

The Emergence of an American/Korean Strategic Triangle

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A “strategic triangle” between the United States and the two Koreas is emerging as a new feature of the international security environment. At the same time that North Korea (the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, or DPRK) has pursued nuclear weapons and ballistic missile technology, South Korea (the Republic of Korea, or ROK) has pursued a conventional, precision-strike capability involving both ballistic and cruise missiles. South Korea’s missile forces are routinely portrayed as holding North Korea’s mobile missiles and leaders at risk. Thus, in different ways, the two rival Koreas have actively sought to join the United States in attaining the ability to inflict serious harm on their foes – particularly upon each other, and, in the case of North Korea, also upon the United States, starting with its forward-deployed forces and regional bases.

As long as the two Koreas perceive a serious threat from each other, and as long as the United States and South Korea maintain a close alliance – with U.S. forces based on the territory of the ROK, joint war planning, and joint exercises – it will be most appropriate to conceive this cluster of three relationships – the U.S.-ROK alliance, the inter-Korean rivalry, and U.S.-North Korean enmity – as a system. This system appears to be characterized by a condition of “interactive complexity,” in which events on any one “face” of the triangle have repercussions for the rest, leading to potentially unexpected sequences of events.¹ Not least of all because of South Korea’s active role, the common characterization of this relationship in terms of “extended deterrence” no longer seems adequate, if it ever was.²

At the heart of this dynamic is a three-way arms race, punctuated by periodic crises, small-scale uses of force, and brinkmanship. North Korea’s role in this arms race is already widely recognized: its departure from the nuclear nonproliferation regime, including its campaign of

¹ For “interactive complexity” in a perhaps related context, see: Scott D. Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). A conception of international relationships as a system is offered in Robert Jervis, *System Effects: Complexity in Political and Social Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

² For a discussion of the neglect of the protégé in the extended-deterrence literature, see: Timothy W. Crawford, “The Endurance of Extended Deterrence: Continuity, Change, and Complexity in Theory and Policy,” in T.V. Paul, Patrick M. Morgan, and James J. Wirtz, eds., *Complex Deterrence: Strategy in the Global Age* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 227-304, especially pp. 291-94. On South Korea before the watershed events of 2010, see: Kang Choi and Joon-sung Park, “South Korea: Fears of Abandonment and Entrapment,” in Muthiah Alagappa, ed., *The Long Shadow: Nuclear Weapons and Security in 21st Century Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), pp. 373-403.

nuclear tests and theater missile tests; and its development of intercontinental ballistic missiles, including through space launches. South Korea's contribution, as noted above, centers on its systematic and increasingly open pursuit of conventional precision-strike capabilities to address the threat from North Korea's theater missiles by holding at risk both enemy mobile missiles and leadership. North Korea has responded to the "conventional counterforce" aspects of this threat by demonstrating the ability of its theater missile forces to strike without warning and from unexpected locations, continuing to develop its nuclear and missile programs, and warning the United States that it will hold Washington responsible for Seoul's actions. Recently, the North has also sought to demonstrate its own conventional precision-strike capabilities, presenting them as capable of holding South Korea's leaders at risk.

The American response to these developments has been twofold. Its most visible aspect has been a series of shows of force designed primarily to reassure the South Korean government and public. The United States also has deepened its investment in Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD), reallocating resources to the Ground-based Midcourse Defense (GMD) program based in Alaska and California. It has also urged two of its closest regional allies, Japan and South Korea, to accept the permanent stationing of new U.S. BMD assets on their respective territories. The United States and ROK governments are currently negotiating terms for the deployment of an American Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in Korea.

Judging by North Korea's continued investment in missiles, these actions will not suffice to counter Pyongyang's choice of strategy. Instead, North Korea's leadership openly plays up the hazards of escalation for the United States, seeing it as an opportunity to drive a wedge between the allies. This choice is evident both in behavior and rhetoric; in the latter area, it is notable how often North Korean statements warn the United States of a "touch-and-go" situation or a "hotspot" region where tensions are high and armed conflict might break out unpredictably.

These developments also have created grave concerns for other parties, most of all for China and Japan, the Koreas' closest neighbors. The government of Japan regards North Korea's missile and nuclear capabilities as a threat to its own country, especially since bases on Japanese territory would be expected to support U.S. military operations in the event of a conflict on the Peninsula, making them attractive targets for the North Korean military. The Chinese authorities – seconded by Russia – have become increasingly vocal in their oppositions to a THAAD deployment in South Korea. While THAAD could not realistically be expected to counteract China's ability to deter the United States, its standing deployment in South Korea could be seen as contributing to a further long-term consolidation of the U.S.-ROK alliance, and perhaps even paving the way for a *de facto* trilateral alliance including Japan. Either development would be to the detriment of Chinese security interests, as Beijing understands

them. These issues are beyond the immediate scope of this paper; they are real but secondary to the core triangular dynamic under consideration.

South Korea's missile ambitions

The least well-understood aspect of the strategic triangle is the missile program of the Republic of Korea (ROK). The program is in many ways emblematic of the country's complicated defense relationship with the United States: always pursuing independence but never truly able to break away. The program began in the early 1970s at the Agency for Defense Development (ADD), which was also responsible for Seoul's clandestine nuclear program at that time. After detecting and quashing the nuclear program, the United States extended wary and conditional support (or acquiescence) to the South Korean missile program. A bilateral 1979 Memorandum of Understanding on technology transfer confined the ROK's efforts to develop ballistic missiles to systems of 180 km range with 500 kg payloads. In 2001, as a result of extended negotiations to bring South Korea into the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), the two parties agreed to "new missile guidelines" holding the ROK to systems of 300 km range with 500 kg payloads, coinciding with the MTCR "category I" limits. But the Seoul government, observing the growth of the North Korean missile program in the late 1980s and early 1990s, had already begun to pursue new sources of missile technology, particularly in Russia. Over the following years, South Korea – which had already deployed short-range ballistic missiles supplied by the United States – progressed towards developing new types of ballistic and cruise missiles.³

Between 1999 and 2006, North Korea maintained a moratorium on missile testing, which came to an end with a series of theater missile launches – and an apparent space-launch attempt – during the night and early morning of July 4 and 5, 2006. South Korea responded with a burst of publicity, revealing to the public that Seoul had repeatedly tested cruise missiles in the previous three years. These new cruise missiles, apparently based on a creative interpretation of the New Missile Guidelines of 2001, were to have a 1,000 km range, enabling strikes deep into North Korean territory, including missile bases near the Chinese border.⁴ South Korea also publicized its plans for a new BMD architecture, called the Korean Air and Missile Defense (KAMD) system.⁵

³ Daniel Pinkston, "The New South Korean Missile Guidelines and Future Prospects for Regional Stability," International Crisis Group, October 25, 2012, <http://blog.crisisgroup.org/asia/2012/10/25/the-new-south-korean-missile-guidelines-and-future-prospects-for-regional-stability/>.

⁴ Daniel Pinkston, "South Korean Response to North Korean July Missile Exercise Includes Unveiling of New Cruise Missile," *WMD Insights*, October 2006, pp. 24-27.

⁵ Jung Sung-ki, "Navy to Begin Sea-Based Missile Intercept Drills," *Korea Times*, November 2, 2007.

The North Korean attacks of 2010 – the sinking of the *ROKS Cheonan* in May and the shelling of Yeonpyeong Island in November – led Seoul to revisit its approach to the North, imposing sanctions, initiating defense reforms, and articulating a strategy of “proactive deterrence,” based on prompt and forceful retaliation to future attacks. Investment in the missile program continued as well; even before the year’s second major incident, the government revealed that it was close to deploying a new generation of indigenously developed cruise missiles with 1,500 km range and the ability to penetrate bunkers.⁶

The combination of North Korea’s growing nuclear threat, its demonstrated willingness to use force against the South, and – as of December 2011 – an untested new leader, presented South Korea’s top military and civilian officials with new complications. The difficulty of successfully locating and destroying mobile missiles, even with a concerted effort, was famously demonstrated in 1991 during the Persian Gulf War. The difficulties show few signs of abating soon, especially when transposed to Korea’s rugged terrain.⁷ A similar observation can be made about missile defenses, which do not offer foolproof protection, especially against as extensive a missile force as the North’s. Without having realized the ability to nullify a mobile nuclear threat, and seemingly reluctant to rely on deterrence by threats of retaliation from the United States, the South faces a dilemma without any obvious path to resolution.

The personalization and escalation of threats

Without overtly articulating the idea of deterrence-by-decapitation, South Korean messaging about its missile capabilities began to shift toward threats against stationary targets, including hints about leadership targets. Perhaps the first hint took the form of a South Korean news report from February 2012 stating North Korea’s nuclear launch codes were held by three individuals: the KPA Supreme Commander (Kim Jong-un, the Chief of the General Staff of the KPA, and the head of the KPA Strategic Rocket Force (SRF) Command, all of whom would presumably be high-priority targets.⁸

After the North began making its own threats against the South’s leaders, the temptation to respond in kind seems to have proven irresistible. The result, in early-to-mid-2012, was a cycle of intensifying threats and counter-threats that seemed uncomfortably close to spinning out of control. By this point, inter-Korean relations had fallen to a low point. With an eye to

⁶ “Seoul Deploys Home-Grown Cruise Missiles,” *Chosun Ilbo*, July 19, 2010.

⁷ Alan J. Vick, Richard M. Moore, Bruce R. Pirnie, and John Stillion, *Aerospace Operations Against Elusive Ground Targets*, MR-1398-AF, RAND Corporation, 2001.

⁸ “Who Has His Finger on the Nuclear Button in N. Korea?” *Chosun Ilbo*, February 23, 2012. See also: “N. Korea Appoints New Head of Missile Force,” *Chosun Ilbo*, June 15, 2012.

influencing the South Korean presidential election set for December, North Korean bodies repeatedly denounced ROK President Lee Myung-bak and his supporters for “treason.” After the South Korean media extensively reported a public demonstration in downtown Seoul against Kim Jong-un, the North Korean authorities announced a “sacred war to wipe out the Lee Myung Bak group of traitors, the sworn enemy with whom the nation can never live under the same sky.”⁹

The next day, President Lee toured a missile-related facility, and South Korea’s Ministry of National Defense (MND) released a video of flight-tests of an indigenous ballistic missile and two indigenous cruise missiles. All three were shown precisely striking their targets, one of which, a three-tiered structure, bore a striking resemblance to the façade of Kumsusan Palace, the mausoleum of the Kims and the site of predictably timed leadership visits.¹⁰ The South Korean media quoted an MND briefer as saying, “This cruise missile can attack a target as small as a window located hundreds of kilometers away. We can attack any military target precisely, including North Korea’s facilities, soldiers, or equipment.”¹¹

The North Koreans interpreted this remark as a threat to their top leadership. On April 23, an official statement assailed South Korea’s leaders for the “temerity” to “dare talking about ‘striking the supreme headquarters [i.e., Kim Jong-un] through [an] office window’.” Issued in the name of the “special operation action group of the Supreme Command” of the Korean People’s Army, the statement announced that “special actions” would commence “soon” against South Korea’s president and a list of South Korean news media outlets. “Once the above-said special actions kick off,” the statement read, “they will reduce all the rat-like groups [Lee and his supporters] and the bases for provocations [news media outlets] to ashes in three or four minutes, in much shorter time, by unprecedented peculiar means and methods of our own style.”¹²

The North Korean media also began issuing abnormally extreme rhetoric, including vulgar caricatures of the death of President Lee, portrayed as a rat with a human head. Television broadcasts showed mass rallies denouncing the president, followed by scenes of realistic, life-size effigies undergoing vivid and extreme violence. Perhaps to demonstrate that its threats were not purely rhetorical, North Korea reportedly conducted GPS jamming against the South in the weeks following the April 23 statement, affecting air traffic at Seoul’s Incheon

⁹ “Lee Myung Bak Regime of S. Korea Will Face Stern Punishment: KPA Supreme Command Spokesman,” KCNA, April 18, 2012.

¹⁰ The video is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8g2U4cLaBY>.

¹¹ Kim Hee-jin, “South shows off missile of its own,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, April 20, 2012.

¹² “KPA Supreme Command Warns Lee Myung Bak Group of Quick Action,” KCNA, April 23, 2012.

International Airport.¹³ The situation took a more serious turn in mid-May, when KPA Air Force fighter aircraft reportedly began to make unusually large numbers of sorties. On June 4, the General Staff of the KPA released an “open ultimatum” demanding an apology for alleged insults to Kim Jong-un. It stated, in part, that “the army corps, divisions and regiments on the front and strategic rocket forces in the depth of the country” were prepared to deliver “punishment” upon a series of geo-coordinates representing the headquarters of a list of news media outlets in Seoul.¹⁴ Around this time, a KPA Su-25 ground attack airplane reportedly approached the Military Demarcation Line near Seoul, prompting the ROK Air Force to scramble.¹⁵

South Korea’s response was to articulate its threat more openly. MND officials informed the media on June 11, 2012 that Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin had ordered a no-notice field exercise involving artillery units, ballistic missile units, and F-15K aircraft armed with SLAM-ER air-launched cruise missiles. An anonymous official of South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff explained, “The inspection put an emphasis on solidifying counterstrike capabilities against the units that could launch an attack on our soil, as well their support and command units. If provoked, we will punish the enemy’s core units, such as the headquarters of their division, corps or higher military commands.”¹⁶ This language implied that the targets of South Korea’s artillery, missile, and air forces after a strike on Seoul would include KPA command centers responsible for long-range artillery and missiles. Kim Jong-un did not respond immediately, but the North Korean media depicted him a few weeks later overseeing an Air Force drill that appeared designed to threaten leadership targets in Seoul.

The growing consolidation of the triangular dynamic

Events in 2012 and early 2013 brought the new triangular dynamic more clearly into view, including North Korea’s emerging ability to strike the United States itself. Over several months, North Korea gradually began hinting that it would soon demonstrate or exhibit an ICBM capability, warning the United States that it is “sadly mistaken if it thinks it is safe as its

¹³ “N. Korea GPS jamming hits S. Korea flights: Seoul,” AFP, May 3, 2012. The North has reportedly targeted Incheon with cyberattacks since at least 2009. See: Lee Chul-jae and Moon Gwang-lip, “Incheon Airport cyberattack traced to Pyongyang,” *Korea JoongAng Daily*, June 5, 2012.

¹⁴ “General Staff of KPA Sends Open Ultimatum to S. Korean Group of Traitors,” KCNA, June 4, 2012.

¹⁵ Kim Young-jin, “Fighters scramble against NK jet near Ganghwa Island,” *Korea Times*, June 6, 2012; Steve Herman, “S. Korea Closely Watching North’s Air Force,” VOA News, June 7, 2012; “N. Korean Fighter Jet Sorties Close to Border,” *Chosun Ilbo*, June 7, 2012.

¹⁶ Lee Tae-hoon, “Seoul vows retaliation against North Korea’s core units,” *Korea Times*, 11 June 2012; “S. Korea warns of retaliation against N. Korea command,” AFP, 11 June 2012; “Military vows relentless retaliation if provoked by North,” *Yonhap News*, 11 June 2012; “Seoul Practices Striking N. Korean Command Posts,” *Chosun Ilbo*, 12 June 2012.

mainland is far away across the ocean.”¹⁷ This process culminated in mid-April 2012, coinciding with the much-heralded centenary of regime founder Kim Il Sung. On April 13, amid unprecedented publicity, North Korea attempted to launch a three-stage TD-2 rocket as a satellite launcher. Two days later, the new leader Kim Jong-un appeared on live television in central Pyongyang to mark Kim Il-sung’s centenary. Kim Jong-un’s speech was followed by a massive military parade prominently featuring a variety of missiles, including six vehicles carrying KN-08 mobile ICBMs or simulators. Kim Jong-un’s speech included a reference to these new weapons: “Military technological supremacy is not a monopoly of imperialists anymore, and the time has gone forever when the enemies threatened and intimidated us with atomic bombs. Today’s solemn military demonstration will clearly confirm this.”¹⁸ The failure of the space launch undercut the effect of this warning in Washington, but attitudes were already starting to shift, and the North Koreans were determined to persist.

Pyongyang drew attention to its strategy in October, when the South Korean press described the outcome of negotiations to replace the “new missile guidelines” of 2001 with “revised missile guidelines” allowing Seoul to deploy ballistic missiles with up to 800 km range, and UAVs and cruise missiles with heavy payloads. The need for these enhanced weapons was explained in terms of both deterring “provocations” and preempting ballistic missiles.¹⁹ Around this time, South Korean officials also began to speak of their missile force as a component of a “Kill Chain” system designed to “to detect, track and target North Korean missiles.”²⁰ Nevertheless, the North was sufficiently concerned about implied threats to its leadership that it gave indications of plans to protect Kumsusan Palace with human shields during future visits by Kim Jong-un.²¹

North Korea’s overt response to the announcement was twofold: to elaborate its earlier claims to be able to carry out retaliatory nuclear strikes against its enemies, and to assert that it would hold the United States responsible for the acts of the South. A statement by North Korea’s most authoritative official body, the National Defense Commission (NDC), declared that the targets of its Strategic Rocket Forces included both military bases in South Korea and targets in Japan, Guam, and the mainland United States:

...now that the south Korean [sic] puppet regime is seeking attacking the whole area of the DPRK by missiles at the instigation of its master, the army and people of the DPRK will bolster military preparedness in every way to cope with it.

¹⁷ Joshua Pollack, “The Unveiling of North Korea’s ICBM,” 38North.org, April 11, 2012, <http://38north.org/2012/04/jpollack041012/>.

¹⁸ Korean Central Broadcasting Station, April 15, 2012.

¹⁹ Jeffrey Lewis, “ROK Missile Rationale Roulette,” ArmsControlWonk.com, October 9, 2012, <http://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/205771/rok-missile-rationale-roulette/>.

²⁰ Kim Eun-jung, “ROK, U.S. Agree To Set DPRK Nuclear Deterrence Policy by 2014,” *Yonhap News*, October 24, 2012.

²¹ Korean Central Broadcasting Station, 12 October 2012; Korean Central Broadcasting Station, 29 October 2012.

We do not hide that the [KPA] including the strategic rocket forces are keeping within the scope of strike not only the bases of the puppet forces and the U.S. imperialist aggression forces' bases in the inviolable land of Korea but also Japan, Guam and the U.S. mainland.²²

Subsequent North Korean statements have frequently emphasized the dangerous and unpredictable nature of the situation on the Peninsula. In its calls for the United States to abandon its "hostile policy" and conclude a peace treaty with the North, Pyongyang now seeks to put the risk of uncontrolled escalation to work in its favor.

This message gained more credence in Washington after North Korea successfully placed a satellite in orbit on December 12, 2012, and conducted its third nuclear test on February 12, 2013, which it described as a successful test of miniaturization. South Korea's response to the nuclear test included the release of more missile test footage, including flight-tests of ship-launched and submarine-launched cruise missiles. Once again, a cruise missile was shown striking a target resembling Kumsusan Palace.

The American response came a month later, in mid-March, when Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, citing North Korea's "advances in its capabilities" and its "irresponsible and reckless provocations," announced a major reprogramming of BMD, shifting resources away from long-range plans for European defenses and toward the existing GMD missile field in Alaska.²³ In April, Hagel and his Japanese counterpart, Itsunori Onodera, agreed to deploy a second TPY-2 X-band radar in Japan in support of regional BMD requirements.²⁴

The United States also showed a desire to demonstrate that it would not be so easily deterred. Later that same month, during annual spring joint exercises with South Korea, the U.S. Air Force flew dual-capable B-52 strategic bombers from Guam over the South, followed by dual-capable B-2 "stealth" bombers from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri. North Korea's responses included field exercises with mobile intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) believed capable of striking Guam, and displaying images of Kim Jong-un "ratifying" the "strike plan" of the Strategic Rocket Forces at an emergency meeting. Notably featured were pictures of a

²² "DPRK NDC Reiterates Its Stand to Fight It Out against U.S. and S. Korean Regime," KCNA, 9 October 2012.

²³ Although many critics regarded this decision as fundamentally designed to assuage Russian concerns about eventual missile-defense developments in Europe, the Department of Defense cited North Korea's actions as motivating the change. See: Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, "Missile Defense Announcement," U.S. Department of Defense, March 15, 2013, <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1759>.

²⁴ Kyodo News, "U.S. to install second X-band radar," *Japan Times*, December 12, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/12/national/u-s-to-install-second-x-band-radar/>.

targeting plan for the United States.²⁵ The North later insinuated that the bomber drills had been part of a plot to conduct a surprise air raid against Pyongyang.

In 2014, amid more frequent talk from Seoul about its plans for “Kill Chain,” North Korea launched an unprecedented series of flight tests of mobile theater ballistic missiles and long-range rocket artillery. The exercises seemed designed to demonstrate the ability to perform launches from multiple locations, without warning, showing the futility of the South’s ambition for conventional counterforce. The North sent a similar message about the futility of BMD systems in May 2015, when it displayed images of Kim Jong-un observing a test of a submarine-launched ballistic missile at sea, a weapon system that (so Pyongyang’s official media emphasized) could be fired from entirely unexpected directions. Seoul responded a week later with footage of President Park Geun-hye observing a ballistic missile test. The footage included views of a warhead striking a moving target at sea. The target object was partly submerged, closely resembling a submarine. Moreover, two views were shown from different types of sensors, potentially consistent with South Korean announcements of acquisition plans for new types of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs).

The next March, as part of its response to the U.S-South Korean alliance’s spring joint exercises, North Korea conducted a series of missile and artillery exercises, describing South Korea’s presidential mansion, the Blue House, as their target. In late April, the South Korean media reported that the North has built a half-scale model of the Blue House, presumably for use as a target in future exercises.²⁶ These actions appear to reflect a sustained effort since 2012 to counteract South Korea’s ability to threaten North Korea’s leaders.

Navigating the “Korea triangle”

Part of the backdrop to these events is South Korea’s drive for greater independence from its alliance with the United States. This trend reflects the desire of a proud, nationalistic society, which is also a maturing military and technological power, to manage its own affairs. This dimension of the relationship is expressed in a number of ways, including recurring discussions over timetables and conditions for the transition of wartime operational control (“OPCON”) of the South Korean military from an American commander to the South Koreans themselves. Seoul’s push for autonomy also reflects concerns about being associated too closely with its former colonial master, Japan. Connections between the U.S. and Japanese BMD architectures may help to explain the slow progress of American efforts to promote interoperability with

²⁵ Jeffrey Lewis, “North Korean Targeting,” ArmsControlWonk.com, April 8, 2013, <http://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/206515/north-korean-targeting/>.

²⁶ “N. Korea readying assault drill on replica of S. Korean presidential office: military,” *Yonhap News*, April 27, 2016.

KAMD, as well as South Korea's earlier reluctance to host an American THAAD battery. North Korea's fourth nuclear test in January 2016 and its second successful space launch in February seem to have overwhelmed these qualms, at least for the time being. Nevertheless, deploying THAAD will not, by itself, bring about any convergence between two parallel BMD systems in South Korea – one American, the other South Korean – with separate and uncoordinated command and control.

Interoperability of defenses is not the greatest problem that the alliance faces. As the strategic triangle has taken shape, American officials have become more open about their concerns about uncontrolled escalation, starting with a "violent provocation" from the North, and followed by a response from the South. Such a response – especially if it threatened or humiliated the North Korean leadership – might turn out to be more than Pyongyang could accept passively. These concerns appear to have motivated the negotiation of new joint plan and strategy documents, including a "ROK-U.S. Counter-Provocation Plan" and a "Tailored Deterrence Strategy Against North Korean Nuclear and other WMD Threats," both adopted in 2013.²⁷ In 2015, the allies further agreed to subsume KAMD and "Kill Chain" into a common "4D concept," standing for "detect, defend, disrupt, and destroy" – seemingly a compromise that deemphasizes the idea of deterrence.²⁸

Given Seoul's eagerness to respond vigorously to future episodes of North Korean harassment, it remains to be seen whether these understandings are sufficient to regulate the functioning of the alliance. The American strategy of "allied assurance" may reflect worries about the credibility of American defense commitments in general, as well as the desire to "keep one's friends close" in Seoul specifically. Whether Seoul and Washington can stay close enough to contain the risks of escalation remains to be seen.

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²⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, Joint Communiqué, The 45th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (Seoul), October 2, 2013.

²⁸ Song Sang-ho, "Korea, U.S. to devise plan to negate N.K. launchers," *Korea Herald*, April 16, 2015.