

KOREA POLICY FORUM

The US-ROK Alliance Under the Trump and Lee Administrations



Tuesday, October 28, 2025
2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. EDT

In-Person & Hybrid Event
School of Media and Public Affairs
Room 310
805 21st ST NW, Washington DC
Virtual via Zoom



Institute for
Korean Studies

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



Korea Policy Forum

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This event is on the record and open to the public.



◇ EVENT DESCRIPTION

The U.S.–ROK alliance faces new challenges and opportunities under the Trump and Lee administrations, as both countries seek to modernize their security partnership while navigating shifting regional and global dynamics. Issues such as the transfer of operational control (Op-Con), the evolution of deterrence strategies, and the implications of U.S.–China strategic competition underscore the complexity of the alliance’s future. At the same time, trilateral cooperation with Japan, changing security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, and emerging domains such as technology and supply chain security are reshaping the policy agenda for Washington and Seoul. The Institute for Korean Studies at the George Washington University and the Research Institute for National Security Affairs at the Korea National Defense University warmly invite you to join us for this timely Korea Policy Forum. The event will bring together leading scholars to assess how the Trump–Lee administrations are shaping the trajectory of the U.S.–ROK alliance and to explore its broader implications for regional security and strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific.



◇ PROGRAM

October 28th (Tue)	
	Welcoming and Opening Remarks
2:00 P.M. - 2:05 P.M. EST	<p>Celeste Arrington, Director of GW Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS)</p> <p>Young Jun Park, Director General, Institute for National Security Affairs (RINSA), Korea National Defense University</p>
	Session
2:05 P.M. - 2:45 P.M. EST	<p><u>Moderator</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yonho Kim, Associate Director of GW Institute for Korean Studies <p><u>Speakers</u></p> <p><i>Modernization of the U.S.–ROK Alliance: Implications for the Transition of Operational Control and U.S.–China Strategic Competition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhyo Sul (Assistant Professor, Korea National Defense University) • Bruce Klingner (Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia, The Heritage Foundation) <p><i>Strategic Dynamics in the Indo-Pacific Region and Policy Tasks for U.S.–ROK–Japan Cooperation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharon Squassoni (Research Professor, Institute for International Science and Technology Policy, George Washington University) • Hanbyeol Sohn (Associate Professor, Korea National Defense University)
2:45 P.M. - 3:15 P.M. EST	Roundtable Discussion
3:15 - 3:30 P.M. EST	Q&A

◇ WELCOME REMARKS



CELESTE ARRINGTON is Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at the George Washington University. She is the Director of the GW Institute for Korea Studies and Co-Director of the East Asia National Resource Center. She is also a Visiting Research Scholar at Princeton's School of Public and International Affairs. Her comparative research examines public policy, law and social change, lawyers, and governance, with a regional focus on the Koreas and Japan. Other research interests include Northeast Asian security, North Korean human rights, and transnational activism. Her first book was *Accidental Activists: Victim Movements and Governmental Accountability in Japan and South Korea* (Cornell, 2016). She has published numerous articles and, with Patricia Goedde, she co-edited *Rights Claiming in South Korea* (Cambridge, 2021). Her newest book, published in 2025 in Cambridge's Studies in Law and Society series, is entitled *From Manners to Rules: Advocating for Legalism in South Korea and Japan*. It analyzes the legalistic turn in Korean and Japanese regulatory style through paired case studies related to tobacco control and disability rights. She received a PhD from UC Berkeley, an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, and an AB from Princeton University. She has been a fellow at Harvard, the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and the Ludwig-Maximilians-University in Munich. GW's Office of the Vice President for Research awarded her the 2021 Early Career Research Scholar Award. Her article with Claudia Kim won the 2023 Asian Law and Society Association's distinguished article award.



YOUNG-JUN PARK is a professor at the College of National Security, Korea National Defense University (KNDU) and the director-general of the Research Institute of National Security Affairs at the KNDU. He obtained B.A. in political science from Yonsei University, M.A. in international relations from Seoul National University and Ph.D. in international relations from the University of Tokyo in 2002. He also conducted research as a visiting scholar at the U.S.-Japan program of Harvard University from 2010 to 2011 and from 2015 to 2016. He published and co-authored several books and dozens of articles focusing on the issue of Japanese security policy and East Asian security affairs, including *The Third Japan* (in Korean, 2008), *International Politics of Security* (in Korean, 2010), *The Status and Tasks of International Security in the 21st Century*(in Korean, 2011), *The Birth of Navy and Making of Modern Japan*(in Korean, 2014), *South Korea's National Security Strategy: Evolution and Challenges*(in Korean, 2017), *Imperial Japan's Wars, 1868-1945*(2020), *Understanding Korea's Security*(Co-authored, 2025) etc. Besides academic activities, he has served as a policy adviser for the Korea National Security Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defense, Korean Joint Chief of Staff, etc.

◇ **SPEAKERS**



BRUCE KLINGNER has specialized in Korean and Japanese affairs for over three decades. He is currently a senior fellow with the Mansfield Foundation. From 2007-2025, he was the Senior Research Fellow for Northeast Asia at The Heritage Foundation. Mr. Klingner served for 20 years with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency. From 1996 to 2001, Klingner was CIA's Deputy Division Chief for Korea, responsible for the analysis of political, military, economic and leadership issues for the president of the United States and other senior U.S. policymakers. In 1993-1994, he was the chief of CIA's Korea branch, which analyzed military developments during a nuclear crisis with North Korea. He has testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, House Foreign Affairs Committee, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and the House Committee on Natural Resources. Klingner is a distinguished graduate of the National War College, where he received a master's degree in National Security Strategy in 2002. He also holds a master's degree in Strategic Intelligence from the Defense Intelligence College and a bachelor's degree in Political Science from Middlebury College in Vermont. He has attained a third-degree black belt in taekwondo and first-degree black belts in hapkido and teuk kong moo sool (South Korean Special Forces attack techniques).



IN-HYO SEOL graduated from Seoul National University's Department of International Relations in 1999 and awarded a doctorate in Diplomacy in 2011 from the Graduate School of Department of International Relations at the Seoul National University. He served as a visiting researcher at the University of Maryland's CIDCM Institute, and in 2012, he served as a lecturer in the Department of Political Science at Seoul National University and a post-doctoral researcher at Yonsei University. Since 2013, he has worked at the Division of Defense Strategy of the Korea Institute for National Defense (KIDA) and researched the U.S. defense and military strategy, and the ROK-U.S. alliance, and served as the head of the current defense issues analyses team from 2018 to 2021. In 2017, he served as a visiting fellow at the U.S. National Defense University (NDU) INSS and served as a director of the Defense Division of the Korean International Political Science Association, and an advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As of 2022, From 2021 to 2022, he worked as an administrator (a staff member) of the Blue House Security Office. He is a professor of military strategy division at the Korea National Defense University (KNDU), since 2022. He has also served as the director of the Nuclear/WMD Response Research Center of the Research Institute for National Security Affairs (RINSA) at the Korea National Defense University.



SHARON SQUASSONI is a research professor at the Institute for International Science and Technology Policy, Elliott School of International Affairs, at the George Washington University. Her current research focuses on North Korea, the risks of new nuclear energy, and the intersection of climate change and national security. Sharon teaches graduate courses on nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction arms control. As a former policymaker, she is keen to help students understand the practical opportunities and challenges for decision-making in these areas. Sharon joined ESIA faculty in 2018, after leading the Proliferation Prevention Program at the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) for 8 years and a few years as a senior scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Prior to that, she served in senior positions at the U.S. Arms Control & Disarmament Agency, the U.S. State Department, and the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress. Sharon now sits on the boards of key organizations in the field, including the Center for Arms Control & Nonproliferation, the Wisconsin Project on Arms Control, the PIR Center, and, previously, the Science & Security Board of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.



HANBYEOL SOHN is a Professor at the Department of Strategic Studies, Korea National Defense University (KNDU). He concurrently serves as Director of the Center for Nuclear/WMD Affairs at the Research Institute for National Security Affairs (RINSA), where he focuses on the ROK–U.S. alliance, U.S. extended deterrence, and military strategy and planning. He previously served as a field commander and staff officer in the ROK Army and as an officer in the Strategic Planning Division (J5) of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has also held visiting scholar positions at the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the George Washington University's Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS), and the Institute of East Asian Studies (IN-EAST) at the University of Duisburg-Essen. Professor Sohn received his B.A. in German Language Education and M.A. in Political Science from Seoul National University and earned his Ph.D. in Military Studies from KNDU.

◇ MODERATOR



YONHO KIM is the Associate Director of the GW Institute for Korean Studies (GWIKS) and an Associate Research Professor of Practice. He oversees GWIKS's Korea-related policy programs—Korea Policy Forum, North Korea Economic Forum, and GWIKS North Korea Program—fostering knowledge-sharing and network-building among experts and policymakers in Washington, Seoul, and beyond. As part of his broader portfolio, he serves as the editor for GWIKS's flagship publication, NKEF Policy and Research Paper Series, and the US-ROK Policy Brief. He specializes in North Korea's digital transformation and U.S. policy towards North Korea. Kim is the author

of several significant works including *North Korean Phone Money: Airtime Transfers as a Precursor to Mobile Payment System* (2020), *North Korea's Mobile Telecommunications and Private Transportation Services in the Kim Jong-un Era* (2019), and *Cell Phones in North Korea: Has North Korea Entered the Telecommunications Revolution?* (2014). Kim has been widely quoted on U.S.-ROK relations, South Korean foreign policy, and North Korea by various media outlets including the Wall Street Journal, The Atlantic, U.S. News & World Report, Christian Science Monitor, Radio Free Asia, Voice of America, Yonhap News, YTN, MBC, Chosun Ilbo, NK News, BBC, France 24, Libération, 4Asia, and Veckans Affärer. Prior to joining GWIKS, Kim extensively interacted with the Washington policy circle on the Korean Peninsula as a Senior Researcher at the U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, a Senior Reporter for Voice of America's Korean Service, and an Assistant Director of the Atlantic Council's Program on Korea in Transition. He received a Dr. phil. (summa cum laude) in Korean Studies from Freie Universität Berlin, an M.A. in International Relations and International Economics from Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and a B.A. and M.A. in International Relations from Seoul National University.