

Introduction

Dr. LEE Jaehyon
Editor-in-Chief

Each year, the Asan Plenum brings together leading experts, scholars, and policymakers to tackle the world's most pressing challenges. In 2026, the Plenum convened under the theme of Modernizing Alliances. The panels explored what alliance modernization demands from multiple perspectives. They began with the fundamental question of why alliances must evolve in the first place, before turning to the forces reshaping the global order—from the growing cohesion of the CRINK bloc (the increasingly coordinated alignment of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea) to the emergence of new alliance frontiers such as technology and cyber cooperation. The panels also considered the future of trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic partnerships and grappled with the enduring challenge of North Korea's nuclear threat.

Taken together, the conference made clear that the alliance structures are under simultaneous pressure from two directions: the internal strains generated by the Trump administration's transactional and at

times disruptive approach to burden-sharing, and the external strains imposed by an increasingly coordinated revisionist coalition of China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea.

The second issue of *The Asan Security Quarterly* continues this conversation. We invited leading academics and policy practitioners to elaborate on some of the most consequential questions raised in Korea, examining what alliance modernization looks like in practice.

Michael Schiffer, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, opens the issue with an assessment of the U.S.-ROK alliance, arguing that modernization has proceeded without the strategic coherence necessary to give it direction. Iwama Yoko, professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, then broadens the scope to the Indo-Pacific, making the case for a more institutionalized JAROK trilateral pillar. Justyna Gotkowska, deputy director at the Center for Eastern Studies, offers a transatlantic perspective, drawing on Poland's

experience to show what modernizing nuclear deterrence arrangements within U.S. alliances actually requires. Julia Macdonald, director at the Asia New Zealand Foundation, examines how modern threats are shaping the Indo-Pacific security architecture, while Lim Ji Hye, associate professor at George Mason University Korea, closes the Feature Articles section by situating alliance modernization within the broader framework of economic security.

This issue also marks the launch of a new section: the Korea Corner. The Korea Corner is dedicated to analysis of Korean foreign and security policy. For the inaugural Korea Corner, we invited Dr. Choi Ina, research fellow at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, to examine Korea's

recent diplomatic engagement with the Global South. Her article traces four recent summits and assesses what they reveal about the direction and ambition of Korea's emerging Global South strategy.

We hope this issue serves as a useful extension to the 2026 Asan Plenum's discussions. We look forward to your continued readership and engagement.

Sincerely yours,

LEE Jaehyon
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Asan Security Quarterly