

# U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy and New Southern Policy of South Korea<sup>†</sup>

- Based on Mutual Cooperation on the Maritime Security -

미국의 인도-태평양 전략과 한국의 신남방정책

- 해양안보 협력 연계 방안을 중심으로 -

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## <Abstract>

The leaders of the Republic of Korea and the United States all recognize the importance of ASEAN and share the mutual interests of policies concerning ASEAN. Above all, both countries not only acknowledge the importance of maritime cooperation with ASEAN but also agree to promote stability and peace in and around the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The Republic of Korea is implementing a New Southern Policy for long-term cooperation with ASEAN, which signifies alignment with the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy in the Asia-Pacific oceans.

The New Southern Policy aims to promote human-to-human exchange, mutual prosperity and peace. The Republic of Korea could boost the ROK-U.S. alliance

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further by identifying certain key areas in the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy where the two countries see eye to eye.

In the status quo of the twenty-first century, competition for maritime hegemony between or among powers has been intensifying, which will inevitably have an impact upon an atmosphere of anxiety. Thus, from the perspective of the Republic of Korea, enhancing ROK-U.S. bilateral cooperation for maritime security in the sphere of ASEAN will be a cornerstone for promoting a future-oriented ROK-U.S. alliance.

**Key words:** Indo-Pacific Strategy, New Southern Policy, ROK-U.S. Alliance, Maritime Cooperation, Maritime Policy

## I. Introduction

On 22 May 2021, two Presidents of the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States (U.S.) had a three-hour long summit meeting in Washington D.C. and discussed the extended scope of the ROK-U.S. alliance. The agenda included denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the semiconductor supply chain, COVID-19 vaccine, and the cutting-edge technology of batteries and the 5G Network.<sup>1)</sup> The meeting not only demonstrated what the United States expects and demands South Korea to do as an ally of the United States, but also confirmed that South Korea is a well-prepared ally that can cooperate with the United States in various fields.

When scrutinizing a joint statement after the bilateral summit, the two countries tried to harmonize and synchronize the different goals of a strategy and orientation that South Korea and the United States can take the lead on respectively, in an effort to strengthen the bilateral alliance. In other words, in order to maximize the synergy of national interests between the two countries, attention must be paid to a clear-cut

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1) The Republic of Korea Cheong Wa Dae(2021).

recognition of decision-making to promote strategic cooperation. The ‘ROK-U.S. Leaders’ joint statement’ shows a common recognition for the diplomatic and security strategies South Korea and the United States can work toward respectively.<sup>2)</sup>

In this situation, it is urgent for the ROK to figure out a policy after reviewing the United States Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) Strategy that is now fundamentally implemented in the Indo-Pacific region. Above all, in conjunction with the New Southern Policy (NSP) of the Korean government and FOIP Strategy of the United States where the two countries share the same geopolitical background, it is important for the governments to cooperate and perform tasks in common, which will boost ROK-U.S. alliance. Furthermore, the two countries should improve strategic synergy and exert their own influence on Asia-Pacific countries.

Various studies or research concerning the Biden administration's diplomatic and security environment, and prospect of future Indo-Pacific Strategy have been published or have been implemented. By extension, those studies note the U.S. policy direction which will be shifted compared to the environment that the Trump administration pursued.<sup>3)</sup> The direction not only deals with the U.S. diplomatic strategy that exerts economic sanctions and pressure against China but also highlights U.S. hard power. Meanwhile, the studies on South Korea's NSP are actively implemented but the topics have been heavily focused on the economic cooperation agenda.<sup>4)</sup> The research on maritime security cooperation where South Korea and the United States should jointly play a key role is not extensively evident.

This article aims to analyze a particular aspect of ROK-U.S. strategic cooperation:

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2) The demand of cooperation between two countries is as follows. “The significance of the ROK-U.S. relationship extends far beyond the Korean Peninsula: it is grounded in our shared values and anchors our respective approaches to the Indo-Pacific region. We agree we will work to align the ROK’s New Southern Policy and the United States’ vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific and that our countries will cooperate to create a safe, prosperous, and dynamic region.” The Republic of Korea Cheong Wa Dae(2021).

3) Park , Seong Yong·Jun Young Choi(2018), Lim, Kyunghan(2019), Ban, Kil Joo(2021), Lee, Shin-wha·Jae Jeok Park(2021).

4) Choi, Ina et al.(2020), Choi, Jae-Duck(2019), Choi, Jae-Duck(2020).

cooperation on maritime security. This article briefly examines the background of the respective strategies of the two countries, grounds for this maritime cooperation, and their strategic priorities. Following that, it seeks to find a way forward on how the ROK and the United States could cooperate on maritime security as allies that is aligned with global concerns, especially on non-traditional fields to protect the public community from threats that may arise on the sea. Ultimately, this article tries to find a way to establish a connection between the ROK's NSP and the U.S. FOIP Strategy, resulting in cooperation on maritime security.

## II. Indo-Pacific Strategy and New Southern Policy

### 1. Indo-Pacific Strategy of the U.S.

In 2011, the United States declared itself a 'Pacific Power' and initiated a 'pivot' to the Asia-Pacific region. This strategic rebalance resulted in the U.S. National Defense Strategy of the 21 Century in January 2012 in response to the rise of China.<sup>5)</sup> President Obama underscored that the United States continues to maintain its quantitative military capability in the Asian region, while also improving its qualitative capability.<sup>6)</sup>

In 2018, the Trump administration confirmed the FOIP Strategy, following an announcement of a security strategy of "peace through strength". To be specific, based on the Obama administration's pivot to Asia, the Trump administration established a new national security strategy including the Indian Ocean as the Indo-Pacific Strateg

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5) U.S. Department of Defense(2012).

6) Sheen, Seongho·Kyunghan Lim(2012), Lim, Kyunghan(2012).

y.<sup>7)</sup> The U.S. Department of Defense said that the main goal of this strategy was to check China's revisionist movement against the current U.S.-led order.<sup>8)</sup> Since then, the United States has consistently maintained its strong and firm military and diplomatic response to a rising China in the national security strategy and U.S. Department of Defense and Department of State reports.<sup>9)</sup>

The Biden administration is expected to continue to follow and implement the FOIP Strategy of the former Trump administration. Based on the United States values, President Biden seeks to lead the international order through solidarity with allies and friendly nations.<sup>10)</sup> A key goal of the U.S. FOIP strategy is to curb China's effort to strengthen its military power by slowing down China's rapid economic growth. In particular, the United States continues various naval activities, including Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs), to protect Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC) from Asia-Pacific to Europe.<sup>11)</sup>

The U.S. FOIP Strategy is highly likely to develop in a way that emphasizes the roles and responsibilities of allies and friendly countries of the United States. This is because it is the most effective strategy to cope with China that challenges the United States on the *status quo*, where the possibility of changing the balance of power or power transition from the United States to China could happen in the region.<sup>12)</sup> The United States will ultimately seek to secure SLOCs in the Asia-Pacific and further increase its own influence on regional countries through a strategic move.

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7) The White House(2017), Lim, Kyunghan(2019).

8) U.S. Department of Defense(2018). p. 46.

9) U.S. Department of Defense(2019), U.S. Department of State(2019).

10) The White House(2021a). Garamone, Jim(2021).

11) Davidson, Philip S.(2021).

12) The White House(2021a).

## 2. New Southern Policy of the Republic of Korea

The ROK government actively promotes diversification of diplomatic relations to expand its role and implement balanced cooperative diplomacy as a key middle power in the international community. The first step that the South Korean administration undertook was to reinforce cooperative diplomacy with the United States and other neighboring countries, and the next was to expand the diplomatic horizon by promoting and implementing the NSP, and establish the foundation for peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and the global community.<sup>13)</sup> The South Korean government, in particular, highly values the potential of ASEAN and India, in order to pioneer new markets there and to reduce trade dependence on China in the future.<sup>14)</sup> Accordingly, the ‘Special Committee on the New Southern Policy’ was inaugurated in August 2018 to establish strategies for promoting NSP, seek cooperation among related ministries, and build major cooperative projects with countries being focused.

The key goal of the NSP is to promote relations with 10 ASEAN countries and India in various fields such as politics, economy, society, and culture in order to contribute to peace and prosperity in the Asia Pacific region. It emphasizes ‘3 Ps’ as a development strategy, which means ‘People, Prosperity, and Peace’, and is currently implementing additional tasks in reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>15)</sup> To summarize, the South Korean government will actively contribute to peace in Asia by forging a community through the exchange of human resources and by building a win-win prosperous community through improved economic cooperation with ASEAN and India. The South Korean government intends to establish a foreign policy that strengthens friendly cooperation with the 10 ASEAN members and India at the same level as the neighboring countries of the Korean Peninsula. The South Korean

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13) The Republic of Korea Cheong Wa Dae(2018), p. 36.

14) The Republic of Korea Cheong Wa Dae(2018), p. 91.

15) Presidential Committee on New Southern Policy,  
[http://nsp.go.kr/assets/eng/pds/NSPplus\\_Brochure\\_ENG.pdf\(2021. 9.10\)](http://nsp.go.kr/assets/eng/pds/NSPplus_Brochure_ENG.pdf(2021. 9.10)).

government is practicing the 3P's through direct visits by the heads of state and high-ranking officials, including the ROK-ASEAN Special Summit, and several agreements.<sup>16)</sup>

The population of ASEAN is approximately 660 million. South Korea recognizes that it is necessary to find a joint agenda for establishing a peaceful regional order along with economic prosperity through cooperation with ASEAN and India amid intensifying competition with the powers of China and Japan around the Korean Peninsula. Adding to this, security cooperation, based on mutual support and cooperation, should be proposed to ASEAN countries, and by doing so, seek links between Indo-Pacific security with security on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>17)</sup> This will further strengthen ROK-ASEAN relations in the short term, and provide an opportunity to gain access to ASEAN under a common and shared perception of economic and security cooperation between ROK and the United States in the middle and long term. Thus, in-depth discussion on ways to connect the U.S. FOIP Strategy and the ROK's NSP is required.<sup>18)</sup>

### III. Common Objectives of Indo-Pacific Strategy and New Southern Policy

The ROK-U.S. summit confirmed that ROK's NSP has an equivalent status to the U.S. FOIP Strategy, allowing it to give significant meaning to the diplomatic community of South Korea.<sup>19)</sup> In particular, two things discussed at the summit should be examined carefully in relation to the maritime cooperation between South Korea

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16) Choe, Wongi(2019).

17) Choi, Youngjong(2019), Choi, Yoonjung(2018), pp. 8-14.

18) Choi, Jaeduk(2019).

19) Kim, Kyoung-sook Kim·Il Seok Oh·Seho Jang(2021).

and the United States. First of all, it is necessary to pay attention to the official discussion of the cooperation between the FOIP Strategy of the United States and the ROK's NSP. This is because the leaders of the two countries jointly acknowledged the importance of ASEAN and shared the intention of policy cooperation on ASEAN.

Another meaningful aspect is that South Korea and the United States promised to value the international order based on norms, and maintain an inclusive free and open Indo-Pacific region. Remarkably, it was pointed out that South Korea's tentative intention to cooperate in the freedom of navigation operations conducted in Indian and Pacific waters has been reflected to some extent.

Countries that NSP is concerning are located in a place where strategic competition between the United States and China is intensifying. This is why maritime security cooperation with ASEAN and India is in the United States' interests as well. Therefore, South Korea needs to improve cooperation with ASEAN and India further, through the NSP, and ultimately maximize its own national interests by preemptively seeking ways to connect with the U.S. FOIP Strategy in the future.

The first step in responding to common threats on the waterways between South Korea and the United States, and at the same time pursuing common interests, is to unify the perception of mutual maritime domains. In the United States, maritime domain awareness (MDA) is seen as an effective way to be cognizant of all areas that can have an impact on the security, economy, safety, environment, etc, associated with the marine realm. MDA goals are as follows: "enhance transparency in the maritime domain to detect, deter, and defeat threats as early and distant from the United States as possible; enable accurate, dynamic, and confident decisions and responses to the full spectrum of maritime threats; and sustain the full application of the law to ensure freedom of navigation and the efficient flow of commerce."<sup>20)</sup>

Under this perspective, the United States is leading the maritime security cooperation through the Quad summit. At the 1st Quad summit held in March 2021,

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20) The White House(2013), pp. 1-3.

the four leaders of Quad-participating countries the United States, Japan, Australia, and India have all publicly announced that they will protect maritime safety under the principle of freedom and openness of the Indo-Pacific region, understand maritime security as a joint agenda, and respect the maritime order based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.<sup>21)</sup>

From the perspective of the South Korean government, it is not necessary to follow the United States' perception of the marine domain, but the South Korean government needs to be able to align with the United States' perception of maritime domain and further, pursue common interests. South Korea should also be able to expand the scope of ROK-U.S. maritime cooperation beyond security cooperation on threats from neighboring countries such as North Korea and China, to a level that encompasses all areas of the ocean, including the economy and environment.

Likewise, the recognition and perception of the maritime realm of safety and economic areas jointly considered by South Korea and the United States provide a basis for joint awareness of the threats encountered by the two countries. In terms of overlapping waters of the NSP and the United States Indo-Pacific zone, the Indo-Pacific waters could be faced with traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats.

■ Table-1. Traditional/Non-Traditional Maritime Security Threat ■

Sector		Main cases
Traditional Threats	Naval power competition between countries	• U.S.-China Maritime Competition (South China Sea, the Taiwan Strait Conflict, etc.)
	Disputes of marine territory and marine resources (including delimitation of Exclusive Economic Zone & Continental Shelf )	• China-Japan (Senkaku Islands achipelago) • Russia-Japan (four northern islands) • China-some members of ASEAN (Spratly Islands/Paracel Islands)

21) The White House(2021b), Biden, Joseph·Narendra Modi·Scott Morrison·Yoshihide Suga(2021).

	Sector	Main cases
Overlapping Threats	Interdiction of sea lane routes (including a blockade at sea)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The crash of the vessel EVERGIVEN which ran aground in the Suez Canal</li> <li>• Interdiction of (temporary) sea lanes due to the reasons of naval training and operation at sea</li> </ul>
Non-Traditional Threats	Natural disaster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tsunami in Indonesia</li> <li>• Earthquake in Japan, etc.</li> </ul>
	Marine accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A variety of vessel collision</li> <li>• Missing Malaysian aircraft, etc.</li> </ul>
	Piracy & maritime terrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A large number of piracy incidents in the Strait of Malacca</li> <li>• Terrorism with explosives on the cruise ship SUPERFERRY-24</li> </ul>
	Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction(WMD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• North Korea's export of WMD-related supplies, etc.</li> </ul>
	Refugees at Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees arising from civil war</li> </ul>
	Marine environmental pollution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Japan's stranded vessel's oil spill, etc.</li> </ul>
	Maritime crimes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smuggling, drug trafficking</li> <li>• Human trafficking (slavery, women, children, etc.)</li> </ul>

Sources: organized by author.

## IV. Scheme of Cooperation for Maritime Security linked with FOIP-NSP

### 1. Promoting Cooperation in the Defense sector

Following an increase of the U.S.-China tension in 2018 that was triggered on a full-scale, the international diplomatic and security paradigm has been completely developing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which rapidly spread worldwide since early 2020. In response to changes in the international security environment surrounding these developments, the Special Committee on the New Southern Policy preemptively

announced a new project of the 'New Southern Policy Plus' which has been added to the existing policy.

Notably, promoting a peace community for a peaceful and safe regional security environment includes four major tasks selected by the Ministry of National Defense to strengthen defense in the non-traditional security sector: (1) strengthening human resources capabilities through education and training exchanges, (2) completing the framework for defense cooperation with ASEAN, (3) promoting cooperation for military logistics in defense, and (4) boosting multilateral security cooperation.<sup>22)</sup>

Table-2. Promoting Project of NSP in the Defense field

Tasks	Main Contents
① Reinforce human resources capabilities through exchanges of education and training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand education and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen peace keeping operations (PKO) cooperation</li> <li>• Actively participate in combined training drill conducted by ASEAN countries</li> <li>• Contribute to strengthening maritime security capabilities of countries of the New Southern Policy</li> </ul>
② Complete framework of defense cooperation with ASEAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclude Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Defense Cooperation</li> <li>• Establishment of a regular defense consultative body</li> </ul>
③ Promote defense-military cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote customized defense cooperation for each country</li> <li>• Hold a logistics (munitions) cooperation forum</li> <li>• When delivering over a retired warship, firstly consider countries in the New Southern Policy as recipients</li> </ul>
④ Stimulate multilateral security cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively participate in multilateral meetings/forum organized by ASEAN</li> <li>• Hold a small group of multilateral meeting led by South Korea &amp; establish 1.5 track of multilateral security consultative body</li> <li>• Promote ROK-ASEAN high-level military/strategic cooperation</li> </ul>

Sources: summarized from Park(2021).

22) Park, Inho(2021).

## 2. Cooperative Plan for Maritime Security

### 1) Strengthening competencies through exchanges of education and training

First, South Korea and the United States can actively participate in joint drills that either have ASEAN participants or are organized by ASEAN and India. This is one of the most suitable, visible, and effective measures for the ROK-U.S. partnership to jointly carry out. While a number of joint exercises have been cancelled or reduced due to COVID-19, exercises led by the United States, Australia, and Thailand have continued to be conducted routinely. The <Table 3> shows some joint exercises recently carried out in Indo-Pacific waters, with ROK Navy as well as the United States and some ASEAN countries participating in the training. The joint exercises provided opportunities to verify interoperability, and to establish a venue of mutual cooperation for multinational peacekeeping activities.

Table-3. Joint exercises led by the United States

Sector	Pacific Vanguard	Talisman Saber	Cobra Gold
Period / location	5 July - 10 July 2021 / Australia	16 July - 31 July 2021 / Australia	2 August - 13 August 2021 / Thailand
Participating nations	the United States, Japan, Australia, and South Korea	the United States, Australia, Japan, the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and South Korea	the United States, Thailand, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, China, India, and South Korea
Missions of exercises	Battle for Free Siege, Fueling at Sea, etc	Forcible Suppression Operation, Operation at Sea, etc	Practice for advising staffs, Cyber Defense Training, etc

Sources: organized by author.

The ROK Navy needs to actively and autonomously find a way to conduct joint exercises with ASEAN and India. In July 2021, South Korea participated in the Marine Information Sharing Training (MARISX) organized by Singapore where South Korea had training opportunities with many ASEAN countries, including Indonesia and Malaysia. On 28 June 2021, the ROK Navy also carried out a joint drill on the sea with the Indian Navy, which followed an Indian port visit to South Korea. The ROK Navy is also considering participating in the ‘Multilateral Naval Exercise (MILAN)’, organized by the Indian Navy in February 2022. Likewise, from the perspective of the ROK Navy, expanding opportunities of joint trainings with Southeast Asian countries that NSP is highlighting can be regarded as being aligned with the direction and context of the U.S. FOIP Strategy.

Second, South Korea contributes to strengthening maritime security capabilities of countries that the NSP is involved, by promoting effective and remarkable maritime security cooperation. As a measure of bolstering maritime security cooperation, establishing and implementing a regular consultative group between high-ranking government and military officials on maritime-specific topics or agendas will be the most effective. In particular, the defense ministers’ talk allows not only security cooperation, but also practical cooperation in the defense field, including weapons development. In addition, other cooperative measures could also include regularization of meetings between ROK Navy and ROK Coast Guard & ASEAN Navies and Coast Guards, establishment of hotlines and liaison offices between the Navy and the Coast Guard, and education programs and training opportunities which are specialized in maritime security.

The United States now pays closer attention to its allies, the Philippines and Thailand, among ASEAN countries, as well as Indonesia and the Vietnam, which have the biggest economic potentials among the member countries. Recently, the U.S. Secretary of Defense Austin visited the Philippines and Vietnam in sequence, emphasizing the substantive issue of military cooperation.

From 1 August to 14 August 2021, the United States and Indonesian forces carried out joint drills of 'Garuda Shield' on the three islands of Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, and the United States agreed to provide \$3.5 million (about 4 billion KRW) worth of funds to build a Coast Guard Training Center on the island of Batam, Indonesia.<sup>23)</sup> For the United States, this is an effort to further accelerate the military cooperation with neighboring countries of ASEAN, facing territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea.

In particular, South Korea needs to further extend and offer its education programs to improve maritime security capabilities of ASEAN countries. As of 2021, naval officers from eight countries of India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia, and Myanmar have been educated and trained in South Korea. The Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia have also sent their own midshipmen to South Korea. After completing education and military training programs at the ROK Naval Academy, they will return to their own countries to be commissioned as naval officers (military officers), and take up important roles in key ministries and divisions.

Outstanding officers from ASEAN countries, who completed commissioned education training in Korea, are now leading defense cooperation with South Korea, a model that emulates what the ROK Navy had done in the past with other advanced navies, including the U.S. Navy. In this context, this virtuous cycle will ultimately help establish the basis for improving interoperability in ROK-U.S.-ASEAN-India quadrilateral naval operations. As revealed in a new maritime strategy paper published by the U.S. Navy, a cooperative plan establishing a network with allies and friendly countries through education and training can help forge capabilities on the sea and improve interoperability.<sup>24)</sup>

Also, South Korea can consider indirectly supporting the United States FOIP

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23) Lee Janghoon(2021).

24) U.S. Secretary of Navy(2020).

Strategy in cooperation with allies of the United States. South Korea's defense scheme intends to strengthen one-to-one partnership with neighboring countries, while participating in the U.S.-led joint exercises of 'Pacific Rim', 'Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training (SEACAT)', and 'Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT)'. In fact, South Korea is actively discussing measures to promote maritime security with Australia as well. Under a common recognition of the need to collaborate for enhanced maritime security, it aims to contribute to promoting regional maritime security by enhancing mutual understanding of the ROK's NSP and Australia's Indo-Pacific Strategy, and supporting ASEAN countries to improve their own maritime capabilities.<sup>25)</sup>

## 2) Promoting Defense–Military Logistics Cooperation

Among the visions of the NSP, achieving the Peace (P) must be preceded by substantial defense cooperation. Furthermore, in order for the U.S.-led FOIP strategy to succeed, visible outcomes on defense and logistics cooperation are required. In this regard, South Korea could consider strengthening defense cooperation with ASEAN countries, and further expanding interoperability for military cooperation with the United States. South Korea would be able to provide assistance to ASEAN countries in building up their navies in a similar way that ROK Navy had received military aid from the United States when the ROK Navy was established.

In fact, since the 1990s, the ROK Navy has been transferring retired naval ships to developing countries wishing to reinforce their own naval powers at no cost (or close to free of charge). <Table 5> illustrates the current status of transferring retired warships of the ROK Navy over to ASEAN countries for the past two decades. For South Korea, this is an opportunity to expand its defense exports into ASEAN as well as elicit ASEAN member countries as maritime security partners. This is because the

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25) Ministry of Foreign Affairs(2021).

similar operation method for weapon systems signifies an enhanced interoperability of ROK-ASEAN equipment. This policy could offer the basis for further collaboration in maritime security that fulfills the common goals promoted by Korea's NSP and the US FOIP Strategy.

Table-4. Transferring Retired ROK Naval Ships to ASEAN

Country	Period to convey	Types/number of ships transferred	Cost
The Philippines	June 1993	PK / 12 ships	\$100 per one ship
	July 1995 - May 2006	PKM / 8 ships	
	May 2015	LCU / 1 ship	at no cost
	August 2019	PCC / 1 ship	
Vietnam	May 2017	PCC / 1 ship	at no cost
	October 2018	PCC / 1 ship	
Cambodia	October 2010	YUB / 3 ships	at no cost

Sources: organized by author.

### 3) Boosting Multilateral Security Cooperation

The most conclusive way to boost multilateral security cooperation is to effectively hold regular multilateral consultative groups, including official and unofficial groups, to appeal for multilateral cooperation. <Table 5> shows official and unofficial multilateral security consultative bodies in the Asia-Pacific region that ROK armed forces and academic circles have been participating in. It has been sorted into Track 1 (a consultative body among branches of government), Track 1.5 (a consultative body of government and civilian experts), and Track 2 (a consultative body of non-governmental organizations).

**Table-5. A Multilateral Security Consultative Group**

Track 1	Track 1.5	Track 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus)</li> <li>• ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)</li> <li>• Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS)</li> <li>• Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP)</li> <li>• Tokyo Defense Forum (TDF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seoul Defense Dialogue (SDD)</li> <li>• Asia Security Summit (ASS)</li> <li>• Halifax International Security Forum (HISF)</li> <li>• Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD)</li> <li>• Fullerton Forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP)</li> </ul>

Sources: revised & added from ROK Defense White Paper(2021).

Although various consultative bodies meeting in the Asia-Pacific have existed, because of certain limitations of each consultative body, cooperation between or among each country based on these consultative bodies can be seen as limited. The primary reason why the consultative bodies have been difficult to hold so far is due to maritime competition between the United States and China. Furthermore, a country willing to create a cooperative group as a leading role has been absent. The consultative bodies for multilateral security should be reactivated to promote trust-building in regional countries, develop into substantive and practical security consultative bodies, and specialize in maritime affairs. Meanwhile, establishing a consultative group for multilateral security on the sea should take the following ideas into account.

First, a brand-new consultative group for collective security should be decided in order to react and deal with non-traditional threats in the Indo-Pacific. In order to redefine and respond to non-traditional security threats, an approach with a completely new perspective is necessary that is different than the framework prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. To cope with common security threats, shared goals and

interests between or among countries should be established. A discussion on national interests from the perspective of liberalism rather than from the standpoint of realism which emphasizes relative advantage should be required. Also, the new framework should suggest a roadmap for comprehensive collaborative plans which will be escalated, for multilateral cooperation at the short and mid&long-term levels.

This paper suggests that countries participating in consultative groups for collective security should proactively search for methods of cooperation. In crystallizing the framework of collective security, common interests should be combined to establish a roadmap that many countries can participate in, and then elicit practical cooperation from participating member countries. For this collective security to be effectively carried out, who is leading this agenda should be clarified.

However, it is very difficult to come up with practical measures when state-led collective security does not work. In these cases, the security consultative body chaired by a country on a rotational basis is relatively weak in solidarity. Therefore, it is necessary for a consultative group of collective security to allow non-governmental experts to participate, as well as have single chair countries, or have two or three countries jointly serve in a chairmanship. This would enable both a robust theoretical basis for policy-making, and practical actions for cooperation between or among countries.

Second, we should strive for a consultative body for multilateral security which is focused on maritime security development. Constructing a multilateral cooperation for maritime security in the Pacific Ocean is not only manageable, but also required. At the same time, it is necessary to be able to prevent conflicts on the seas in advance, through maritime trust-building measures or maritime crisis management systems. It is imperative to construct a prompt crisis management system in the case of unforeseen incidents.

#### 4) Council Meeting on Maritime Security led by ROK-U.S. Cooperation

There have been cases in the Pacific where various forms of the U.S.-led cooperative systems for security have been conducted. After the Tsunami in December 2004, which was 2,300 times the power of a nuclear bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945, 157,777 casualties were reported, 26,753 were missing, and 1,075,350 people became refugees. At the time of the disaster, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Russia, France, and Malaysia all had dispatched troops to the U.S.-led coalition, and almost all neighboring countries around East Asia, including South Korea and China, had actively participated in and offered aid under the humanitarian relief operation.

The U.S. Pacific Fleet Commander, Thomas Fargo designed the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) in 2004 in order to countervail piracy and terrorism on the seas. The United States also supported the Five Power Defense Arrangements (FPDA) where the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore have been involved in conducting joint exercises in maritime interdiction and counter-terrorism operations. Moreover, various types of maritime security cooperation were implemented which included the Malacca Straits Sea Patrol (MSP), securing the sea route in the Malacca Strait following operation MALSINDO in collaboration with Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia.<sup>26)</sup>

The United States proposed the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) in 2010 in reaction to China's expansion of its maritime policy as well as North Korea's threats to use Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Through the Container Security Initiative (CSI), the United States also focused on preventing the threat of WMD proliferation that could occur in the form of shipping networks around the world. There have been various cases of cooperation that provided immediate assistance in the event of an emergency on the seas, including the earthquake of Japan in 2011 where neighboring countries offered assistance, and a Malaysian civil aviation disaster

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26) Massey, A. S.(2008), pp. 41-48.

in 2014 where search and rescue operations were conducted. These all signify the importance of developing a cooperative body for multilateral security on the seas.

The United States has continued to emphasize an alliance and partnership between regional countries, led by the United States Pacific Fleet Command.<sup>27)</sup> The United States continues to promote interoperability between or among navies in the Indo-Pacific region. In addition to the U.S. Navy-led joint maritime drills in collaboration with navies of neighboring countries, the United States has conducted video conferences where leaders of maritime powers in the Indian and Pacific Oceans can participate virtually. At the virtual conference in September 2020, fourteen leaders of maritime powers as well as high ranking naval officers participated and discussed the importance of cooperation on the seas. The U.S.-led meeting of the 4th ‘Web Conference for the Leaders of Maritime Powers’ was held in July 2021. Sixteen countries participated to build cooperation to deal with non-traditional threats in the Indian and Pacific waters.

The South Korean government shall continue to work on completing the field of Peace among the three key elements of NSP (People, Prosperity, and Peace). At the same time, it is challenging to come up with the best option that can enhance the ROK’s status in the ROK-U.S. alliance. At the top of the list is the idea that the ROK-led security cooperative body with a maritime-specific focus should be classified into short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies. Thus, it is imperative for South Korea to construct a full-range of consultative groups for multilateral security on maritime issues. A sharp competition between the United States and China in the Indian and Pacific Oceans has occurred. South Korea must enhance its own strategic value by expanding its influence to regional countries, including ASEAN, and India.

Therefore, it is necessary for South Korea and the United States to ultimately promote and develop a multilateral council meeting fostering maritime security where ASEAN countries also can participate in the conference. It is urgent to establish a

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27) U.S. Secretary of the Navy(2020), Ronald O'Rourke(2021).

rapid crisis management system for unpredictable incident or accidents on the waters. For this reason, the project that not only supports academic research, cultivates professionals in the maritime cooperation field, strengthens organizations/staff or budgets on this field, but also seeks multilateral cooperation measures and agendas should be actively pursued in both government (military) and private sectors.

## V. Conclusion

Since the ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951, both South Korea and the United States have been officially and strongly allied, and maintain a partnership that promises mutual military support in case of an emergency. The ROK-U.S. foreign and defense ministers'(2+2) meetings and the ROK-U.S. summit talk held in March and May 2021 respectively, were all significant in that those bilateral meetings provided clues and signals about the United States' expectations for South Korea's diplomatic and military role as a major ally of the United States in Asia.

President Biden, inaugurated in January 2021, openly and repeatedly expressed the importance of the ROK-U.S. alliance, referring to the bilateral alliance as a 'linchpin' and the axis of the wheel of security and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. In this regard, South Korea also needs to participate more actively in working with the United States to further strengthen the ROK-U.S. alliance, thereby expanding the scope of cooperation in various realms, including economy, diplomacy, and military.

The ongoing FOIP Strategy of the United States under the Biden administration is a counter-measure to cope with China's threats in the short term, but also is the result of the careful calculation of its own national interests. In this context, the strategic options that South Korea can pursue are limited but clear. As time goes on, and as the competition between the United States and China becomes more intensified, South

Korea's strategic position and value will go up. As stated before, maritime security cooperation can be chosen as the field where South Korea's national value and status can be exerted to the full extent in terms of diplomacy and security from the ROK-U.S. alliance.

South Korea is promoting the NSP for long-term cooperation with ASEAN and India in the Asia-Pacific region, the focal point of the U.S. FOIP Strategy. In the process of bringing NSP's core vision of exchange, co-prosperity and peace to fruition, the ROK-U.S. alliance can be strengthened by closely linking it with the U.S. FOIP Strategy. Maritime competition between the great powers is creating a much more unstable situation. Thus, strengthening ROK-U.S. maritime security cooperation will naturally have an impact on the future of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

In conclusion, there is much future research needed regarding this topic. Based on the ROK-U.S. alliance, the two countries should not only strengthen their military cooperation, but they should also seek a common maritime, space, future high-tech industries, biology, cyber and climate change agenda. However, for South Korea, as it gets closer to the United States, it may encounter difficulties in relations with China. It should be clearly recognized that the benefits gained from strengthening relations with the United States are worth the trade off with potentially worsened relations with China. Nonetheless, based on a solid ROK-U.S. alliance, South Korea should also contemplate and contribute to well-managed ROK-China relations in a timely manner.

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