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Master's Thesis of International Studies

The ROK-US Alliance Game under the Moon-Trump Administration:

Overcoming Crisis through Enhancing Bargaining Power

문재인-트럼프 행정부와 한미동맹의 동맹게임:
협상력 강화를 통한 위기 극복을 중심으로

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Abstract

In an attempt to answer the question of how the ROK-US alliance withstood the turbulent times of the Moon-Trump administration, this paper focuses on South Korea's success in playing the alliance game. In more detail, the paper examines how South Korea, despite the strong pressure it was facing from the United States, pursued the agenda of increasing its leverage within the alliance by managing its levels of dependence and commitment.

During the Moon-Trump administration, the ROK-US alliance suffered a wide array of conflicts that were based on having different interests and perspectives. One explicit example of such discrepancy was how former President Trump perceived the alliance between the United States and South Korea as a mere transactional relationship under the concept of the 'America First' policy. This was translated into the Trump administration, in an effort to maximize its gains from the alliance, pushing hard for increased levels of commitment from South Korea to tackle not only the North Korean issue but also the containment of China. For South Korea, this meant facing the danger of entrapment in siding with the United States in the power struggle against China while also being threatened with the risk of abandonment if it did not meet the requested levels of commitment; both of which, were not acceptable outcomes.

In such a difficult situation presenting various types of risks and uncertainties, the paper explains how South Korea was successful in managing the

challenges it faced by utilizing the framework of Glenn Snyder's Bargaining Power Index. South Korea's management of the fear of abandonment and entrapment while resisting the request of its stronger ally within the alliance for increased commitment is analyzed and explained through the lens of interest, dependence, and commitment. The paper proposes that South Korea, even in an asymmetric alliance dynamic with the United States, pursued the decrease in dependence levels, managed to resist the request for increased levels of commitment, and established its goals based on the priority of its interests. The conclusion is that such actions displayed by Seoul increased the bargaining power it had against Washington, which in the end, led to the successful maintenance of the alliance in times of severe conflict.

In sum, the significance of the paper lies in how it studies the asymmetric alliance from the weaker state's perspective. The conclusion that the dynamic within the alliance can change according to the level of bargaining power a state has on a certain agenda and that bargaining power can affect the decision and outcome of the alliance can be applied to other states that are in similar situations. In other words, as East Asia becomes more contended for power, this study's research on how weak states can increase their leverage in order to ensure their survival and maintain alliances under volatile security situations is becoming increasingly pivotal.

Keywords: ROK-US Alliance, Moon-Trump Administration, Abandonment, Entrapment, Alliance Management, Alliance Dilemma, Bargaining Power

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Chapter I. Introduction

The state of anarchy, or the absence of a higher power that regulates international order, generates fear in the minds of the states that reside within the international community as they cannot be sure of other states' intentions or their own survivability. In this situation where Mearsheimer (2006) illustrates that "it is better to be Godzilla than Bambi", states have searched for diverse methods of alleviating the fear of various threats (162). This paper focuses on one of the most useful methods that states have utilized and still continue to do so: alliances. Alliances have proved to be useful for many states by preventing them from becoming helpless Bambis while fending off Godzillas. It has also provided member states with added capabilities in diverse fields ranging from diplomacy to economy and security. As time went on, however, the relationship within such alliances has been questioned as states found themselves in different conditions in comparison to the time of forming their alliances. In other words, the issue of alliance management began to rise.

An intra-alliance struggle that illustrates this management situation well is the relationship between the Republic of Korea and the United States. Similar to the case mentioned above, the ROK-US alliance also faced many problems both internal and external throughout the years due to the change in its surrounding situations. On the outside, while the Cold War was over, the power struggle between the United States and China, a rising power, was becoming fiercer in both the fields of security and economy. Meanwhile, North Korea continued to pose a serious threat to the

alliance with enhanced missile firing and nuclear capabilities. Internally, the threat assessment and the policies to treat such threats were becoming less aligned between the ROK and the US as their interests and priorities shifted. This problem took a serious turn as the alliance found itself under intense tension during the Moon-Trump administration. While it experienced disagreement and conflict across the areas of strategy, threat assessment, and national interest, it also faced the chronic problems that asymmetric alliances possess. Such differences had many scholars worried about the possibility of the ROK-US alliance weakening and even a possible collapse of the alliance (Snyder 2016; Klingner, Pak, and Terry 2019). How President Trump indicated that he would end the alliance when reelected through the book written by Leonnig and Rucker shows how serious the conflict was and could have been (Byun 2021). Interestingly, however, the alliance still stands to this day displaying its ‘ironclad’ relationship while playing an essential role in maintaining the peace and security of the Korean Peninsula.

The initial question of this paper stems from this oddity: *what managed to keep the ROK-US alliance intact and prevent its collapse?* To answer this question, the paper focuses on the perspective of the weaker state in the asymmetric alliance and narrows down the question to how South Korea, amidst a tense intra-alliance struggle, ensured its survivability through alliance management. The strategy South Korea utilized in order to increase its bargaining power to maintain the role of the alliance is regarded as the reason why the ROK-US alliance could have survived the difficult times. The paper will utilize the concept introduced by Glenn Snyder to explain how South Korea successfully managed the alliance. In the following chapters, the background of the ROK-US alliance and its asymmetric characteristics

will be examined while the literature on the origin of the problems during the Moon-Trump administration as well as the reason behind the alliance's survival will be covered. Under this review, the policies and strategies enacted by South Korea will be studied to present how its actions resulted in the enhancement of its bargaining power and resisted the United States' efforts to expand the scope of the alliance.

The topic that is being dealt with in this paper is becoming more relevant as the area of East Asia continues to become increasingly contested for control. The rise of China in conflict with America's focus in the region is presenting multiple foreign policy issues among the East Asian states. Therefore, the study of the dynamic among alliances will prove to be useful as many states will be caught in between the conflict of superpowers. Understanding how South Korea managed to gain more leverage within the alliance will set the foundation for not only South Korea's future plans and course of action but also that of the so-called middle powers in East Asia. Furthermore, as alliance theory is dominantly understood under the conditions that either predate or is during the age of American Hegemony, it is now more important than ever to reassess the dynamics and development of alliances as the American Hegemony faces a strong contender in East Asia due to the rise of China.

In sum, the purpose of this study is to understand how South Korea, despite its relatively limited capabilities, managed to keep the alliance from neither collapsing nor becoming overly demanding. It is a study of the modern-day intra-alliance dynamic in order to fill the gap within the literature in identifying how weaker states within asymmetric alliances persevere under changing security conditions. In other words, by studying one of the most fragile periods of the ROK-

US alliance, this paper aims to present the strength the weaker ally displayed in surviving such dangers to provide the direction that the alliance should take in the future.

Chapter II. Background

1. Defining the ROK-US Alliance

It is said that in order to treat a problem, it is important to correctly diagnose and recognize the issue at hand. Under this idea, the core of the problem in understanding the ROK-US alliance's troubles during the Moon-Trump administration lies in the characteristics of the alliance itself. The ROK-US alliance can be understood under the following definition that Glenn Snyder (1997) provides: "alliances are formal associations of states for the use (or nonuse) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership" (4). First of all, the ROK-US alliance fits well under the definition provided by Snyder as the alliance was formed under the formal agreement of the Mutual Defense Treaty which was signed by the two states and came into effect in November of 1954. The ROK-US alliance can be differentiated from a more loosely tied concept of alignments as "alignments reflect similarity in interest without the formal mutual commitment present in an alliance" (Morrow 1991, 906). In other words, the formation of the ROK-US alliance was under strict conditions that formally promised mutual commitment.

Secondly, the foundation of the alliance and its focus on security-related matters was evidently shown in the treaty which states that in case one of the parties is under threat, the other would come to provide support and protection. As it is said that alliances rarely form where security benefits are not involved, the ROK-US

alliance was not an exception as the two parties had clear security-related motives to form the alliance (Altfeld 1984). In the process of forming the alliance, the security motive of South Korea was survival. The security situation that South Korea faced during the time of the formation of the alliance called for a strong alliance which can be explained as an “explicit defense commitment...that involves a positive security guarantee or a promise of military assistance in case a country is attacked” (Tertrais 2022, 2). For the United States, on the other hand, the alliance meant that it had the legitimacy to have a military presence inside the Korean Peninsula and intervene in any future aggression within the South Korean territory which was of important value in pursuing the agenda of containing communist forces that the United States saw as a security threat.

Lastly, the alliance was built to protect itself from a clear adversary although each member state had different assessments regarding the extent of the threat as mentioned above. The conceptualization of the adversary in this case presents an interesting discrepancy between the member states in perceiving the alliance’s need for formation. South Korea was acting on Walt’s ‘Balance of Threat’ theory. The presence of North Korea was threatening to South Korea at the time of the formation as it was considerably more powerful than, adjacent to, and had aggressive intentions toward South Korea (Walt 1985). On the side of the United States, it was acting on the concept of the Balance of Power theory presented by Morgenthau. As Morgenthau (1948) saw alliances necessary for the balance of power, the United States, under the situation of the Cold War, had the goal of balancing against the Soviet Union and other communist states.

Thus, the definition of the alliance provided by Snyder successfully captures

the nature of the ROK-US alliance under the notions of how it was a formal association, focused on security matters, and was set to treat an adversary outside of its membership. These characteristics, however, fail to encompass the different interests and motives the states within the alliance have, as mentioned above. Thus, it is important to examine how dissimilar the alliance member states are instead of how closely their interests align. In other words, by looking at the intra-alliance relations, rather than the adversary, the ROK-US alliance and its problems can be better understood. This is especially important as the alliance during the Moon-Trump Administration the source of the problem was generated on the inside, rather than the outside, of the alliance.

2. The Asymmetric Alliance and its Characteristics

2.1. Autonomy-Security Trade-Off

From the beginning, the ROK-US alliance has been asymmetric. Morrow (1991) asserts that “in an asymmetric alliance, the stronger partner gains autonomy and provides security to the lesser partner” (930). This is repeated by Lee (2016) when he explains that asymmetry in intra-alliance relations refers to a situation where the correlation between security and autonomy is clear. Morrow (1991) further describes that unlike the capability aggregation model, where all of the members of the alliance receive benefits in terms of security, the asymmetric model is where “one partner receives autonomy benefits, and the other, security benefits from the alliance” (904). More specifically, autonomy refers to having the power to decide one’s own policies and actions as Park and Chun (2015) write that “autonomy

is more related to the independence of policy formulation of the state” (46). Security, on the other hand, is heavily reliant on the security-related situations that a state is placed in as “if a state borders a threatening state, the security level will be higher than a state that borders a calm and peaceful state” (Park and Chun 2015, 46). The autonomy-security trade-off can be understood as a situation where one partially surrenders the full control of its own policies in order to manage the security threat at hand which acts as a reason for the formation of asymmetric alliances.

As the ROK-US alliance shows a clear autonomy-security trade-off, the ROK-US alliance can be categorized as an asymmetric alliance (Han and Ha 2008). This further explains the discrepancies described in the section above in how the interests behind the formation of the alliance were different for each state. For South Korea, survivability and defense against North Korea were of the highest priority. Jung (2013) explains that the Republic of Korea had no choice but to form the alliance as the United States was the only partner that could guarantee its survivability due to the lack of power it possessed. On the other hand, for the United States, the projection of its powers and the containment of adversarial states was important. Morrow (1991) explains the behavior that the United States displayed as a “strategy for extending hegemony through the network of asymmetric alliances that it established after World War II” (930).

The two different objectives and goals for each of the states resulted in having to make a difficult decision between security and autonomy. For South Korea, compromising its autonomy was inevitable as it had no other means of achieving enough security to ensure its survival. This can be seen through how the South Korean president during the outbreak of the Korean War, Rhee Syng-man,

transferred its operational control over the military forces to the United States. By giving up control of its own military, South Korea gained an ally strong enough to defend its territory. For the United States, the goal was to utilize the autonomy that South Korea gave up to not only have a military presence in East Asia but also keep South Korea from needlessly creating conflict. Meanwhile, the United States had to increase its commitment by providing security-related resources to South Korea. In the modern-day ROK-US alliance, the dilemma between security and autonomy became a bigger issue as the dynamic between the autonomy-security trade-off has changed to a situation where it is more difficult to identify the adversary and how to divide the cost and benefits.

It must be noted here that the autonomy-security trade-off has much more significance to the weaker state within the alliance. Park (2016) goes as far as to say that the deciding factor in the strength and cohesion of an asymmetric alliance is related to how willing it is to sacrifice its autonomy. This is especially true as the security situation at the time of the formation of the ROK-US alliance was much more threatening to South Korea which made it more desperate and reliant on the formation of the alliance. As Morrow (1991) claims that because major states “have no overriding interest to raise either autonomy or security” and they “will not be driven to pursue exclusively autonomy or security in their alliances,” there is a clear difference in the level of necessity and reliance on the alliance from the two states (913). This does not mean, however, that the weaker state does not yearn for more autonomy. In fact, the case of South Korea shows multiple historical incidents that sought increased autonomy. All in all, this autonomy-security trade-off has been a problem that South Korea traditionally had significant interest and concern about

within the alliance.

2.2. Abandonment and Entrapment Dilemma

Another important problem that stems from the asymmetric condition of the alliance is the abandonment-entrapment dilemma. It refers to situations where 1) a state fears that its ally will abandon them and no longer provide support and 2) how a state is afraid of being dragged into a conflict it does not wish to be in due to the alliance. In this situation that Snyder (1990) calls ‘alliance security dilemma’, the important variable to the ally fearing abandonment is how dependent that ally is on the alliance. The fear of entrapment, on the other hand, is described as a fear that relies heavily on whether or not the interests are shared among alliance members. In sum, Snyder describes this balancing of the fear of abandonment and entrapment as a “continuous bargaining process in which the members seek to maximize their alliance benefits while minimizing their risks and costs” (Snyder 1990, 113).

The ROK-US alliance, as Chun (2000) describes, suffered the struggle of the abandonment-entrapment dilemma in the sense that it started with the United States having “virtually no need to worry for the US to be abandoned” (83). In line with how the problem of the autonomy-security trade-off had an imbalanced meaning to each of the member states, it can be considered to be a similar situation when it comes to the dilemma between abandonment and entrapment within the ROK-US alliance. In this case, it was South Korea that feared the United States would abandon them while entrapment was of more concern to the United States. The process of creating the Mutual Defense Treaty and the overall process of the

alliance formation was self-evident in displaying the different positions the two states had in terms of abandonment and entrapment dilemma. South Korea wanted to bind the United States into being committed to providing support in case of any contingencies. The United States, on the other hand, did not wish to be engulfed in a conflict that it was not interested in. This conflict of interests can be well seen in the following article of the Mutual Defense Treaty.

Article III	Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the Parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the Parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.
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Table 1. Article III of the Mutual Defense Treaty

The article well displays the fundamental interests and fears of the ROK-US alliance during its formation as the United States' promise of coming to aid South Korea in case of an attack by an adversary alleviates the fear of abandonment for Seoul while having to abide by the constitutional process reduces the fear of entrapment for Washington.

The ROK-US alliance today is also heavily affected by the dilemma between abandonment and entrapment. The security situation within the alliance is similar in comparison to the end of the Korean War as the United States is still the strongest military power in the world taking the role of an indispensable ally to South Korea.

Meanwhile, South Korea still has North Korea as a threatening adversary that is both adjacent and unpredictable. Thus, abandonment by Washington remains a big fear Seoul has yet to overcome. The fear of entrapment by the United States still remains a serious problem as North Korea has increased its capabilities in firing its missiles. This means that to the United States, the risk it takes by being committed to the alliance means endangering not only the military personnel stationed in South Korea but also the possibility of a missile attack on the mainland United States.

Meanwhile, the issue of abandonment and entrapment has been highlighted, more so recently, in opposite fields as well. The fear of entrapment that South Korea has exists in being pulled into unwanted conflicts with the United States' adversaries. Interestingly, the United States, although to a lesser degree, faces the fear of abandonment on the same issue as Oh and Chun (2021) explain that the Moon administration's establishment of positive relations with North Korea and China further developed the fear of abandonment within the United States. As one state cannot be completely certain of the actions its ally will take, the fear of entrapment can be considered as big an issue as abandonment. Indeed, the fear of abandonment and entrapment can be somewhat managed through the cooperation of the two states in the alliance. Cooperation in terms of a general assessment of the adversary and aligning the policies against it can reduce the fear stemming from the aforementioned uncertainty (Lee 2016). However, as the dilemma is deeply rooted in the alliance, it can always reach the surface again and threaten the member states.

In sum, the intra-alliance relations of asymmetric alliances are heavily reliant on the factors of autonomy-security trade-off and abandonment-entrapment dilemma. As the ROK-US alliance is innately asymmetric, these issues are problems

that cannot be completely resolved. After the end of the Cold War, alliances, including the one between the ROK and the US, have gone through inevitable change. Weaker states in an asymmetric alliance are very reliant on the changing security situations within the international community while also being heavily affected by the stronger state's strategies, pressures, and national interests (Jung 2013). Under such a situation, the important question to answer is the following: *why has this become more severe after decades of maintaining the alliance?* The following chapter will assess the literature in identifying the problems the ROK-US alliance faced during the Moon-Trump administration and how the alliance maintained its survivability to answer the question above.

Chapter III. Literature Review

1. The Origin of the Moon-Trump Alliance Issues

The ROK-US alliance during the Moon-Trump Administration brought back the chronic problems of asymmetric alliances on a new security backdrop. Generally, the alliance overall was seen to be faltering in terms of cooperation while its capabilities were assessed to be weakened. While Walt (1997) points to factors such as the changing perceptions of threat, credibility, and domestic politics for the deterioration of alliance relations in general, Fuchs and Lee (2020) claim that “over the past four years, U.S. President Donald Trump’s disdain for the U.S.-South Korea alliance has undermined the partnership, causing a wide gap in trust between the two sides” (3). Meanwhile, Yeo (2022), explains that the turbulence the alliance went through was due to the “increasing US-China competition and Trump’s dismissive views of alliances”, the actual relationship between the two countries did not deteriorate to the extent that was initially expected (12). Terry assesses the Moon-Trump administration period more harshly in claiming that “like a long-term marriage, the alliance is likely to survive, but South Korea’s trust in the United States has been so badly shaken that the relationship may never be the same” (Terry 2020). This shows that while the assessment of the degree of tension between the member states differed, there is a shared consensus on how the alliance experienced issues that in a significant manner, compromised the capabilities of the alliance.

In identifying the origin of the problems the alliance experienced, it is useful

to merge the different perspectives utilized in analyzing the alliance's struggles. First of all, and interestingly, the ROK-US alliance was frequently analyzed through the lens of the individuals that led the two states within the alliances. In order to do this, the perspectives, political beliefs, and overall leadership of presidents Moon and Trump were closely observed to understand their effect on the alliance. Second, the intra-alliance relations and the nature of the asymmetric alliances were used as a means of analysis. Multiple works of literature look at how each of the administrations based their policies on the innate dilemmas of asymmetric alliances. Third, the alliance issues were seen through the lens of a systemic level. This analysis refers to the change of the international system especially after the end of the Cold War. It is closely related to how the influence of the United States changed in the world while also looking at the rise of China as an important factor in creating the change the alliance went through in its relations with the security environment in East Asia. The following sections, thus, review the existing literature in order to identify the origin of the issues the ROK-US alliance experienced during the Moon-Trump administration.

1.1. The Individual Factor

As mentioned above, multiple analyses of the personalities and individual perspectives of the presidents have been conducted. For example, Yoon (2020) focuses on the individual level in analyzing the origins of the troubles the alliance went through. While claiming that the “international political order affects the nature of the security partnerships”, Yoon stresses that the leadership of the president is an

important factor that is relevant to the equation (31). In the study, it is mentioned that “during the Moon-Trump Administration, the ROK-US security alliance was significantly affected due to...peculiar leadership of the presidents” (45). The claim refers to how the alliance relations were affected by the nature of leadership and the policies that the individuals made as opposed to the individuals merely playing a role of representing the government’s actions. This claim implies that the individual differences and discrepancies the alliance had were what caused the alliance to falter.

Meanwhile, in regard to the conservative Trump administration, Park (2021) notes that the individual aspect of President Trump and his unique style of leadership must be analyzed in order to fully understand the ROK-US alliance. In this study, Park goes on to claim that “the reason behind the instability of the ROK-US alliance was due to how [President Trump] did not understand the importance of the alliance” (Park 2021, 113). Park’s claim is that President Trump’s personal views on the value of the alliance in accordance with his ‘America First’ policy provided the grounds for the problems within the alliance. For the Moon administration, widely understood as progressive in character, the president’s personal ties to the former Kim and Roh administrations in its peaceful and cooperative North Korea policies were noted. As the two predecessors also experienced signs of conflict and disagreements with the United States in regard to their North Korean policies, the Moon administration’s vow to follow in their footsteps was bound to create noise within the alliance. Furthermore, Yoon (2020) notes that “the discrepancy between the two leaders were more noticeable after 2019 in terms of values and national interests” as the Moon administration distanced itself from the United States’ active policies (44). The tendency that President Moon had in identifying North Korea and China as less of a

direct adversary created a situation where the United States was now uncertain about how its ally would act; providing the basis for the decrease in trust.

The idea of analyzing the conflict the ROK-US alliance experienced through the lens of the individual is helpful to some degree. It is especially an attractive solution in understanding the alliance as the two figures were vastly different in assessing the adversary and conducting their policies accordingly due to their personal views or personal political ties. However, it is difficult to analyze the ROK-US alliance conflict from only this perspective. Kih (2021) mentions that while “it cannot be denied that political leadership can play a large part in shaping their strategic behavior, given that both alliances have experienced discord under their presidency,” it is difficult to rely just on the individual aspect for accurate analysis as “it is questionable to assume if the aspects of their recent puzzling behavior could be fully accounted for on the basis of a single factor” (558). It is also difficult to fully understand the alliance troubles just through the lens of the personal conservative-progressive ideologies and parties the administrations were associated with. Yeo (2022) mentions that “the flexibility of the ROK-US alliance goes beyond common security interests and shared threat perceptions that will inevitably deviate from administration to administration” (10). In sum, while it is important to note how each of the administrations within the alliance was different in their personalities, characteristics, and perspectives, it cannot be said that the discrepancies in the leadership alone can be seen as the most essential factor in understanding the alliance.

1.2. The Intra-Alliance Factor

One of the biggest reasons behind the conflict of the ROK-US alliance

during the Moon-Trump administration was due to the intra-alliance factor and how it saw the chronic problems of the asymmetric alliance relations revisit the alliance. The first and biggest point that spurred the range of problems was in relation to the autonomy-security trade-off and the dilemma of abandonment and entrapment. Thus, the study on the topic of these issues was widely studied (Ahn 2018; Kim 2020; Park and Seol 2017; Park 2021; Yang 2021). Here, some looked at the issue of the United States aggressively pushing the burden-sharing agenda as the main problem that troubled the alliance, while others saw the source of conflict in the United States' push for more commitment against South Korea's resistance. In sum, the issues that the authors dealt with were claimed to have been rooted in the intra-alliance conflict in the form of a struggle to secure more autonomy within the alliance.

More specifically, scholars such as Kim (2020) claim that the cause of the conflict was how "the reduction in asymmetry has complicated the alliance's cost-benefit calculation and the security-autonomy trade off" (50). This means that the asymmetric relations between the alliance have changed since the time of its formation in regard to national interests and capabilities. Han and Ha (2008), on this topic, provide two reasons for how asymmetric alliances may falter over time. The first reason is that the conflict of pursuing national interests between the two states, especially on the notion of autonomy and security, becomes more severe. As one state tries to maximize the benefits that it reaps from the alliance, the other ally is put in a situation where its costs lead to smaller gains. In the context of the ROK-US alliance, Han and Ha (2008) expand this idea on the factors of threat assessment and conflict in regard to autonomy. They propose that the discrepancy of the states in analyzing how threatening North Korea is can lead to problems within the alliance.

It can be said that this conflict was shown during the Moon-Trump administration period as the two states identified and assessed their threats in a different light as well as determining how to approach the threat. The Moon administration framed North Korea as less of an enemy but a partner to work with through peaceful talks and negotiations. On the other hand, the Trump administration, now facing a North Korea capable of creating nuclear weapons and firing missiles at mainland America, wanted to pursue a so-called big deal by maximizing their pressure and engagement. This can be considered a change in the threat perception and national interest that the two states had that is different from the time of the formation of the alliance. Another issue that the two states' perceptions differed on was relatively a newer issue of the rise of China. One saw it as a contender and a revisionist while the other saw it as a strong economic partner that was not to be treated in an offensive way. This shows how the two administrations and their different national interests as well as their threat perceptions can cause the alliance to weaken due to having different agendas while presenting a basis for a change in the asymmetric relationship.

Another reason given by Han and Ha (2008) is that the weaker state of the alliance becomes more capable over time. If the weaker state invests in its arms, the motivation to continue the alliance becomes weaker which, if the stronger state fails to compromise its stance against its ally, could lead to the weakening of the alliance. Regarding this point, Pollack and Cha (1995) claim that one important change the ROK-US alliance went through since its formation was how "the ROK is no longer a vulnerable and underdeveloped society, and the overall power balance on the peninsula continues to shift in the ROK's favor" (xiv). This was especially true during the Moon-Trump administration as South Korea's military and economic

capabilities were considerably more capable in comparison with that of North Korea. Looking at the Global Firepower Index in how South Korea was placed in 7th place while North Korea was in 18th place supports the claims mentioned above. The increased military capability of the weaker ally makes it less attractive for the weaker ally to give up more of its autonomy for security as it is more and more able to provide security for itself; thus changing the asymmetric dynamic. Pollack and Cha (1995) go as far as to say that “the region as a whole has experienced sustained economic and political development, transforming highly dependent relationships between the United States and its regional allies into much more symmetrical and balanced ones” (xiv). This change can be exemplified through incidents that scholars like Kim (2016) claim in how the increased military capability can open the possibility of South Korea pursuing the transfer of wartime operational control which has been an important point in South Korea’s attempt to increase its autonomy during the Moon administration.

To sum up, the factor of intra-alliance relations is useful in understanding the conflict the alliance went through. While the individual factor has variables and components that are not obvious or clearly visible, the notion of the autonomy-security trade-off with the dilemma of abandonment and entrapment can be observed with actual policies that were executed. Especially during the Moon-Trump administration, such policies directly showed their intentions in whether they wanted to pursue increased autonomy by threatening to abandon their ally or wanted to resist the pressure from the other party by decreasing their commitment and dependence. Thus, the change in the level of asymmetry in regard to the changing conditions of national interest and capabilities will prove to be useful in realizing the reason for

conflict.

1.3. The International Systemic Factor

The last factor that scholars point to in the origin of asymmetrical alliance problems is the international systemic factor. Here, the international relations of each state in regard to the rest of the world are observed. To start, Jung (2012) points to American unipolarity as the cause of the change of asymmetric alliances after the end of the Cold War. As the security-related conditions, including major threats to alliances, have changed, Jung claims that the United States has been freer to choose its alliance policies. This leads to the United States asking more from its allies if they wish to prolong the alliance as the United States is less dependent on the alliances it had created before it was the unipole. Jung (2012) also asserts that because the ROK-US alliance has not been able to adapt to the new security situations, it has faced the deterioration of its institutions. On a similar note, Pollack and Cha (1995) claim that the major change the alliance saw since its formation was how the Soviet Union fell apart and that this led to the termination of the bipolar conditions between the United States and the Soviet Union.

While the idea by Jung, Pollack, and Cha in how the United States' change of international status changed to being the unipole led to the weaker cohesion of the alliance may be true to some aspect, it was no longer the case during the Moon-Trump administration period. The opposite was true because America, at least in the area of East Asia, was facing a similar situation to that of the Cold War in how it was facing a formidable contender threatening its hegemonic influence in the region.

Thus, while the strengthening of the United States as the unipole in the international community may have been a cause for the United States to devalue the importance of its allies, the weakening of its status and the rise of a contender created other, more complex problems instead of naturally leading to a stronger alliance. For the ROK-US alliance, some scholars claim that it was actually this weakening of the ally as a hegemonic power that led to the conflict the alliance faced. Port (2020) claims that “there is a view among many observers in Washington that if Seoul veers too closely to Beijing, that would weaken the U.S. posture vis-à-vis China, raising fears that Beijing could exploit potential divergences between the views of South Korea and those of the United States” (48). In addition, scholars such as Yoo (2020) claim that in the situation where the United States sees China as a revisionist while South Korea treats it as a trade partner, the actions of the Moon administration can be understood as shifting the focal point of its foreign relations toward China rather than the United States. Thus, with these types of literature, it is hard to see a consistent trend in the alliance dynamics as having a substantial threat to the alliance does not necessarily mean that the alliance relations are strengthened and the change in the status of the stronger ally does not immediately lead to weakening of the alliance. In the end, it can be said that there are more complex factors when it comes to identifying the reason for intra-alliance conflicts.

2. How the Asymmetric Alliance Survived

Despite how the alliance faced many problems originating from multiple factors, it managed to survive the Moon-Trump administration period. As to how the

alliance achieved doing so, scholars provide different reasons. In a general sense, Walt (1997) points to factors such as hegemonic leadership, credibility, domestic politics, institutionalization, and ideological solidarity as reasons why alliances avoid collapse. In another aspect, Jung (2013) points to several reasons why the alliance continued to exist. First, the claim is that the ROK-US alliance did not lose its original function in comparison to when it was formed. He asserts that the major threat to the alliance at the time of its formation was North Korea and still remains to be North Korea. In other words, to the alliance, the threat North Korea poses has increased, if not the same, which gives enough reason for the alliance to maintain itself. Second, ROK lacks the capabilities to replace the vacuum created by the United States as a balancer. As China rises as a superpower in East Asia, South Korea not only lacks enough material resources to balance against China but also its relations with Japan prevent cooperation in the form of an alliance. Last, because ROK is still heavily reliant on the United States for both economic cooperation and the provision of security, it is extremely difficult for South Korea to abandon the alliance.

The three points suggested by Jung in how North Korea is still a significant threat, how ROK lacks the capabilities to replace the United States in East Asia, and how ROK still relies on the United States were still very relevant during the Moon-Trump administration period. However, although North Korea was still a big danger to South Korea, its threat perceptions were changing amidst its increasing capabilities. Also, South Korea's reliance on the United States was becoming more of a problem as South Korea's capabilities were increasing while the United States wanted increased commitment. Thus, the aforementioned reasons why the alliance

could have survived were actually the points that the alliance problems began as there were major discrepancies in terms of costs and benefit to the new security situations presented.

Meanwhile, Park (2021) points to the role of nuclear weapons possessed by North Korea as the main reason why the alliance survived. He claims that “because the North Korean nuclear weapons and its level of threat was so severe that even the United States could not compromise the ROK-US Alliance to a significant degree” (170). The idea here is that, despite the conflict the two states went through in terms of burden sharing, the threat of withdrawing United States forces in Korea, and the real-world problems OPCON transfer may bring, the alliance still had the mutual goal of keeping the North Korean threat of nuclear strikes at bay.

The solution presented by Park in how the North Korean nuclear weapons were what held the alliance together is partially true. The existence of North Korean nuclear weapons is of significant danger to both South Korea and the United States as its use would bring a devastating effect. However, it is difficult to see that the nuclear weapons were what held the alliance together through the hardships as the issue of nuclear weapons was the point where the two states had the biggest differences in terms of interests. The two states saw the threat in a different light, had different measures that they wanted to use in denuclearization, and ultimately had separate meetings with North Korea to alleviate the problem. In a situation where the two leaders could not trust one another nor fully foresee their intentions, it was difficult for them to expect the other to be responsible or committed to the cause.

Furthermore, there are scholars that suggest the reason that the alliance still exists today is because of the incentives both states have. For instance, Min (2017)

suggests that the goal of the United States in containing China and maintaining its role in East Asia will hold the alliance together. While he does mention the difference between the two states in assessing the issue of burden sharing and North Korean denuclearization could lead to a conflict, Min asserts that the two alliances are facing the same direction in terms of general strategies in East Asia. Likewise, Snyder (2012) claims that “despite South Korea’s relative rise in power vis-à-vis North Korea, the rise of China-led regional economic integration, and the development of complex economic interdependence between the United States and China, the United States and South Korea are retaining, revitalizing, and promising to expand the dimensions of cooperation within the US-ROK security alliance” (1).

Similar to the factors mentioned above, what was thought to be the reason for the alliance to persevere through the difficult times was what the two states saw as conflict. Perhaps, the most troublesome aspect of the maintenance of the alliance was the China issue for the Moon-Trump administration. While it is true that the United States was concerned about a rising China and wanted to contain its expanding influence, South Korea had quite a different idea as it saw more risk in the United States’ active policies to contain the rise of China. In other words, Washington’s vigorous request for South Korea to join its efforts to maintain peace and stability by identifying China as a threat to the objective was what created the alliance dissonance in the first place. Thus, in a similar context with the North Korean nuclear weapons, the issue of containing China was another point that the Moon-Trump administration had disagreements on, rather than being a strong incentive for the two states to maintain their alliances.

In sum, the main points that are covered by the current literature on the topic

of how the ROK-US alliance survived focus on the issues that actually acted as the foundation for disagreements. These issues of the North Korean nuclear weapons and the rise of China, as well as the incentives the alliance brought to both South Korea and the United States, were actually points of conflict as the two states did not see eye to eye on these matters. Thus, it is important to see how the two countries set out their policies in relation to these matters and how the alliance managed the problems of tearing the alliance apart.

Chapter IV. Theoretical Framework:

Snyder's Bargaining Power Index

In understanding and correctly analyzing the policies South Korea and the United States utilized, it is important to first establish the theoretical framework through which the policies are examined. In this paper, the main framework will be the Bargaining Power Index presented by Glenn Snyder and its relations with the alliance dilemmas mentioned above. Snyder and Diesing (1977) define bargaining power as the “political power held and exercised bilaterally” or the “capacity to achieve results” (189). In addition, it is explained by Snyder that “risk-tolerance and risk-generation capacity together amount to bargaining power” (Snyder 1984, 176). Thus, the higher bargaining power a state possesses, the freer it is to pursue its own goals against risk.

The reason for utilizing this framework to explain the issue the ROK-US alliance faced is because of the nature of the conflict itself. This paper assumes that the troubles the two countries experienced were deeply rooted in intra-alliance relations rather than being driven by changes in external factors. Also, the research focuses on the asymmetric nature of the ROK-US alliance and how the Moon-Trump administration struggled in the fields of autonomy and security as well as abandonment and entrapment. Under such conditions, as bargaining power can be a useful tool in explaining what kind of leverage a state within an alliance has in its tolerance of the possibility of abandonment and entrapment in relation to achieving

its goal of ensuring autonomy and security, the framework was seen as an adequate tool.

The next question is then the following: what are the deciding factors for increasing one's bargaining power? This is answered in Snyder's book *Alliance Politics* with the factors of interest, dependence, and commitment. First of all, dependence is explained as the need a state has towards the total sum of benefits that it receives from its partner in comparison to other alternative sources. Here, the notion of military dependence is emphasized as being a pivotal benefit that a state receives. On this topic, Snyder (1984) explains that a state is more dependent on its ally if the state's need for military support is strong and does not have other methods of acquiring that support. The dependence is also strong if that ally is capable of reaching the level of support. Within an alliance, as Snyder mentions that "dependence implies vulnerability," the more dependent ally is at a relative disadvantage in terms of bargaining power (Snyder 1997, 168).

Another factor, commitment, is "an arrangement of values that disposes one to act in a certain way" (Snyder 1997, 168). Snyder explains that like dependence, commitment also binds a state against its ally and weakens bargaining power as there are fewer options for the state to execute. In terms of commitment, two factors of verbal recognition and interests are introduced. In other words, states within an alliance will have a higher level of commitment if the state is bound by an agreement that leads to moral and legal obligations while its own strategic interests in upholding the obligation to protect its ally also leads to motives for increased commitment. On this topic, Snyder (1984) adds how "a strategy of strong commitment and support will have the undesired effect of reducing one's bargaining leverage over the ally"

(467). On the other hand, the bargaining power of an ally will be stronger if commitment is weak or ambiguous.

The last factor in determining a state's bargaining power in an alliance is interest. The common interest of an alliance is to keep the adversary in check. While the alliance has this common interest, the states within an alliance will have differing thoughts on how to treat the issues it faces and how to distribute the benefits and costs in doing so. Snyder (1997) introduces the ideas of "relative military contributions, ...diplomatic stance toward the adversary in a crisis, [and] ...military action" to explain the dimensions that alliances can have conflicts about and how this can affect the states' bargaining power. Snyder further explains that "the protagonists threaten to harm each other on the dimension of common interest in order to get their way on the dimension of conflict" (Snyder 1997, 171).

In short, "the interest component of the index reflects what a party stands to gain by standing firm, and the dependence and commitment factors represent what it stands to lose" (Snyder 1997, 175). The degree of dependence, commitment, and interest is translated into bargaining power, which again is translated into how the alliance plays its alliance game in regard to the autonomy-security trade-off and abandonment-entrapment dilemma. One interesting notion that Snyder adds to these factors is that assessment of the other party's dependence, commitment, and interest relies on perception. This makes a full circle back to the idea of anarchy in which states cannot be certain of other states' intentions. Thus, the alliance game is played by states whose decision is based on hypotheses at best.

Utilizing the concept mentioned above, the following simple table will be utilized to analyze the bargaining power of the two countries within the alliance in

accordance with their policies.

	Interests	Dependence	Commitment
High	3	1	1
Moderate	2	2	2
Low	1	3	3

Table 2. Alliance Bargaining Power Categories (Snyder 1997)

This table shows that a state with high interest, low dependence, and low commitment would have the highest possible bargaining power by scoring nine and would have an advantage in bargaining in the alliance. On the other hand, a state with low interest, high dependence, and high commitment would have the lowest bargaining power by scoring three, and would place the state in a difficult situation. The score that a state has on the alliance refers to “a party’s tolerance for risk, that is, its willingness to stand firm on its own demands at the risk of no agreement and possibly alliance collapse” (Snyder 1997, 175). For the purpose of this paper, the levels of interest, dependence, and commitment will be measured for South Korea for both the threats of North Korea and China which will later be added for the calculation of the total bargaining power.

For the estimation of each of the levels and their bargaining power, the following factors were considered. First of all, the level of interest, as mentioned above, will depend on how much a state is willing to lose in order to achieve a certain objective. In other words, even when a state relatively has a low level of dependence

and commitment, it can still have enough bargaining power if it has high levels of interest and is willing to risk what it is currently gaining from the alliance. Second, the level of dependence will be calculated on the factors of an ally's need for military assistance, how much an ally fills this requirement, and the alternatives an ally has in replacing the requirement. Therefore, if a state has low levels of the need for military assistance, doubts on if the ally will fill this requirement, or has strong alternatives in meeting such needs, their level of dependence is low. Third, in terms of commitment, the level of bargaining power will be measured by how much each state has positioned itself in supporting the other ally. Thus, if the promise of support is vague and negative, the level of commitment will be set as low; while a strong promise of support will lead to higher levels of commitment.

One shortcoming with this type of analysis is that the quantification of the figures is an estimate at best and that the measurement does not have an objective standard to base its estimates upon. However, the change of direction in a state's policy in each category of interest, dependence, and commitment can be compared to its former policies as it faces new challenges and requests. In the case of the ROK-US alliance, it can be useful to understand how the pressure from the United States under the Trump administration changed the policy of South Korea in each category and how this affected the dynamic within the alliance. Another interesting point that can be seen through utilizing this theoretical framework is in understanding how perspectives can affect intra-alliance dynamics. As states cannot be certain of the goals and motives of their allies, the way that a state positions itself in relation to its ally can have a bigger influence in comparison with its intentions or capabilities. In the end, the analysis through the tool of the bargaining power index can be useful in

how it categorizes the policies enacted by South Korea under the Moon administration and how it positioned itself against the United States. Through this analysis, the paper seeks to understand what South Korea was aiming to achieve and what it was willing to give up; or in other words, how it was portraying itself within the intra-alliance relationship.

In sum, the purpose of utilizing the theoretical framework presented by Snyder is in identifying the bargaining power South Korea had and how it managed to increase it in comparison to the United States in order to treat the challenges that were exacerbated during the Moon-Trump administration. The categorization of the bargaining power into the fields of interest, dependence, and commitment and the concept that higher levels of interest and lower levels of dependence and commitment will prove to be useful in understanding the policies that South Korea chose to enact in treating the abandonment-entrapment issue as well as the autonomy-security dilemma.

Chapter V: Analysis of ROK-US Policies and South Korea's Bargaining Power

1. US Foreign and Alliance Policy

1.1. America First Policy

The most important concept that guided President Trump's strategies and policies while serving the role as the basis for the ROK-US alliance conflict was the America First policy. Min (2017) claims that this policy can be understood as an effort to increase efficiency in the field of diplomacy and security while also promoting economic nationalism. In other words, it can be said that President Trump's intention was to maximize the United States' benefits while minimizing its losses. The concept of this kind of foreign policy was already foreshadowed during the interview Maggie Haberman and David E. Sanger of the *New York Times* conducted with President Trump when he was the Republican presidential candidate. During the interview, President Trump mentioned that "at some point, there is going to be a point at which we just can't do this anymore" while asserting that the United States can no longer "be the policeman of the world" (New York Times 2016).

Moreover, this concept was also applied to alliance relations as President Trump explains how the relations America had with its allies have not been lucrative and that if allies like South Korea and Japan do not increase their contributions, he would withdraw the American troops from the alliance territories (New York Times

2016). This can be understood that President Trump saw America's alliance relationships as a serious loss in its interest and that the threat the United States was facing was actually a competition between it and its allies (Kim 2018; Yoo 2020). The cases of how President Trump, during his inauguration speech, claimed that America has "subsidized the armies of other countries while allowing for the very sad depletion of [its] military" and that it has "defended other nations' borders while refusing to defend [its] own, [spending] trillions and trillions of dollars overseas" or how the president asserted during the speech to Congress that the alliances of the United States should "take a direct and meaningful role in both strategic and military operations, and pay their fair share of the cost" presented an increased level of fear for its allies in that the United States had actual intentions of taking action against its allies if its expectations were not met (Trump 2017a; 2017b).

Throughout his term, President Trump did actually show multiple examples of withdrawing from the role it once had in being engaged deeply in international cooperation if it did not match the goal of increasing the United States' interests. For example, the United States under the Trump administration executed the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Paris Agreement, and the United Nations Human Rights Council, and deployed military forces in Syria. In sum, while President Trump's actions were not necessarily isolationist in nature, it was very much focused on protecting its own resources and interests regardless of what the United States had established in the political, diplomatic, or historical field which sent a strong negative message to its allies (Dombrowski and Reich 2017; Min 2017).

1.2. Looking to Reinforce the Alliance

In terms of the ROK-US alliance, the Trump administration's America First policy meant the United States' reassessment of the value of the alliance and applying pressure in the areas that it perceived as a loss. This policy led to fierce negotiations on the topic of burden sharing in the Trump administration requesting that South Korea raises its level of commitment. As the Trump administration mentioned the withdrawal of military forces in case the requests of the United States were not met, South Korea was facing the fear of abandonment which was an innate fear that had been troublesome since the formation of the ROK-US alliance. Moreover, the Trump administration also showed how it perceived the alliance through actions such as putting a stop to the ROK-US combined exercises without South Korea's consent or excluding South Korea in the talks with North Korea on denuclearization (Park 2021). These actions displayed how the Trump administration was looking at the alliance as a transactional relationship and identified South Korea as more of a free rider in the security realm rather than a security partner in East Asia. From President Trump's perspective, thus, South Korea had to provide more to prove its worth of the security benefits it receives from the alliance which leads to the following point.

The United States' view of the alliance was very much related to how it saw the security conditions of East Asia and especially the rise of China. In the report titled *United States Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China* that the United States released in 2020, it is written that America's aim in dealing with the China issue, while reprimanding the recent Chinese behavior in harming American interest, is to "(1) protect the American people, homeland, and way of life; (2)

promote American prosperity; (3) preserve peace through strength; and (4) advance American influence” (U.S. Department of Defense 2020). While the document shows an idea that is consistent with the America First policy on the outside, it actually shows how it categorizes China. Kowalski (2021) points to how the Trump administration saw China “not only as a great-power rival, but also as a fundamental systemic threat to the rule-based order and democratic bloc to which the US is making an appeal” (256). Thus, to achieve this goal of keeping its rival in check and containing its rise in influence, the United States chose to include alliances in the picture. It is written that “our competitive approach to the PRC has two objectives: first, to improve the resiliency of our institutions, alliances, and partnerships to prevail against the challenges the PRC presents; and second, to compel Beijing to cease or reduce actions harmful to the United States’ vital, national interests and those of our allies and partners (U.S. Department of Defense 2020). This statement shows how the United States sought to utilize its alliances in an effort to push its East Asian agenda and as a means to maintain its influence in the region.

Other evidence that the United States was trying to fortify its alliance with South Korea to involve it to join the cause of containing China was shown through how the United States wanted South Korea to do the following tasks: “opposing more explicitly China’s military intimidation of Taiwan; associating more thoroughly with the Quad...; deepening security cooperation with Japan; and an additional deployment of...THAAD” (Lee and Shidore 2022, 5). Thus, it can be said that for South Korea, the fear of entrapment, more so than the fear of abandonment, was building as the United States chose to apply more pressure to the alliance. It can also be understood that the movement of the Trump administration in hard bargaining to

increase South Korea's share of the burden and frame South Korea as a free rider was a pressure not to distance itself from South Korea but to increase and force its alignment in terms of national interests. In other words, the underlying motive of the United States' push for commitment was to have South Korea play the role of containing China.

2. ROK Foreign and Alliance Policy

The type of policy that the Moon administration pursued conflicted directly with what the Trump administration had as an agenda. Through what Yoo (2020) calls a 'balanced diplomacy', the Moon administration attempted to find a stable balance between the United States and China. For South Korea and the Moon administration, the issue of being a state caught between the two superpowers of the United States and China was not a new concept. However, it had become an increasingly difficult problem during the Moon-Trump administration period as South Korea had suffered economic retaliation by placing THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) in South Korean territory while the Trump administration seemed to be determined to pressure its alliances for more commitment. Therefore, among such convoluted security environments, the Moon administration was focused on avoiding the possibility of putting itself into difficult situations with any of its neighbors. President Moon set the tone with the inauguration speech by stating that "I will...ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula through a Northeast Asia peace regime" (Moon 2017). Under this notion of peace and alleviating tension, he mentioned that he will have negotiations "with the U.S. and China to resolve the

Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile system issue” which indicates that South Korea would work hard not to have any of the two countries as enemies (Moon 2017).

In other words, the strategy that the Moon administration pursued was being balanced between the superpowers while trying to manage its relations with both North Korea and China in order to avoid any aggression toward South Korea. It placed itself in a strategically ambiguous position that presented itself as a strong ally of the United States while promising that South Korea will not participate in increased security cooperation with the United States to China. Until the very end of the administration, President Moon was determined to come to an agreement on declaring the end of war with North Korea, while working hard throughout the presidency to maintain a peaceful mood with the northern neighbor. This, however, conflicted with America’s goals and interests as aforementioned. It refrained from giving more support to the United States in terms of security cooperation as it could not risk China becoming its adversary. Thus, it clashed with the burden-sharing negotiations it had with the United States to an unprecedented level which in turn dropped the level of trust and support that the South Korean citizens had for the alliance. In sum, it can be said that the clash between the two countries, at least on the outside level, was caused first due to how the United States pursued the agenda of reevaluating its alliances in a transactional aspect and pushing the agenda of expanding the purpose of the ROK-US alliance into serving the role of containing China. The conflict was developed as South Korea was unwilling to give in to the United States’ request for increased commitment to the alliance or taking the role of containing China. The following chapter will look at how South Korea was

successful in fending off these requests by increasing its bargaining power and standing firm to its own position in maintaining the status quo.

3. South Korea's Bargaining Power Analysis

South Korea's goal was to resist the United States' call for increased commitment and the expansion of the alliance in containing China. It was a difficult situation as South Korea had to battle the issue of resisting entrapment as well as treating the fear of abandonment. Looking at the history of the alliance dynamic, South Korea did not have a lot of choices in terms of its actions as it was always very dependent on the support of America to face the dangers it faced from North Korea. Chun (2000) describes that "[i]n general, leverage will be enhanced if the supplier enjoys an asymmetry of dependence vis-à-vis the recipient. For example, if a client state faces an imminent threat, but its principal patron does not, then the latter's ability to influence the former's conduct should increase" (82).

Thus, what South Korea had to do in order to resist the United States' request was to increase the leverage it had within the alliance through bargaining power. As was explained in the theoretical framework section, bargaining power is closely related to the level of dependence, commitment, and interest a state has within an alliance. This is also closely related to the issue of abandonment and entrapment as Snyder (1997) claims that "the severity of the alliance security dilemma, and the intensity of fears of abandonment and entrapment, is largely determined by the same three factors that are the central components of alliance bargaining power..." (186). In the end, the goal of South Korea was to find a position that could alleviate the

pressure given by the United States while managing the fear of abandonment.

3.1. Interest

One of the most influential aspects of the three factors of bargaining power is the factor of interest. As mentioned above with the foreign and alliance policies, the interests of the two states within the alliance were vastly different. According to Snyder (1997)'s terms, interest can be defined as the level of intensity an ally values a certain objective, or in other words, how unwilling it is to compromise on a certain issue. It is explained that "the interests at stake in intra-alliance bargaining typically are conflicting interests in how to implement the allies' common interests vis-à-vis an adversary. The allies have a joint interest in resisting the adversary, but they disagree about how to share the benefits and costs of doing that" (Snyder 1997, 171). For the ROK-US alliance, the interest of the two states has shown differences throughout history. During its formation, the interest level was high for South Korea as defending itself from the invasion of North Korea was inseparable from its survival in East Asia. For the United States, defending South Korea from the North Korean invasion also meant the containment of the expansion of communist forces which was in its interest. After the end of the Cold War, however, the interest the United States had in the alliance in keeping North Korea in check quickly dropped as it no longer faced an adversary that was a significant threat. In other words, it became not only a problem of sharing and designating the benefits and costs, but also a problem of different threat assessments.

The interest that each state had in the alliance changed with the Moon-

Trump administration. On the topic of North Korea, the two states recognized it as the main adversary while still having some differences in approaching the issue. The Moon administration was shifting its position to having more of a peaceful approach like its progressive predecessors which went against the Trump administration's concept of maximum pressure and engagement. Meanwhile, the bigger problem was dealing with China and having China involved in the scope of the alliance. According to Snyder (1997), "in intra-alliance bargaining, the parties threaten to extinguish or frustrate the realization of their common interest - ultimately, their shared interest in preserving the alliance - in order to prevail on some other issue on which they are in conflict" (171). Under Snyder's terms, the policies executed by the United States were an attempt to obstruct the common interest of successfully maintaining a sufficient level of defense against North Korea in order to achieve its goal of containing China. As the main security threat and concern of South Korea was North Korea, it can be said that the United States tried to evoke South Korea's fear of abandonment in order to increase its level of commitment to expand the alliance into taking the role of containing China.

South Korea, on the other hand, did not share the same interest the United States had in the alliance playing a bigger role in East Asia to contain China and support the United States' maintenance of its influence in the region. Instead, like it was shown through President Moon's stance, the opposite was true. South Korea had no intention of categorizing China as an adversary. The possibility had already been experienced and seen to be dangerous as South Korea suffered the consequence of agreeing to deploy THAAD in South Korean territory. Thus, as the problem of entrapment regarding China was so great, South Korea chose to resist America's

request even though the possibility of USFK withdrawal was significantly threatening.

The reason why South Korea chose to resist the request of the United States for increased commitment to deal with North Korea and China can be further explained through the idea of the trade-off between autonomy and security. In the model provided by Morrow (1991) regarding the trade-off between autonomy and security, weaker states form alliances with stronger states in order to acquire more security in the region at the cost of sacrificing their level of autonomy. In the case of South Korea, especially during the time of the alliance formation, it was desperate to increase its level of security in order to secure its borders and ensure its survival. Figure 1 below shows how the trade-off is made in terms of the level of autonomy and the level of security.

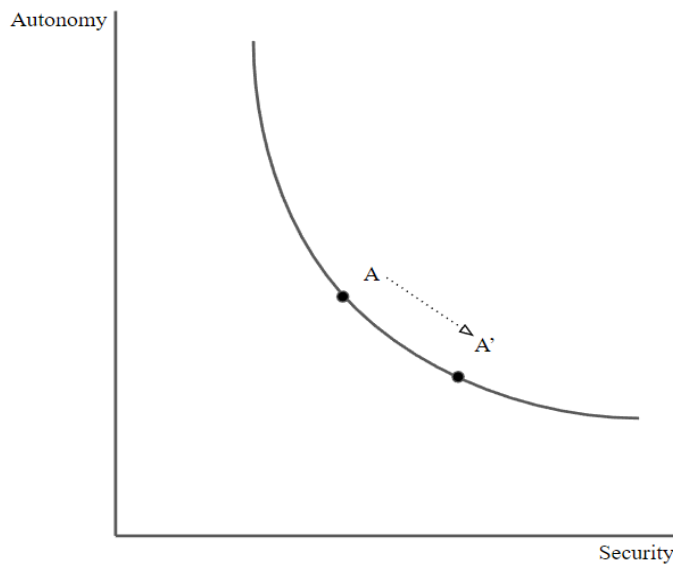


Figure 1. ROK's Autonomy-Security Trade-Off Against North Korea

South Korea gave up its autonomy, or control over its military and political choices and had the United States station its forces in order to enhance the level of deterrence it had against any attacks made by North Korea. This trade-off, although limiting South Korea's choices, was acceptable as it gave South Korea more benefits than costs.

During the Moon-Trump administration, however, the United States wanted South Korea to commit more actively not only in the talks with North Korea but also in containing China. The problem was that the Moon administration had no intention of provoking China. It had seen the damages that China could inflict on South Korea's economy, and it saw that it would be a foolish move to side strongly with the United States. The Moon administration feared that if it did side with the United States and strengthened the alliance, it would send a message to China that could bring potential economic problems and security threats to South Korea. In addition, the method by which the United States conveyed this message was making South Korea increasingly more reluctant to meet the requests of its ally. How the Trump administration put America first, how it saw the alliance through a transactional lens, and how it threatened to withdraw its forces from the peninsula combined with the fact that South Korea now had more to worry about than just its survivability made the option of blindly following the United States' needs less attractive to South Korea. Kim (2016) claims that how an ally perceives its partner and how it expects the partner to act in the future is critical in alliance relationships and that "the variables discussed are important only to the extent that they are visible to one's ally, and what really matter are the perceptions of these variables rather than the reality" (114). On this note, the Trump administration was not short of sending aggressive messages in

the form of policies and public statements.

Thus, what the Trump administration was requesting of South Korea was in one aspect a decrease in the overall levels of security in having China as an adversary of the alliance. It would cause both economic and security damage that South Korea not only was incapable of handling but also had no intention of facing. Another problem was that if South Korea agreed, it would have required South Korea to be more heavily reliant on the United States. This would mean giving up more of its autonomy in that the decision that it could make on its own would be more limited. In sum, the request from the United States in having China included as an adversary of the alliance would bring a decreased level of security for giving up more of its autonomy which, needless to say, was an option that South Korea did not see any benefit in pursuing.

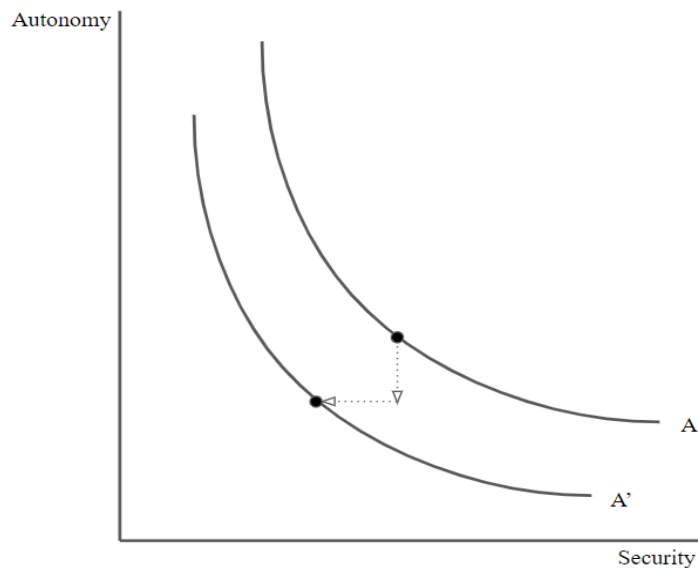


Figure 2. ROK's Autonomy-Security Trade-Off Against China

Under such conditions, South Korea was determined to increase its interest in going against the agenda of including China in the scope of the alliance. As mentioned above, even when a state lacks bargaining power in the categories of dependence and commitment, strong interest alone can push a state to achieve its goal. As Snyder (1997) claims that “an ally that is more dependent and committed than its partner might nevertheless have superior bargaining power if it can convince the partner that it places the greater value on whatever they are negotiating about,” it can be said that it was South Korea’s goal and interest to show that it was determined to move away from the United States’ request even if it meant moving away from the alliance itself (171).

Country	Threat	Level of Interest	Bargaining Power
ROK	North Korea	Moderate	2
	China	High	3

Table 3. ROK Interest Levels and Bargaining Power

In the end, South Korea was in a difficult situation where a tough decision had to be made. Surely, there were differences in how South Korea wanted to deal with North Korea in comparison with the United States due to the factors of having different perspectives and increased capabilities. However, it could not risk the collapse of the alliance and have the United States leave the peninsula which put the level of interest at a moderate level and left the bargaining power it had with a two.

On the other hand, in the risk of entrapment in the power struggle with China, South Korea saw more possibility of intense crises. It faced the possibility of losing not only the level of overall security but also losing the level of overall autonomy as its stance would bind its choices. Thus, South Korea's level of interest on the topic of China was high in that it was determined to avoid the risk of entrapment even if it implied the weakening and even a collapse of the alliance. In the sections below, it can be seen that South Korea's policies were based on this interest as South Korea sought to manage its levels of dependence and commitment in regard to its ally.

3.2. Dependence

Snyder (1997) claims that "a state's dependence on an alliance ... is a function of the net benefit it is receiving from it, compared to the benefits available from alternative sources (166). Snyder (1997) also explains that when converting the concept of dependence into military terms, it can be understood in the sectors of "(1) a state's need for military assistance, (2) the degree to which the ally fills that need, and (3) alternative ways of meeting the need" (167). First of all, in terms of the ROK-US alliance, South Korea has always been needing the military assistance of the United States since its birth. However, the level of this need fluctuates with how much an ally lacks in military capability in comparison with its adversary and how threatening the situation is in its relations with the adversary (Snyder 1997). As aforementioned, the gap between South Korea and North Korea in regard to its military capabilities had been increasing as South Korea's investment in its military resources rose. In terms of the level of threat that South Korea was facing during the

Moon administration, while the number of missile and nuclear tests were high, the important aspect was that the Moon administration was devoted to keeping a peaceful relationship with North Korea. A study conducted by the Asan Institute for Policy Studies shows that the public's opinion on perceiving North Korea in a negative light was at a record low (Kim et al. 2021).

Administration	Park				Moon			
Year	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20
Negative	83.5	93.6	87.3	96.7	96.9	36.6	73.9	84.1
Positive	16.5	6.4	12.7	3.3	3.1	63.4	26.1	15.9

Table 4. Views on Inter-Korean Relations (Kim et al. 2021)

It can be said that due to the policies that the South Korean president conducted during this time frame, the public's opinion on the level of threat that North Korea posed significantly decreased. Although the percentage of negative thoughts against North Korea rose after the summit talks with North Korea failed to reach meaningful results, the levels were somewhat maintained. This, in turn, meant that the Moon administration had more support in terms of the peaceful tactics in treating North Korea which also decreased the level of threat and the possibility of war the South Korean public associated with North Korea. Thus, the answer to the question of the level of need that South Korea had for military assistance was decreasing due to the increase in military capability and decrease in the perception of threat levels.

Second, the degree of security that the United States was providing to South

Korea seemed unstable to the Moon administration. According to Klingner (2019), “President Trump’s harsh criticism of America’s allies has triggered growing uncertainty of America’s commitment to the defense of South Korea” (1). During the negotiation period of SMA, South Korea was becoming more worried about the withdrawal of American forces from the Korean Peninsula. In an article by *Chosun Ilbo* in November 2019, it was stated that President Trump was considering the option of withdrawing one brigade if South Korea does not meet the request of the United States in increasing the burden-sharing costs by five times the former cost. The article also quoted Mark Esper, the secretary of defense at the time, who answered the question of whether or not the United States is considering the option of reducing the number of American forces in Korea by saying that South Korea is a rich country that can and must contribute more (Chosun Ilbo 2019). This spurred many talks within South Korea where some feared abandonment and wanted South Korea to conform to the level that the United States requested while most others went against meeting the level of increase. A study by Lee (2020) shows that the research done by KINU (Korea Institute for National Unification) indicates a towering 96.3% of the people surveyed replied that the level of burden sharing that South Korea should remain the same or should be reduced instead of being increased.

Year	Increase in Shares	Maintain Status Quo	Reduce in Shares
2019	3.7	71.5	24.8
2020	3.5	69.6	26.9

Table 5. Opinions on Burden Sharing (Lee 2020)

This percentage remained approximately the same when the research was conducted one year after. The results of this study show that the South Korean public was against the idea of increasing the burden-sharing costs and reacted negatively to the Trump administration's request. This negative view had close relations with how the public perceived South Korea's relations with the United States as well as the level of trust in the alliance.

Accordingly, in association with the negative public opinion of the request for a significant increase in the level of burden sharing, the level of support for the alliance and trust that the United States would come to help South Korea in times of war showed a decrease. In a report by the Asan Institute of Policy Studies, the survey done by the institute shows how the public trust in the United States fell to a level considerably lower than the average of approximately 90% in terms of expecting intervention in times of contingencies (Kim et al. 2022).

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Will Intervene	92.6	91.3	91.6	90.0	88.0	84.7	86.6
Will Not Intervene	7.4	8.7	8.4	10.0	12.0	15.3	13.4

Table 6. United States Response upon War in Korean Peninsula (Kim et al. 2022)

This shows that the pressure the Trump administration applied toward South Korea in terms of the issue of burden sharing had a vastly negative effect on how South

Korea perceived the support of the United States which put the levels of expectation at a record low. It can be explained that the mentioning of the increase of burden sharing, the threat of removing USFK from the Korean Peninsula, and the level of uncertainty that the Trump administration presented to the public made the United States less reliable in terms of military support which in turn increased the attractiveness for South Korea to further decrease its dependence on the United States.

Third, the factor of having an alternative option to fill the gap that could be made by the absence or lack of support by the United States was thought of actively by the Moon administration. As the goal of the Moon administration was to escape entrapment by expanding the alliance to contain China, it had to find ways to alleviate the fear of abandonment. This was the case as “the danger of entrapment can be reduced by weakening one’s general commitment or by refusing support to the ally on a particular issue, but this increases the danger of abandonment by reducing the alliance’s value to the ally” (Snyder 1990 113). In other words, escaping the entrapment meant increasing the risk of abandonment which put South Korea in a classic abandonment-entrapment dilemma. On this matter, Cha (2000) claims that the fear of abandonment can be escaped through “(1) building up internal capabilities, (2) seeking out new alliances or reinforcing alternate existing ones, (3) bolstering its commitment to the alliance in order to get the ally to reciprocate, (4) appeasing the adversary, or (5) bluffing abandonment in order to elicit greater support from the ally” (Cha 2000, 266). During the duration of the Moon administration, South Korea showed multiple tactics that presented the methods of attempting to decrease the level of dependence to escape the issue of entrapment by resisting the request for

increasing the level of commitment while pursuing alternative methods of managing the problems of abandonment. This follows the idea of Chun (2000) as it is said “when one ally does not need the other very much, its leverage should increase” (82).

Among the tactics that the Moon administration utilized, one policy of how it appeased its adversary is noticeable. Like shown above with the threat perception of the public against North Korea, South Korea’s policies showed efforts to make North Korea seem as less threatening and aggressive as possible. The continued peace talks with North Korea, inviting North Korean officials to the Winter Olympics, and underplaying the provocative actions of North Korea were some examples. The Moon administration also pursued the matter of alleviating actual military tension through formal agreements. The Panmunjom Declaration that the Moon administration released with its North Korean counterpart was aimed to serve this goal. This included the establishment of a no-fly zone near the Military Demarcation, setting the contested areas in the West Sea as a peace zone, and an agreement for denuclearization (Reuters 2018; Shin 2018).

Another example was how the Moon administration approached its relations with China. By establishing the ‘Three No’ policy, it attempted to reassure that South Korea was not willing to conduct military behavior that could be threatening to China with the United States or Japan. In addition, President Moon, during his visit to Peking University, mentioned that although South Korea is a small country, it will support the Chinese Dream which is also the dream of Asia (PKU News 2017). By aligning itself with the adversary and the state that was in conflict with the United States, South Korea attempted to manage its levels of fear in terms of abandonment. Among the tactics used, however, one that the Moon administration

put the most effort and focus on was the building of independent military capabilities. While the relations with its surrounding countries may be volatile according to new security situations, building one's capabilities was a method that was surely possible of alleviating the consequences of abandonment through increasing its level of security. Also, as it was being used in line with alleviating and reinforcing its ties with states other than the United States, it was additionally an effective method.

3.2.1. Enhancing Independent Military Capabilities

In analyzing the policies that the Moon administration conducted, one of the most important plans that the administration was focused on was building its independent military capability. Its plan can be largely divided into two policies: Defense Reform 2.0 and OPCON transfer. The Defense Reform 2.0 can be understood as a means of actual investment in military capabilities while the transfer of OPCON was more of a push for structural change. First of all, this reform was announced in 2018 in an effort to continue what the Roh administration left off with the Defense Reform 2020. Klingner (2019) points to the fact that the reform's goal of increasing defense spending to 2.9 percent of its GDP would place South Korea higher than the NATO member states' spending. The following table shows how the Moon administration actually increased military spending throughout this timeframe.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Percentage of GDP	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.7	2.8

Table 7. Military Expenditure in % of GDP (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database)

The aggressiveness that the Moon administration showed in terms of the defense budget is significant in comparison with former administrations even when compared to conservative ones. The Lee administration from 2008 to 2013 had an annual increase average of 6.1 percent whereas the Park administration from 2013 to 2016 had an average of 4.2 percent increase (Noh 2019). The Moon administration, in comparison, showed an increase of 7.5 percent annually (Noh 2019).

Furthermore, according to Kim (2020) the Defense Reform 2.0 “aims to transform the ROK Armed Forces into a more mobile and lethal force” (4). Klingner (2019) points out how Defense Reform 2.0 seeks to “expedite completion of the three-axis strategy of Kill Chain, KAMD, and KMPR by allocating 14.5 percent more in the defense budget to enable deployment by 2020 instead of original plan of 2022” (7). This is repeated by an analysis conducted by Paek et al. (2018) which reports that the mid-term defense budget, which is closely related to executing the Defense Reform 2.0, had sectors of costs that ranged from personnel, O&M (operation and management), facility, procurement, to defense R&D. Of these factors, the researchers point to “the early establishment of Korean Triad System, the unit restructuring, and the transfer of OPCON...” as the main reason for the increase in the procurement costs (71). Thus, the focus of Defense Reform 2.0 and the related budgets can be understood as a means to expedite the increase in the military capabilities that South Korea possesses. Furthermore, in addition to the increase of the defense budget, the efforts the Moon administration displayed on projects such as expediting the implementation of an indigenous defense system to keep the North Korean nuclear weapons and WMDs in check; developing indigenous fighter jets; purchasing various assets such as UAVs and satellites; and the lifting of

the limitations on missile capabilities in terms of the weight of the warhead and its distance all count for the increase in the independent capabilities of the South Korean military.

The second aspect that the Moon administration focused on in terms of pursuing independent military capability was the transfer of operational control. OPCON, or operational control, was given to the United States during the Korean War to give control of the South Korean military to the United Nations Command (UNC) in 1950. Meanwhile, the OPCON for armistice, opposed to wartime OPCON, was transferred to South Korea in 1994 which gave the South Korean military to conduct its own operations that were not related to wartime and contingency planning and exercises. The wartime OPCON transfer, however, was not completed despite many administrations' attempts.

Date	Progress
July 1950	Transfer of Operational Command by President Rhee to the UNC Commander
November 1954	OPCON is given to UNC Commander
November 1978	ROK-US CFC established, OPCON given to CFC Commander
December 1994	Armistice OPCON given to ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
September 2006	ROK-US leaders agree with wartime OPCON transfer
February 2007	OPCON transfer date set to April 17, 2012
June 2010	OPCON transfer date delayed to December 1, 2015
November 2015	Agreement on Conditioned-based Operational control Transition Plan (COTP)
June 2017	Agreement on expedited conditioned-based OPCON transfer

October 2018	Agreement on Future Command Structure during SCM
August 2019	Future Command IOC conducted

Table 8. OPCON Transfer History (ROK Policy Brief 2021)

Therefore, currently, the armistice OPCON is held by the Republic of Korea's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROK JCS), and the wartime OPCON is held by the CFC Commander. The CFC Commander takes the guidelines from the presidents of the two states through the SCM (ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting) and MCM (Military Committee Meeting) to exercise this operational control. As for the conditions of the OPCON transfer, there are three conditions.

Condition 1	Requisite military capabilities needed for leading the combined forces
Condition 2	Capability against North Korean nuclear and missile threats
Condition 3	Security environment ensured within Korean Peninsula and the surrounding area fit for OPCON transfer

Table 9. Conditions for OPCON Transfer (ROK Policy Brief 2021)

One of the biggest agendas of the Moon administration was to expedite the completion of the OPCON transfer before the end of the term. This meant that the conditions aforementioned must be met while both countries of the alliance need to come to an agreement on the matter. As the issue of OPCON transfer has been an issue very closely related to the idea of autonomy under the name of self-reliant

defense within South Korea, the Moon administration's pursuit of this agenda sent out a message of strong determination that South Korea is seeking to regain its autonomy in the realm of operational control once and for all. The administration, despite many concerns that the expedited OPCON transfer could cause security-related problems, set out the three stages of IOC (Initial Operational Capability), FOC (Full Operational Capability), and FMC (Full Mission Capability) as steps to complete during the administration. Scholars such as Choi (2021) claim that South Korea should strongly pursue OPCON transfer as it is a problem of recovering sovereignty and acquiring more flexibility as well as capability. Choi (2021) adds that the increase in the military capabilities of South Korea in addition to the decrease in the level of confidence it has in American support are valid reasons to pursue OPCON transfer. Meanwhile, scholars such as Klingner (2019) show concerns that the shortcomings that the South Korean military has in intelligence collecting capabilities and how these "raise serious questions about the viability of South Korea receiving wartime OPCON as quickly as President Moon is pressing for" (12). Klingner (2019) also asserts that "if South Korea has not attained the requisite capabilities, the result could be less agile combat capabilities that could potentially lead to more casualties" (14).

Under such conditions, despite the difficulties that were foreseeable, President Moon said that "we are pursuing the early takeover of OPCON" while asserting that "the handover on the basis of our independent defense capabilities will ultimately lead to a remarkable advancement in the fundamental capabilities of our military" (Kim 2017). The firm stance the Moon administration displayed throughout the term presented that South Korea would invest its resources and work

hard toward OPCON transfer sending a message that South Korea will head in the direction of securing independent military capabilities. It can be understood that this agenda of the Moon administration successfully managed the possible risk of abandonment which acted as a basis that the administration could utilize in the face of the pressure for increased commitment toward entrapment.

Country	Threat	Level of Dependence	Bargaining Power
ROK	North Korea	High → Moderate	1 → 2
	China	Low	3

Table 10. ROK Dependence Level and Bargaining Power

The level of dependence that South Korea had on the threat of North Korea decreased from a high to a moderate which in turn increased the level of bargaining power it had against the United States. The efforts that were made to identify North Korea as an entity to cooperate with rather than wrestle with was decreasing the level of perceived threat. Also, as people saw the United States' support less likely in times of contingency due to the position of the Trump administration, it added legitimacy for South Korea to increase its investments in the field of military capabilities and the push for reclaiming wartime operational control. In a situation where the United States was threatening to leave the alliance, it was a bold decision to move in the opposite direction of finding alternatives and appeasing its adversary instead of

appeasing its ally and promising more commitment. Again, this can be seen as an action of moving away from the dangers of entrapment that were seen as detrimental to its interests as stated above. For the dependence it had on dealing with China, South Korea had a low level as it did not have any intentions or showed any efforts to identify China as a threat. In the end, South Korea was able to increase its bargaining power significantly in terms of dependence when comparing the bargaining power it had before the Moon administration's policies as it was showing a clear position to the United States on what it could suffer to lose.

3.3. Commitment

The conflict on the level of commitment was the issue that the alliance clashed on most directly and openly. Snyder (1997) explains that "commitment weakens bargaining power" and that "the more firmly one is committed to the alliance, the less credible, and therefore the less effective, are threats to withdraw support from the ally or abandon the alliance" (168). On this matter, it can be considered that the burden-sharing issue was one of the biggest issues in terms of alliance management as Snyder (1990) explains that "the armament level in the adversary game is "arms racing"; in the alliance game it is "burden sharing"" (106). The concept of commitment can be explained as how much an ally can trust its partner that it would come to its support in times of contingencies. The idea of burden sharing is closely related to commitment as it proves that an ally is firmly committed to the alliance through the promises of financial support. Furthermore, according to Chun (2000), burden sharing is more of an issue that asymmetric alliances face in

that within symmetric alliances, “each nation wishes to increase its security and is capable of making a significant contribution to its own security” (84). Unlike symmetric alliances, states within asymmetric alliances are not capable of increasing their security capability to an equal degree; thus leading to the accusations of free riding.

The Trump administration capitalized on this point of the asymmetric alliance and requested that South Korea shares more of the burden. For the ROK-US alliance, Chun (2000) explains that “the issue of cost-, burden-, and responsibility-sharing between South Korea and the United States became a hot issue starting from the 1980s” (84). The key issue of burden sharing is dealt with between the two states under the name of SMA, or the Special Measures Agreement. SMA is based on the following article of SOFA or the Status of Forces Agreement.

Article 5	1. It is agreed that the United States will bear for the duration of this Agreement without cost to the Republic of Korea all expenditures incident to the maintenance of the United States armed forces in the Republic of Korea, except those to be borne by the Republic of Korea as provided in paragraph 2.
	2. It is agreed that the Republic of Korea will furnish for the duration of this Agreement without cost to the United States and make compensation where appropriate to the owners and suppliers thereof all facilities and areas and rights of way, including facilities and areas jointly used, such as those at airfields and ports as provided in Articles II and III. The Government of the Republic of Korea assures the use of such facilities and areas to the Government of the United States and will hold the Government of the United

	States as well as its agencies and employees harmless from any third party claims which may be advanced in connection with such use.
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Table 11. Article 5 of the Status of Forces Agreement (ROK Policy Brief, 2011)

SMA has been ongoing since 1991 and has shown an increase to support for the United States Forces Korea (USFK) stationed within the Korean Peninsula. The issue of burden sharing in providing security for the alliance is closely tied with SMA and USFK as the question of who provides for the maintenance of military power of the alliance relies on those two factors. The conflict during the Moon-Trump administration occurred as the United States wanted South Korea to take more of this burden while South Korea wanted to keep its share of the costs at a minimum. The issue of burden sharing was closely related to the notion of free riding and under the discourse formed by President Trump, the United States had no interest in continuing support of relationships that were detrimental to American profits. Thus, this was not only a sign of the struggle for achieving the America First policy of the Trump administration but also a pressure of abandonment as refusal to increase shares would cause withdrawal.

As for the history of the negotiation, the costs of the burden sharing are as follows.

SMA	Year	Cost (100 million KRW)	Percentage of Increase
1st	1991-1993	1,073	-
2nd	1994-1995	2,088	18.2%

3rd	1996-1998	2,475	10%
4th	1999-2001	4,411	8.0%
5th	2002-2004	6,132	25.7%
6th	2005-2006	6,804	-8.9%
7th	2007-2008	7,255	6.6%
8th	2009-2013	7,600	2.5%
9th	2014-2018	9,200	5.8%
10th	2019	10,389	8.3%
11th	2020-2025	10,389 (2020); 1,1833 (2021)	13.9%

Table 12. History of SMA Agreements (Kim 2020; MOFA 2021)

While the agreement on the issue of burden sharing has always been tough, the Trump administration presented an unprecedented level of difficulties. An article in the *New York Times* mentions that “Mr. Trump has been determined to withdraw troops from South Korea, arguing that the United States is not adequately compensated for the cost of maintaining them, that the troops are mainly protecting Japan and that decades of American military presence had not prevented the North from becoming a nuclear threat” while also writing that “his latest push coincides with the tense negotiations with South Korea over how to share the cost of the military force” (Landler 2018). Another article by *The Wall Street Journal* writes that “President Trump wants South Korea to pay significantly more money for American troops stationed in South Korea, a demand that has snarled negotiations over a defense pact as the Seoul government resists...” (Lubold et al. 2018). Like this, the pressure that President Trump applied on the alliance with the burden-

sharing issue was quite considerable and as the 9th SMA came to an end in 2018, President Trump had the goal of increasing the payment of South Korea by 50 to 100 percent.

The conclusion of the 10th SMA was an unprecedented single-year agreement with South Korea increasing the share of the burden by 8.2 percent. However, the issue continued as the duration of the 10th SMA came to an end in 2019. President Trump proposed a new deal to increase South Korea's costs to a shocking 5 billion dollars, which was an approximately 400 percent increase that South Korea could not agree to. The stalling of the negotiations for the 11th negotiations left the Korean contractors unpaid due to the termination of the former agreement and failure to come to an agreement with a new one. During this process, President Trump not only devalued the alliance but also gave a strong message to the South Korean public that the American administration perceived the alliance as a means of profit rather than the provider of security that it once was. On this topic, Ferrier claims that "such an untenable ask without transparency as to how this new funding would be spent sparked an even louder cacophony of disagreement in South Korea and raised widespread concerns about the health of the alliance" (Ferrier 2021). Meanwhile, scholars such as Park (2021) claims that "the perception of President Trump on the ROK-US Alliance that can be seen through his strategy in terms of burden sharing was not the relationship of an autonomy-security trade-off but of a patron-client relationship" (167).

The significance of the burden-sharing issue that the Trump administration focused on was that it sent the message of not only pursuing American profit over providing security as an alliance but also that it saw the alliance as something that

the United States could easily dispose of. Through the threat of withdrawing its forces during the SMA meetings, it quickly dropped the level of expected commitment to the alliance as South Korea could no longer expect that the United States would come to its rescue. In addition, the underlying objective of the Trump administration in wanting to enforce increased commitment of South Korea to expand the scope of the alliance was shown through how the United States wanted to include the category of operational support in deploying strategic assets to South Korea as a matter of burden sharing costs during the 10th SMA.

South Korea, on the other hand, while not conforming to the requests made by the United States continued to show a ‘balanced’ position between the United States and its adversaries. The aforementioned tactics of alleviating the threat level by actively preventing any aggression in addition to the reluctance South Korea displayed in following suit with the United States-led containment efforts against China dropped the level of commitment that the United States was expecting from South Korea. The Moon administration displayed to the United States that it would not increase the level of burden sharing to the degree that the Trump administration wanted which made its level of commitment vague. In addition, the tactics to appease North Korea through peace talks and China through the ‘Three No’ policy added ambiguity to South Korea’s position that it is fully committed to the same goals that the United States had.

Country	Threat	Level of Commitment	Bargaining Power
ROK	North Korea	High → Moderate	1 → 2
	China	Low	3

Table 13. ROK Commitment Level and Bargaining Power

In the end, it can be said that the level of commitment that South Korea had and displayed to its ally was decreased from a high level of commitment to a moderate level of commitment due to making its policies and position vague. This was also the case with treating China as South Korea was also not showing clear commitment in sharing the same goal with the United States. Like the decrease in the level of dependence as shown above, the decrease in the level of commitment is a daring move as it can easily discourage an ally from fully supporting the alliance especially when the ally is openly warning against the free-riders. However, as South Korea saw that turning China into an enemy and siding with the United States was a bigger threat than the collapse of the alliance, the action to decrease the levels of commitment was made.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

1. Findings

Throughout the history of the ROK-US alliance, there have been many turbulences that were a threat to the survivability of the alliance. This thesis identifies that during the Moon-Trump administration, the biggest threat was the Trump administration's attempt to have South Korea be more committed to the alliance in containing not only North Korea but also China by threatening to leave the alliance. This meant multiple problems for South Korea as siding with the United States on the hegemonic struggle in East Asia would make South Korea an adversary of China. The THAAD incident clearly showed the magnitude of damage that China could inflict on South Korea and when considering the various economic and security threats it would face, South Korea decided to resist the United States' request.

This paper, thus, focuses on how South Korea was able to successfully resist the requests made by the United States and sustain the benefits of the alliance by increasing its bargaining power. It displayed a high level of interest in the matter of China in that it was willing to resist America's request even at the risk of abandonment or a decrease in the overall level of security. Simultaneously, it decreased the level of dependence it had on the alliance by alleviating threat perceptions, investing aggressively in independent capabilities, and expediting OPCON transfer. For the level of commitment, South Korea displayed ambiguity in providing its full support as it showed a type of appeasement toward the adversaries of the United States while refusing to meet the increase in the level of burden sharing

that the United States was requesting. In the end, South Korea was successful in increasing its bargaining power by decreasing the level of dependence and commitment based on its high levels of interest as shown below. With the added bargaining power, South Korea was able to resist the request from the United States while maintaining the alliance in one piece. In other words, it was sending a message to the United States that even if its relations and the alliance management was jeopardized, it would not conform to the requests that it was making which in the end, had the United States ease its threats and strong requests and return back to the status quo.

Country	Threat	Interest	Dependence	Commitment	Bargaining Power
ROK	North Korea	Moderate	High → Moderate	High → Moderate	4 → 6
	China	High	Low	Low	9

Table 14. ROK Bargaining Power Summary

The success of South Korea in resisting the request of a stronger state for increased levels of burden sharing, commitment, and autonomy sets an example of what weaker states can do in similar situations within similarly asymmetric alliances. As the area becomes more contended, the United States and China are bound to urge their allies to reinforce their relationships and align with their national interests. However, it is through the example of South Korea that middle powers should realize in order to prevent the alliance from collapsing due to differing values and goals or

to prevent it from falling into a patron-client relationship, it must focus on increasing its bargaining power, through decreasing dependence and commitment; and thus acquiring autonomy, as a priority above other available strategies.

2. Policy Implications

The study of alliance relations in relation to South Korea and its surrounding countries has already become more important. The risk that South Korea faced in being entrapped to support the agenda of the United States in containing China continues to grow as the region of East Asia continues to be competed for control. Paradise (2020) explains that “having to choose between its alliance partner, with whom it has a mutual defense treaty, shares common values and has strong economic ties, and its neighbor, which has a different political system but is its biggest trading partner, puts South Korea in a very difficult position” (144). This so-called ‘very difficult position’ seems likely to be exacerbated by the recent policies of the Yoon administration as it chose to explicitly position itself closer to the ROK-US alliance and the agendas of the United States. The recent Washington Declaration is a good example of this as it shows the enhancement of the relationship between the two states.

Paragraph 2	To commemorate this historic year for our Alliance, President Biden and President Yoon have committed to develop an ever-stronger mutual defense relationship and affirm in the strongest words possible their commitment to the combined defense posture under the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The United States
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	and the ROK are committed to peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific, and the measures we take together are in furtherance of that fundamental goal.
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Table 15. Paragraph 2 of Washington Declaration (White House 2023)

This paragraph, in hand with the declaration mentioning the reassurance of the United States' support in utilizing nuclear measures to protect South Korea, sends a message, especially to China of the still relevant security presence in the region. The regular deployment of the American nuclear ballistic missile submarine is a clear example of the message. China, in turn, has responded to the Washington Declaration by saying that this is the result of the United States taking the current situation through a Cold War-like mindset and denouncing its actions as detrimental to other states in the region and the idea of nuclear nonproliferation.

This direction of policies and diplomatic ties is moving away from the Moon administration's balanced diplomacy and is a clear indication that South Korea wants to move away from China and North Korea and toward the United States and Japan. It can then be explained that the United States' goal of containing China through the ROK-US alliance as well as mending the relationship between its closest allies, South Korea and Japan, is gradually becoming a reality. This, although it may seem promising today, still presents questions and dilemmas that are yet to be solved. Moving closer to the United States and Japan decreases the level of autonomy that South Korea has within the alliance as the dependence and commitment levels will increase. As South Korea identifies China as more of an adversary in East Asia

instead of a close economic partner, it will be increasingly more dependent on the security resources that the United States will provide.

In the end, this paper suggests that South Korea focuses first on increasing its autonomy instead of reinforcing its ties with its allies to stand against China. It is important that South Korea prioritizes the acquisition of capabilities to sufficiently defend itself from the attack of North Korea before it focuses on playing the role of a provider of peace and security in the larger region of East Asia. It must invest in improving its military capabilities to predict, defend, and retaliate against any North Korean attacks in order to expedite its OPCON transfer. Meanwhile, it is also important to manage its ties with not only the United States but also with surrounding countries of China and Japan in order to have multiple layers of defense against its adversary. In the end, as the area of East Asia becomes contended, the most important way for South Korea to increase its influence is to increase its autonomy by developing its capabilities.

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Abstract in Korean

한미동맹이 어떻게 격변의 문재인-트럼프 정부 시기에도 유지될 수 있었는지에 대한 답을 찾기 위해 본 논문은 한국의 성공적인 동맹게임에 초점을 둔다. 나아가 해당 논문은 대한민국이 미국의 강한 압박에도 불구하고 의존도 및 기여도의 관리를 통해 어떻게 동맹 내 영향력 증가를 추구했는지 살펴본다.

문재인-트럼프 정부 시기의 한미동맹은 서로 다른 이해관계와 관점으로 인해 다양한 종류의 분쟁을 겪었다. 트럼프 대통령이 ‘미국 우선주의’의 정책을 기반으로 한미 간의 관계를 단순한 거래관계로 인식한 것이 그 예시이다. 이는 트럼프 정부가 북한 뿐 아니라 중국을 견제하기 위해 대한민국으로부터 더 강한 수준의 기여도를 요구하는 것을 의미했고 동맹 내 이익을 극대화하기 위한 노력으로 볼 수 있다. 대한민국에 있어 이러한 정책은 미중 갈등에 연루될 위험과 미국이 기대하는 정도의 기여도를 보이지 않을 경우 방기의 위험에 놓이게 되는 것을 뜻했고 둘 중 어느 방안도 대한민국이 받아들이기 어려운 결과였다.

다양한 종류의 위험과 불확실성의 시기 속 본 논문은 글렌 스나이더 (Glenn Snyder)의 협상력 지표 (Bargaining Power Index)를 사용하여 한국이 어떻게 해당 위기를 관리했는지 설명한다. 한국의 방기 및 연루에 대한 위험 관리와 미국의 기여도 증가 요청에 대한 저항을 의존도, 기여도 및

관심의 관점을 통해 분석 및 설명한다. 해당 논문은 대한민국이 미국과의 비대칭 동맹의 세력구조 내에서도 동맹에 대한 의존도를 감소시키고 기여도 증가에 대한 요구에 저항하며 국가의 이익을 기반으로 한 목표를 세웠다고 주장한다. 이러한 정책을 바탕으로 한국은 미국에 대한 협상력을 증가시켰고 분쟁의 시기에서 동맹을 성공적으로 관리할 수 있었다고 주장한다.

결론적으로, 본 연구의 의미는 비대칭 동맹을 약한 국가의 입장에서 바라본 것에 있다. 동맹 내 한 국가가 특정 주제에 대한 협상력을 통해 동맹의 세력구조 뿐 아니라 동맹의 결정과 결과에 영향을 끼칠 수 있다는 결론은 비슷한 상황에 놓인 다른 국가에도 적용될 수 있다. 다시 말해, 동아시아 지역이 계속해서 권력의 격전지가 될수록 동맹 내 약한 국가가 어떻게 자신의 영향력을 키워 스스로의 생존과 동맹을 지켜낼 수 있는지에 대한 연구는 더욱 중요해지고 있다.

키워드: 한미동맹, 문재인-트럼프 정부, 방기, 연루, 동맹관리, 동맹 딜레마, 협상력

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