

THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA-UNITED STATES ALLIANCE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the US Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Strategic Studies

by

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2019

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-06-2019		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2018 – JUN 2019
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Future of the Republic of Korea-United States Alliance			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
			5b. GRANT NUMBER	
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) David A. Courter			5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
			5e. TASK NUMBER	
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) US Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited				
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES				
14. ABSTRACT The ROK-US Alliance has demonstrated incredible resoluteness since its inception in 1953. It survived calls for a reduction in US combat power from President's Nixon and Carter. It responded to Secretary Rumsfeld's need to deploy US forces from the Korean Peninsula to the Middle East. It adapted to President Bush's nuclear weapons withdrawal. All of this has demonstrated the ability of the Alliance to adapt to changing military and geo-political conditions or risk becoming obsolete. This work explores a future scenario where the two Koreas are not at war and the Alliance must again adapt. This paper proposes that the Alliance be re-framed as a ROK-US integrated command tasked with a larger regional security role outside the Korean Peninsula.				
15. SUBJECT TERMS Republic of Korea, Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, ROK-US Alliance				
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF: UNCLASSIFIED			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT SAR (U)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 91
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)		
			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE FUTURE OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA-UNITED STATES ALLIANCE, by MAJ David A. Courter, 91 pages.

The ROK-US Alliance has demonstrated incredible resoluteness since its inception in 1953. It survived calls for a reduction in US combat power from President's Nixon and Carter. It responded to Secretary Rumsfeld's need to deploy US forces from the Korean Peninsula to the Middle East. It adapted to President Bush's nuclear weapons withdrawal. All of this has demonstrated the ability of the Alliance to adapt to changing military and geo-political conditions or risk becoming obsolete. This work explores a future scenario where the two Koreas are not at war and the Alliance must again adapt. This paper proposes that the Alliance be re-framed as a ROK-US integrated command tasked with a larger regional security role outside the Korean Peninsula.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to thank my wonderful spouse for her unending support as I wrote this paper. I'm sure she is sick of hearing me babble about China, the ROK, and the inherent benefit of military alliances. Without her patience, I would not have finished this endeavor. Secondly I'd like to thank my committee for their insight, patience, and careful examination of this paper. They encouraged me to reflect on my experiences in Korea and be imaginative.

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ACRONYMS

DIME	Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic
OE	Operational Environment
JP	Joint Publication
DoD	Department of Defense
CJCS	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff
ROK	Republic of Korea
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USMC	United States Marine Corps
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On October 1, 1953, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the United States (US) entered into a formal alliance with the signing of a mutual defense treaty. Although no adversarial state was specifically named, it was the direct result of the previous three years of intense fighting on the Korean Peninsula. The fall of 1953 did not usher in an era of peace; instead an armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, that paused the war at the 38th parallel. That pause remains in effect today.

For decades, national security experts have opined on the future of the Korean Peninsula and the armistice that holds it somewhat stable. Many experts believe an inevitable collapse of the Kim dynasty will create an opportunity for Korean unification under the ROK flag. Other experts posit that conflict will again engulf the landmass ending in unification under one of the current powers. Finally, another group believes in the imperishability of the armistice as both a foundation of the modern North-East Asian geo-political climate and an indispensable mechanism for a tenuous stability.

What if none of that happens? There is another option that receives little attention in academia, and that is where this paper attempts to enter the discourse. This paper posits a world where North and South Korea sign a peace treaty, ending the armistice and creating a permanent two-state peninsula. Even with the signing of a peace treaty, the US and the ROK governments decide to continue the military alliance, albeit reframed as an integrated and combined command capable of assuming a larger role as a regional security guarantor. The rest of Chapter One will address the conditions of this scenario, key insights about the operational environment that influences the future of the US-ROK

Alliance, the reason the Alliance must be reframed, and several limitations in this research.

The Proposed Scenario

This thesis seeks to envision the geostrategic realities and primarily military consequences of a permanent peace scenario with a stable relationship between North and South Korea. While the thesis postulates a set of future conditions that may or may never come to pass, these plausible conditions provide a unique lens into the dynamics and possibilities of a future US-ROK Alliance. In this future scenario, diplomacy moves quickly which eases tensions rapidly thus creating favorable conditions for both heads of state to agree on a bilateral peace treaty officially ending the Korean War. Military demonstrations, aggressive posture increases, and provocative actions are not employed by either state; thus, the military forces of each country are a part of the peace process.

Politically, the treaty results in an equitable settlement for both governments, primarily reducing security concerns on both sides. The peace treaty ends the Korean War, but it does not federate the two Koreas, unite the two Koreas, or result in a change of government on either side. Of note, this is a distinct departure from the majority of discourse about the Koreas, as most authors do not envisage future peace without regime change in the DPRK. Chapter two will discuss this more fully.

From a security perspective, as a result of this new peace treaty, the DPRK ceases continued nuclearization, and the peace treaty mitigates the conventional threat on both sides. In spite of these peaceful trends, both the ROK and US governments desire to maintain a military alliance due to shared national interests. As one regional expert opined, “These alliances have been useful for all parties involved and have provided an

institutional basis for cooperation, which is also beneficial for the future. It would be in the interest of the US and South Korea to maintain a transformed version of alliance to preserve the cooperation and influence.”¹ Finally, in this scenario, the pace of diplomacy mitigates outside regional influences (e.g. China and the US) as a Korea centric approach enables the two Koreas to dictate the terms of the agreement.

The Operational Environment

The US military joint planning doctrinal manual explains that the operational environment contains the relevant actors within a given geographic space for a specific operation. The relevant actors include those that are friendly, adversarial, and neutral.² National-strategic and theater-strategic documents used throughout this work describe the Indo-Pacific region according to the above definition and within the geographic constraints of Figure 1. The countries indicated in green and the water that surrounds them are within the USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (AOR).



Figure 1. The Operational Environment

Source: U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, “USINDOPACOM Map,” accessed January 26, 2019, http://www.pacom.mil/Portals/55/Images/USINDOPACOM-MAP-H1_Oct-2018.jpg.

NOTE: Map modified by author.

However, the entire USINDOPACOM AOR is outside the scope of this work. For the purpose of this thesis, the OE is geographically constrained to the area displayed in the red box above. Per Joint Publication 5-0, strategists and planners should consider factors relevant to the specific operation or decision. For the purpose of this thesis, China, North and South Korea, and the US are the primary regional actors with Russia and Japan taking a lesser role. Russia takes a lesser role due to two key reasons. First, in North East

Asia, Russia seeks strategic depth between the US and themselves. An intact DPRK maintains a buffer state, and thusly does not meet a Russian trigger to interfere. Second, the value of the China-Russia economic relationship and the recent political détente incentivizes Russia to accommodate any China solution. Japan is also not a primary actor. A stable and non-aggressive Korean peninsula is within Japan's national interests. Continued US presence in the region further adds legitimacy to the newly found peace. As such, Japan has not met a trigger to interfere. Thus, China, the two Koreas, the United States become the relevant actors with Japan and Russia being more distant influencers.

The Problem

Based on US national interests, a peace treaty between the two Koreas, while generally beneficial for short-term security gains, has the potential to reshape the preconditions and foundations of the ROK-US Alliance. The Alliance functions to deter external armed attack, and without a credible DPRK threat, the Alliance could become a mutual defense agreement in search of a threat. Thus, should both sides seek to continue the Alliance, they must reframe the scope and purpose it serves.

The DPRK currently decries the Alliance as hindering peace; this rhetoric and requests for its dissolution would increase after the signing of the peace treaty. Furthermore, the ROK government would want to make a sign of good faith in order to bolster the legitimacy of the peace. Reframing the Alliance in a way that shifts focus off of the DPRK is a potential mechanism to produce the desired good faith gesture. Regional actors, like China, would also quickly move to assert influence for a reduction and/or removal of US military presence on the peninsula. Therefore, what is the military problem? ROK-US national leaders seek to sustain a mutually beneficial military

relationship and functioning military alliance given the conditions of general peace between the two Koreas and a significantly reduced conventional and nuclear threat. This thesis seeks to provide US senior military leaders with analysis and options for a new strategic direction designed to preserve US national interests in the INDOPACOM AOR from a military perspective.

Scope

Reframing the current ROK-US Alliance is the focus of this thesis, predominantly in terms of its military aspects. This work will examine the diplomatic and economic relationship between the two countries throughout history to provide context, but the scope is predominantly of a military nature. Additionally, although regional actors play a key role in the discussion, the thesis limits itself to address only strategic level actors who can influence the Alliance.

The thesis also limits the discussion to an immediate reframing of the bilateral Alliance. Reframing the Alliance as a collective security agreement with additional Asian state signatories is outside the scope of this work. While it is a future possibility, the author does not assess that it is a likely option in the ensuing years immediately following a signed peace treaty between the two Koreas. Additionally, it would likely occur due to other geostrategic realities outside the scope of this scenario. Similarly, the thesis does not explore a formal trilateral agreement between Japan, the ROK, and the US. The author assesses this is also an unlikely scenario based on historic animosities, and the easing of tensions between the two Koreas is not a proximate cause for a trilateral treaty.

Limitations

This thesis is limited to unclassified sources of information. As such, there is potentially more specific information on threats or current ROK-US programs that the author does not consider in the analysis. This work is limited in that it is predicated on a future set of conditions that may never be. As such, any conclusion within this thesis is concomitant to those assumptions. Therefore, any reader must be cautious in overly asserting the validity of the conclusions contained herein. Chapter five of this work will discuss general conclusions that are less directly tied to the scenario.

The Way Ahead

Chapter two will provide a literature review of the current schools of thought on the future of the Korean peninsula, historic trends and the evolution of US international relations ideologies, and the inherent value of military alliances. Chapter three will explain the methodology used to gain understanding in order to generate potential solutions to the aforementioned problem. Furthermore, chapter three will explain the mechanism used to evaluate three possible new strategic directions in order to determine the best option.

The three new directions are designed to demonstrate the spectrum of options available to US senior leaders. Thus, this work will explore a complete withdrawal of US combat power on one end, contrasted with a net increase in aggregate Alliance lethality on the other. Finally a composite of the two opposite constructs will attempt to strike a balance of the two extremes.

Chapter four will explain the findings of the research, i.e. the threat assessment, defined US national interests, and the new directions. Lastly chapter five will discuss

areas of future study, ways in which to apply this research, and finally, make a recommendation on a new strategic direction for the ROK-US Alliance.

¹ Tara O., *The Collapse of North Korea Challenges, Planning, and Geopolitics of Unification* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) 54.

² U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2017), IV-10.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

General

There are numerous sources of information available to provide an understanding of the current ROK-US Alliance, US national-strategic policy goals, the historical context of US foreign policy towards the two Koreas, and scholarly opinions on the future of the Korean Peninsula. This chapter will divide the literature into four categories: the purpose and inherent value of military alliances, the evolution of political and military thought on alliances and their context within foreign policy, the history of the ROK-US Political and Military Relationship, and the future of the Korean Peninsula.

The Purpose and Inherent Value of Military Alliances

Definition

The definition of an alliance has evolved over time. According to the joint force dictionary, JP 1-02, a coalition is “an arrangement between two or more nations for common action.”¹ This same reference defines partnered nation as “a nation that the United States works with in a specific situation or operation.”² The idea that alliances are agreements between states for a specific purpose is common to both definitions. It is important to note this definition does not mention the use of military force as a function of the alliance.

Charles Marshal, a prominent alliance writer explained that in the 18th century alliances, explains that over time alliances came to mean “a contract between or among governments more or less explicitly obliging at least one of them to use military force

beyond its own domain, under certain defined contingencies which indicate the purpose and scope of the obligation, against an adversary or adversaries, whether or not specified, external to the undertaking.”³ Edwin H. Fedder, a former professor of political science at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, agrees with Marshall and opined that an alliance is, “a limited set of states acting in concert at x time regarding the mutual enhancement of the military security of its members.”⁴ Fedder adds the promise of military support to the definition of alliance.

Congruently, Hans Morgenthau a leading 20th century academic in international politics, explained that alliances “guarantee” that state A and state B will come to each other’s assistance in the event of an attack upon either or both from a common enemy.⁵

George Liska in his seminal work, *Nations in Alliance*, explains:

In theory, the relation of alliances to the balance of power is simple enough. Put affirmatively, states enter into alliances with one another in order to supplement each other’s capability. Put negatively, an alliance is a means of reducing the impact of antagonistic power. Perceived as pressure, which threatens one’s independence. The object is to check or divert pressure with counter pressure, applied at the point of the adversary’s initiative or at his weakest point.⁶

Lastly Riker, another prominent writer on the topic believed that, “in social situations similar to n-person, zero-sum games with side-payments, participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will insure winning and no larger”⁷

The US military’s definition of alliance is, “the relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.”⁸

The US State Department uses the term collective defense agreement which they define as an attack against one signatory is an attack against all. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), for example, is the result of one of these collective defense

agreements. Some may opine that this is collective security not an alliance. However, countries join NATO by formal agreement to aggregate capability and increase regional security to further their national interests. Mutual defense has been a function of alliances for centuries.

Dinerton explains that after World War Two alliances hardened as a result of a global shift from power politics to ideology politics. He further submits that alliances sought to deter conflict, in part because of its increasingly destructive nature, instead of simply aggregating enough allied combat power to win. Moreover, international bodies like the UN could resolve conflicts politically, which negated the importance of aggregating enough capability for a decisive military victory.⁹The purpose of the alliance did not change, they were still formed to ensure favorable balances of power, the impetus to coalesce did. That is to say, post World War II, states entered into alliances based on shared values not just perceived threats.

A careful review of the literature identifies four key characteristics. First, they are formal arrangements between states for the purpose of aggregating military capability. Second, they exist to garner political and military influence and increase state security. Third, alliances are used to support state interests. Finally, World War II caused a paradigm shift in the structure of military alliances.

Consequently, for the purpose of this work the following definition of alliance will be used. Alliances are formal agreements between states, over any specified amount of time, for the purpose of aggregating capability to politically or militarily influence balances of power or to increase security through deterrence, in direct support to national interests.

The Purpose of an Alliance and its Inherent Value

Edwin H. Fedder, a long time alliance writer describes the three basic functions of a military alliance in his work, *Concept of the Alliance*. He submits that alliances are augmentative. That is to say that country A allies with country B in order to combine their power against a given enemy, C. He uses the equation $A + B > C$. This concept is commonly discussed in the context of its deterrent value because $A + B$ is now greater than C, therefore C will not attack A or B. The simple act of aggregating capabilities and messaging mutual support creates a deterrent effect.¹⁰ The grand strategist Edward Luttwak posited that alliances are a way for smaller countries to coalesce in order to create a balance of power against larger states,¹¹ very similar to Fedder's idea of augmentation. The 2017 National Security Strategy demonstrates this principle by suggesting, "experience suggests that the willingness of rivals to abandon or forgo aggression depends on their perception of US strength and the vitality of our alliances."¹²

Fedder also discusses the pre-emptive nature of alliances where $A > C - B$. In this case, country A allied with country B to prevent them from allying with country C. This form of alliance is very common in US international relations, $US > \text{North Korea} - \text{South Korea}$.

Lastly, Fedder surmises that alliances function to further national and regional interests, e.g. military basing, refueling depots, staging areas, etc.¹³ The current Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff GEN Dunford explained that alliances in this fashion allow the US military to project power because of expanded access, he writes "allies and partners expand our reach by providing access to air and sea ports, guaranteeing transit rights and allowing the forward positioning of both manpower and

materiel.”¹⁴ Forward positioned military personnel can be found in Germany, Japan, and South Korea. GEN Dunford continued, “Operationally, this access allows the Joint Force to rapidly and flexibly project power across the globe, effectively cheating time and space. In a fight tonight world of trans-regional, multifunctional, and all domain threats, this advantage cannot be overstated.”¹⁵

Alliance literature explains that states commonly enter into alliances in order to influence their ally to support their own national interests. In *The Cost of Security: Foreign Policy Concession and Military Alliances*, the author argues that all military alliances trade the promise of military support for concessions in foreign policy.¹⁶ More broadly, a military alliance gives the protection provider influence over the protected. Many authors in alliance literature describe this as military diplomacy, a technique of statecraft, or a way to achieve the ends of foreign policy. All of these characterizations, proliferated across alliance literature, support Fedder’s description of alliances and their support to further national and regional interests.

President Donald Trump, in the 2017 NSS, explains that alliances facilitate, rather necessarily, free trade, exchanges of knowledge, and investment that is critical to managing the geo-political environment.¹⁷ Access to markets and investment is a function of the ability of alliances to influence other domains of state-to-state relationships. Anthony Blinken, referenced earlier, argued that military alliances created the conditions necessary to end the Cold War peacefully, averted major world wars, and supported a stable system that allowed the world to grow and prosper.¹⁸

US senior military and civilian leadership discuss the purpose of military alliances with a consistent and common theme and inline with the alliance thinkers in academia.

The 2018 NDS refers to the US alliance infrastructure as the “the backbone of global security,”¹⁹ and a “constellation of allies and partners” that is indispensable in not just preserving peace but sustaining American influence and the rules based international order.²⁰ The current CJCS, GEN Dunford, said this alliance network was the source of US military power²¹ and “primary enabler of that competitive advantage.”²² Mr. Anthony Blinken, deputy secretary of state during the Obama Administration, called it the “flexible geometry of collaboration”²³ These examples demonstrate the common idea that US military alliances are more than a national security apparatus but a medium in which the United States magnifies its power, extends its influence, protects national interests, and promotes the free and open international order. Is it important to understand that when most senior military leaders discuss the network of allies as partners, they are not only referring to military alliances as defined in this work, but they are also including the myriad of defense coalitions and partnered nations.

Military alliance literature demonstrates that when two or more countries act in concert their action is often seen as more legitimate because the action is that of general consensus as opposed to the self-interest of one particular state. For example, a NATO response to Russian aggression is seen differently in geopolitics and perceived as more legitimate than a unilateral response from the United States.

Narrowing the Scope: Purpose and Value of ROK-US Alliance

On October 1, 1953 the Republic of Korea and the United States agreed to “common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone.”²⁴

Furthermore the mutual defense treaty stipulates, “Separately and jointly, by self-help

and mutual aid, the Parties will maintain and develop appropriate means to deter armed attack.”²⁵ As discussed previously, a key function of military alliances is to deter aggression. The ROK-US Alliance has demonstrated incredible success in that capacity especially given decades of provocations and threatening messaging coming from the DPRK.

Numerous US senior leaders describe a vital system of treaties, agreements, and military alliances that enable US access to foreign markets, ideas, and a stable international environment in which to thrive. The ROK-US Alliance demonstrates this principle very clearly. In a 2017 joint statement between the United States and Republic of Korea, the two heads of state agreed that the Alliance has been a “linchpin for security, stability, and prosperity”. The joint statement also highlighted expanded trade, joint capability development in science and technology, and a desire to uphold the rules based order in the Asia-Pacific Region.²⁶ This statement demonstrates the ability of a military alliance to act as a medium for economic and political prosperity.

Furthermore, a military alliance gives the protection provider influence over the protected. This dynamic is evident in the creation of the ROK-US Alliance. The US agreed to provide military assistance should a foreign power attack the ROK. This created the deterrent effect the ROK needed to be able to focus on post-Korean War rebuilding; arguably, this is the reason they entered into the Alliance. In exchange, the US was able to influence the ROK. The Alliance created markets for US exports and allowed US combat power to be forward stationed in ROK sovereign territory, in order to deter DPRK, Chinese, and Russian aggression. Lastly, it helped the ROK develop into a liberal democracy congruent to US foreign policy goals.

The ROK-US Alliance demonstrates the idea of legitimacy in action. President Truman appealed to the UN before entering Korea. United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 83 and 84 provided legitimacy to the war effort by internationally admonishing the DPRKs attack and through the establishment of the UNC, in which 17 nation states provided military forces for the war effort.²⁷

As mentioned earlier, alliances often grant access to seaports, airports, inland bases, logistics infrastructure, and over-flight rights. This global reach allows the US military to respond to crisis abroad and meets the security commitments of its alliances. Currently, the US maintains between 27,000 and 33,000 troops assigned to United States Forces Korea. This comprises the third largest contingent of forces stationed outside of the US. These service members are scattered among a handful of bases. The Army maintains Camp Humphreys in Pyeongtaek and Yongsan in Seoul. The US Air Force has airbases at Osan and Kunsan and the Navy operates out of Busan and Jinhae.²⁸ This provides a mechanism for the ROK and US military to conduct joint and combined exercises on and around Korea. These exercises are critical in developing military-to-military relationships at all echelons.

Evolution of Political and Military Thought on Alliances and their Context within Foreign Policy

The Paradigm Shift

We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of [the] sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians certainly will.²⁹

In the early years of US independence, foreign policy followed the tenets of the Monroe Doctrine; which professed a non-confrontational and defense centric isolationism. US senior leaders did not trust ‘old-world’ European powers.³⁰ Henry Kissinger explains this idea with the 1821 President John Quincy Adams warning of, “going abroad in search of a monster to destroy”³¹ This ideology of foreign affairs lasted into the early 20th century where a world war would force the US to reconsider its decades old international affairs model.

The sinking of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915 officially ended American isolationism and thrust it into World War One.³² The beginning of a paradigm shift in international affairs emerged from this great conflict. Later called Wilsonianism, the idea of collective security emerged in the form of the League of Nations. It stipulated that collective security was more important than the national use of force and ‘old world’ alliances, and the rule of international law usurped national sovereignty.³³ Another author defined Wilsonianism as, “collective security, the conversion of one’s competitors to the American way, an international system that adjudicates disputes in a legal fashion, and unqualified support for ethnic self-determination”³⁴ Wilsonianism, albeit espoused by the US head of state, did not usurp US foreign policy until after the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria, the 1935 Italian invasion of Abyssinia, and the 1935 US Neutrality Act to revealed the weakness of the League of Nations Charter and demonstrated the incongruence of US isolationism in modern geopolitics. This set the stage for a more formal collective security agreement after the world war.

Henry Kissinger explained that American leadership did not like ‘old world’ alliances as they constantly changed to parry balances of power in favor of limited

objectives.³⁵ Before World War Two, countries allied to aggregate military forces to ensure a favorable balance of power in support of limited state objectives or security. For example, in 1939 Britain and France quickly allied with Poland and Romania to deter Hitler from committing further aggression. Hitler then allied with Stalin to re-balance the power equilibrium, allowing him to pursue the invasion of Poland.³⁶

Post World War Two states allied because they shared an ideology. Wolfgang Friedman called this a “fundamental revolution in international affairs.”³⁷ Two bodies emerged, the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The UN was a more robust attempt at the Wilsonian idea of international collectivism and the appeal to an international governing body. NATO, by design, was a bifurcation of ‘old world’ military alliance thinking. According to the US State Department at the time, it sought to collectively defend principle, not territory, and not resist change but deny the use of force to accomplish change.³⁸ Henry Kissinger clarified that this was a decidedly American way to frame these bodies and not necessarily how European partners discussed them.³⁹ Charles Burton Marshall adeptly explained this new world adaptation of old world Monroe doctrine as “An alliance thus conceived as a central frame of collaboration administering a world assumed to be basically harmonious well suits an old American dream. Combinations against adversaries in a tense and contentious world are a quite different matter. Alliance in this version is alliance undiluted.”⁴⁰

This is an important point to comprehend because it is critical to understanding US foreign affairs and policy in the modern era. Post World War Two, two divergent frameworks of international affairs emerged. On one hand, you had universalism and collectivism, embodied by Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, and Truman, and under whose

leadership the UN and NATO were formed. On the other hand, there still existed old world balance of power, sphere of influence, and imperialistic or Stalinist realpolitik.⁴¹ History has shown that the US would continue to operate in both arenas from 1945 to the present.

Wolfgang Friedman explains, “The only conceivable justification for such a dichotomy of attitudes is the assertion that the United States stands, globally and regionally, as a defense of self-determination and freedom, a guardian of the principles of the Charter which the United Nations itself is unable to enforce.”⁴² Kissinger, in agreement, believed the US was in a unique position to protect the non-communist world and further the ideal of internationalism because it was the least scarred after World War Two, had the requisite dynamic leadership, military, and economic means.⁴³ As such, the US could maintain its idealism while simultaneously building its spheres of influence in order to balance the power of Soviet hegemony. More simply, there existed both a moral and realistic framework for modern US foreign policy.

Rise of the Containment Strategy

George Kennan, a famous mid-century statesmen, in a 1947 lecture to the National War College said, “Our objective is to remove Russian influence throughout Europe to an extent which would make it possible for all the European countries to lead again an independent national existence without fear of being crushed by their neighbor to the east.”⁴⁴ The Soviet Union had quickly become the principal threat to liberal democracy and the epicenter of foreign affairs. Kennan, under the pseudonym Mr. X, wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* that greatly informed US policy on the Soviet Union. He posited two important arguments. The first, he credits the Soviet head of state Joseph

Stalin as saying, “as long as there is a capitalist encirclement there will be danger of intervention with all the consequences that flow from that danger.”⁴⁵ Secondly, he provides a mitigating solution, “In these circumstances it is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies.”⁴⁶

Shortly after this article was published, the US formally adopted a containment strategy as evidenced in National Security Council Policy Paper 68, which recommended the US rapidly build political, economic, and military strength and relationships with the free world. This policy harkened back to old world balance of power politics where the US attempted to aggregate like-minded states in order to deny Russian imperialism.⁴⁷

In East Asia, containment arrived only after open conflict engulfed the Korea Peninsula. Kissinger explained that US senior leaders were focused on the European theater and that a Soviet move in Asia was an afterthought.⁴⁸ Moreover, there was no pretense of collective security or cooperation based on shared values as was evident in Europe.⁴⁹ In Asia the hub and spokes systems was created. This was an adaptation on the European style of collective security. The hub was the US and the spokes were the US-Japan Security Treaty of 1951, the US-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 and of critical importance to this work, the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953.

The contours of modern US foreign policy emerged: commit first to the UN in order to legitimize the inherent goodness of the action unless it directly opposes US national interests, in which case apply balance of power politics. It is under this political framework that the Soviet containment strategy arose and the ROK-US Alliance was born.

The History of the ROK-US Political and Military Relationship:
Its Inception and Change of Time

At the Yalta Conference in February 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Marshal Josef V. Stalin agreed to establish an international trusteeship over Korea.⁵⁰ with the intent to eventually restore an independent Korean government.⁵¹ In August, both heads of state agreed to split the peninsula along the 38th to expedite the surrender and repatriation of the Japanese and decrease the risk of conflict between both occupying powers.⁵²

Four months later, Moscow and Washington agreed that the trusteeship should allow the Korean people five years to establish their own independent democratic government.⁵³ However, within three years Russia had installed a communist government in the north led by Kim Il-sung. Following suit, the US created the Republic of Korea (ROK) and inaugurated Dr. Syngman Rhee as its first president.⁵⁴ According to one historian, the Soviets were “wise to the ways of the world” and quickly armed the North Koreans with modern weapons and armored vehicles.⁵⁵ The US believed Syngman Rhee might invade North Korea. Therefore, in order to reduce the possibility of a military entanglement they only equipped and trained a lightly armed ROK police force.

All but a small contingent of US advisors had withdrawn from the Korean Peninsula by 1949. Dean Rusk, Secretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson explained that the service chiefs did not want to maintain ground forces on the Peninsula; the war department was demobilizing, the Cold War had begun, and the principal threat was in Europe. Moreover, the American public was sensitive to the costs of World War Two and desired to redeploy US forces in order to ensure the US did not get trapped in another foreign war. Under these constraints it did not seem pertinent to maintain a strong

force posture in Korea. If war did break out, they surmised, it could be handled with naval and air power.⁵⁶ Interestingly, the CIA and NSC had concluded that there was a high probability of a North Korean attack.⁵⁷ History would prove them correct.

The DPRK invaded the ROK on June 25, 1950 and quickly seized the capital of Seoul. The ROK Army, ill-equipped to slow the advance, lost ground rapidly. The US government believed that the DPRK aggression was sanctioned by Moscow. This invasion was seen to be within the scope of US containment policy and thusly, senior civilian leaders decided to intervene.

President Truman requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting. Absent a Russian delegate, they issued United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 83, which recommended UN members “furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.”⁵⁸ Furthermore, UNSCR 84 established a unified UN command under US generalship where other UN members could provide assistance to the war effort.⁵⁹ The US, under UN direction, entered the conflict and successfully reversed its course. In October 1950, the Chinese entered the war and drove UN forces back south. At this point, the conflict became static with neither side gaining or losing much ground. An armistice was signed on July 27, 1953, which ended open conflict on the peninsula and established the de-militarized zone (DMZ) roughly drawn along the 38th parallel.

Post-war, the US remained a staunch ally to the ROK. On October 1, 1953 both governments signed the ROK-US mutual defense treaty wherein the US agreed to help defend the ROK against external armed attack. It states, “Desiring to declare publicly and formally their common determination to defend themselves against external armed attack

so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of them stands alone in the Pacific area.” Furthermore, the treaty sought to, “further strengthen their efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security pending the development of a more comprehensive and effective system of regional security in the Pacific area”.⁶⁰

The verbiage of this treaty demonstrates three key tenants of US foreign policy at the time. The phrase “external armed aggression” prevented Seoul from re-escalating conflict with the DPRK, which ensured the US could avoid another conflict. This decision followed alliance thinking of the era; namely, alliances are for defensive purposes only. “No potential aggressor” and “stands alone” language demonstrated sphere of influence and balance of power politics, in this case, aimed at denying and deterring Russian aggression or expansion.⁶¹

Over the next 66 years, the ROK-US Alliance frequently adapted to changes in each state’s national interests. After the armistice was signed, the US became concerned Syngman Rhee would re-attack the DPRK. As such, the UNC Commander, a US General Officer, maintained operational control of ROK forces.⁶² Also, the US withdrew 250,000 forces from the Peninsula. A 70,000-troop garrison remained to act as a tripwire guaranteeing US involvement should conflict renew.⁶³ The tripwire force allayed ROK government concerns of US abandonment.

In 1968, the DPRK seized the USS Pueblo. While the provocation did not escalate to war, it demonstrated the Alliance’s inability to manage crisis well. As a result, the Alliance introduced a Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). The SCM is a formal meeting between the ROK Minister of National Defense and US Secretary of Defense, which allows each representative a forum to discuss issues within the Alliance.⁶⁴

In 1969, President Nixon, in what was later coined the Nixon and-or Guam Doctrine, called for an increase in Asian nations to provide for their own defense. He explained that this did not detract from US support in times of war but wanted internal security problems to be handled by the host nation.⁶⁵ During this period, the US was decisively engaged in the Vietnam War, it was seeking better US-Sino relations, and wanted to consolidate its assessed strategic over reach.⁶⁶ This policy surprised ROK President Park. He had just sent 300,000 ROK Soldiers to Vietnam and did not expect, as payment, a decrease in US combat power on the Peninsula. As recompense, President Nixon offered military and financial aid to the ROK. In response to President Nixon's Guam Doctrine, President Park attempted to increase their ballistic missile and nuclear technology. However, President Nixon's successor President Gerald Ford blocked this endeavor and assured the ROK that no withdrawals were forthcoming.⁶⁷

In 1977 President Carter, following the precedent of US withdrawal after long periods of combat, sought to completely remove US ground forces from the Peninsula. The American public and Congress had adopted a more isolationist attitude and sought to decrease US forward presence.⁶⁸ To mitigate the perception of abandonment, President Carter believed that maintaining and possibly strengthening air and naval forces would allow the return of ground troops.⁶⁹ Military officers, the most vocal were those serving in Korea, opined that ground troops were critical to deterring DPRK aggression. They argued it would be exceedingly difficult to re-deploy US forces to the Peninsula once they had withdrawn. Furthermore, withdrawing from Korea may motivate Japan to procure nuclear weapons or adopt a pro-China foreign policy.⁷⁰ Two critiques of this era are important to the overall argument of this work. The first was that the ROK still

needed the US to deter the Soviet Union and China. Regardless of their potential to defeat the DPRK, the ROK military did not believe they had the capabilities to defeat or deter the major regional actors.⁷¹ Secondly, a troop withdraw may signal increased doubts that the US desired to remain an Asian power which could create political uncertainty that would undermine foreign investment in the ROK economy.⁷² In the end, President Carter only withdrew 3,500 Soldiers.

In 1978, the ROK and US created the Combined Forces Command (CFC). This new command shifted operational control of select ROK forces from the UNC to the CFC during armistice conditions. Moreover, this command integrated a staff of ROK and US officers under a US four-star and a ROK four-star deputy. The command allowed both Washington and Seoul to have national command authority over peacetime decisions.⁷³

The end of the cold war brought about another rebalance of US forces in the ROK. In 1989, Congress passed the Nunn-Warner Amendment calling for a phased reduction of 6,987 service members from the Army and Air Force.⁷⁴ In 1991, President George W. Bush Sr. withdrew all forward tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea. Initially the ROK government was angry that they were no longer under the US nuclear umbrella. However, US promises of continued nuclear deterrence and an overall easing of DPRK-ROK tensions allayed the concerns of the ROK government.⁷⁵

The second Bush Administration also brought about changes to the ROK-US Alliance as a result of the Future of the Alliance Talks. Tensions on the peninsula had been growing. In June 2002, a US military vehicle on exercise accidentally killed two Korean girls, the US and ROK governments were divided on how to deal with the DPRK's violation of the 1994 Agreed Framework, the US. had deployed combat power

from the peninsula to Iraq which greatly troubled the ROK government, and the ROK military deployed men, material, and other assistance to support the war against terror must to the chagrin of many ROK citizens.⁷⁶

Foreign policy officials in both countries knew they needed to address the rising issues within the Alliance. The US had shifted its focus to the Middle East, whereas the ROK was still focused on the threat from the DPRK. The two year long Future of the Alliance Talks provided a glide path to ease tensions and adapt the alliance to the 21st century. The bilaterally approved Land Partnership Plan and Yongsan Relocation Plan intended to remove US forces from the capital and some northern areas and relocate them south. In addition, these talks started the Strategic Consultations for Allied Partnership (SCAP) as a diplomatic version of the SCM. The SCAP focused on the DPRK, but also existed to facilitate ROK and US policy and program goals e.g. mitigating pandemic disease and nonproliferation. The January 2006 inaugural meeting dealt with the ROK governments concern about troop deployments to regional conflicts from the peninsula and the potential negative consequences that could have with ROK neighbors. These talks also set the groundwork for wartime OPCON transition from the CFC to ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).⁷⁷

More importantly, this shift signaled a change in the dynamic of the ROK-US Alliance. A joint press release in 2005 between President George W. Bush and President Roh Moo-hyun stated, “the two leaders agreed that the alliance not only stands against threats but also for the promotion of the common values of democracy, market economy, freedom, and human rights in Asia and around the world.”⁷⁸ Expanding alliances from

strict mutual defense to shared ideological ventures, is a reoccurring theme of 21st century alliance conversations.

The last adaptation of the ROK-US alliance was the Obama Administration's pivot to the Pacific strategy. This strategy was not a return to containment, in this case to combat China, but a focus on whole-of-government unity of effort in the Pacific.⁷⁹ Rebalancing in Asia called for substantial and enduring US presence, more specifically an increase in US Navy and United States Marine Corps (USMC) forces. The ROK and other East Asian states generally supported this initiative as increased US presence could check rising Chinese nationalism.⁸⁰

The Future of the Korean Peninsula

A review of the modern literature on the future of the Korean peninsula reveals that the preponderance of scholarly work is dedicated to the discussion of Korean unification. In fact, the DPRK and ROK constitutions comment on this reunification directly. The preamble of the DPRK's constitution states, "The great leader Comrade Kim Il Sung is the sun of the nation and the lodestar of the reunification of the fatherland. Comrade Kim Il Sung set the reunification of the country as the nation's supreme task, and devoted all his work and endeavors entirely to its realization."⁸¹ The ROK constitution reads, "We, the people of Korea, proud of a resplendent history and traditions dating from time immemorial . . . having assumed the mission of democratic reform and peaceful unification of our homeland and having determined to consolidate national unity with justice, humanitarianism and brotherly love . . ."⁸²

Current literature on Korean unification falls into two major categories. The first is the body of work on potential scenarios that would result in Korean unification, most

commonly, under the ROK government. A few common scenarios are presented. The first is a soft landing that involves the gradual peaceful warming of DPRK and ROK relations. Referred to as the confederation scenario or federal style of unification. The scenario is plausible as it involves very gradual changes in attitudes about each countries espoused values i.e. humanitarian considerations. The end result of this scenario is a single state with two systems of government.⁸³

A second soft landing scenario involves the internal collapse of the DPRK and its absorption into the ROK. This scenario has also been referred to as the German style unification. This would be extremely costly to the ROK in the form of humanitarian assistance. Moreover, the way in which the ROK assumes control over the failed states may incite an insurgency.⁸⁴

Lastly, the hard landing scenario most discussed is the reemergence of armed conflict on the peninsula. Many authors agree that the cycle of provocations along the DMZ may accidentally escalate to full armed conflict. One author assumes that armed conflict on the peninsula would only come through invasion of the DPRK by ROK-US Alliance forces and calls this the Vietnam style scenario.⁸⁵ As long as a third party does not enter the foray, most authors agree, the DPRK would be absorbed into the ROK.⁸⁶

The other major category of literature on Korean unification involves the discussion of China's actions in each of these scenarios. The vast majority of authors researched for this work believe that China would interdict in Korean unification. For one, conflict on the peninsula would probably cause a mass migration of DPRK citizens into Manchuria. China would not want this as there are more than two million ethnic Koreans already living there and it could destabilize the internal politics in that region.⁸⁷

Secondly, a buffer state deeply indebted to China checks the growth of US influence in the region and denies the emergence of a strong ROK.⁸⁸ China will seek to preserve a buffer state. Moreover, most authors agree that China's position is difficult. It is exceedingly costly to support the DPRK and it is commonly blamed for increasing regional tensions that frustrate Chinese national interests.⁸⁹ Regardless, most writers on the topic agree that China would insert itself very quickly and very forcibly into any potential Korean unification scenario.

Conclusion

The great military theorist Carl Von Clausewitz in his famous work *On War* posited that Rome grew more from alliance than conquest.⁹⁰ So too has been the fate of the US. The abhorrent destruction and loss of life during the first and second world wars motivated American leadership to pursue international engagement to negate the potential for any future conflict. International governing bodies emerged, and sought to alleviate the need to constantly jockey for power and influence, as was the custom before these wars. These international bodies required idealistic commitment and abdication of some national sovereignty. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union did not oblige, a bipolar world emerged, and the globe was thrust into half a century of cold war. Wilsonian foreign relations and the global engagement framework espoused by Presidents Wilson, Roosevelt, and Truman would not combat the sphere of influence and balance of power politics of the Kremlin. As such, the containment policy was born to check globally the expanse of Soviet hegemony.

In 1950, the cold war erupted into open conflict on the Korean peninsula. With the support and mandate of the United Nations, President Truman ordered the

deployment of US forces to the peninsula to check the DPRK advance and more importantly deny the Soviets the entire Korean peninsula. As a result of this conflict and the paradigm of communism containment the ROK-US Alliance was born. Since 1953 this Alliance has adapted and evolved consistently to support changing ROK and US national interests.

Senior US leaders often promulgate a new function of military alliances. They value military alliances because they enable a broader relationship with the allied country than the original defense only military agreement originally stipulated. Moreover, they often discuss the network of alliances and their critical importance to US national interests. The ROK-US Alliance has provided and continues to provide the US a foothold in East Asia. This forward stationed presence supported the containment policy and more recently works to check China as an emerging hegemonic power.

Outside of balance of power politics, the ROK-US Alliance provides permanent basing that expands US global reach in support of US national interests, it deters aggression both regionally and abroad, it is a conduit of US influence in Asia, and finally it is a beacon of the success available to US allies under the current US led international world order. The new strategic directions for the ROK-US Alliance, discussed in the following chapters, operate within the context provided in this literature review and support the senior leaders vision of the expanded alliance purpose.

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CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

General

Chapter 1 introduced, defined, and scoped the problem that this work seeks to address. The literature review in chapter 2 provided the necessary context to begin to understand the complexities of the environment and strategic political and military framework within which the ROK-US Alliance operates. This chapter seeks to explain the methodology used to understand the relationship between context, strategic guidance, and the problem, and how that informed the development of a new strategic direction.

Purpose and Research Questions

This study proposes options to the US military for a new strategic direction of the ROK-US Alliance now that a peace treaty has been signed between the two Koreas and North Korea is no longer a proximate security threat to the ROK. The primary research question is: What is the future strategic direction of the ROK-US Alliance if North Korea is no longer the primary security threat to the ROK? Five supplemental research questions were developed to scope the research and unpack the primary question.

1. What was the historical context in which the Alliance was formed?
2. How has the ROK-US Alliance adapted to changing conditions over time?
3. If North Korea is no longer the proximate threat, is there a proximate threat for the ROK?
4. What are US national interests in the region?
5. Do regional opportunities exist that this new direction could capitalize on?

Methodology Overview

This problem is complex. A methodological framework was needed that could examine the problem within its historical and current context and then generate options to solve the problem. Moreover, this framework needed to have a mechanism to constrain the available solutions in order to limit the number of options. Lastly, this framework needed to facilitate a comparison between the possible solutions in order to make an informed recommendation.

As such, this thesis utilized US Joint Operational Design as the framework for developing several operational approaches, herein referred to as strategic directions, for a future ROK-US Alliance. This framework assists military strategists and planners in understanding the complexities of the operational environment in order to understand possible solutions to a clearly defined problem, all while ensuring the possible solutions are nested within US national strategic guidance. The output of this design exercise was three possible strategic directions for the Alliance. These directions were then compared using the evaluation criteria discussed later in this chapter.

Joint Operational Design

According to the Joint Planning Manual, JP 5-0, Operational Design is a planning framework that enables commanders and staffs a way to understand and organize the operational environment.¹ It consists of four major components that continually and recursively interact with each other. Simply put they are: strategic guidance, the OE, the problem, and the solution. JP 5-0 uses the following graphic to visually model the design framework.

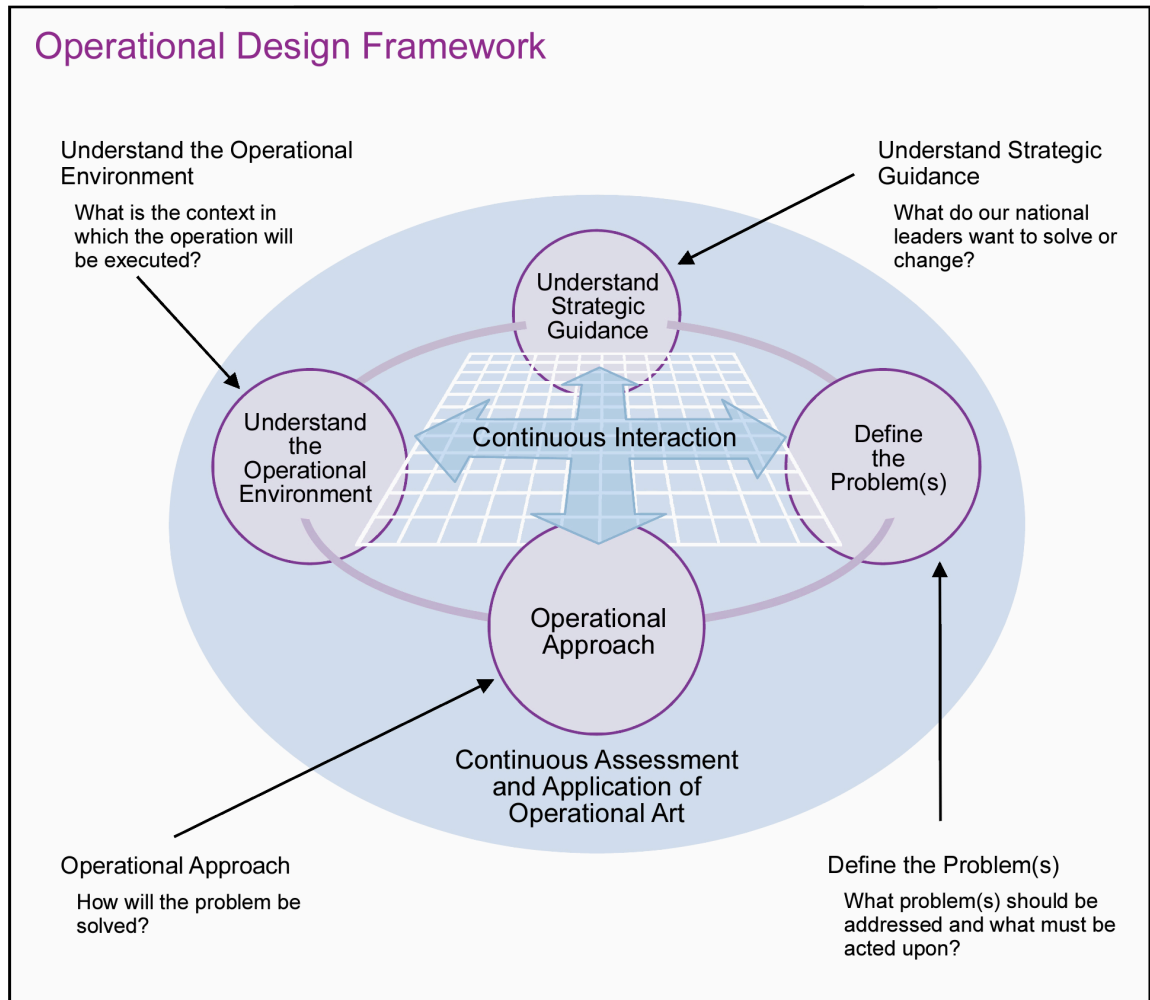


Figure 2. Operational Design Framework

Source: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 16, 2017), Figure IV-3.

The joint publication offers guidance on how to use this methodology, which was used as a guide while researching for this paper. The steps do not necessarily need to be executed in order. The last three steps: identify decisions and decision points, refine the operational approach(es), and develop planning guidance, were not utilized as they are outside the scope of this particular work.²

Understand the Strategic Direction and Guidance

The 2017 National Security Strategy and the un-classified summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy were reviewed to understand national strategic direction and guidance from senior civilian leadership. The 2015 National Military Strategy was used for senior military direction and guidance, as it is the most recent of this particular document. For theater strategic direction and guidance ADM (Ret) Harry Harris' 2018 statements to the House and Senate Armed Services Committees were studied. ADM (Ret) Harris, at the time, was the commander of all military forces in the Indo-Pacific region and as such was the senior uniformed commander providing guidance and direction to that theater. For Korea specific guidance, statements from GEN Vincent Brooks and GEN Curtis Scaparrotti were used. Both of these officers had recently commanded UNC, USFK, and CFC. Research was limited to these documents as they were the most recent, and authoritative unclassified documents used by military decision makers and planners. Thus, these documents formed the basis of the authors understanding of strategic guidance both regionally and globally.

Identify Assumptions Needed to Continue Planning

This step was completed second in order to clearly define the assumed conditions in the OE and enable proper problem framing later in the design process. This is similar to contingency planning in that it assumes a set of future potential conditions but still uses the Joint Operational Design framework. JP 5-0 explains, "Since contingency planning is based on hypothetical situations, it relies on assumptions to fill in gaps"³ and continues, "specific conditions affecting courses of action (COAs) remain uncertain, making it difficult to identify specific decisions for events that have not yet occurred in a

dynamic OE. Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) may be asked to provide multiple options to the civilian and military leadership.”⁴

As discussed in chapter two, the majority of discourse on the future of the peninsula is focused on the unification of the Koreas. However, this work assumed a different set of hypothetical conditions. These assumptions were broken into two categories. Chapter one discussed the envisioned scenario and conditions present that were necessary to understand the OE. The second category was assumptions that were needed to continue planning. For one, this paper assumes that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) would deactivate the United Nations Command, as the impetus for its existence is gone. Furthermore, any representative from the 16 sending states would return to their home countries. This assumption is critical in ensuring that the solution presented accounts for only US interests. Lastly, this work assumed that as a result of the peace treaty, the ROK and DPRK governments desire a net decrease in US capability and/or capacity on the peninsula. The assumptions from chapter one about the current situation and the assumptions discussed above inform the left circle “Understand the operational environment.”

Define the Problem

Defining the problem extends beyond analyzing interactions and relationships in the OE. It identifies areas of tension and competition – as well as opportunities and challenges – that commanders must address to transform current conditions to attain the desired end state.⁵

Step one sought to understand the desired military and political end-states in the USINDOPACOM AOR and more specifically on the Korean Peninsula. This became the desired end-state referenced in the quote above. Step two defined the OE, discussed here

as the current conditions. Therefore, by knowing the current state and desired end-state, it is possible to clearly determine the problem to solve. This required two areas of analysis. What actions must the US military take to transform the current conditions into the desired conditions, and what obstacles exist that could frustrate those US military actions?

Evaluation Criteria

This work used four evaluation criteria to compare each proposed new strategic direction. The criteria were founded in senior US civilian and military leader requirements of military alliances, the ROK-US Alliance specifically, and US national defense and military strategies.

As discussed in the literature review, a primary function of military alliances is their ability to deter aggression. This work assumes that the DPRK is not the primary threat to the ROK but acknowledges that there are other threats within the OE. As such, any change to the ROK-US Alliance must preserve the primary function of security. Deterring war is a function of capability, capacity, and commitment and each course of action must address how they will deter aggression.

In conjunction with military deterrence, US alliances must enable diplomatic influence in order to support national interests and perpetuate the current US led international world order. This thesis assesses influence based on the Alliance's ability to provide access to senior ROK government and military leadership. Senior US military leader access to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROKJCS), the Ministry of National Defense (MND), and the Blue House all provide a channel in which the US military, for the furtherance of US national interests, seeks to influence its ally. Each strategic

direction must address their ability to support US national interests with their access to ROK senior leaders.

If deterrence fails and the ROK receives an external armed attack, then the third criteria, defeat potential adversaries, becomes imperative. This evaluation criterion allows for a comparison of how each strategic direction prepares and postures the Alliance for armed conflict. Several factors impact the Alliance's ability to defeat adversaries including: the interoperability of the two nations' militaries, the efficacy of the command and control structure, access and agreements for the reception and staging of deployed US forces, and host nation support capacity. This criterion is essential to sustain a viable alliance framework.

An expanded bilateral relationship is critical to justify the costs and commitment of an alliance beyond strictly a military mutual defense treaty. For example, the US and ROK have a free trade agreement which the 70 year old military alliance helps support. Information and technology sharing agreements are another example of peripheral agreements that the military relationship enables and each strategic direction must be able to influence.

There is an assigned weight for each evaluation criteria commensurate with the amount of importance senior US leaders place on that particular function of the military alliance. The Alliance's ability to deter and influence are the two main functions of the military alliance and accounts for both balance of power and sphere of influence politics. As they directly affect the accomplishment of the alliance's purpose, they received the highest weight. Expanding the relationship and the ability to defeat an external armed attack are secondary functions of the military alliance. The capability and capacity of

military forces necessary to defeat an external armed attack is malleable to the situation presented. That is to say, if deterrence fails the US will undoubtedly meet the requirements of the treaty but they can be scaled to meet the situation. As such, this evaluation criterion received a lesser weight than deter. Waging the war is not half as important as deterring so it was weighted at 1/3 as important. Lastly, expanding the relationship beyond strict military cooperation is a function of military alliances that receives a lot of attention from senior US leaders. This is a peripheral benefit of alliances and not its primary purpose. As such it received a lesser weight than deter and influence.

Example	Weight	Strategic Direction 1	Strategic Direction 2	Strategic Direction 3
Deter	3	1(3)	2(6)	3(9)
Influence Through Access	3			
Defeat	2	3(6)	2(4)	1(2)
Expand the Relationship	2			
	Total	4(9)	4(10)	4(11)

Figure 3. Evaluation Criteria Matrix Example

Source: Created by author.

The chart above visually provides a representative example of the evaluation criteria and application of weighting. In this example, strategic direction three deterred aggression the best, receiving a non-weighted value of three and weighted value of nine. Direction two was second best, and one was the worst - the higher the number, the better. Under the defeat criterion, strategic direction one is designed to best posture the Alliance to defeat an external armed attack. It received a non-weighted value of 3 and weighted value of six. This demonstrates the importance of weighting the evaluation criteria. In the example, each strategic direction received the same non-weighted score. However, once the weights were applied, strategic direction three had the highest score. As a result, direction three would be the recommended new strategic direction of the ROK-US Alliance. This is just an example meant to demonstrate the benefit of weighting evaluation criteria and show the method in which these new directions will be compared in chapter four.

Conclusion

The Joint Operational Design framework is an ideal methodology for determining feasible new strategic directions for the ROK-US Alliance. By design, it adeptly accounts for the environment in which the Alliance operates. It intentionally leverages US national interests and senior leader guidance to constrain and focus the solutions presented. Lastly, the framework utilizes assumptions based planning to clearly define the problem. The following chapter will discuss the results of the analysis.

¹ JCS, JP 5-0, IV-6.

² Ibid., IV-7.

³ Ibid., I-7.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., IV-14.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction and Review

This purpose of this work was to provide options for a new strategic direction for the ROK-US Alliance given a proposed scenario. Most importantly, the DPRK and ROK governments signed a peace treaty officially ending the Korean War. As a result, the DPRK is no longer the proximate threat to the ROK. Since 1950, the ROK-US Alliance has been focused on the threat from the north. The proposed scenario presents a unique opportunity to the US to reshape the Alliance to better serve its national interests.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Joint Operational Design was used to provide the US military three options. The following chapter describes the analysis that informed the methodology, explains the three options that were generated, compares them, and sets the stage for a recommendation in chapter five.

Regional Threats

A more lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovating Joint Force, combined with a robust constellation of allies, and partners, will sustain American influence and ensure favorable balances of power that safeguard the free and open international order. Collectively, our force posture, alliance and partnership architecture, and Department modernization will provide the capabilities and agility required to prevail in conflict and preserve peace through strength.¹

Most of the same documents that described US national interests in the region were used to articulate the threats. It is important to understand how senior civilian and military leaders see the OE in order to generate possible solutions to mitigate those threats. There are three key threats to the East Asian security environment. Most

importantly, these threats are not necessarily just threats to the ROK but also threats to the ROK-US Alliance and to US national interests.

The first threat is the resurgence of great power competition and conflict. In North East Asia this is represented by China. Henry Kissinger opined that President Wilson was constrained by isolationism and President Truman by Stalinist expansion, but post Cold War the US was unconstrained.² The 2017 National Security Strategy declares:

Following the remarkable victory of free nations in the Cold War, America emerged as the lone superpower with enormous advantages and momentum in the world. Success, however, bred complacency. A belief emerged, among many, that American power would be unchallenged and self-sustaining. The United States began to drift. We experienced a crisis of confidence and surrendered our advantages in key areas. As we took our political, economic, and military advantages for granted, other actors steadily implemented their long-term plans to challenge America and to advance agendas opposed to the United States, our allies, and our partners.³

Arguably the 2008 financial crisis in the US and the shockwave it sent across the globe demonstrated the fallibility of the Wilsonian style US international world order and its espoused rules-based international collectivist ideology.⁴ In response, revanchist, irredentist, and authoritarian politics began to emerge. A Congressional Research Report titled, *A Shift in the International Security Environment: Potential Implications for Defense – Issues for Congress*, highlights a few key indicators that demonstrate the revival of great power competition:

1. Ideological competition in the form of renewed authoritarian and illiberal governments in major powers, namely China and Russia.
2. State controlled media narratives that condemn the prior humiliation and unfair treatment of states by the West, most frequently, to support revanchist or irredentist actions.

3. The emergence of opaque grey zone operations by military and paramilitary state actors, and non-state actors, within the information and cyberspace domains. Also, overt military operations in Syria, Georgia, the Ukraine, and the South China Sea.
4. Demonstrated indifference to the international rules based order, as evidenced by intellectual property theft, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) violations, and intermediate nuclear forces (INF) treaty violations.
5. Competition of major powers to influence weakly governed or non-governed spaces and non-state affiliated populations, as evidenced in Venezuela, Syria, and the Ukraine. ⁵.

China is one of these powers.⁶ It has emerged as an extremely powerful regional actor and is attempting to re-shape the geo-political landscape in its favor. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), for example, appears to be a Chinese effort to deny the United States its current unipolar world order. Furthermore, China threatens the world order not only through its military behavior such as its actions in the Spratly Islands, but also politically and economically as well. Many academics warn that there is potential for a Thucydides trap.⁷

According to the National Security Strategy, China seeks to re-shape the world according to its authoritarian model. It states, “A geopolitical competition between free and repressive visions of world order is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region.”⁸ In a January 29, 2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment, the US Intelligence Community wrote, “We assess that China’s leaders will try to extend the country’s global economic,

political, and military reach while using China’s military capabilities and overseas infrastructure and energy investments under the Belt and Road Initiative to diminish US influence.”⁹ It further states, “Chinese leaders will increasingly seek to assert China’s model of authoritarian capitalism as an alternative – and implicitly superior – development path abroad, exacerbating great-power competition that could threaten international support for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”¹⁰ US senior leaders have openly acknowledged the re-emergence of great power conflict and have stated that it simply reinforces the need for US global engagement, military presence, and a network of military alliances.¹¹

Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs) are the second regional threat that must be addressed. This phenomenon did not exist at the inception of the Alliance but must be accounted for if the Alliance seeks to continue to demonstrate legitimacy and deterrence. For example, after 9/11 in a “second-front”, Filipino and Thai policy makers worked to combat the jihadist threat in South East Asia.¹² Although not explicitly discussed in the context of East Asia, the 2015 NMS does discuss disrupting, degrading, and defeating VEOs as its second priority to deterring state aggression.¹³ This prioritization applies to the Korean Peninsula as well.

The third and final threat is the unknown threat that regional stability seeks to thwart. That is to say, it is difficult to predict where or from whom the next attack will come. However, since it is assumed that both countries desire to perpetuate the Alliance, it must constantly and tenaciously seek to frustrate and prevent future rising threats. A certainty to US policy makers is that a multi-polar world following a reduction in US influence could lead to international instability, emboldened state-on-state or non-state

aggression, and potentially increase ethno-religious conflicts; a strict departure from the current rules-based US-maintained international world order.¹⁴

This threat discussion demonstrates that the ROK does not face an overt critical military threat if they are at peace with the DPRK. The question then is, who is the aggressor that must be deterred? It is unlikely that China seeks to engage in direct open military conflict with the ROK or the US in East Asia. The threat of VEOs is relatively small regionally and has not manifested itself within the Korean theater. Regardless, the Alliance must be able to deter China, VEOs, and unknown threats.

It is unlikely that anyone can accurately predict the nature of a future conflict. This paper would submit that strategic deterrence of great powers in the modern era is accomplished more through balance of power and sphere of influence politics than through specific military capabilities. That is to say, the network of allies with all that that the states can bring to bear deters the adversary more than nuclear weapons, intermediate range ballistic missiles, or a carrier strike group can on their own. Moreover, deterrence in the modern world is more frequently done through diplomacy, information campaigns, and through economic levers than military presence and demonstrations. In order to deter lesser powers or non-state actors however, the ROK-US Alliance must maintain a forward stationed aggressive posture with specific strategic deterrence capabilities.

To summarize, the ROK does not face an existential or clear military threat. However, they must still demonstrate capability and a willingness to employ that capability in order to deter the non-predicted threat. The ROK-US Alliance and US national interests in the region is only really threatened by the emergence of China as a

powerful regional actor. The ROK-US Alliance is unfortunately in the middle of the sphere of influence politics between the US and China. Maintaining this Alliance and presence in East Asia facilitates US influence projection. Losing influence would disadvantage US national interests, as it would be incredibly difficult to maintain the rules based international order in Asia without it. China likely sees the US' strong regional influence as a constraint on future Chinese growth and, therefore, likely sees the ROK-US Alliance as a point of friction, conflict, or tension in the region. Consequently, the ROK-US Alliance must also demonstrate resolve in the face of China's hegemonic expansion. The new strategic direction of the Alliance will address both.

US National Interests in the Region

The National Security Strategy outlines four focus areas: protect the American people, the homeland, and the American way of life, promote American prosperity, preserve peace through strength, and advance American influence.¹⁵ Within Asia, the current administration seeks to redouble commitment to alliances and partnerships, encourage regional cooperation to maintain a free and open INDOPACIFIC, and maintain a forward presence capable of deterring and defeating any adversary.¹⁶

The National Defense Strategy discusses several defense objectives: maintain favorable balances of power in the Indo-Pacific, defend allies from military aggression and fairly share responsibilities for common defense, and ensure common domains remain open and free.¹⁷

The National Military Strategy highlights three national military objectives: deter, deny, and defeat state adversaries, disrupt, degrade, and defeat violent extremist organizations, and strengthen our global network of allies and partners.¹⁸

To summarize, the US must maintain its influence in the region in order to preserve the international rules-based world order. It will do this by expanding regional diplomatic, economic, and military relationships. Specific to the military, the US will maintain a credible force posture and demonstrate US resolve to deter aggression, defeat any adversary, and support US and allied national interests. As then president Obama said in a 2012 statement, “US economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities.”¹⁹

Three New Potential Strategic Directions for the ROK-US Alliance

There are three activities that are common to each new strategic direction. They will be discussed here to avoid repeating them three times. The first is military officer exchange programs. Currently ROK military officers attend the Command and General Staff Officers Course and US officers can attend classes at the Korean National Defense University. This is a simple, cheap, and efficient way to increase perspective sharing, cultural interoperability, and shared experiences.

Another action that is common to all is International Armaments Cooperation. JP 3-20 defines this as combined capabilities research and development between the US and an allied government.²⁰ This could work to expedite OPCON transition, enable the ROK to grow capability and capacity, and create another opportunity for an expanded ROK-US Alliance. In the absence of joint capability development the US could continue to leverage foreign military sales (FMS). This is beneficial as it could grow ROK capability and capacity while simultaneously supporting the US economy. As of February 2018 the Alliance has 650 FMS cases valued at over \$26 billion.²¹

The final line of effort common to each direction is Joint Military exercises (JME). Since 1976, the ROK-US Alliance has conducted JMEs. Historically these exercises have caused an increase in tension between the Koreas, but the long-term benefits to readiness, lethality, and inter-operability make them worthwhile.²² Each strategic direction will utilize JMEs in some capacity.

Strategic Direction 1: Complete Withdraw

Nevertheless, the conditions of peace (the absence of war) may sometimes create the preconditions of war readiness of the peaceful, while allowing the uninterrupted strengthening of those who crave the gains of war.²³

The first new strategic direction for the ROK-US Alliance is to politically reframe it as a global partnership that, according to a November 8, 2017 joint statement of Presidents Moon and Trump, would focus on energy, science and technology, space, environment, and health.²⁴ Militarily it would not negate the 1953 mutual defense treaty but would involve the complete withdrawal of US combat power from the Peninsula. This is an acceptable option as it is consistent with the historical precedence of re-balancing forward stationed combat power after long periods of conflict. It is also congruent with senior leader messaging about initiating a new strategic alliance that through shared values evolves beyond its mutual defense humble beginnings. As the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria are scaled back, US government officials would expect to be presented a complete withdrawal as an appropriate option.

Conversely, a complete withdrawal would degrade the Alliance's ability to execute operational and strategic deterrence. In the proposed scenario, the DPRK is not the proximate threat to the ROK, but other threats exist within the region, and therefore deterrence is still an incredibly important aspect of the Alliance and something US senior

leaders require the Alliance to do. By completely removing US forces, the US military would lose critical operational reach. For example, an Air Force intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) airframe out of South Korea can respond more rapidly to an emerging requirement than a similar platform could out of Japan, Guam, or the US. That same logic applies to ground combat units, rotary wing attack aviation, etc.

A decrease in deterrence may potentially signal a decrease in US commitment to ROK defense and may embolden China, Russia, or non-state actor aggression. This course of action seeks to deter through the other elements of national power, e.g. diplomatic, information, and economic levers. If military force was needed to respond to a crisis or to conduct a demonstration in response to a provocation then US Forces Japan (USFJ) could respond, reminiscent to the Korean theater of 1949. Japan may not favor this idea as it could potentially draw unnecessary conflict to the island chain.

The Alliance's ability to defeat an external attack is another task the new strategic direction must be able to accomplish. It is more difficult to defeat an attack without forward stationed military forces on the Korean Peninsula. In 1950, the US deployed forces directly from Japan. This may not be a feasible course of action today. Without the tripwire effect of US ground forces in South Korea, the ROK government would likely be concerned about US commitment to their defense.

Another concern may be the potential domino effect a troop withdrawal could cause among other US-Asian allies and partners. That is to say, it could embolden Japan, Australia, and the Philippines to seek to eject US forces, both permanent and rotational, as they may not wish to be the only Asian nation housing foreign troops. As one author submitted, the biggest challenge for the US in Asia is simply maintaining a presence.²⁵

Losing a presence in Asia would be extremely detrimental to the US military's ability to support national interest and maintain the US as the ally of choice. If the domino effect comes to fruition, this would devastate the current balance of power posturing between the US and China in East Asia.

This permanent presence in Asia has also been instrumental in the US' ability to influence its ally, grow the relationship, and respond to crisis as an Alliance. The simple act of being co-located facilitates relationships between key leaders from both countries. If US and ROK senior leader face-to-face interaction is relegated only to special trips and the country team, then the special relationships between senior US military leaders and the President of the Republic of Korea (POTROK), ROKJCS, or ROKMND may deteriorate. This would negatively affect the Alliances' ability to function well and support each countries national interests. This lesson was already learned in 1968 when the SCM was created in order to ensure these relationships were developed and the Alliance could respond to political and military crisis.

The specifics of the withdrawal are a topic for another paper. However, a complete withdrawal of combat power from the peninsula does not necessarily mean that 100% of US military members, civilians, or contractors must depart. Potentially, a small contingent of leadership is maintained in the future combined command. There are many options to negate some of these concerns but the primary focus of this course of action is to withdrawal 100% of combat forces.

A benefit to a complete withdrawal of US combat power is the likeliness that it will reduce tensions between the ROK, US, and China and it is a good faith step towards maintaining this newfound peace between the Koreans. This net decrease in tensions

creates an opportunity to expand the Alliance into the other areas of focus mentioned above. From a defense perspective, a withdrawal of US forces could create an opportunity to increase foreign military sales and joint capabilities development between the two countries militaries.

The last benefit of a complete withdrawal is that it would probably been seen very positively by the US populous. Henry Kissinger warned that a gap is forming between US interests and the US' willingness to support those interests.²⁶ More simply, the US government wants to do more globally than the citizenry is willing to support and finance.

Strategic Direction 2: The Expeditionary Alliance

As the literature review has demonstrated, military alliances offer benefits at the strategic and operational level. This new strategic direction would reframe the ROK-US Alliance as a combined force, in war and peace, capable of projecting power off the peninsula in order to increase the Alliance's role as a regional security guarantor. A catalyst for change is the desire to increase interoperability at every level. This unified command could employ complimentary capabilities, which potentially enables cost and burden sharing between the two states. Without delving to deeply into the details, the expeditionary ROK-US Alliance may integrate its commands at the tactical level to the strategic combined command. They could also increase the frequency of joint military exercises, and more importantly; they could conduct these operations outside of the Korean theater. Similar to Cobra Gold, this new Alliance could be the driver of regional stability and an important player in protecting smaller Asian states against larger great power aggressive expansion.

Other regional players, namely China and Russia, may negatively react to this reframed ROK-US Alliance. Strategic direction one seeks to deter war by removing this source of conflict whereas, this course of action deters by making war seem extremely costly as a result of the increased lethality of this new combined force.²⁷ It is hard to say whether this new direction will increase or decrease tensions between the major regional actors, but a net increase in tensions is likely. However, this new lethality and interoperability could greatly increase the Alliances' ability to defeat external armed attack, a critical requirement of the Alliance.

This new Alliance structure presents a unique opportunity to expand the relationship. The need to be interoperable would necessitate, what title 10 of the US code calls, International Armaments Cooperation. As JP 3-20 explains, it is intended to support needed military capabilities to strengthen alliances and encourage collective action.²⁸ This is an excellent program for this new Alliance direction.

A more integrated Alliance force would likely strengthen relationships between US and ROK senior leaders. It would force more dialogue because all Alliance actions would be inherently bilateral. Consequently, this would generate a net increase in US influence on the southern half of the peninsula.

Strategic Direction 3: Reduction in Forces and Footprints

Similar to strategic direction one, this new direction seeks to reframe the Alliance as an evolved 21st century partnership that works together to promote liberal democracy, science and technology, etc. It differs in that this reframe requires only a complete reduction of US ground combat power, similar to President Carter's 1977 proposal. This would demonstrate commitment to the newly signed peace treaty, would signal US

acquiescence to ROK political sovereignty, and would likely decrease tensions between the ROK, US, DPRK, and China.

The Alliance is still required to execute deterrence. As such, and again similar to historical discussions on rebalancing in Asia, this would be at the cost of an increase in air and naval forces. While discussing basing, aggregate troop strength, and specific capabilities is outside the scope of this work, the important thing to note about this course of action is the net decrease in total aggregate troop strength with all remaining strength in the Air and Naval force.

The benefit of this course of action, similar to the complete withdrawal, is the reduction of forward stationed combat power. Maintaining strategic deterrent forces in South Korea, however, signals continued US commitment to the ROK; which historically is extremely important to ROK leadership. These remaining Air and Naval forces would integrate more with their ROK counterparts, similar to direction two, than they are currently. For example, US 7th Air Force could cease to exist on the Peninsula. Instead, a combined unit, with a parallel command structure, could be formed that integrated both countries Air Forces in the ROK.

In terms of expanding the relationship and access to senior ROK leadership, this course of action can do both. Similarly to direction two, an integrated air and naval force could leverage joint capability development to increase interoperability and lethality, increasing their deterrent effect. Also, by maintaining a headquarters with senior leadership access to ROK senior civilian and military leadership can be maintained.

The Comparison

Deter

While all three new strategic directions leverage diplomatic, information, and economic means to deter, in a strictly military sense, strategic direction two deters the best. The new expeditionary Alliance presents a much more powerful and lethal force. Increased lethality best checks China's recent capability development and likely provides a stronger deterrent effect on unknown threats. Strategic direction one attempts to deter China by removing a potential source of conflict, but does little to disincentive other state or non-state actors. Instead it gives the responsibility to the ROK to have a formidable military, capable of deterrence. Strategic direction three does provide a strong deterrent effect through the use of an expanded and integrated Air and Naval Force. Without a ground force however, it may not deter unknown threats as well as the expeditionary Alliance. Of the three options, strategic direction two presents the strongest most united Alliance, and therefore, produces the greatest deterrent effect against the identified threats.

There is another point to be made about force posture and deterrence. It can be argued that the Air Force and Navy can provide enough strategic deterrence simply because of their mobility and capability. In fact, this is what President Carter advocated for in 1977. At the time, some strategists warned that a reduction in ground troops would signal a lack of resolve in US commitment to large-scale war. They could relegate their part of fight to the sea and air obfuscating their intention to commit ground forces. Moreover, by removing ground troops, some strategists have opined that it could cause a domino effect in Japan. Losing forward stationed troops in both countries may be

severely detrimental to US interests in East Asia. Forward stationed ground combat troops send signal US intent to support the mutual defense treaty in Korea, and indicate permanence to US presence in the region. This perception of permanence legitimizes senior leader discourse as they discuss the US' role in East Asian security. Only strategic direction two maintains a US ground force and therefore scores highest in this evaluation criteria.

Influence through Access

The complete withdraw of US combat power in direction one would create a net decrease in access to ROK senior leaders and therefore receives the lowest score in this category. The expeditionary Alliance scores best. Reframing the Alliance as a regional force for good would necessitate an increase in relationships and coordination between the two governments. This is also true of direction three. The integrated Air and Naval force would require an increase in US-ROK relations but not to the level of direction two. The expeditionary force is projected throughout the region, whereas the integrated air and naval forces only exist as a strategic deterrent.

Defeat

Strategic direction two is best designed to defeat an adversary, as it is the course of action that maintains the most combat power. While the Carter model in direction three maintains Air and Naval forces, it would require a rapid deployment of ground combat troops if the ROK were attacked. Direction one scores the lowest in this category, as it does not maintain any combat power forward stationed on the peninsula. This does

not imply that this new direction could not defeat an adversary; it simply means it would be more difficult to do so.

Expand the Relationship

Strategic direction one and two score equally in this category and higher than direction three. A complete withdraw of combat power from the peninsula creates a necessity to expand the relationship. The ROK military would have to replace capability and/or capacity in the wake of absent US forces. This incentivizes programs like joint capability development and foreign military sales. Direction two leverages the same programs, causing a similar expansion in the relationship but this time, these programs are used to increase interoperability and force projection capability. Direction three could leverage these programs but lacks the inherent necessity the other directions have.

Summary

	Weight	Strategic Direction 1	Strategic Direction 2	Strategic Direction 3
Deter	3	1(3)	3(9)	2(6)
Influence Through Access	3	1(3)	3(9)	2(6)
Defeat	2	1(2)	3(6)	2(4)
Expand the Relationship	2	2(4)	2(4)	1(2)
	Total	5(12)	11(28)	7(18)

Figure 4. Evaluation Criteria Matrix Complete

Source: Created by author.

Strategic direction two scored highest in the evaluation criteria matrix. As an expeditionary and integrated force it presents the strongest version of the Alliance and therefore creates the largest deterrent effect. The fact that the force is integrated increases its interoperability and thusly makes it more lethal. Consequently, it scored highest in the defeat criterion. Direction two scored that same as direction one in its ability to expand the relationship as both a complete withdrawal and dynamic integration would necessitate a dramatic shift in the Alliance and force expanded relationships. Lastly, this integrated force best increases US influence, as it would require greater access to ROK senior

leaders in order to bilaterally command the force. It is important to note, that this new strategic direction scored highest with and without weights.

The fact that strategic direction two scored the highest should not come as a surprise. The literature review in chapter two demonstrated the singular focus of the future alliance network in that it desires to expand and deepen those military to military and state to state relationships in order to combat aggression and preserve the current rules based world order. The 2015 National Military Strategy summarizes this point:

As we look to the future, the US military and its allies and partners will continue to protect and promote shared interests. We will preserve our alliances, expand partnerships, maintain a global stabilizing presence, and conduct training, exercises, security cooperation activities, and military-to-military engagement. Such activities increase the capabilities and capacity of partners, thereby enhancing our collective ability to deter aggression and defeat extremists.²⁹

Conclusion

This work envisioned a future where a Korea peace treaty abates the conventional military threat from the DPRK. As such, a careful assessment was conducted to understand what threats remained to the ROK, ROK-US Alliance, and US national interests. It was found that although the ROK does not face an overt military adversary, a rising hegemonic China seeks to impede US influence and handicap the ROK-US Alliance.

A rising hegemonic China is in opposition to US national interests in the region. Senior US civilian and military leaders desire a stable and secure East Asia in order to maintain the current rules based international order. To accomplish this, the US must promote and advance its influence through diplomacy, its economy, and the military. The military utilizes its network of allies and partners to maintain a US favorable balance of power. The ROK-US Alliance is a critical node of that network.

With the primary threat to the ROK abated through a peace treaty, there is a unique opportunity to reframe the ROK-US Alliance to better meet US national interests. This paper presented three options. The first reframes the Alliance as a primarily political and economic partnership with a mutual defense treaty. This new strategic direction requires a complete withdraw of US combat power from the peninsula. In many ways this supports US interests as it would promote a rebalancing of cost and burden sharing, and would allow the US to apply those forces to another problem. The second strategic direction presented is on the opposite end of the spectrum. This new direction seeks to integrate ROK and US forces at every level in order to project power from the peninsula. Option three seeks to take provide a middle option. This new strategic direction involves the complete withdraw of ground combat forces from the ROK but would integrate the remaining Air and Naval forces in the Korean theater.

These three options were compared using four evaluation criteria. The criteria were developed after analyzing what senior US civilian and military leaders wanted in the ROK-US Alliance, alliances in general, and globally. Strategic direction two, the expeditionary ROK-US Alliance, best deterred regional aggression, was best postured to defeat an aggressor, was best designed to further US influence, and expand the current relationship. The next chapter will explain how, when, and to whom this information could be helpful.

¹ SecDef, NDS, 1.

² Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 805.

³ U.S. President, NSS, 2.

⁴ U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS), R43838, *A Shift in the International Security Environment: Potential Implications for Defense – Issues for Congress*, CRS Report for Congress (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, August 3, 2018), 6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷ A Thucydides trap refers to idea that there is a high probability of conflict when one great power is usurped by a new rising great power.

⁸ U.S. President, NSS, 45.

⁹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee on Intelligence, *Statement for the Record Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community*, 116th Cong., 1st sess., Washington, DC, January 29, 2019, 25.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America 2015: The United States Military's Contribution to National Security* (NMS) (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015), <http://nssarchive.us/national-military-strategy-2015>, 1.

¹² Deni, *Augmenting Our Influence: Alliance Revitalization and Partner Development*, 19.

¹³ JCS, NMS, 10.

¹⁴ Deni, *Augmenting Our Influence: Alliance Revitalization and Partner Development*, 9.

¹⁵ U.S. President, NSS, V-VI.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

¹⁷ SecDef, NDS, 4.

¹⁸ JCS, NMS, 5.

¹⁹ Deni, *Augmenting Our Influence: Alliance Revitalization and Partner Development*, 11.

²⁰ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), (JP) 3-20, *Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2017), A-6.

²¹ U.S. Congress, House. Armed Services Committee, *Statement of General Vincent K. Brooks Commander, United Nations Command; Republic of Korea and United States Combined Forces Command; and United States Forces Korea in Support of Commander, United States Pacific Command*, 115th Cong., 2nd sess., Washington, DC, February 14, 2018.

²² Vito D’Orazio, “War Games: North Korea’s Reaction to US and South Korea Military Exercises,” *Journal of East Asian Studies* 12 (2012): 277.

²³ Luttwak, *Strategy The Logic of War and Peace*, 61.

²⁴ The White House, “Joint Press Release by the United States of America and the Republic of Korea,” November 8, 2017, accessed February 21, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-press-release-united-states-america-republic-korea/>, 5.

²⁵ Carl E. Haseldon Jr., “The Effects of Korean Unification on the US Military Presence in Northeast Asia,” *Parameters* (Winter 2002-2003): 120.

²⁶ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 812.

²⁷ Ikle, *Every War Must End*, 108.

²⁸ JCS, JP 3-20, A-6.

²⁹ JCS, NMS, 9.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Similar to contingency planning, this work sought to solve a hypothetical problem that may never come to pass. Since it is hypothetical, a set of conditions was used to define the hypothetical scenario. Understanding these conditions is important because it informs how and when the conclusions can be applied to the current situation. This chapter will discuss the conclusions of this planning process.

What are the implications of strategic direction two?

Implementing strategic direction two would require a change to a US military norm. The US does not typically place military forces under foreign military commanders. An equitable combined force would require this. Training, clear communication, and time may allay US senior leaders' concerns. Interestingly, US military officers have commanded ROK forces since 1950.

It will take time to integrate the two forces. Force integration could be combined with current ROK-US initiatives such as, the Yongsan Relocation Plan, Land Partnership Plan, and CFC-Next. The decision-making structure already exists within the Alliance and adaptation over time has been a constant reality. This new chapter is unlikely to cause a significant loss in military readiness or diplomatic irritation.

A principal benefit of the combined and fully integrated ROK-US military force, beyond what was discussed in the previous chapter, is its built-in system of checks and balances. By design, the integrated force would require the bilateral consent of both countries' national command authorities; which is important for two reasons. One, it

demonstrates legitimacy. Each action would have to be in the interests of both nations, which denies the adversarial narrative of imperialist US unilateral actions in South Korea. Secondly, it impedes excess aggression. Any action by the combined force would have to be seen as necessary and appropriate by both states before it was executed. This may slow the command's ability to react to crisis but that could be a positive effect when wielding such a powerful force.

How is this information helpful?

If the OE, as described in this paper, comes to fruition and guidance from senior civilian and military leaders remains consistent with what was analyzed in this work, then the three options presented are a good point of embarkation into a whole-of-government discussion aimed at determining a future framework for the ROK-US Alliance.

If every aspect of the proposed scenario does not come to be, this paper still adds value to an intelligent conversation on the future of the Alliance. For one, it demonstrated the spectrum of options available to the US government short of withdrawing from the Alliance. Strategic direction one employs a complete withdrawal of US forces whereas strategic direction two drastically increased the military power of the Alliance. These two options essentially bracket the entire spectrum of options available. Should the proposed scenario happen and US guidance shifts then a new proposed direction would most likely fall within the spectrum directions one and two have bounded. Furthermore, if the future OE is slightly different from the hypothetical situation in this work but US guidance remains the same then a new strategic direction would similarly fall within this spectrum. Simply put, this work likely bounds new possible directions logically enough to account for a single variable change.

The discussion of each new strategic direction independently holds its own value. This is why literature from the late 1970's that discussed President Carter's withdrawal idea was valuable to this work. Moreover, alliance theory has stayed relatively constant since World War Two. As such, discussing the benefit of these new strategic directions in the context of a military alliance is valuable and applicable outside of a Korea scenario. For example, the concept of integrating two countries' air forces into an interoperable and well-trained strategic deterrent force is an idea that can be applied to the Japanese Air Self-Defense Force or within the Philippine Air Force. The same can be said of strategic direction three's integrated naval force, or direction two's complete integrated force.

Lastly, this information is helpful in that it generates a conversation about the future of the ROK-US Alliance. By providing three options that demonstrate the left, right, and center of the spectrum of available courses of action, senior leaders can begin to understand and visualize what they see as the future of the Alliance. That is to say, it provides a basic framework to discuss the Alliance and helps decision makers think about what may be tenable should the need to reframe the Alliance arise.

What hypothetical scenarios would the other new directions solve?

As Henry Kissinger warned, the US may be losing the will to maintain its global outreach.¹ In the future it is possible that maintaining combat power in Korea becomes politically untenable. Wars in the Middle East, cold conflict in Europe, and a myriad of other foreign entanglements may produce an incentive for US senior leaders to withdraw from Korea, a function of an increasingly isolationist approach to foreign policy. If that is the OE, then the discussion about strategic direction one and three has value. Those

courses of action are suitable and feasible ways to accomplish this change in foreign policy while maintaining US influence in the region.

If the US military becomes decisively engaged in another large-scale war it may produce an incentive to downsize the US footprint in Korea. This was the position Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld took in the early years of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and it is a likely approach should another war emerge. If that is the case then the conversation about US withdrawal in strategic one is valuable. If the new war was a limited, small-scale, or especially ground-centric than strategic direction three may be a valuable new framework for the Alliance.

How is this information not helpful?

It is important to understand that this paper did not intend to provide options that were guaranteed to be politically and militarily acceptable to the ROK. Any of the options presented may be unacceptable to the ROK government if the hypothetical scenario comes to fruition. The intent of this work was to provide options for reframing the Alliance from a strictly US military perspective.

If a collective security agreement is reached among Asian states where South and North Korea are signatories then very few ideas in this work have value. Concepts like foreign military sales and joint military exercises can be applied to this new security arrangement but the basic premises of this work are so different that it is probably impossible and definitely unwise to apply its conclusions. Even less likely, is the chance that senior US officials no longer desire to maintain the Alliance. If so, then a basic assumption of this work is untrue and consequently the conclusions are nullified. This is

an unlikely scenario as the literature review in chapter two clearly demonstrated the US' desire to maintain the Alliance.

Lastly, the information contained in this work becomes of less value if the two Koreas unify. If the DPRK collapses, as some authors predict, and the peninsula is united under the ROK, then the basic assumptions about the OE are too divergent from reality. Therefore it would be unwise to apply the same three options as the very nature of the OE, the problem, and US strategic guidance would have changed. This work assessed the threat of China within the context of the existence of the DPRK. If this border state no longer exists then current US strategic guidance would undoubtedly change, whereby voiding the new strategic directions presented in this paper. Similarly, if unification occurred as a result of armed conflict, especially if US ground forces were involved, then the conclusions of this paper are not applicable. The OE would be entirely different from the scenario used within this thesis and many of the critical assumptions would be incorrect.

Areas of Future Research

There are three main areas of future research that would close gaps within the conversation that this thesis sought to participate. It would be helpful to execute the same methodology within the same scenario but use ROK national interests and ROK senior strategic guidance in order to develop three possible solutions from the ROK military perspective. It is conceivable that the same three options could be generated from this single variable change but also plausible that this iteration of Joint Operational Design may yield extremely different results. Furthermore, it is entirely likely that this work is already being done within the ROK military as the ROK-DPRK diplomatic relationship is

trending positively and good ROK planners are probably conducting their own contingency planning.

It would also be beneficial to examine this same potential scenario from a whole-of-government approach. This paper was specifically scoped to only engage the problem from a military perspective. In reality, a whole-of-government approach would be required and thusly benefit from a careful examination of the ROK-US Alliance from a political and economic perspective.

The US military uses a concept called red team. This is where a member or members of the staff take the adversarial position and challenge the assumptions and merits of the plan in order to make it better. This same technique should be applied to this work. Further research on the Chinese, Japanese, and Russian reaction to the peace treaty and potential reactions to each new strategic direction of the Alliance would be extremely beneficial to the conversation. It would also be invaluable to the overall understanding of the OE that senior US decision makers must have.

Conclusion

This work sought to provide a new strategic direction for the ROK-US Alliance should the DPRK no longer directly threaten the ROK. A hypothetical scenario was developed to explore this. Critical conditions of the OE were: both Koreas signed a peace treaty officially ending the Korean War, no other regional actors or military force was able to influence the peace process, the two Koreas are under their current leadership and espouse the same ideals as they do now except that they were able to put aside those differences in order to sign a peace treaty, and the DPRK has nuclear weapons but as a result of the peace treaty is no longer incentivized to use them. Lastly, the scenario

assumed that both the ROK and US desire to maintain the military Alliance but must reframe it as a result of the peace treaty.

In order to solve this problem the US military's joint operational design methodology was used. This methodology was designed to help military commanders and planners understand and organize a complex OE in order to clearly define the problem and provided solutions that are nested within US strategic interests and guidance. This methodology recursively analyzes the relationship between US national interests, the operational environment, the problem, and the possible solutions. The scenario and conditions described above defined the OE. The primary research question previously articulated represents the problem. For the purpose of this work, US interests and senior leader guidance for the Alliance is defined as our intent to enforce the current, US led, international world order by denying Chinese hegemony and deterring region aggression.

Three possible solutions were presented in chapter four. In Strategic Direction one the Alliance was reframed as a global partnership and required the complete withdraw of US forces from the peninsula. Strategic direction two went the opposite direction. It expanded the Alliance and reframed its role to that of a regional security guarantor. Strategic direction three split the difference. It sought to follow a 1977 President Carter proposal to remove ground combat forces from the ROK. To mitigate the loss of this combat power, this new direction integrated ROK and US Air and Naval forces.

These three new potential strategic directions were compared using four evaluation criteria. Examining strategic guidance documents from senior US civilian and military leaders developed these criteria. Each new strategic direction had to deter

aggression, enable US influence through access to senior leaders, defeat potential adversaries should deterrence fail, and be a mechanism for an expanded ROK-US relationship. After carefully comparing each direction it was determined that reframing the Alliance as a larger regional security actor best accomplished US interests in the region.

Reframing the strategic direction as a regional security guarantor, with an integrated ROK-US force, presents the strongest military deterrent of the three options. This strong and integrated force is likely best able to defeat an adversary should deterrence fail. By integrating the forces in this way and by employing them as a combined force, it inherently expands the Alliance into other sectors. Moreover, this new Alliance would guarantee access to senior ROK military and civilian officials due to the fact that the deployment of the force is inherently a bilateral decision. For all of these reasons it was determined that combining ROK and US combat power on the peninsula into a fully integrated Alliance force best reframes the ROK-US Alliance post Korean peace.

¹ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*.

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