to deploy THAAD on the Korean Peninsula. Less than one week later, the Park government announced that THAAD would be deployed to the southeastern county of Seongju.

Seoul’s interest in THAAD deployment was aimed at countering the North’s evolving missile threats and was meant to be a strong signal to China that Seoul will take necessary measures to defend itself, even if Beijing does not approve such defense measures. The Park government also seemed to believe that THAAD deployment could lead to greater Chinese pressure on North Korea to curb its nuclear and missile threats; the best way to halt a THAAD deployment is to stop North Korea’s missile and nuclear programs. In part, Seoul’s decision was also based on President Park’s deep frustration that close ties with China—the “best-ever national ties in history,” as President Xi Jin Ping put it—had failed to result in any willingness by China to apply more pressure on North Korea in the aftermath of its fourth nuclear test. President Park has tried hard to woo Chinese support in reigning in North Korea, and has even risked displeasing Washington by attending a military parade commemorating the end of World War II in Beijing last year. During that time, there were even controversies over the possibility of Seoul tilting toward China at the expense of its relations with the U.S. With all the goodwill demonstrated by President Park, President Xi remained unresponsive to Park’s public appeal until China agreed on tougher UN sanctions on North Korea nearly two months after the nuclear test.⁴⁰

THAAD Deployment and Security Anxiety

Since the Park government’s departure from its strategic ambiguity on THAAD deployment following North Korea’s fourth nuclear test, the issue has returned to the forefront of public debate in the ROK. Liberal,

and even some centrist conservative newspapers, politicians, scholars, commentators, and civic organizations have fiercely disagreed with the assertion that THAAD is indispensable for the security of the country. Considering the technical specifications of THAAD and the geographic features of the Korean Peninsula, they claim THAAD is of little military utility for defending South Korea from North Korean missile attacks. This position is reinforced by the belief that North Korea is likely to employ short-range missiles in an attack against the South, which THAAD is not designed to protect against. THAAD has limited effectiveness against North Korea's accurate Multiple Launch Rocket System weapons, which are a cheaper alternative to more expensive ballistic missiles. In addition, THAAD is only useful for protecting very limited area. One THAAD battery has 48 interceptors, whereas North Korea has around 1,000 missiles available for attacking South Korea. The missile shield cannot work effectively if North Korea launches decoy missiles with conventional warheads. More critically, intercepting the North's incoming missiles might not be technically feasible since it takes only a few minutes for the missiles to reach Seoul and it may be difficult to coordinate a THAAD response in a timely manner.⁴¹

Opponents of THAAD point to the enormous costs associated with its deployment. Operating a single THAAD battery is estimated to cost at least \$1 billion. Even if the current discussions between Seoul and Washington are about defending USFK, South Korea will have to provide a base to support THAAD deployment, and bear the expenses to expropriate the land in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement. Particularly, civic groups, politicians, and the residents of Seongju are concerned about the health implications of the THAAD radar system's electromagnetic waves. These health concerns have led to fierce protests against THAAD's deployment. Protesters have strongly expressed their opposition, including hunger strikes and even pelting Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn with eggs and water bottles.

It is notable that THAAD opponents emphasize the potential "security anxiety" that would result from Chinese and Russian opposition that they claim would be associated with THAAD deployment. They argue that THAAD deployment is an invitation for diplomatic troubles with China and Russia, given that the two powers perceive THAAD deployment as a security threat.⁴² Indeed, the Chinese ambassador to South Korea, Qiu Guohong, warned that THAAD deployment could "destroy" PRC-ROK bilateral relations "in an

instant.”⁴³ From the opposition’s point of view, THAAD deployment will create a situation in which South Korea is “dipping its feet in the nuclear game between superpowers on the U.S. side”⁴⁴ and supporting U.S.-led efforts to contain China. In February, Lee Jong-geol, then-floor leader of the main opposition Minju Party, claimed, “[i]f China and Russia come to hate South Korea after THAAD deployment, North Korea would diplomatically come closer to China and Russia. This would in turn escalate regional tensions and endanger peace on the Korean Peninsula.”⁴⁵

Opponents are concerned that the geopolitical developments triggered by THAAD deployment will lead to a new Cold War in the region with China, Russia, and North Korea on one side and the U.S., Japan, and South Korea on the other side, hurling the ROK into the center of the Sino-American rivalry. Kim Heung-kyu, director of the China Policy Institute at South Korea’s Ajou University, argues, “[s]hould the discussions on the deployment make progress, peninsular situations would be dictated by the U.S.’ position, and South Korea would be forced to absorb China’s (negative) response on its own.”⁴⁶ The concern of some opponents goes so far as to include the possibility of the ROK becoming China’s strategic strike target. A regional arms race is another potential concern. To compensate for their downgraded missile capabilities, China, Russia, and North Korea may try to acquire more missiles to overwhelm THAAD. In this situation, China may appreciate the strategic value of North Korea in its rivalry with the U.S. and be less motivated to curb North’s nuclear and missile development.

China has indicated that the ROK will have to pay a price for THAAD deployment. Given the fact that China is the ROK’s largest trading partner, many South Koreans are worried that China might retaliate against the ROK economically, including the banning certain imports from the ROK similar to the so-called “garlic trade dispute” in 2000.⁴⁷ However, China may be cautious in taking these kinds of extreme measures against the ROK in order to avoid creating a catastrophic break in relations. Nonetheless, China still holds cards that could negatively impact the South Korean economy, including discouraging Chinese tourists from visiting South Korea and imposing punitive regulations on South Korean companies in China. More seriously, China could reinforce its air defense network capability and deploy additional military forces near the Sino-DPRK border in response to the deployment of THAAD.⁴⁸ Symbolic Chinese moves in the airspace

over disputed waters are also possible reactions to THAAD. Ieo Island which lies within the Korean Air Defense Identification Zone (KADIZ) but is also claimed by China, is a likely target of such actions.

National Assembly Election and Beyond

Until recently, THAAD has not evoked the same level of response as in the past. Seoul has kept a low profile during talks with Washington on the feasibility of THAAD deployment. After the summit meeting between Presidents Park and Xi on March 31, 2016 the Blue House explained the two leaders discussed the possible deployment of THAAD and agreed to “continue communications in the future.”⁴⁹ This was interpreted as Seoul indicating its willingness to consider Chinese concerns about THAAD deployment and to forgo expediting its negotiations with Washington. In its editorial, *Donga Ilbo*, a major conservative newspaper in South Korea, criticized this approach, noting that every time the U.S. brought up THAAD in public since the start of official talks, South Korea has quickly made clear their disinterest in discussing it.⁵⁰

Of particular note, all major political parties restrained from discussing THAAD during the period leading up to the National Assembly election in April 13. None of them referred to the issue of THAAD deployment in their campaign pledges, even though it was one of the most contentious security issues facing the country. The ruling Saenuri Party appeared to have concluded that becoming enmeshed in the growing controversy surrounding the issue—especially the fierce opposition within the party’s political strongholds of Daegu and Pyeongtaek that were rumored to be potential candidates for THAAD—would not be of help in the election. The major opposition Minjoo Party, led by emergency committee chairperson Kim Chong-in, tried to be ambiguous on THAAD, while calling for a “cool assessment” of its deployment. Their election strategy seemed to stem from a longstanding belief that security issues only help the conservatives in the election. The People’s Party tried to avoid any controversy by emphasizing the importance of a popular consensus on THAAD through public discussion.⁵¹

Although security issues did not draw much attention during the National Assembly election campaign, growing nuclear and missile threats from North Korea are likely to be one of the most contentious issues in the period leading up to the presidential election in December

2017. Indeed, emboldened by so-called *yosoyadae* (ruling minority and opposition majority) at the National Assembly, the opposition parties aggressively questioned the prudence of the Park government's decision to deploy THAAD. The Minjoo Party proposed setting up a special National Assembly committee to investigate the planned THAAD deployment, while the People's Party called on the government to gain the National Assembly's ratification before agreeing to THAAD's deployment. These proposed measures underscored the opposition parties' perceived need to seek public understanding about this controversial issue prior to THAAD's deployment.

However, the opposition parties will need to exercise caution so as not to become entrapped by the THAAD controversy. This is especially true since the National Assembly election proved the decisive power of reform-minded centrist voters that caused the ruling conservative Saenuri Party to lose its majority, which led to a three-party system for the first time in 20 years. It is not surprising that Kim Chong-in, the interim leader of the Minjoo Party, remained relatively neutral regarding the deployment, though this neutral position drew criticism from within his own party. In that sense, the centrist People's Party's then-leader Ahn Cheol-soo's remarks are worth reviewing:

It's extremely dangerous for Korea to be overly biased in its diplomatic relations with the nations around it at this historical moment. I am certain that the alliance with the United States will be the basis for our policies going forward. At the same time, it is a reality that China has become Korea's biggest trading partner and that China can play a critical diplomatic role in resolving the problems with North Korea. In diplomacy it is essential that we maintain harmonious [*gyunhyeong*] and stable relations with both nations.⁵²

With no majority party in the National Assembly, the South Korean political landscape has become very fluid, giving the People's Party a casting vote. The limited successes of opposition leaders in the election, combined with the ruling party's defeat, have left no clear frontrunner for the 2017 presidential election. This could create room for a centrist coalition, either between parties or like-minded politicians from both conservative and liberal blocs. It remains to be seen whether a reshaping of the political landscape or a policy coalition will be feasible scenarios.

Depending on future political developments, Seoul's stance on THAAD deployment could change slightly, either before or especially after the presidential election in December 2017. An increasing disinterest in THAAD deployment would generate waves of controversy and ideological debate within South Korea and a serious reassessment of the new U.S. administration's policy regarding the Korean Peninsula. However, one near certainty is that while South Korea will place its alliance with the U.S. at the center of its foreign policy, it will continue to refuse to choose between China and the U.S.

Conclusion

North Korea's fourth nuclear test provided the U.S.-ROK alliance with both opportunities and challenges. The two allies responded to North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations with strong coordinated measures including tougher U.N. sanctions, which put significant economic pressure on the regime, as well as an official move for the deployment of THAAD to South Korea. However, North Korea's fourth nuclear test rekindled calls by conservatives in the ROK for South Korea's own independent nuclear arsenal as they questioned the reliability of U.S. extended deterrence. The challenges to the U.S.-ROK alliance sparked by North Korea's nuclear test came not only from conservatives, but also from the liberals' fierce criticism of the Park government's departure from its strategic ambiguity on THAAD deployment. Opponents of THAAD emphasized the potential "security anxiety" associated with THAAD deployment. They argue this security anxiety will escalate regional tensions and introduce a new Cold War, endangering peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The future of the U.S.-ROK alliance will be largely influenced by the kind of measures taken by the two allies to address the above concerns from both conservatives and liberals in South Korea. It is noteworthy that the pro-nuclear view is mainly driven by feelings of profound frustration and helplessness over North Korea's growing nuclear threat. Barring a significant breakthrough in the North Korean nuclear problem, this frustration is likely to continue unabated. Such a breakthrough will ultimately require the resumption of long-term diplomatic efforts towards a comprehensive security settlement with North Korea. Meanwhile, Washington should start seeking new methods of reassuring its South Korean ally of its intention to honor its security commitments.

The future of the THAAD controversy depends on the South Korean

political landscape, which became very fluid after the National Assembly election in April of this year. As the Presidential election of 2017 draws close, THAAD has become a political hot potato with the potential to entrap major presidential candidates in a difficult policy position. To avoid any backlash, the candidates will have to take a middle road and refuse to choose between China and the U.S., while continuing to place the alliance with the U.S. at the center of South Korea's foreign policy. South Korean politicians may want to delay the actual deployment of the THAAD system as long as possible in order to give the U.S. and China enough time to come up with a mutually beneficial security arrangement of the security of Northeast Asia.

Notes:

¹ Richard Nephew, "UN Security Council's New Sanctions on the DPRK," *38 North*, March 2, 2016, <http://38north.org/2016/03/rnephew030216>.

² "S. Korea, U.S. to kick off largest-ever joint exercise," *Yonhap News*, March 6, 2016.

³ David Sanger and Choe Sang-hun, "As North Korea's Nuclear Program Advances, U.S. Strategy is Tested," *New York Times*, May 6, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/07/world/asia/north-korea-nuclear-us-strategy.html?_r=0.

⁴ Yeo Jun-suk, "Calls Resurface for Nuclear Armament," *The Korea Herald*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160107001041>

⁵ Ser Myo-ja and Jeong Yong-soo, "Calls Grow for Nuclear Weapons in the South," *JoongAng Ilbo*, January 8, 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/Article.aspx?aid=3013677>.

⁶ "Ruling Party's Floor Leader Calls for Nuclear Armament," *Yonhap News*, February 15, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/02/15/0301000000AEN20160215002500315.html>.

⁷ "Ruling Party Policy Chief Calls for Nuke Capability," *Yonhap News*, February 17, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/02/18/50/0301000000AEN20160218005000315F.html>.

⁸ "S. Koreans Must Discuss Acquiring Nuclear Arms," *Chosun Ilbo*, January 28, 2016, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/01/28/2016012801950.html.

⁹ Kim Jin-ho, "Gun Wonrodeuleun Haekmujang Gongronhwareul Wonhanda" 군원로들은 핵무장 공론화를 원한다 [Senior Military Veterans Want a Public Discussion of Nuclear Armament], *Chosun Ilbo*, February 22, 2016, http://premium.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/02/22/2016022200391.html?Dep0=twitter. See also Chung Mong-joon, "Fighting Fire with Nuclear Fire," *JoongAng Ilbo*, February 15, 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3015074>; Kim Tae-

woo, "It's Time to Revise South Korea-U.S. Alliance," *The Korea Herald*, March 9, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160309001023>.

¹⁰ Park Ju-min, "Calls in South Korea for Nuclear Weapons as Parliamentary Poll Looms," *Reuters*, February 15, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-satellite-southkorea-polit-idUSKCN0VOOU4>.

¹¹ Peter Hayes and Moon Chung-in, "Should South Korea Go Nuclear, Redux?" *East Asia Foundation*, February 19, 2016,

https://www.globalasia.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=forum&wr_id=9197&sca=Global+Asia+Forum.

¹² "Debate Heats up over S. Korea's Nuclear Armament," *Yonhap News*, February 26, 2016,

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/02/26/0301000000AEN20160226003151315.html>; Mark Fitzpatrick, "Why South Korea Should Not Go Nuclear," *The Korea Herald*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160219000241>;

Peter Hayes and Moon Chung-in, "Should South Korea Go Nuclear, Redux?" *East Asia Foundation*, February 19, 2016,

https://www.globalasia.org/bbs/board.php?bo_table=forum&wr_id=9197&sca=Global+Asia+Forum; Troy Stangarone, "Going Nuclear Wouldn't Be Easy for South Korea," *The National Interest*, February 29, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/going-nuclear-wouldnt-be-easy-south-korea-15345>.

¹³ Among them, Chung Mong-joon, the former leader of the Saenuri Party, has been the leading proponent of South Korea's development of a nuclear weapons program. Chung said, "The Americans don't feel the North Korean nuclear weapons as a direct threat. At a time of crisis, we are not 100 percent sure whether the Americans will cover us with its nuclear umbrella." See Martin Fackler and Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Flirts with Nuclear Ideas As North Blusters," *New York Times*, March 11, 2013,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/11/world/asia/as-north-korea-blusters-south-breaks-taboo-on-nuclear-talk.html>. See also Mark Hibbs, "MJ, the 123, and the SLA," *Arms Control Wonk*, April 14, 2013, <http://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/1101650/mj-the-123-and-the-iaea/>.

¹⁴ Lee Seok-su, "The Future of Extended Deterrence: A South Korean Perspective," *Perspectives on Extended Deterrence* (Paris, France: Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, 2010), 47-57.

¹⁵ The politicians who did not make public statement this time are likely to simply choose not to do so while retaining the same view. See Toby Dalton, Byun Sung-gee, and Lee Sang-tae, "South Korea Debates Nuclear Options," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 27, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/27/south-korea-debates-nuclear-options-pub-63455>.

¹⁶ "Yeo Jidobu Jache Haek Mujangron Jegi" 여 지도부 자체 핵무장론 제기 [The Ruling Party's Leadership Raised the Need for Self-nuclear Armament], *Yonhap News*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2016/01/07/0200000000AKR20160107063200001.HTML?f67bcc50>.

¹⁷ Toby Dalton, Byun Sung-gee, and Lee Sang-tae, "South Korea Debates Nuclear Options," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 27, 2016,

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/27/south-korea-debates-nuclear-options-pub-63455>.

¹⁸ “Daebuk Jeonmunga Geurupseodo Haekmujangron...Jeongseongjang ‘Silboda Deuki Manda’” 대북 전문가 그룹서도 핵무장론...정성장 “실보다 득이 많다” [Voice for Nuclear Armament Comes from Even North Korea Experts Group: Cheong Seong-chang “More Benefits Than Losses from Going Nuclear”], *Yonhap News*, January 12, 2016, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2016/01/12/0200000000AKR20160112077000014.HTML>; “N.K. Nuke Test Sparks Debate on S. Korea Nuke Armament,” *Yonhap News*, January 13, 2016.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Choe Sang-hun, “After Tests in the North, Conservatives in South Korea Call for a Nuclear Program,” *New York Times*, February 19, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/20/world/asia/south-korea-nuclear-program-north.html>. For the transcript in Korean of President Park’s news conference on January 13, 2016, see <http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/politics/bluehouse/725976.html>.

²¹ “Gimmuseong, Wonyucheol ‘Haekmujangrone “Gaein Saenggak” Seongeueo” 김무성, 원유철 ‘핵무장론’에 “개인 생각” 선그어 [Kim Moo-sung Says Won’s Nuclear Armament Argument is His “Personal Opinion”], *Yonhap News*, February 15, 2016, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2016/02/15/0200000000AKR20160215185500001.HTML?input=1195m>; “Chinbak Yunsanghyeon, Jache Haekmujang Jeongmal Seoppureun Pandan” 친박 윤상현, 자체 핵무장 정말 설부른 판단 [Pro-Park Yoon Sang-hyun, ‘Independent Nuclear Armament is Careless Judgment’], *Chosun Ilbo*, January 7, 2016, http://news.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/01/07/2016010702630.html.

²² Toby Dalton, Byun Sung-gee, and Lee Sang-tae, “South Korea Debates Nuclear Options,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 27, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/27/south-korea-debates-nuclear-options-pub-63455>.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ “Yeo Jidobu Jache Haekmujangron Jegi”여 지도부 자체 핵무장론 제기 [The Ruling Party’s Leadership Raised the Need for Self-nuclear Armament], *Yonhap News*, January 7, 2016, <http://www.yonhapnews.co.kr/bulletin/2016/01/07/0200000000AKR20160107063200001.HTML?f67bcc50>.

²⁵ In contrast, the February 2013 nuclear test by the North was done after Park Geun-hye won a landslide victory at the presidential election in December 2012. This partly explains why the conservatives’ response to North Korea’s third nuclear test was relatively toned down.

²⁶ The ROK Foreign Ministry also dismissed the calls for nuclear armament as “a sense of frustration among experts in terms of how to respond” to North Korea’s fourth nuclear tests. See “S. Korea Rejects Calls for Nuclear Armament,” *Yonhap News*, February 23, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/02/23/79/0301000000AEN20160223008300315F.html>.

²⁷ Chung Mong-joon, “Fighting Fire with Nuclear Fire,” *JoongAng Ilbo*, February 15, 2016, <http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=3015074>

-
- ²⁸ Toby Dalton, Byun Sung-gee, and Lee Sang-tae, "South Korea Debates Nuclear Options," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, April 27, 2016, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/27/south-korea-debates-nuclear-options-pub-63455>.
- ²⁹ Song Sang-ho, "Debate Heats up over S. Korea's Nuclear Armament," *Yonhap News*, February 26, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/02/26/0301000000AEN20160226003151315.html>.
- ³⁰ "Amid public fear, more calls for South Korea's nuclear armament," *Hankyoreh*, September 14, 2016.
- ³¹ "S. Koreans Must Discuss Acquiring Nuclear Arms," *Chosun Ilbo*, January 28, 2016, http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/01/28/2016012801950.html.
- ³² Dennis Blair and Masayuki Hironaka, "The North Korean Nuclear Test and the US-Japan Alliance," *Diplomat*, January 24, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-north-korean-hydrogen-bomb-test-and-the-us-japan-alliance/>.
- ³³ Kim Tae-woo, "It's Time to Revise South Korea-U.S. Alliance," *The Korea Herald*, March 9, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160309001023>.
- ³⁴ "Haekmujangroneui Jachungsu Jeonsijakjeontongjegwon" 핵무장론의 자충수 전시작전통제권 [Nuclear Armament Undermines Op-Con Transfer], *Weekly Donga*, February 24, 2016, <http://weekly.donga.com/Main/3/all/11/526120/1>.
- ³⁵ "Acquiring SM-3 Missiles Not an Option for S. Korea: Defense Ministry," *Yonhap News*, May 26, 2014, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2014/05/26/32/0301000000AEN20140526006400315F.html>.
- ³⁶ "NK's March Missile Test Aimed at Evading Interceptor Systems: Sources," *Yonhap News*, June 19, 2014, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/full/2014/06/19/98/1200000000AEN20140619004600315F.html>.
- ³⁷ Kang Seung-woo, "Park Hints at THAAD Deployment," *The Korea Times*, January 13, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/01/116_195361.html.
- ³⁸ "S. Korea, U.S. Launch Formal Talks on Deploying THAAD in Korea," *Yonhap News*, March 4, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/03/04/0301000000AEN20160304003200315.html>.
- ³⁹ "THAAD Seen as Capable of Intercepting N.K. Mid-range Missile: Defense Minister," *Yonhap News*, June 24, 2016, <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/national/2016/06/24/49/0301000000AEN20160624007351315F.html>.
- ⁴⁰ For President Xi's strategic calculus, see Lee Seong-hyon, "Why Xi Jinping Didn't Answer Park's Call?" *The Korea Times*, February 2, 2016, http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/opinion/2016/02/197_197434.html.
- ⁴¹ Moon Chung-in, "THAAD isn't Answer to Seoul's Anxiety," *Global Times*, May 28, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/924200.shtml>. For detailed technical discussions for and against THAAD deployment to South Korea, see Bruce Klingner, "South Korea Needs THAAD Missile Defense," *The Heritage Foundation* (Backgrounder, No. 3024), June 12, 2015,

<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2015/06/south-korea-needs-thaad-missile-defense>; and Park Hyun, "US Experts Questions THAAD's Ability to Intercept North Korean Missiles," *Hankyoreh*, June 25, 2016,

http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/697543.html.

⁴² For criticism of Chinese concerns, see Bruce Bennett, "THAAD's Effect on South Korea's Neighbors," *The Rand Blog*, April 5, 2016,

<http://www.rand.org/blog/2016/04/the-effect-on-south-koreas-neighbors.html>.

⁴³ Choe Sang-hun, "South Korea Tells China Not to Intervene in Missile-Defense System Talks," *New York Times*, February 24, 2016,

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/25/world/asia/south-north-korea-us-missile-defense-thaad-china.html>.

⁴⁴ Yu Shin-mo, "Allowing THAAD in Korea is the Same as Diving into the Nuclear Game of Superpowers," *The Kyunghyang Shinmun*, February 2, 2016,

http://english.khan.co.kr/khan_art_view.html?code=710100&artid=201602021749447.

⁴⁵ "[jonggeol 'Jeongbu Jochi Eoltteolteol' ... Wonyucheol 'Bukpungnonran Neomu Hwangdang'" 이종걸·정부조치얼떨떨'... 원유철 "북풍논란 너무 황당" [Lee Jong-geol, "Bewildering Government's Steps"... Won Yoo-chul, "Ridiculous *Buk-poong* Argument"] *Kukmin Ilbo*, February 14, 2016,

<http://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0010352875&code=61111111&sid1=all>.

⁴⁶ Song Sang-ho, "South Korea Divided over THAAD," *The Korea Herald*, February 10, 2016, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160210000280>.

⁴⁷ Don Kirk, "Just a Little Garlic Overpowers Asian Trade Ties," *New York Times*, July 8, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/07/08/news/08iht-garlic.2.t.html>.

⁴⁸ Kim Heung-kyu, "The International Politics of THAAD and the Direction of South Korea's Diplomacy," *IFES Issues and Analysis*, No. 40, March 28, 2016,

http://ifes.kyungnam.ac.kr/eng/FRM/FRM_0401V.aspx?code=FRM160328_0001.

⁴⁹ "Park Discusses U.S. missile Defense System with Xi," *Yonhap News*, March 31, 2016,

<http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/northkorea/2016/04/01/0401000000AEN20160401006700315.html>.

⁵⁰ "Sadeu Noko Jungguk Nunchiboda Hanmidongmaeng Gyunyel Choraehalgeonga"

사드 놓고 중국 눈치보다 한미동맹 균열 초래할건가 [Will China's Eye on THAAD Lead to a Crack in the US-ROK Alliance?], *Donga Ilbo*, June 6, 2016,

<http://news.donga.com/List/ColumnSasul/3/040109/20160605/78510367/1#>.

⁵¹ Kim Jin-cheol, "Parties' Unification, Security and Foreign Affairs Platforms for General Elections," *Hankyoreh*, April 10, 2016,

http://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_national/738992.html.

⁵² Emanuel Pastreich, "The Bernie Sanders of Korea? An Interview with Ahn Cheol-soo," *Huffington Post*, February 11, 2016, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/emanuel-pastreich/the-bernie-sanders-of-kor_b_9211944.html.