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1. The Debate on Modernizing the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Since the 21st century, the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region has undergone fundamental changes. China's economic rise and military modernization, North Korea's advancement of its nuclear capabilities, and the intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition pose structural challenges to the existing regional security order. Within this altered security landscape, the traditional bilateral alliance structure demands adaptation and innovation to effectively respond to new threats. Alliance modernization centers on improving and strengthening existing alliance frameworks to more effectively address the changing security environment and new challenges. In this context, discussions on modernizing the ROK-U.S. alliance set as a core direction the expansion of the alliance's operational scope and strategic role from a Korea-centric system to the Indo-Pacific region, in response to the evolving regional security environment. This signifies not merely a quantitative expansion of the existing alliance relationship, but a qualitative transformation of the alliance's strategic horizon and operational domain. Specifically, ROK-U.S. alliance modernization encompasses the following key areas (Min Jeong-hoon 2025). First, securing strategic flexibility through adjustments to the size and role of US Forces Korea. Second, expanding the ROK military's primary role in the defense posture against North Korea and the corresponding increase in defense spending. Third, establishing a joint response system for military threats beyond the Korean Peninsula within the region.

The prevailing analysis holds that the core of the alliance modernization pursued by the United States lies in securing strategic flexibility for US Forces Korea (USFK) to counter China. This implies that USFK must transition from its traditional role of defending the Korean Peninsula to a system capable of performing broader regional security missions. Perceptions and evaluations of ROK-US alliance modernization among South Korea's political elites show significant differences depending on political affiliation (Yang Ji-ho 2025). The conservative camp maintains that strategic

flexibility for containing China must be accepted within the framework of the ROK-US alliance. Citing Article III of the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, they argue that if the US is attacked in the Indo-Pacific region, South Korea could be automatically drawn into the conflict. They contend that the very presence of USFK on the Korean Peninsula serves not only as a deterrent against North Korea but also as a means to contain neighboring countries. Conversely, the progressive camp maintains that the ROK-US alliance is fundamentally centered on the Korean Peninsula. They judge that the purpose of USFK's presence is to provide war deterrence and defense capabilities against attacks from North Korea, expressing the view that it is difficult to accept strategic flexibility for USFK deployed for North Korean deterrence.

The security strategy of the second Trump administration, which prioritizes containing China, suggests potential changes to the size and role of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK). Under the new strategic vision, USFK is expected to shift toward concentrating its capabilities on containing China, while anticipating that South Korea will take a more proactive role in responding to the North Korean threat (Yang Wook and Lee Kyung-seok 2025). In this context, The Wall Street Journal published an article raising the possibility of reducing the 4,500-strong Stryker Brigade currently deployed on a rotational basis in South Korea (Youssef, Ward, and Martin 2025). Within Washington, arguments have even surfaced advocating for a significant reduction in USFK troop levels to approximately 10,000 (Kavanagh and Caldwell 2025).

As the modernization of the ROK-U.S. alliance emerges as a core agenda item for both Korea and the United States, systematically analyzing the perceptions and attitudes of the Korean public toward these changes holds significant policy implications. The democratic legitimacy and sustainability of alliance policy must be grounded in national consensus and support, which requires accurate measurement and analysis of public opinion. This report comprehensively analyzes Koreans' perceptions regarding changes to the role of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), utilizing the latest public opinion poll data conducted by the East Asia Institute (EAI) in August 2025. By identifying key factors driving shifts in perception, it aims to derive strategies for building public consensus on modernizing the ROK-U.S. alliance and policy implications, thereby contributing to exploring a more stable and sustainable direction for alliance development.

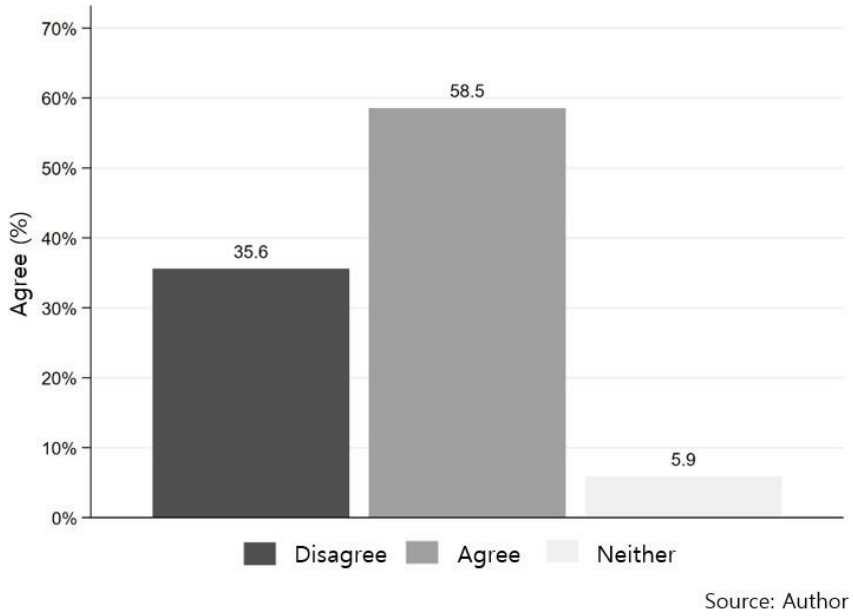
2. Koreans' Perceptions of Changes in the Role of U.S. Forces in Korea and the ROK-U.S. Alliance

Since the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty between Korea and the United States in 1953, the core mission of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK), stationed in South Korea, has been deterrence against North Korea—defending South Korea from North Korea's military threats. This traditional role has formed the bedrock of the ROK-U.S. alliance for over 70 years and has functioned as a central pillar of the Korean Peninsula's security architecture. However, as discussed earlier, amid the changing security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, discussions on alliance modernization persist in Washington, arguing that the existing mission of USFK should be expanded from deterrence against North Korea to containment of China. What perceptions do South Korean citizens hold regarding this potential policy shift? The results of a public opinion poll conducted by the East Asia Institute (EAI)

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in August 2025 offer intriguing insights.

[Figure 1]: South Koreans' Perceptions of the Changing Role of U.S. Forces in Korea



Source: Author

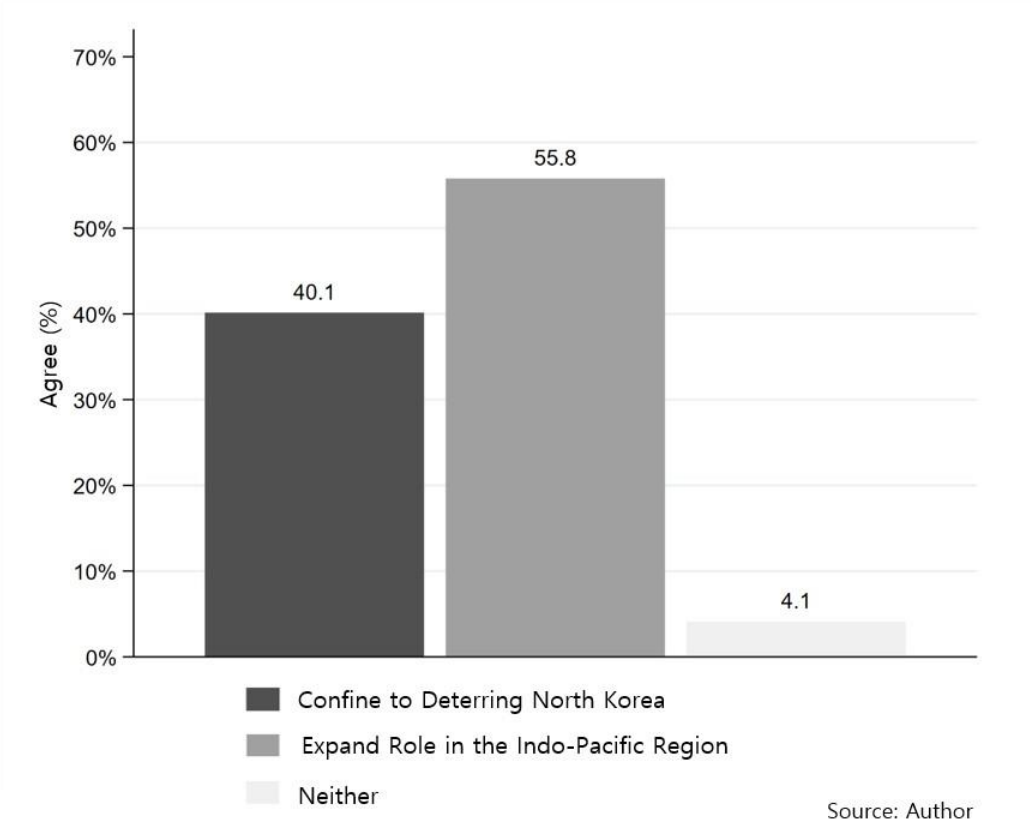
As shown in [Figure 1], 58.5% of South Korean citizens expressed approval regarding the change in the role of U.S. Forces Korea toward strengthening containment of China (40.5% approve, 18% strongly approve). Conversely, opposition stood at 35.6% (opposed 29.6%, strongly opposed 6%), while only 5.9% of respondents took a neutral stance. These results indicate that a majority of South Koreans hold a positive view of expanding the role of USFK. This reflects a shift in perception, moving away from the traditional stance that USFK's role should be limited to defending the Korean Peninsula, and instead showing forward-looking support for this new role change aimed at containing China.

In this context, what patterns emerge in public perceptions regarding the role of the ROK-U.S. alliance? According to [Figure 2], 40.1% of respondents believed the alliance should be limited to its traditional role of responding to North Korea's military threats (Strongly agree: 10.3%, Somewhat agree: 29.8%). Conversely, 55.8% of respondents perceived that the alliance should play a more active and broader role, such as countering China's challenges in the Indo-Pacific region (Strongly agree 24.4%, Agree 31.4%). Only 4.1% expressed a neutral opinion.

The findings from [Figure 1] and [Figure 2] present significant implications for discussions on modernizing the ROK-U.S. alliance. They indicate a structural shift in public perception regarding the alliance's role. It is noteworthy that approximately 60% of South Koreans perceive that the role of USFK and the ROK-US alliance should extend beyond traditional defense of the Korean Peninsula (deterrence against North Korea) to encompass the entire Indo-Pacific region. This indicates that Koreans' perspective on the alliance is moving beyond a limited, Korean Peninsula-centric framework, demonstrating a willingness to embrace comprehensive security cooperation at the regional level.

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[Figure 2]: South Koreans' Perception of the Role of the ROK-U.S. Alliance



3. Perceptions of the Changing Role of US Forces in Korea: Theoretical Discussion of Driving Factors

What factors then trigger shifts in the Korean public's perception regarding the enhanced role of US Forces in Korea in countering China? This report aims to analyze the influence of specific factors within three broad categories: (1) perceptions of US policy, (2) perceptions of security threats, and (3) perceptions of China policy.

3.1. Perceptions of U.S. Policy and Views on the Changing Role of U.S. Forces in Korea

The expansion of U.S. Forces Korea's role in countering China is a result of shifts in U.S. strategy toward China. In the unfolding U.S.-China strategic competition, driven by China's growing national power, the United States has designated China as its core competitor and is pursuing a strategy of denial to block China's expansion of influence in the region (Jeon Gyeong-ju 2025). This is based on the strategic objective of maintaining U.S. global leadership by preemptively preventing China from securing military superiority in the Indo-Pacific region. As China's economic growth fuels its military expansion, its anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities within the Indo-Pacific have significantly improved. As China's military power develops to a level posing a substantive challenge to the United States, Washington is substantially adjusting its regional troop deployments to prevent China from establishing military dominance within the First Island Chain. Within this strategic shift, the change in the role of US Forces Korea in countering China is directly linked to US defense of Taiwan and connects to the core US objective of deterring China within the First Island Chain (Jeon Jae-sung

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2025).

Basic trust in the United States is predicted to be the most fundamental and crucial factor in shaping South Koreans' perceptions regarding the changing role of U.S. Forces Korea for containing China. According to an August 2025 public opinion poll, 66.5% of respondents perceived the United States as a trustworthy partner for South Korea, while 30.2% did not. This suggests that the higher the level of trust in the United States, the greater the likelihood of South Korean public support for changes in U.S. security strategy aimed at containing China. Furthermore, trust in the United States' extended deterrence capabilities for South Korea's defense could also be influenced. The traditional role of US Forces Korea (USFK) has been to serve as a tripwire deterrent against North Korean military provocations. If part of USFK were to be redeployed for China containment missions, concerns could arise about a weakening of deterrence against North Korea. Amid North Korea's advanced nuclear missile capabilities posing a grave threat to South Korean security, the US nuclear umbrella remains a fundamental pillar of South Korea's security policy for deterring North Korea. According to an August public opinion poll, 56.5% of respondents believed the U.S. nuclear umbrella could guarantee South Korea's security against North Korean threats, while 34.1% held a negative view. In this context, it can be anticipated that the higher the trust in U.S. extended deterrence, the greater the acceptance of shifting USFK's role toward containing China.

South Korean citizens' perceptions of U.S. foreign policy are shaped not only through security issues but also through economic factors. Amid intensifying U.S.-China strategic competition, the United States is focusing on rebuilding its economic foundations to enhance its competitiveness. Following the 2008 financial crisis and the 2020s pandemic, the U.S. economy continues to bear the dual burdens of fiscal deficits and trade deficits (Kim Hak-gyun 2025). Simultaneously, China's low-cost production structure and manufacturing competitiveness are accelerating the relative decline of U.S. manufacturing (Kim Su-eon 2025). Responding to these structural changes, the second Trump administration pursued the revitalization of the U.S. economy through tariff policies, and these protectionist measures were also applied to its ally, South Korea. Despite the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, the Trump administration announced it would impose high tariffs on South Korea. On August 1, 2025, it adjusted the mutual tariff rate from 25% to 15% conditional on South Korea's commitment to invest $350 billion in the U.S. According to opinion poll analysis, 81% of respondents assessed the U.S. high tariff policy on South Korean exports to the U.S. as inappropriate. South Koreans' negative perception of U.S. tariff policy is expected to lower support for the U.S. strategy to contain China through changes in the role of U.S. Forces Korea.

Furthermore, regarding South Korea's $350 billion investment in the U.S. to lower America's high tariffs, 55.6% of respondents viewed it negatively, while only 32.8% perceived it positively. This reflects South Korean citizens' resentment toward U.S. policies that impose economic burdens on allies for America's own economic benefit. Furthermore, the U.S. is restricting South Korea's science and technology-related trade and investment with China to secure an advantage in technological competition with China in advanced technology fields. The poll also found that 57.6% of respondents negatively evaluated U.S.-led export control policies targeting China. Overall, it is evident that the South Korean public negatively evaluates the United States' unilateral economic policies and the

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economic pressure exerted on its ally, South Korea. In this context, negative perceptions of the United States' large-scale investment pressure using tariffs as a weapon and South Korea's export control policies toward China to maintain U.S. hegemony are expected to heighten opposition to changes in the role of U.S. Forces Korea aimed at containing China.

3.2. Perceptions of Security Threats and Views on the Changing Role of US Forces in Korea

South Koreans' perception of security threats is also considered a key factor influencing public opinion on the role transition of US Forces Korea. In an August 2025 poll, South Korean citizens selected North Korea as the most militarily threatening nation, with 83.6% of respondents identifying North Korea as a threat to South Korea's security. South Korea remains the world's only divided nation, and with the Korean War still not formally ended, North Korea has continuously advanced its nuclear missile capabilities since Kim Jong-un took power. North Korea's adoption of a nuclear force policy law in September 2022 has heightened the possibility of its preemptive use of nuclear weapons. South Koreans' perception of North Korea as a security threat is expected to weaken support for changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) to focus on countering China. As previously mentioned, USFK has primarily carried out the core mission of deterring North Korea. Therefore, shifting its role to counter China could significantly weaken the deterrence posture against North Korea.

Meanwhile, an August public opinion poll revealed that perceptions of China as a threat have spread significantly among the South Korean public, alongside concerns about North Korea's security threat. The poll found that 84% of respondents perceive China's military expansion as threatening. Particularly, military tensions between South Korea and China in the Yellow Sea have escalated recently as China unilaterally installed structures in the Yellow Sea's provisional numerical zone. It is reported that when the South Korean marine research vessel Onnuri approached the structures China installed in the West Sea, Chinese coast guard vessels systematically obstructed its access (Noh Seok-jo 2025). Furthermore, incursions by Chinese military aircraft into South Korea's Air Defense Identification Zone (KADIZ) are also on a continuous upward trend. China repeatedly justifies its unilateral incursions by arguing that the KADIZ is international airspace (Lee Seong-hoon 2024). Against this backdrop, the growing perception among South Koreans of China as a security threat is likely to translate into increased support for strengthening the US Forces Korea's role in countering China. This suggests an underlying recognition that US Forces Korea should be utilized more proactively to counter China's military expansion and security threats.

3.3. Public Perception of Public Policy and Views on the Changing Role of US Forces Korea

The final category concerns South Korean citizens' perceptions of China policy. As the Trump administration's second term intensifies U.S. tariff policies targeting South Korea and pressure on South Korean investment in the U.S., the importance of economic relations between South Korea and China is being highlighted once again. Traditionally, China has been a major export destination for South Korea, playing a crucial role in its economic growth. However, following the THAAD deployment incident, China's economic retaliation and internal economic restructuring driven by its

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rise have elevated China to a key competitor in South Korea's core industrial sectors. Consequently, economic cooperation between South Korea and China has indeed become somewhat strained compared to the past. Yet, as U.S. economic pressure intensifies, the importance of economic cooperation with China is resurfacing. According to an August public opinion poll, 53% of respondents felt the current level of economic cooperation between South Korea and China is appropriate, while approximately 33% believed economic cooperation should be strengthened. This emphasis on economic cooperation with China could potentially weaken support for enhancing the role of U.S. forces in South Korea as a deterrent against China. On the other hand, the public may perceive economic cooperation with China and China's security threats as separate dimensions. In other words, the public may hold the view that economic cooperation with China should proceed while China's military threats must be contained. From this perspective, it can be anticipated that the perception of strengthening economic cooperation with China will not significantly impact the perception of enhancing the USFK's role in containing China.

Another key factor shaping South Korean public perception of China policy is the possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Concerns have been raised in various quarters about the potential for Xi Jinping to use force to unify Taiwan. Some analysts suggest that Xi may consider invading Taiwan to secure a strong justification for suppressing domestic political opposition, thereby ensuring his long-term rule. The general assessment is that the possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would have both direct and indirect impacts on the security environment of the Korean Peninsula. Should China engage in armed conflict with Taiwan, the United States is highly likely to intervene to defend Taiwan. Consequently, South Korea, as a U.S. ally, would also likely become involved in the Taiwan conflict. Furthermore, some viewpoints suggest that China might induce North Korea to engage in military provocations timed to coincide with a Taiwan invasion, through prior discussions with Pyongyang, to minimize South Korean and U.S. Forces Korea intervention in such a scenario. Amid the potential significant impact of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan on South Korea's foreign and security policy, polls indicate that a majority of South Koreans perceive a high likelihood of military conflict occurring in the Taiwan Strait in the near future. Nearly 72% of respondents predicted that China could engage in military provocations against Taiwan. Furthermore, 88% of respondents stated that military tensions and conflicts in the Taiwan Strait are important to South Korea's national interests. Considering this context—South Koreans' perception of the possibility of China's military unification of Taiwan and the importance of the Taiwan Strait to South Korea—it is anticipated that support for changing the role of USFK to counter China will increase.

4. Perceptions of the Changing Role of U.S. Forces in Korea: An Empirical Analysis of Driving Factors

To analyze the empirical influence of factors that could drive changes in the Korean public's perception of altering the role of USFK, this report employed quantitative analysis methods. The dependent variable was set as the level of support among South Korean citizens for changing the role of USFK to strengthen containment of China, as described earlier. The independent variables were set as factors belonging to the three categories described above: (1) perceptions of US policy, (2)

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perceptions of security threats, and (3) perceptions of public policy. Independent variables related to perceptions of U.S. foreign policy included: trust in the U.S. as Korea's partner; trust in the U.S. nuclear umbrella for Korea's defense; perceptions of U.S. tariff policies imposed on Korea; perceptions of U.S. pressure on Korea to increase investment in response to tariff rate cuts; and perceptions of U.S. export controls on Korea's exports to China. Independent variables related to security threat perceptions included the perceived security threat levels from North Korea and China. Finally, the independent variables related to perceptions of public diplomacy policy included perceptions of South Korea-China economic cooperation, the possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, and the perceived impact of a Taiwan Strait crisis on South Korea's national interests. This is summarized in the table below.

[Table 1]: Empirical Analysis Variable Specification

Dependent Variable	Support for changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea
Independent variable	Perceptions Regarding Policy Toward the United States - The United States' credibility as a key partner - The Credibility of the U.S. Nuclear Umbrella - Perception of U.S. Tariff Imposition - Perception of U.S. pressure on investment in the U.S. - Perception of U.S. Export Controls on China Perception of Security Threats - Perception of North Korea as a Security Threat - Perception of Security Threats from China Public Policy Perception on China - Importance of Korea-China Economic Cooperation - The possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan - Impact of the Taiwan Strait Crisis

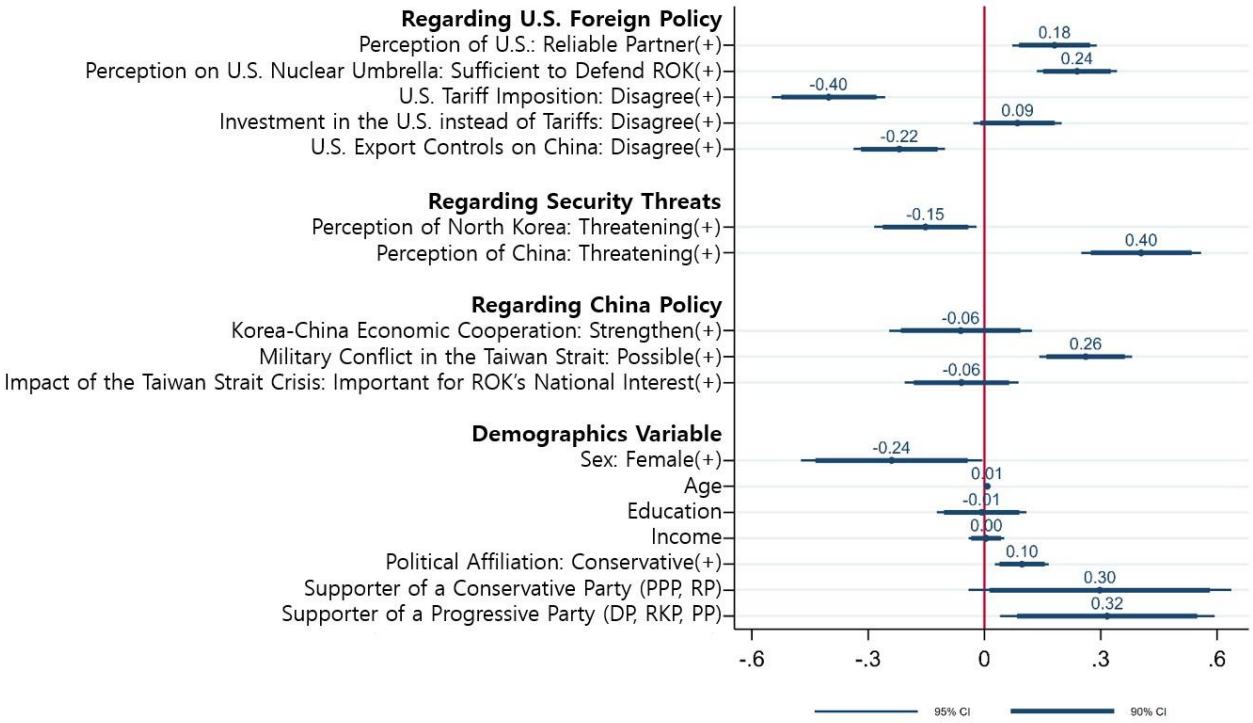
The results of the statistical analysis[1] reveal the following key findings ([Figure 3]). First, examining the influence of independent variables related to U.S. foreign policy reveals that all coefficients are statistically significant, except for the perception of U.S. pressure on investment in Korea due to tariff rate reductions. Among these, the coefficients for trust in the U.S. and trust in the U.S. nuclear umbrella are both positive (+), while perceptions of U.S. tariff policy and export controls on China are both negative (-). These empirical findings suggest the following implications. The more the South Korean public trusts the U.S. as an important partner, the more they support changing the

[1] If the 90% or 95% confidence interval for a specific independent variable does not include zero, that variable can be considered to have a statistically significant effect on the dependent variable. If the 90% or 95% confidence interval for a specific independent variable is located to the right of zero, it can be considered to exert a statistically significant positive (+) influence on the dependent variable. Conversely, if the 90% or 95% confidence interval for a specific independent variable is located to the left of zero, it can be considered to exert a statistically significant negative (-) influence on the dependent variable.

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role of U.S. Forces Korea to strengthen containment against China. Similarly, the more they trust the U.S. nuclear umbrella for South Korea's defense, the more they support changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea. Conversely, the more negatively people view the high tariffs the U.S. imposes on Korea, the more they oppose changing the role of USFK. Similarly, the stronger the perception that Korea's export controls on China are inappropriate, the more people oppose utilizing USFK to contain China. These analytical results provide empirical evidence supporting the theoretical discussion outlined earlier. One notable exception is that perceptions of U.S. pressure on investment in the U.S. do not influence attitudes toward changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea.

[Figure 3]: Analysis Variables for Determinants of Perception Change



Second, examining the influence of variables related to security threat perceptions, the coefficients for the North Korea threat perception variable and the China threat perception variable are statistically significant, being negative (-) and positive (+), respectively. First, as the perception of the North Korean threat increases, opposition to changing the role to counter China also increases. Conversely, as the perception of the Chinese threat increases, support for changing the role of US Forces Korea to counter China also increases. These empirical results support the theoretical explanations discussed earlier. Third, examining the influence of independent variables related to public diplomacy policy, only the coefficient for the possibility of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait is positive (+) and statistically significant. This result indicates that citizens who perceive a higher likelihood of a Chinese military invasion are more likely to support a change in the role of USFK. However, contrary to the preceding theoretical discussion, perceptions of Korea-China economic cooperation and the perceived impact of a military crisis in the Taiwan Strait on Korea were found to have no influence on changes in perceptions regarding a change in the role of USFK.

Finally, among the demographic variables of respondents, the coefficients for gender and

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party support were found to be statistically significant. Men were found to be more supportive of changing the role of USFK, and respondents showed a positive perception of changing the role of USFK across party lines. This bipartisan public support for changing the role of USFK stands in stark contrast to the clear differences in position among political elites based on partisanship.[2]

Thus far, we have only confirmed the statistical significance of each variable's influence on perceptions of changing the role of USFK. But what is the actual impact of each variable? First, it was found that for every one-unit increase in public trust that the US is an important partner for Korea, support for changing the role of USFK rises by 3.6 percentage points. Furthermore, as public trust in the U.S. nuclear umbrella for Korea's defense increases, support for changing the USFK's mission to counter China rises by 4.8 percentage points. Conversely, as public negative perceptions of unfair U.S. tariffs increase, support for changing the role of USFK decreases by 8 percentage points. Similarly, as negative perceptions of South Korea's export controls on China to pressure Beijing intensify, support for changing the role of USFK declines by 4.4 percentage points. Regarding foreign policy toward the U.S., U.S. tariff policy was found to exert the greatest influence on perceptions of changing the role of USFK. If the U.S. intends to pursue a change in the role of USFK in the future and seeks to increase public support in South Korea, it must seriously reconsider its economic pressure policies on South Korea pursued for its own interests.

Regarding perceptions of security threats, public recognition of the Chinese threat was found to exert a significantly greater influence on support for changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea than recognition of the North Korean threat. As the perceived threat level from China increased, support for altering the role of U.S. Forces Korea to counter China rose by 8 percentage points, whereas support declined by 3 percentage points as the perceived threat level from North Korea increased. Analysis indicates that as South Korean public concern rises not only about China's security threats to Korea but also about the possibility of China's military unification of Taiwan, support for strengthening the USFK's role in countering China to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait increases by 5.2 percentage points.

5. Policy Implications and Recommendations

Discussions on changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) to strengthen containment against China have emerged as a key issue between South Korea and the United States. Under the U.S. grand strategy to curb China's military rise in the Indo-Pacific amid the U.S.-China hegemonic competition, the modernization of the ROK-U.S. alliance is being discussed, with the re-missioning of USFK at its core. Since the Korean War, USFK has played a central role in defending South Korea for over 70 years. They continue to perform the critical mission of deterring North Korean military provocations as a frontline force. Given this importance, if USFK's mission shifts to countering China, a comprehensive revision of South Korea's security policy would be inevitable. A key point to note is that as the U.S.-China hegemonic competition persists, China's military expansion in the Indo-Pacific region will accelerate. To counter this, the U.S. is increasingly likely to demand more active roles

[2] The coefficient for the conservative party supporter variable is statistically significant only within the 90% confidence interval.

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from its regional allies. This is precisely why public awareness of the potential shift in the USFK's mission is crucial, as it could have massive ripple effects on South Korea's security policy and broader diplomacy.

Within this structural context, this report analyzes the overall views of the Korean public regarding changes to the role of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and examines the specific factors driving these views. According to the latest public opinion poll conducted by the East Asia Institute among 1,585 adults, nearly 60% of respondents supported changing the mission of USFK to contain China. More notably, South Korean citizens support USFK's role in containing China across party lines.

These poll results reflect that South Korean citizens recognize the geopolitical realities described earlier. Notably, it indicates that citizens are acutely aware of the security threats posed by China's military expansion. Perceptions of China's security threat and concerns over China's potential use of force to unify with Taiwan are key factors driving South Korean public support for strengthening the USFK's role in countering China. As China's military influence expands in the Indo-Pacific region and the West Sea, public support in South Korea for changing the role of USFK is expected to continue rising.

For the Korean public to agree that the ROK-U.S. alliance should contribute to the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region beyond the Korean Peninsula, in line with the deepening U.S.-China strategic competition, the U.S. role is decisive. As the mission of U.S. Forces Korea is being discussed within the context of America's evolving grand strategy, the U.S. must address several key challenges to secure the support of the Korean public. First, it must provide South Korea with a more robust and credible nuclear umbrella amid the growing North Korean nuclear missile threat. Despite the 2023 Washington Declaration issued by the US and South Korea to strengthen the credibility of extended deterrence, questions about the reliability of the US nuclear umbrella persist. If the US intends to utilize its troops stationed in South Korea for deterrence against China, it must present South Korean citizens with a more credible extended deterrence strategy. Second, the tariff policies targeting allies pursued by the Trump administration must be seriously reconsidered. The U.S. must recognize that its tariff policies, which pursue only its own interests, are severely undermining trust in America as both a hegemonic power and an ally. Furthermore, the U.S. must acknowledge that its foreign policy of restricting allies' exports and investments to China to curb China's technological rise actually increases South Korean public resentment toward changing the role of U.S. forces in Korea.

Ultimately, for the United States to continuously secure the support of the South Korean public for strengthening the role of U.S. Forces Korea in countering China, it must simultaneously enhance credibility in the security domain and adjust policies to consider mutual benefits in the economic sphere. This can be considered an essential condition for the ROK-U.S. alliance to effectively respond to the era of U.S.-China strategic competition while achieving sustainable development. ■

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Appendix

[Appendix Table 1]: Logit Regression Analysis Table

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
	Dependent variable: Support/Opposition to changing the role of U.S. Forces Korea to strengthen containment of China			
	U.S. Policy Model	Security Threat Model	China Policy Model	All Models
Perception of U.S.: Reliable Partner (+)	.16***			.18***
	(.05)			(.06)
Perception of U.S. Nuclear Umbrella: Sufficient to Defend ROK (+)	.22***			.24***
	(.05)			(.05)
U.S. Tariff Imposition: Disagree(+)	-.35***			-.4***
	(.07)			(.07)
Investment in the U.S. instead of Tariffs: Disagree(+)	.07			.09
	(.06)			(.06)
U.S. Export Controls on China: Disagree (+)	-.3***			-.22***
	(.06)			(.06)
Perception of North Korea: Threatening (+)		-.06		-.15**
		(.06)		(.07)
Perception of China: Threatening (+)		.46***		.4***
		(.07)		(.08)
Korea-China Economic Cooperation: Strengthen (+)			-.28***	-.06
			(.09)	(.09)
Military Conflict in the Taiwan Strait: Possible (+)			.35***	.26***
			(.06)	(.06)
Impact of the Taiwan Strait Crisis: Important for ROK's National Interest (+)			0	-.06
			(.07)	(.07)
Sex: Female (+)	-.35***	-.27**	-.31***	-.24**
	(.11)	(.11)	(.11)	(.12)
Age	0	0	0	.01*
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)
Education	.01	-.05	-.06	-.01
	(.06)	(.05)	(.05)	(.06)
Income	0	-.02	-.01	0
	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)	(.02)
Political Affiliation: Conservative (+)	.11***	.16***	.15***	.1***
	(.03)	(.03)	(.03)	(.04)
Supporter of a Conservative Party (PPP, RP)	.3*	.53***	.52***	.3*
	(.17)	(.16)	(.16)	(.17)
Supporter of a Progressive Party (DP,	.25*	.23*	.29**	.32**

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RKP, PP)	(.14)	(.13)	(.13)	(.14)
Constant	.76	-1.38***	-.62	-1.26*
	(.59)	(.5)	(.54)	(.73)
N	1585	1585	1585	1585
Log Likelihood	-952.77	-1003.02	-1001.13	-920.22

The values in parentheses indicate robust standard errors.

**** p<.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1*

[Appendix Table 2]: Descriptive Statistics Table

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Agree/Disagree on Changing Role of USFK to Strengthen Containment of China	1585	.59	0.49	0	1
Perception of U.S.	1585	3.48	1.13	1	5
Perception of U.S. Nuclear Umbrella	1585	3.29	1.12	1	5
Imposition of high tariffs on U.S. allies	1585	3.92	1.00	1	5
Investment in the U.S. instead of Tariffs	1585	3.3	1.10	1	5
U.S. and Allies' Export Controls on China	1585	3.28	1.19	1	5
Threat Perception on North Korea	1585	4.05	0.98	1	5
Threap Perception on China	1585	4.03	0.91	1	5
Korea-China Economic Cooperation	1585	2.18	0.66	1	3
Possibility of Military Conflict in the Taiwan Strait	1585	3.72	1.03	1	5
Impact of the Taiwan Strait Crisis	1585	4.23	0.85	1	5
Sex	1585	1.5	0.50	1	2
Age	1585	51.3	16.42	19	91
Education	1585	4.46	1.07	1	6
Income	1585	4.94	2.60	1	11
Political Affiliation	1585	5.15	2.01	0	10
Supporter of a Conservative Party (PPP, RP)	1585	.24	0.43	0	1
Supporter of a Progressive Party (DP, RKP, PP)	1585	.42	0.49	0	1

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"South Korean Public Opinion on ROK–U.S. Alliance Modernization: Perceptions of Evolving Role of United States Forces Korea (USFK) in Korea Based on the First ROK–U.S.–Japan Public Opinion Poll"

979-11-6617-990-7 95340 Date of Issue: September 5, 2025

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