

Sino-Korean Relations since 1992: Achievements and Prospects

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TEN YEARS FOR COMPREHENSIVE COOPERATION

Next August 24th marks the tenth anniversary of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China. During those years, the two countries have made vast progress, both quantitative and qualitative, and have undergone numerous structural changes.

Economically, the two countries reached the third-largest trading relations, recording 31.2 billion dollars in trade as of this time last year. Moreover, China rose to become the second-largest investor in Korea. The number of contacts between Chinese and South Korean people has reached 2 million, remarkable progress compared to the 90,000 contacts ten years ago when the two countries established diplomatic relations, and there have been over 230 round trip flights between the two countries.

On the occasion of Prime Minister Zhu Rongji's visit to South Korea in October 2000, the "South Korea-China cooperative partnership oriented towards the 21st century," which was launched in 1998 during President Kim Dae-jung's visit to China, was upgraded to "comprehensive cooperative ties," expanding the

bilateral relations to cover the areas of politics and military security. The most symbolic illustration of the move towards comprehensive cooperative relations between the two countries was the visit of a South Korean warship to Shanghai last October. Accordingly, the two countries were able to improve the imbalanced structure of the bilateral relations that have existed since the establishment of diplomatic relations.

THE PROGRESS OF SOUTH KOREA-CHINESE DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The establishment of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China in 1992 can be characterized as a product of China's policy response to South Korea's active northern policy. The extreme antagonism between South and North Korea at the time left China with a limited policy choice: maintaining the former alliance with North Korea or establishing new friendly and cooperative relations with South Korea. In other words, China recognized that the relations involved a zero-sum game in which maintaining both relations was impossible.

Given the circumstances, China adopted a strategy of *detour*, minimizing damage to China-North Korea relations while normalizing its relations with South Korea. Although the conditions were ripe for establishing diplomatic relations with the South at the time of the joint induction into the United Nations of both Koreas in 1991, China maintained an indirect, passive policy to create a favorable environment for normalizing China-South Korea relations by placing priority on progress in North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan. However, with the likelihood of Clinton's victory in the 1992 presidential election, China considered it unwise to maintain its strategy of *detour*, and thus, it reevaluated its indirect strategy.

As a result, China shifted to employing a straightforward

strategy, and placed priority on establishing diplomatic ties with South Korea. A possible reason for the shift was that by so doing it could help break the deadlock in North Korea's relations with the United States and Japan and bring about Korean peninsula cross-recognition, thus alleviating North Korea's state of isolation. These were probably the important factors that quelled violent resistance from North Korea against the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and South Korea.

As it happened, China succeeded in minimizing the negative effects, and there was minimal damage to its relations with the North. Given the special characteristics of diplomatic ties between China and North Korea, had China made a rapid advance without allowing a buffering period, as the former Soviet Union had done, it is highly likely that China's relationship with North Korea would have deteriorated more than the Soviet Union-North Korea relationship did after it normalized relations with South Korea.

However, the amity between China and South Korea did not lead to North Korea's improved relationship with the United States, Japan, and the West. Instead it deepened North Korea's isolation, making China's relationship with North Korea even more difficult for a while. Accordingly, China tried to mend the rupture in its relationship with North Korea by pursuing various policies to maintain its former friendly relations with North Korea.

First of all, China pursued an extremely discrete policy as it sought to improve relations with South Korea, following establishment of diplomatic ties. China, despite the shift in its relations with South Korea, still maintained the pattern, i.e. economic exchanges, as it had before the normalization with the South. In particular, it tried to limit cooperation with South Korea in the areas of politics and military, something that could have seriously damaged existing relations with North Korea. This pattern, however, led to a serious imbalance in relations between China and South Korea.

Eventually, with the exchange of summit visits between South

Korea and China in 1995, the relations between the two nations made remarkable progress. In short, with 1995 as the turning point, the two countries have made slow but steady progress to improve the imbalance that characterized the relations since the normalization. These changes reflect the outcome of the adjustments made in the Chinese policy on North Korea, and demonstrate China's attempt to achieve, at once, a qualitative change in its relations with South Korea, which would lead to partnership.

The imbalance in relations between China and South Korea stemmed from the transitional factors of the past enmity between the two countries, as well as from the structural factors of China's domestic politics and the special alliance between China and North Korea. The fact that China-South Korea relations are advancing from economic areas to areas of politics and military shows the ebbing of the transitional and structural factors that had hindered the balance and the progress in China-South Korea relations.

During his visit to South Korea in November 1994, then-Prime Minister Li Peng declared that China would adhere to the principle of independence in its relations to South Korea and North Korea, and not conduct those relations based on ideology or the socialist system. Li Peng's emphasis on an independent approach toward Chinese policy on the Korean peninsula, a characteristic of the post-camp or post-ideological stance, signifies the change in China's policy, that is, moving away from the ideology of the Maoist legacy. China's post-ideological policy on the Korean peninsula at once changed China's alliance with North Korea, which had been based on its past revolutionary and ideological solidarity, and became a decisive factor in eliminating structural elements that had hindered balanced relations between China and South Korea.

Especially, after the 15th Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party, when Chinese leadership shifted from Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin, policy could move away from the continuation of Mao's legacy, creating conditions favorable for a new way of thinking in China's policy on the Korean peninsula.

Accordingly, the North Korea factor, which had been a major obstacle in China's Korean peninsula policy, has waned in importance, and as a result, China was able to secure more leeway in making policy adjustments towards the pursuit of its interests. Consequently, conditions for expanding cooperation and ties in more areas have been created for China-South Korea relations.

With President Kim Dae-jung's state visit to China in November 1998, the friendly and good-neighborly relations between China and South Korea were upgraded to a cooperative partnership, and Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji's subsequent visit to Korea resulted in further progress in relations, to a comprehensive cooperative partnership, marking a transition in China-South Korea relations from imbalanced, partial cooperation to a more balanced and comprehensive partnership.

In order to expand China-South Korea relations to the areas of politics and security and to prevent such progress from producing a zero-sum game effect on China-North Korea relations, changing the nature of the special ties between China and North Korea is a prerequisite. In fact, the bond between China and North Korea is unique, as it is based on revolutionary and ideological solidarity; therefore, unlike the usual ties between countries based on respective national interests, China-North Korea ties are rife with sentimental elements. Thus, in order to minimize the damage and to maintain stability in China-North Korea relations the most important task for China is to normalize those special ties so they are more like the international relations between other countries.

Meanwhile, just before the inter-Korean summit of June 2000, the North Korean leader Kim Jung-Il made a secret visit to Beijing on the invitation of Chinese Communist Party, followed by a visit to Shanghai in January of last year. Kim Jung-Il's visits to China seems to signify the resumption of summit diplomacy between China and North Korea that was interrupted with the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and South Korea in 1992 and the death of Kim Il-Sung, and the creation of a framework necessary to

restore the China-North Korea relations that existed before China established ties with South Korea.

Since China's policies on South Korea and North Korea are based on the principle of independence, under the "post-ideological stance" and "non-camp based diplomacy," the restoration of China-North Korea relations does not mean an automatic return to the previous state.

The resumption of summit diplomacy between China and North Korea, marked by Kim Jung-Il's visit to China, is, at least from China's perspective, based on the reality of progress in China-South Korea to a comprehensive cooperative partnership that includes security areas; therefore, it would be impossible to restore the past special alliance between the two. Moreover, North Korea's attitude toward improving relations with China can be explained as a process of adjustment to, and acceptance of "post-ideological perspective," "non-camp-based diplomacy," "the end of their special alliance of blood-ties" that summarize China's policy on the Korean peninsula. Accordingly, improvements in China-North Korea relations will move towards normalization based on national interest and reciprocity, and will not return to the past special alliance. Furthermore, normalization and the move away from ideology in China-North Korea relations will help to weaken the importance of the North Korea factor that had been a major obstacle in China's relations with South Korea.

With Kim Jung-Il's two visits to China, relations between the two countries have normalized, and channels of communication and contact, including party-to-party contact, between China and North Korea have been fully restored, making it possible for the two countries to adjust their policies regarding important pending issues. Accordingly, China's attitude on the Korean peninsula question is changing from that of an indirect and passive one, to that which is direct and active.

Therefore, instead of giving automatic support to North Korea's position, China will seek an active, constructive role in establishing

peace on the Korean peninsula and in dealing with the Korea question. The establishment of such conditions would create a favorable environment for China and South Korea to establish close ties and cooperative system regarding the Korean peninsula question.

THE DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE U.S. AND CHINA AROUND THE KOREAN PENINSULA QUESTION

With the rapidly changing political climate in Northeast Asia in the post-Cold War era, the future relationship between China and South Korea will also undergo vast changes. The regional political climate will have a direct effect on future China-South Korea relations. Also, the direction of China-U.S. relations following the inauguration of the Bush administration will have a major impact, not only on China-South Korea relations but also on the political climate of the Korean peninsula.

If the Bush administration pursues as its Asia-Pacific strategy the weakening of China's current status as a regional power, and adopts a policy to promote expansion of the U.S.-Japan alliance and Japan-first partisan policy, it would not only result in a serious setback for China-U.S. relations, but would also obstruct the mutual development of leading powers in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, it would further worsen the skewed structure in the new trilateral relations among U.S., China, and Japan, negatively impacting regional stability. If the Bush administration were to take a hard-line approach to China, the mutual cooperation of China and the U.S. to North Korea would become difficult to carry out, and could possibly create intense competition between the two countries.

In short, if the Bush administration puts priority on a policy that would obstruct the expansion of China's power of influence or role on the Korean peninsula, instead of helping to pave the way for China to assume a constructive role in resolving the issues of the

Korean peninsula, such a policy would only have a negative effect on the Korean peninsula.

The worst possible scenario for the Korean peninsula would be for China-U.S. relations to turn confrontational, and for there to be setbacks in U.S.-North Korea relations. In order to prevent this from happening, South Korea and China need to work more closely through dialogue and cooperation.

It is likely that the U.S. and China will have a joint interest in the prevention of war on the Korean peninsula as well as for denuclearization. The possible differences in approach and methods, however, will cause conflict in China-U.S. relations. In particular, if the Bush administration should push implementation of the principle of reciprocity in resolving the Korean peninsula question, it would conflict with China's policy that places priority on creating conditions that would enable North Korea to come out of isolation and pursue reform.

On the contrary, if China and the U.S. could come together for the mutual goal of bringing peace and stability to the Korean peninsula through close cooperation and dialogue, the principle of reciprocity emphasized by the U.S. government could work positively to change North Korea's attitude, and even its policy on pending issues such as the issue of weapons of mass destruction. However, without the precondition of mutual cooperation between China and the U.S., emphasis placed by Washington on the principle of reciprocity could only work to heighten conflict and confrontation between the two countries on the Korean peninsula question.

On the issue of the Korean peninsula, unlike that of Taiwan, which caused a rift in the U.S.-China relations, the interests of the two countries have converged. The U.S. and China have a history of maintaining a cooperative relationship whenever there has been tension on the Korean peninsula, such as the North Korea nuclear issue of 1994 and the long-range missiles issue of 1999. Based on this fact, both South Korea and China should concentrate on diplomatic efforts, so that for the U.S. and China can maintain and develop a

cooperative partnership to maximize their shared interest in bringing peace and stability to the Korean peninsula. In particular, the South Korean government should strive, through dialogue and cooperation with China, to minimize the differences in the U.S. and China's position, especially focusing on strategies to resolve the Korea question.

A mature and rational attitude is apparent in China's recent approach to China-U.S. relations. After the September 11th terrorist attack, China, highlighting the U.S. and China's mutual interest in working together for anti-terrorism, has been actively pursuing various policies to prevent the Bush administration's hard-line approach toward China from taking effect. Given the importance of China's cooperation in establishing an international coalition on anti-terrorism, it is likely that cooperation and progress, rather than conflict and confrontation, will characterize future U.S.-China relations.

Through its efforts to form a strategic partnership with the U.S., China has been successful in casting aside its role as the challenger in the new U.S.-China-Japan triangle. Rather, it has upgraded its relations with the U.S. to the same level as U.S.-Japan relations. If China can lead U.S.-Japan and the U.S.-China relations toward becoming complementary and harmonious, thereby gradually working free of the current deadlock in China-Japan relations, the current skewed structure of the new trilateral relations would be vastly improved. This in turn would be vital progress in eliminating the last vestiges of the Cold War in the Northeast Asian region and securing stability in the region. As far as the actual work to mend old fences through establishment of balanced trilateral relations among the U.S., China, and Japan, the Korean peninsula is likely to become the core issue, and the need for close cooperation between South Korea and China would be acutely felt.

Currently, the Kim Dae-jung Government is making a break from its past strategy of temporary remedy over problems regarding the Korean peninsula. Instead, it is moving towards resolving

fundamental issues through the dissolution of the Cold War structure on the peninsula. The new approach corresponds with China's basic understanding of, and policy on the Korean peninsula. Therefore, South Korea and China, based on their mutual understanding, should seek a policy that would dismantle the Cold War structure on the peninsula through close cooperation.

In this regard, the issue of U.S. military presence would likely be a key issue for discussion between South Korea and China. There has been a certain degree of discrepancy between China's official position and its actual policy regarding the withdrawal of the U.S. military in South Korea, and its position on the issue has varied depending on changes in the leadership and the strategic environment.

Following its basic principle of foreign policy that opposes the stationing of foreign military in a foreign country, China has maintained an official policy consistent with its principles. However, after the 1980s, when China broke away from Mao's revolutionary diplomacy and began promoting independent foreign policy, it took a more pragmatic perspective, re-evaluating the U.S. military presence in South Korea. In other words, China acknowledged the U.S. military presence in South Korea as a historical product of the Cold War system. It also understood the negative impact on the balance of power on the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia that would result if the U.S. military withdrew. Hence, China's actual policy regarding the U.S. military in South Korea seeks gradual, rather than complete and abrupt withdrawal of the U.S. military, the establishment of countermeasures against the negative impact of military withdrawal. If China and the U.S. were to cooperate in issues for the Korean peninsula, China's pragmatism on the U.S. military in South Korea would likely become more evident.

However, if U.S.-North Korea relations improve in the future and the effects of the South Korean government's policy to resolve the Korean peninsula issue through the dissolution of the Cold War structure takes shape, the need to redefine the U.S. military presence

in South Korea will be keenly felt. Accordingly, China and South Korea should form communication channels to discuss the U.S. military presence.

South Korea and China, acknowledging the importance of bilateral and multilateral security negotiations for the Asian Pacific region, including Northeast Asia, have maintained multi-faceted policy consultations to this effect. Based on their achievements, South Korea and China should further strengthen cooperative relations on security issues in order to effectively deal with bilateral security issues and various countermeasures for crises, including the crisis management and dispute settlement for the Korean peninsula.

Above all, China and South Korea should strengthen their mutual cooperation based on their mutual concerns over the expansion of the Japanese military, more specifically, the expansion of movement of the Japanese Self-Defense Force. They must also be concerned with the conservatization of Japanese society and the waning of powers to check those conservative powers. China also needs to play an active role in dissuading North Korea from continuing its risky military policy, including its nuclear and missile programs, which provides justification for the Japanese military buildup.

China seems to be skeptical about the multilateral security cooperative system as an effective mechanism for resolving and preventing regional disputes and conflicts. Its skepticism stems from the recognition that a multilateral security mechanism could easily fall under the control of one particular country (the U.S.). If China were to be incorporated under the regulations of a mechanism controlled by one nation, it would be detrimental to the national interest. Hence, China is taking a cautious and gradual approach to the multilateral security cooperative system, assuming a more passive position on concrete measures for establishing mutual confidence and increasing transparency.

The multilateral security mechanism would not only work to develop and expand the Chinese economy and market but also ease

the military competition among the countries in the Asia Pacific region. Multilateral security cooperation would, moreover, dissolve the justification for a Japanese military buildup, increase the transparency of Japanese military policy, and act as an effective mechanism to keep Japan from becoming a major military power. Therefore, China and South Korea should reinforce strategic dialogues and exchanges for building a multilateral security cooperative system as a mechanism to resolve and prevent regional disputes and conflicts in East Asia.

SOUTH KOREA-CHINA RELATIONS IN ESTABLISHING PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Compared to China and Japan whose relations are still at the friendly and good-neighborly phase, China and South Korea currently have a mutual understanding on bilateral issues on the Korean peninsula question as well as more diverse multilateral issues. Compared to other countries, the two countries are blessed with advantages to develop their mutual relations. Based on their mutual strategic interests, mutual dependence between South Korea and China is on the rise, and the potential for mutual cooperation is immense. Utilizing these advantages, the two countries should focus on developing their relations into a more mature relationship.

In expanding the mutual cooperation between South Korea and China to the areas of politics and security and upgrading their relations to a true partnership, it will be necessary to readjust the China-North Korea friendship and alliance treaty formed in the past that designated South Korea as the archenemy, and to build confidence among the citizens of both countries.

In this connection, with the attenuation of the military security element of the friendship and alliance treaty, the Chinese government and political experts have expressed the view that with the establishment of bilateral relations between China and South

Korea, the treaty has lost its effectiveness. In addition, there is a movement in some academic circles to re-evaluate the Korean War from a more pragmatic perspective. Hence, in order to form a true partnership, re-evaluation of the Korean War and efforts to correct mutually distorted views and attitudes are desperately needed in order to build confidence among the people of China and South Korea. In this regard, the two countries should actively pursue various policies and foster exchanges of information and literature as well as of specialists and scholars on the Korean War.

Currently, the issues of establishing peace on the Korean peninsula, dissolution of the Cold War structure, reform of the North Korea system, North Korea's programs in nuclear, missile, and weapons of mass destruction, the rise in the number of North Korean defectors due to the collapse of the rationing system, and other various issues directly linked to North Korea are pending issues between China and South Korea. China's active and constructive role is need more than ever to foster cooperation between the two.

By expanding bilateral relations to include areas of politics and security through establishment of a cooperative partnership with South Korea and by reviving summit diplomacy and securing various cooperative channels with North Korea, China has what it takes to help resolve the Korean peninsula question, as well as to establish a system of peace and coexistence on the peninsula. Since China has concurred with South Korea's approach to the Korean peninsula question and its policy of engagement for North Korea, it is expected to work actively to build a system of peace and coexistence on the Korean peninsula.

In order to maximize mutual interest between China and South Korea, and for China to play an assertive role, the two countries need to build unofficial channels as well as multilateral cooperative channels.

North Korea's agreement to hold the June 15 Inter-Korean Summit illustrates a shift in its policy from the communization of the entire Korean peninsula or "One Korea" policy to a priority to

maintain its regime based on recognition of “a divided Korea” as a reality. However, the policy shift did not begin with the summit, but should be seen as the result of a long process that began when North Korea recognized that it would have a serious problem defending its system following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Communist bloc.

That North Korea acknowledges a divided Korea as a reality also signifies its recognition of South Korea as a real entity. The changed North Korean attitude bears significance in terms of institutionalizing and establishing peace and coexistence between the two Koreas. Once North Korea begins to recognize South Korea as an actual political entity, the policy of peaceful coexistence, based on the policy of “two Koreas” promoted by the neighboring four powers and South Korea, will bear visible results.

The key to inspiring North Korea’s attitude toward change and its enthusiasm for resolving the Korean peninsula question lies in changing the North Korean system. Hence, efforts should be focused on creating conditions conducive to reform and opening. Kim Jung-Il’s two visits to China is ample evidence of a potential shift in North Korea’s policy line.

In 1987, when China defined itself as “socialism in the early stage” in order to promote reform, North Korea altered its attitude on China. Furthermore, when South Korea and China established diplomatic ties, North Korea maintained opposition toward China more strongly. North Korea’s antagonism to China’s reform policy changed, however, with Kim Jung-Il’s visit to Beijing. The fact that Kim Jung-Il offered a positive assessment of China’s reform policy to the Chinese leaders during his visit to Beijing, illustrates the change in North Korea’s attitude. While Kim Jung-Il’s assessment of China’s reform policies were brief and non-committal at that time, his comments after the January visit to Pudong, Shanghai were more sweeping, signifying a new step forward.

Since 2001, North Korea has stressed a new ideological perspective, and this can be assessed as a break from the existing

fixed ideas about reform and open-door policies. The “New Ways of Thinking” movement budding in North Korean society also demonstrates an important change in its existing position, considering the fact that the North criticized China’s ideological shift as antisocialist.

In this respect, Kim Jung-Il’s visit to Pudong may be seen as an event signaling the changes to come in North Korean society. This is not merely a shift in North Korea’s attitude toward China’s reform but a symbolic move that expresses its own will to shift its policies toward reform and opening the country to the outside.

In North Korea’s attempts to change its policies towards reform and to open its market, it would likely show much interest in the Chinese reform and developmental model, which achieved high economic growth through economic reforms, creating a market economy while, at least from the macroscopic view, minimizing changes in the political system. Unlike the early phase of China’s reform efforts under Deng Xiaoping, when China underwent many initial difficulties because there was no “Chinese model” available, North Korea has the model as a rudder to guide its reform efforts.

After his visit to Pudong, Kim Jung-Il positively assessed China’s reform policy. That, in effect, will influence his decision to approve China’s overall reform policy and the Chinese reform model. When North Korea’s position was negative toward Chinese reform, China could not play a role in the reform and opening of North Korea; however, with the North’s positive recognition of China’s reform, even if only as a policy, China can now play a role in that reform and opening.

REDEFINING THE STATUS OF SOUTH KOREA-CHINA COOPERATIVE RELATIONS

Given the active role that China is expected to assume, closer cooperation and coordination are needed between China and South

Korea. South Korea is eager for China to participate in resolving the Korean peninsula question since both countries share a mutual perspectives on South Korea's engagement policy toward North Korea as well as on its approach on the Korean peninsula.

In order to promote its cooperation, South Korea should thoroughly analyze China's interest on the Korean peninsula, as well as interests of the two countries as a means for expanding the radius of action for South Korea's diplomacy with China.

Because South Korea's policy has so far been based mainly on China's role in resolving the Korean peninsula issue and on South Korea's own needs, and not in consideration of their mutual interests, South Korea has, in fact, narrowed its room to maneuver. As seen in South Korea's policy towards Taiwan and in the case of the Dalai Lama's visit to Korea, its China policy was not based on the Chinese perspective. Rather, it acquiesced more than China expected it to, causing lack of flexibility.

While South Korea is in desperate need of China's cooperation, not only in South Korea's sunshine policy, but in establishing peace and dissolving the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula, these key policy issues also correspond to China's policy choices for obtaining an interest on the Korean peninsula. However, to secure China's positive role and to settle areas for cooperation between the two nations, South Korea must define, as part of its foreign policy, the status of cooperative relations between China and South Korea, and must work on convincing the U.S. to adjust its policy to the post-Cold-War reality in Northeast Asia.

As long as the Korean peninsula is divided, the South Korea-U.S. alliance and the South Korea-China partnership can be characterized as survival and development; however, in the case of conflict between the relations, the basis of judgment will be survival. Once a clear principle on the basic nature of U.S.-South Korea relations is clearly established, and the U.S. trusts in that principle, the potential close coordination and cooperation between China and South Korea, so vital to resolving the Korean peninsula issue, will not be

misconceived as a shift in the axis of diplomacy.

Despite the significant changes in China-North Korea relations, based on the “principle of independence,” the fact that China still places strategic value on North Korea stems from its limited relations with South Korea, and its assessment that no degree of progress in China-South Korea relations can surpass or replace U.S.-South Korea relations. In short, China’s assessment of North Korea’s strategic value is premised by the fact that even if it forms a partnership with South Korea, it is fundamentally impossible to take the place of the United States. Therefore, it believes that if it loses its influential position over North Korea, it will be relegated to a more passive role in the strategic game.

In forming foreign policy, if South Korea should clearly defines the status of its alliance with the United States and cooperation with China, and if it builds U.S. confidence in that defined status, then bilateral relations between the U.S.-South Korea alliance and China-South Korea cooperation will develop into a win-win relationship. In addition, the framework of U.S.-South Korea cooperation established under the Cold-War system, must be adjusted the post-Cold War environment, one which recognizes that the concept of “the archenemy” is obsolete. This is essential for the strengthening of China-South Korea cooperation. “The archenemy” characterization, which also included the currently important cooperative partner China, is a thing of the past.

Many concrete and realistic changes have taken place in the regional political climate as well in other spheres; yet, South Korea’s relationship with the United States, formed during under the Cold War system, has not adjusted to the times, causing unnecessary misunderstandings and conflict between South Korea and the United States. Indeed, any changes in South Korea’s relations with former enemies, particularly China, continue to directly impact the alliance system between South Korea and the U.S.

Therefore, in order to establish a mechanism for China-South Korea relations as well as South Korea’s cooperative relations with

other former enemies, a new cooperative framework, for a more rational and functional U.S.-South Korea alliance should be built. With such a mechanism in place, the field of cooperation between China and South Korea can then be expanded.