

**THE FUTURE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE  
IN ASIA:  
LANDPOWER AND THE GEOSTRATEGY  
OF AMERICAN COMMITMENT**

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## FOREWORD

After lunch with a member of Congress, during which we discussed views in the Congress about the U.S. military presence in Asia, I remarked to Major General Robert H. Scales, Commandant of the Army War College, that it seems prudent to examine alternative strategic futures for U.S. security in the Asia-Pacific. In some parts of the Congress, I noted, support for a continued forward-stationed presence was waning; articles were appearing from American academe critical of that presence in Japan and Korea; and in the event of some form of reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, the continued stationing of U.S. forces there could be called into question. As we sketched out a potential future U.S. presence in Asia, stretching from Alaska through Hawaii to Guam, General Scales remarked that this would be a terrible outcome that would undermine the peace and stability of the region. U.S. forces in Asia, he argued, are stationed in places where there is a nexus of vital U.S. interest and historical zones of conflict.

In the months following that discussion, separately or together, the authors pursued this topic with security thinkers from military strategy institutes in Vietnam, China, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore and Australia. In some cases we traveled to those places. The arguments herein also were considerably improved by comments from General (Retired) Robert Sennewald, Professor Robert Scalapino, and Professor Arthur Waldron, for which the authors thank them.

The result of these explorations into the future strategic landscape in Asia is this monograph. Its thesis is simple, and reflects not only the considered beliefs of the authors but the consensus of many military strategists in the Asia-Pacific: A forward-stationed U.S. military presence in the region, even in the event of Korean reconciliation, is vital to U.S. interests and to maintaining peace and

stability. A "virtual" or "fly-by" presence does not do the job. Should the United States isolate itself and withdraw militarily from Asia, it would be disastrous for the stability of the region and for the security of the United States. However, just as it is up to security thinkers in the United States to make that case to the American people and the Congress, it is important that the governments of the nations where U.S. forces are stationed make the same case to their citizens in a public dialogue.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES OF THE AUTHORS**

ROBERT H. SCALES, JR., a Major General in the U.S. Army, has been Commandant of the U.S. Army War College since August 1997. He graduated from the United States Military Academy and subsequently earned a Master's and Ph.D. in History from Duke University. He is also a graduate of the Armed Forces Staff College and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces. He is principal author of *Certain Victory*, the official Army account of the Gulf War. *Firepower in Limited War*, a history of fire support in post-World War II conflicts, is his latest work. Prior to his present assignment, General Scales was Deputy Chief of Staff for Base Operations and then Deputy Chief of Staff for Doctrine at Headquarters Training and Doctrine Command.

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For more than 50 years, countries around the world have looked to the United States for international leadership. Most Asian governments welcome a U.S. presence in the region to help preserve security and stability. They know that an American presence does not mean an occupying force since, if asked, the United States leaves.<sup>1</sup> These countries are reassured by a more or less continuous presence of U.S. forces in a way that the temporary passage or intervention of expeditionary forces will not accomplish. The credibility and deterrent effect of a soldier (sailor, airman, or marine) on the ground represents commitment and stability. Face-to-face contact and "boots on the ground" are the only ways to defeat the "tyranny of distance" and really effect events on land in support of U.S. interests.

The nexus of vital U.S. interests in Asia is in Northeast Asia because of the presence of five traditionally warring powers there: North and South Korea, Japan, Russia, and China.

There are some who believe that to map out a strategic future in the next century, the U.S. military must be prepared to draw back to a security zone extending from Alaska through Hawaii to Guam. This would involve dismantling the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.<sup>2</sup> Other strategic thinkers around Asia and in the United States, in contrast, recognize the benefits of maintaining U.S. forces in Korea and Japan.<sup>3</sup> Michael O'Hanlon, a Fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution, notes that keeping forces in the region helps retain influence for Washington.<sup>4</sup> The U.S. presence,

O'Hanlon maintains, serves as a deterrent against instability in Northeast Asia.<sup>5</sup>

This article will argue that for the United States to isolate itself and withdraw militarily from Asia would be disastrous for the stability of the region and for the security of the United States. The point is made in the paper that a robust land presence in Northeast Asia provides a strategic weight into the 21st century. A U.S. withdrawal from Northeast Asia would leave a major void in the strategic architecture that would lead to a serious arms race, competition for control of the Korean Peninsula, competition for control of the sea and air lines of communication in the western Pacific, and would probably create a nuclear arms race. The United States needs a balanced military presence in Asia, including air, sea, and land forces.

### **The European Example.**

In Europe, the American participation with NATO to relieve the chaos in the Balkans was welcomed in part because the residents of Europe perceive the United States to be an honest broker with no designs on territory. When the Soviet Union collapsed and Germany reunited, the governments of France, Germany and England privately, consistently and persistently asked to keep a U.S. military presence on the continent.<sup>6</sup> A senior German military official, during a visit with the Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army in 1991, explained that the United States must commit itself to maintaining a ground presence of at least a corps to be credible in Europe and to reassure NATO.<sup>7</sup> The Germans believed that, given their history, they would never really be trusted by the rest of Europe, but that the continued presence of U.S. forces on their soil reassured their neighbors that Germany would not again be a threat to the continent. Recently George Kennan, the architect of American Cold War strategy, recalling the debate in the United States about a divided and disarmed Germany in

1949, reminded us of the insecurity in Europe about Germany:

... the doubt that the remainder of the European community would ever easily or fully accommodate itself to the spectacle of Germany as *the* great power of the European mainland; and that unless and until these other Europeans could feel comfortable in their relationship to them.<sup>8</sup>

The debate by the early 1990s was not over whether there should be an U.S. presence in Germany, but about what size force represented a credible presence for the United States to maintain in Europe.<sup>9</sup> In the end, U.S. planners and their NATO colleagues determined that to maintain a "fully capable, fully staffed corps-sized force with accompanying air forces, naval forces, logistics, communications, other command, control and intelligence" assets to ensure a "solid force" required about 100,000 troops.<sup>10</sup> Maintaining a forward presence allowed U.S. forces the flexibility to "conduct major independent combat operations in Europe on short notice," while the use of a fully supported (corps-sized) force was "an accepted symbol of a meaningful military contribution to NATO."<sup>11</sup> A lower force level would have deprived the United States and its NATO allies of "an operationally effective, nationally independent, and politically weighty force in Europe."<sup>12</sup> Lower force levels would also have meant that the United States could not respond rapidly to other contingencies in the region, including Africa, without seriously degrading its commitments in NATO.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Application of the European Experience for Asia.**

The lessons of the utility and durability of the U.S. military presence in Europe have application worldwide, especially in Asia. There is not the sort of traditional balance of power in Asia that exists in Europe, making the U.S. presence essential to keep a balance.

In Asia, the debate over the utility of American bilateral alliances and the presence of U.S. forces, for some, is still ongoing.<sup>14</sup> The presence of the U.S. military is still welcome, despite some popular dissent.<sup>15</sup> Many in Asia believe that an American military presence inhibits the rise of a power that could dominate either the mainland of continental Asia or the maritime lines of communication through the South China Sea. The people of Asia are concerned about China and its future potential strength.<sup>16</sup> But like the Europeans, who are watchful of Germany, Asians are mindful of history and have not forgotten Japan, the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the creation of a puppet state in Manchuria in 1931, the invasion of China in 1937, and World War II.<sup>17</sup> U.S. friends and allies in Asia do not openly talk about the fact that a U.S. presence in Japan inhibits its remilitarization, but many people in Asia are thankful that the stationing of American forces in Northeast Asia serves that purpose.<sup>18</sup> While China publicly states its principled objection to the stationing of forces on foreign soil, privately Chinese leaders acknowledge that the American presence in Japan acts as a guard against remilitarization.<sup>19</sup> These same Chinese leaders privately acknowledge that the presence of U.S. ground forces stabilizes the Korean peninsula.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile there is Russia, now bankrupt, with its Asian forces looking for their next meal. Russia's arms industry is selling what it can in Asia and the equipment is good. Russia's scientists are helping China get stronger. However, one should not be complacent because of Russia's current problems. Remember that the Nazi's undertook the rearmament of Germany in about 1935. By 1941 they had cruise missiles, long-range guns, high performance aircraft (jets by the end of the war), high endurance submarines, and nerve gas. Despite the state of Germany's economy in 1935, 3 years after giving his military the go-ahead, Hitler had the world at war. Moscow's forces are not robust in readiness at present, but with its military forces in the Far East

balanced around a solid mix of ground, air, naval and submarine forces, Russia is still a player in Northeast Asia.

### **A Dangerous Alternative Future.**

Visualize what the strategic landscape might look like without an U.S. presence in Northeast Asia: U.S. forces would probably be anchored along a line stretched from Alaska, through Hawaii, to Guam. If this sort of American withdrawal left any confidence in a traditional ally, perhaps there would be pre-positioned supplies in Australia.<sup>21</sup> Deployment times by sea to the main shipping lines in the region would be longer, and the ground presence, which really demonstrates the depth of the American commitment to the region, much thinner. The sea lines of communication beyond the "first island chain" in the western Pacific would probably be part of an expanded security perimeter controlled by China. (The "first island chain" is defined as the waters west of the Japan, the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, the Philippines and Borneo.)<sup>22</sup> This is important because today, China's "brown water" navy has a sea-denial mission inside the "first island chain," which defines China's littoral. China's maritime objectives, however, are to develop a Navy that can control the South Pacific and Western Pacific out to what China has called the "second island chain" stretching from Alaska to the Marianas, through the Fiji Islands to Australia. People's Republic of China (PRC) control of this area would subject critical maritime lines of communication open for free, uninhibited navigation to an expanded sea-denial role by China's submarine and surface fleets supported by shore-based (and even by then carrier-based) aircraft. If Russia recovers from its current economic woes, it too would become a major actor in a race for primacy in the Western Pacific.

Japan, under the geostrategic alternative presented in the paragraph above, would no longer be adequately assured of the U.S. commitment to Asian security. Because Tokyo could not allow its maritime lines of communication

to be dominated or controlled by interrupting freedom of navigation and denying use of the sea, it would probably expand Japan's own naval patrol areas and strengthen its naval, air, and ground forces. This would alarm the rest of Asia and revive the memories of World War II. Korea, whether reconciled in a confederation, reunified or divided, mistrusting of both China and Japan, would probably expand its own military in anticipation of the potential for conflict with, or between, its neighbors. Southeast Asian countries, wary of a certain military buildup by China or a resurgent Russia and the corresponding response by Japan, would probably build their own military forces, if they could afford to do so. The Asia-Pacific region would be a far more dangerous, less stable and secure place than it is today without the presence of U.S. forces. Moreover, much of what China claims as its maritime territory in the South China Sea would come under the control of the naval forces of the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

### **The Nuclear Dimension: Stability versus Proliferation.**

The presence of American military forces in the region was one of the reasons that U.S. nuclear deterrence was extended to our allies in Korea and Japan. As in Europe, the stationing of U.S. conventional forces provided a deterrent option that is reinforced by the nuclear dimension.

American nuclear deterrence, therefore, is also welcome in Northeast Asia for its contribution to security and stability in the region. China's military strategists may complain that the U.S. nuclear arsenal is a threat to China; but they acknowledge in private discussion that without extended deterrence, as provided for in the U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Republic of Korea defense treaties, Korea might develop nuclear weapons and Japan could follow suit.<sup>23</sup> China's leaders even realize that without the defensive conventional arms provided to Taiwan by the United States under the *Taiwan Relations Act of 1979*, Taiwan might develop nuclear weapons. Japanese military strategists

express their own concerns about South Korea.<sup>24</sup> Threatened by the probability that North Korea has developed a nuclear capability, without the protection of U.S. extended deterrence, the South would probably respond in kind by developing its own weapons. Certainly South Korea has the requisite technological level to develop nuclear weapons. In the event of the reunification of the Korean peninsula, because the North already has a nuclear capability, Japan would face a nuclear-armed peninsula. Tokyo might then reexamine its own commitment to defense relying on conventional weapons with the support of the Japanese populace. Strategic thinkers in China and Japan acknowledge that the continuation of extended deterrence might inhibit Japan from going nuclear in such a case.<sup>25</sup> Barry Posen and Andrew Ross, two Americans, make this same argument: ". . . Japan's leaders would be less likely to develop a nuclear arsenal as a hedge against Korean pressure."<sup>26</sup> Strong U.S. diplomacy combined with continued extended deterrence, argue some of Korea and Japan's strategic thinkers, might convince the regime in charge of a reunified Korea to dismantle whatever devices the North has built instead of improving them.

### **An Historical Perspective.**

There are zones of conflict in Asia that stand out through history. In Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula is referred to by Japan and Korea as a "dagger and a bridge": a bridge across into Manchuria and the Russian Far East for Japan, and a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan if used by China, Russia, or Korea. Korea's history with China and Japan is worthy of note. As early as the 3rd century BC, the northern part of the Korean peninsula and Manchuria (northeast China) were merged. The Korean *Choson* state, in 194 BC, had a capital at what is now Pyongyang and was a Sinocized state whose bureaucracy and records were very much like China's, and lasted until 12 AD. Again, from the 6th century forward, the records and administrative system of Korea were Confucian in nature. Korea also was under consider-

able Chinese influence in the 10th and 11th centuries. Japan invaded Korea in 1592, effectively occupying much of the peninsula. In 1593, Chinese military forces drove the Japanese out of Pyongyang, but Japan sent in forces in strength again in 1597. It was only in 1598, after a long series of negotiations, that Japan withdrew from the Peninsula.<sup>27</sup> In 1894, 1904, 1931, and 1937, Japan attacked north, over the Korean Peninsula to occupy first Manchuria and the Russian Far East, then nearly all of eastern China in World War II.

Further south, inside the "first island chain" of the East China Sea in 1873, China and Japan clashed over the Liuqiu Islands (the Ryukyus) and over Taiwan itself. Conflict in this area involved not only competition for control over land and resources, but because of the island chains and straits involved, had (and continues to have) a significance for sea lines of communication vital for trade. This historical competition between China and Japan is reflected today in the dispute over control of the Senkaku (or Diaoyu) Islands. Both countries (and Taiwan) claim the Senkakus, which are about 200 miles west Okinawa and 80 miles from the end of the Okinawa Island chain.<sup>28</sup> Japan retained control of the islands after returning Taiwan to China after World War II, and China wants to restore its control over what it sees as one of its historical territories. The Senkakus are five islands, all uninhabited; the largest of which is 2.5 miles long and 1 mile wide. The islands have potential economic significance (for undersea mineral rights and fishing rights in surrounding waters), but in the security realm they are more important. China needs the islands to complement its forward basing and area-denial naval strategy in littoral waters. This would be analogous in the East China Sea to the role served by the Paracel Islands in the South, already in China's hands since 1974, when the PLA Navy invaded them and kicked out the forces of the Republic of Vietnam.<sup>29</sup> Possession of the islands also permits China to flank Taiwan and dominate the waters to the south of the contested island.

The question that other countries in the Asia-Pacific region must ask is why does Japan continue to press its Senkaku claims? One explanation, of course, is that the potential fishing and mineral rights alone are significant enough to make the islands important to Tokyo. Of course, those countries of the Asia-Pacific region that remain sensitive over Japan's World War II history may view the island claims as a means to support future power projection in the event that Japan would remilitarize. China, for which Japan's history of aggression on the Asian mainland is particularly neuralgic, is one of the countries most sensitive to this possibility, but so is Korea.

So long as all of the parties are amenable to dialogue and do not resort to force, the Senkakus are an irritant that the United States must watch, but they are not a strategic matter important to the security of the United States.

In the South China Sea, there are also areas that have the potential to be flash points for conflict. The conflicting claims over the Spratly Islands have led to clashes in the past 10 years, principally between China and Vietnam, but also between China and the Philippines.<sup>30</sup> Only recently has the United States taken a position on the importance of avoiding conflict in the waters contiguous to the Spratlys, since 67 percent of the oil supplies for China and Japan pass through the area and a maritime conflict in the Spratlys could spill over, affecting commerce.

Back on the continent of Asia, the Sino-Vietnam border is another historic zone of conflict. Since the 9th century, Chinese emperors have attempted to exercise suzerainty over Vietnam with varying degrees of success.<sup>31</sup> In the mid-to-late 19th century the French occupied the area and fought China. In 1979, China attacked Vietnam not only over border claims, but also because at the time Hanoi had several divisions poised to attack over the Cambodian border into Thailand.<sup>32</sup> Practically speaking, however, the Sino-Vietnam border is of no strategic importance to the United States. Thailand, on the other hand, is an ally of the

United States, which made China's actions against Vietnam in 1979 welcome to Washington. After the U.S. defeat in Vietnam, there would not have been much domestic support for American involvement in Southeast Asia so soon after the Vietnam War.

This *tour d'horizon* of Asia was a useful exercise to pinpoint the areas of greatest strategic interest and concern for the United States. If the Sino-Vietnam border is not a critical strategic interest for the United States, it is quite clear that the South China Sea and the Straits of Malacca are. In Northeast Asia, the nexus of the Korean Peninsula and Japan are most critical to American interests.

### **Why Is Korea of Strategic Importance?**

"What if" exercises are useful in attempting to decipher the implications of alternative courses of events. In 1990, what if the American ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, had taken a strong position about U.S. concerns over the sovereignty of the borders of Kuwait in her demarchés to the government of Iraq? What if she had told Saddam Hussein that the United States places great importance on the preservation of peace and stability in the Persian Gulf and that the borders of another state are inviolable? What if Ambassador Glaspie had advised the President to back up that statement with the deployment of an intervention force of a brigade, even a battalion, of the 82nd Airborne Division to Kuwait, backed up by naval and air forces, before Saddam acted? Would Saddam Hussein have invaded as he did? Using regionally based forces for "Strategic Preclusion" is an important option for the United States, an option particularly relevant in Asia because of the distances involved.

In 1950, the national security apparatus in the United States did not think that either Taiwan or the Korean Peninsula was very important. Reflecting the opinions of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on January 12, 1950, in a speech at the National Press Club in Washington, Secretary of State

Dean Acheson described a security cordon in Asia that excluded Korea and Taiwan.<sup>33</sup>

When Acheson excluded the Korean peninsula from the security cordon, the Soviet Union inferred that the United States did not care to get involved in Asia. Suppose Acheson had said that the United States took a strong interest in the preservation of the *status quo* on the Korean Peninsula? What if he had backed those statements up with the deployment of a task force immediately? We do not know the answer to these questions; but we do have the advantage of looking back and making our decisions today informed by them. In 1950, Acheson did not think that the Peninsula was of security concern to the United States, even in the context of our containment policy. After the North Korean attack, the Peninsula became important mainly in the context of the containment strategy against Communism and the Soviet Union. The title of Acheson's speech, however, deserves to be repeated. His words about the U.S. commitment to its presence in Asia are relevant today: ". . . we can only help where we are wanted."<sup>34</sup> At present, the United States has some 37,000 troops on the Peninsula to provide that help.

We can find a number of important reasons for the need to ensure the survival of an independent, democratic South Korea beyond the legacy of the Cold War. One must first consider the impact of any conflict in Northeast Asia on the economy not only of South Korea, but also for the neighboring countries and the rest of East Asia.<sup>35</sup> South Korea's bilateral trade with Japan in 1996 was \$47.2 billion, U.S.-Korean bilateral trade was \$49 billion in the same year, and U.S.-Japanese trade was \$187 billion.<sup>36</sup> These are substantial components of the regional economy that would be seriously disrupted by crisis. Japan received 22.7 percent of its imports from the United States in 1996, and 27 percent of its exports went to the United States. In the same year, 22.7 percent of South Korean imports came from the United States and 21 percent from Japan, while 16.7 percent of its exports went to the United States and 12.2 percent to

Japan.<sup>37</sup> In short, entering Korea in 1950 was a decision made based on a broader strategy designed to contain Communism.<sup>38</sup> Today, however, Korea and the rest of Northeast Asia are vital parts of a regional and international security and trade system, the disruption of which would have a serious impact on the United States and Northeast Asia.

It is not only Korea that we must consider when we think about the fundamental importance of northeast Asia for the United States. It is difficult to separate the security situation in Korea from the region in general, and we must not forget that the interests of four of the world's (and Asia's) major powers coincide in Northeast Asia: the United States, China, Japan, and Russia. Therefore, our security relationships there, which are so closely linked, dominate U.S. security thinking about Asia.

Economics and trade are vital, but international standing and principle are also important to the American standing as an international leader. Remaining a responsible member of the United Nations Security Council and a responsible partner in Asia requires a credible security presence in the region. The national security strategy of the United States commits the nation to an approach that "recognizes that we must lead abroad if we are to be secure at home."<sup>39</sup> The U.S. commitment to East Asia and the Pacific is to maintain a force of approximately 100,000 U.S. military personnel in the region.<sup>40</sup> While doing so, the United States intends to enhance its treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines as the foundation of an American security role in the region.<sup>41</sup> This statement begs the question, however, of why the United States can fulfill its vision for security with a policy of "places not bases" in some areas, renouncing permanent base rights for access agreements, and not in Northeast Asia? The answer is clear: In Northeast Asia, but in Korea especially, the size and proximity of the threat demands an immediate response. This can only be provided by "boots-on-the-ground." Confidence in the United States

by its allies is built on troops and leaders who are embedded in the culture where they are stationed, know their allies, and operate with their allies. The stakes are higher in Northeast Asia because of the history of conflict there, because of our alliance commitments, and because there are no other security arrangements to serve as strategic glue. Maintaining forward-stationed forces are critical to these commitments.<sup>42</sup>

In Southeast Asia, the Five-Power Defense Agreement (FPDA) has served as a multilateral security mechanism since its inception in 1971. Linking the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, and Singapore, the FPDA provides that

. . . In the event of any form of armed attack externally organized or supported, or the threat of such an attack against Malaysia or Singapore, their governments would immediately consult together for the purpose of deciding what measures should be taken jointly or separately in relation to such an attack or threat.<sup>43</sup>

Originally conceived as a very necessary security measure to reassure the newly independent Singapore that Malaysia would not attack it, the FPDA also served to ensure that neither Singapore nor Malaysia had anything to fear from an aggressive or confrontational Indonesia. There is still a naval base and airfield at Penang, Malaysia, that allows the British, the New Zealand, and the Australian armed forces to maintain a forward presence of operating forces in the area. Thus, with the interlocking alliances between the United States and Australia (the ANZUS Pact), the United States and the United Kingdom, and the FPDA, the South Pacific is a reasonably secure place. The U.S.-Thailand, U.S.-Philippine, and Australia-Indonesia security agreements only reinforce that security.<sup>44</sup> No similar set of interlocking agreements ensures the security of American allies in Northeast Asia. Our treaty commitments and security alliances in the north are bilateral.

### **Korean Reconciliation or Integration.**

There is probably no country in Northeast Asia that really wants to see the near-term reunification of the peninsula. China would prefer to maintain a buffer state indefinitely. Chinese strategists from ancient times to the present have always treasured buffer states and have referred to Korea using the analogy of "lips to teeth," indicating that Manchuria would be exposed without a buffer on the peninsula.<sup>45</sup> Korean industrialists would like to take advantage of what would be a cheap, easily trainable, ethnically homogenous labor pool in the north.<sup>46</sup> They are restrained, however, by what they see as the potential costs of reunification. Having studied the German case in the early 1990s, which depleted for a time the coffers of West Germany, stretched its economy and its political system, and having assessed the effects of the current financial crisis in Asia, South Korean corporations are taking a measured approach to the north. Military and security groups in South Korea, who stand to lose much if there was no tension between the two states, also tend to discourage integration.<sup>47</sup> Although reunification is less of a foregone conclusion than it seemed in 1995, even with President Kim Dae-Jung's "sunshine policy" any form of integration or confederation will demand security safeguards until the threat goes away.<sup>48</sup>

Japan has a major stake in the Korean Peninsula as well. A reunified Korea might follow the course of history and develop a close relationship to China instead of conducting a truly independent foreign policy. After all, for centuries Korea was a tributary state of China. This eventuality would increase Japan's security concerns. Moreover, a reunified Korea might seek to strengthen itself militarily, including developing a nuclear option.

### **What a Future U.S. Presence in Northeast Asia Might Look Like.**

The U.S. commitment to maintaining 100,000 troops in Asia was reiterated in the October 1998 *National Security Strategy*. The genesis of that force level is linked to the decision to keep 100,000 troops in Europe. If the Korean peninsula reunifies or somehow reconciles, the United States may not need the same type or capability of a forward-stationed presence in Asia that is there today. New strategic glue may be useful. The security equation then should focus on the capabilities of U.S. forces, not the numbers.<sup>49</sup>

Our individual bilateral relationships in Northeast Asia provide an adequate basis to maintain a presence overseas. The United States as the pivot of a security organization in Northeast Asia permits closer relations with Japan and Korea, supports a continued U.S. presence and supports extended deterrence. These "bilaterals" could evolve, however. One can envision a combined command in Northeast Asia, with United States, Korean, and Japanese forces linked in a single headquarters sharing staffs. Regardless of where command over such an organization rests, in the event of a crisis or a deployment, national forces would have to be commanded by that nation's senior officer in the organization. However, such an arrangement is common, and was built into the coalitions formed for the Gulf War in 1990-91. It is also part of the current United Nations Command arrangements in Korea. The more difficult issue is not the question of command, which is easily negotiated, but the question of out-of-area use and deployment, especially if "strategic preclusion" or some form of preemption is contemplated. If such a military organization is no longer aimed at a specific threat, what does it do? In Europe, NATO has already come to grips with this question. Obviously, however low the likelihood might be, the chance of conflict in the Asia-Pacific region still exists. But even without a general conflict, the combined forces could also address transnational security problems, whether in region or out of region (that is in Southeast Asia).

There could be serious constitutional constraints on out-of-area deployments or operations by Japanese forces, but good prior planning and a sharing of roles in staffs would permit this. Even in Cambodia, Japan managed to send a few Army officers by attaching them to the United Nations. In the event of a humanitarian crisis in the region, all of the forces could probably respond. But if there was some reason to send combat forces in response to aggression, it might only be the units of the United States, or in combination with Korea, that responded.

The size of the U.S. presence as part of a combined command would also have to be negotiated. Clearly, a division of infantry on the Korean Peninsula might not be necessary. But the United States would need a credible contingency force balanced among air, naval, and ground forces.

The United States must be prepared militarily for a variety of tasks, not only in Northeast Asia, but also in the Asia-Pacific. Part of this task is accomplished by traditional "engagement activities" in the conduct of preventive defense. These activities are not conducted independent of the Asia-Pacific strategy, and will remain part of that strategy now and in the future. Continued, repetitive exchanges and visits pay off and complement forward-stationed forces.<sup>50</sup> These activities help to ensure that the U.S. presence is welcomed by our allies and accepted by the populations of the host-countries. Whether as part of a multinational alliance, operating with a second country, or operating independently, the military presence in Asia must be capable of doing traditional military things, like fighting and winning maneuver wars. But **all** of the military forces in the region, whether U.S. or allied, must also be robust enough to carry out other missions, including noncombatant evacuation operations (NEO); humanitarian and disaster relief missions; de-mining; peacekeeping or peace enforcement; resolving serious, destabilizing urban unrest; addressing conflicts over resources; and addressing

problems that are partially law enforcement matters, such as smuggling and drug trade.

There is no clear road map to accomplish this task. Nor is there a ground swell of popular opinion in the United States or in Northeast Asia for forming a new structure with new missions. But serious strategic thinkers in Korea and Japan have begun discussing these matters. To a certain extent, they are far ahead of their colleagues in the United States in shaping the future. This type of dialogue is necessary, in fact critical, and should be part of our cooperative military intercourse.

In Tokyo and Seoul, defense thinkers are asking U.S. strategists how such a future force might be structured.<sup>51</sup> They are fixed on the continued promises by the United States that a strength of 100,000 will be maintained, as restated in the 1998 *National Security Strategy*. But Asian security planners are aware that the broad trend in Washington is toward basing more forces in the continental United States, and they are concerned that the financial crisis in Asia has reduced the capacity of Japan and Korea to continue financial support for the U.S. military presence in those countries. The fact is, significant security changes such as the resolution of tension on the Korean Peninsula will lead to a restructuring of the U.S. presence. A future presence in Asia must be capabilities-based, like the current U.S. security strategy. American planners and their allies in Tokyo and Seoul will need to work together to determine what military capabilities are needed in the region and why they are needed.

The most important factor will be that any future force or presence be balanced. It must be capable of performing a variety of missions where based, and out-of-area within Asia. Whether an Army combat division will be needed on the Korean Peninsula in the future is a matter open for discussion. But certainly any future force must have strategic weight based on the enduring presence of land power. A "virtual" presence or powerful "fly-by" just won't do

the job. It must be capable of some form of traditional maneuver war and forced entry. This means that, as a minimum, a U.S. Army combat brigade and part of a Marine Expeditionary Force must remain in region. These forces will require adequate sea and air lift to move them, and adequate protection from hostile aircraft and missiles. The United States must be able to dominate the air at potential points of conflict and must maintain a robust naval force to patrol the sea lines of communication. Major logistical facilities will be needed to supply Army, Naval, and Air Force units. The potential for humanitarian and disaster relief operations will require at least an Army engineer brigade and a medical brigade. Our forces must get adequate intelligence support, requiring an array of intelligence collection platforms, analytical organizations, and a military intelligence brigade. A major command and control headquarters must remain in the region. Whether that is a sub-unified command like U.S. Forces Korea, of course, depends on the situation and any new, three-nation, combined military headquarters that may form. The need to be able to conduct humanitarian operations, disaster relief, and possibly for the evacuation of noncombatants in case of domestic unrest in the region will probably require a military police brigade and a robust psychological operations (or information warfare) organization.

### **Conclusions.**

The U.S. strategic framework in the Pacific has three parts: peacetime engagement, as described above, which includes a forward presence; crisis response, which builds on forward-stationed forces, the "boots-on-the-ground"; and, if necessary, fighting and winning any conflict that might develop. The mechanisms to carry out this strategic framework are embedded in the regular contacts and engagement activities that the United States carries out with friends and allies in the region.

What the future will look like in Asia will be determined largely on what happens on the Korean Peninsula. It could be changed by such eventualities as a resurgent, expansionist, or nationalistic Russia. But the dialogue that is taking place among strategists in Seoul and Tokyo needs to be broadened to include the United States. It also must become a public debate. The "tyranny of distance" requires a U.S. military presence, and the governments of Korea and Japan must involve their own voters in a civil debate, setting forth the case for a new security structure. This is important not only for domestic political reasons in Asia, but because the American people need to know that there is a civil debate about the subject among their allies, and that the alliances that have kept Asia safe, peaceful and prosperous for 55 years are still useful, welcome, and healthy.

## ENDNOTES

1. The evidence of this comes from the U.S. willingness to leave Thailand when asked in the 1970s and the U.S. departure from the Philippines in 1991 based on a decision by the Philippine Senate not to renew the bases agreement. See Larry M. Wortzel, *The ASEAN Regional Forum: Asian Security Without an American Umbrella*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1996; Julius Caesar Parrenas, "The Philippines: Reaping the Fruits of Reform and Stability," *Southeast Asian Affairs, 1997*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1997, pp. 233-244.

2. Chalmers Johnson and E.B. Keene, "East Asia Security: The Pentagon's Ossified Strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 74, No. 4, July/August 1995, pp. 103-114.

3. In what he characterizes as "Chalmers Johnson's diatribe against 'military colonialism' in Asia," Ezra F. Vogel argues strongly for the U.S.-Japan alliance. Ezra F. Vogel, "The Case for U.S. Troops in Okinawa," *Asian Studies Newsletter*, Vol. 44, No. 1, January 1999, p. 11.

4. O'Hanlon, "Keep U.S. Forces in Korea After Reunification," pp. 5-6; see also Gilman, "A Pacific Charter," pp. 5-7.

5. O'Hanlon.

6. "The general consensus on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean," according to Don Snider, was that "U.S. forces should remain in Europe because of their unique contributions to transatlantic political cohesion, as well as their more direct contribution to regional security and stability." See Don M. Snider, "U.S. Military Forces in Europe: How Low Can We Go?," *Survival*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Winter 1992-93, p. 24. See also Walter Hahn, "The U.S. and NATO: Strategic Readjustments," *Global Affairs*, Fall 1991, p. 68. Hahn cites especially Josef Joffe, who opines that the U.S. presence "denationalized" security and defense among NATO's members, whereas a Conference on Security Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)-based security architecture would revive old rivalries and "re-nationalize" the continent with the potential effect of making it go military. See Joffe, *Forum fuer Deutschland: "Die Rolle Deutschlands in Europa,"* Bonn: Die Welt, 1990.

7. COL Wortzel, as an assistant to the Director of the Army Staff, served as note-taker for this discussion.

8. George Kennan, "A Letter on Germany" (to Professor Gordon Craig, July 28, 1998), *The New York Review*, December 3, 1998, pp. 21. See also Gordon Craig, "XXXXXX," *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 1998 for the article that led Kennan to remember the deep concerns in Europe over German unification.

9. The 1988 National Security Strategy uses the terms "forces and equipment strategically stationed or deployed forward" to describe the U.S. force presence overseas. *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, Washington, DC: The White House, October 1988, p.12. (Cited hereafter as *National Security Strategy*.)

10. Colin Powell, "The American Commitment to European Security," *Survival*, Vol 34, No. 2, Summer 1992, pp. 7-8.

11. Richard L. Keigler, *The Future U.S. Military Presence in Europe*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1992, p. ix. See also William T. Johnsen and Thomas-Durell Young, *Defining U.S. Forward Presence in Europe: Getting Past the Numbers*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1992, pp. 10-12.

12. Keigler, p. xi. By operationally effective, Keigler meant a fully supported corps, which equated to about 100,000 personnel. He reasoned that any force needed to be nationally independent so that, if required, it could deploy out of area or act on the orders of the U.S. President.

13. The U.S. European Command, EUCOM, under the Unified Command Plan, shares responsibility for securing U.S. security interests in parts of Africa with the Central Command. Therefore, it is critical to have nationally independent forces in case EUCOM is called upon to meet its missions in Africa.

14. This point is made eloquently by Representative Benjamin A. Gilman, *A Pacific Charter: A Blueprint for US Policy in the Pacific in the 21st Century*, Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 1997; "Japan Policy: Between Guns and Economics," *The Economist*, November 28, 1998; Robert A. Scalapino, "Toward a New World Order," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 10th Anniversary Issue, 1998, pp. 7-17; Ro-Myung Gong, "Northeast Asian Security and Korea's Relations with its Neighbors," *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. XXI, No. 2, Summer 1997, pp. 173-182; Ryu Yamazaki, "Review of the Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation: A Japanese Perspective," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. IX, No.2, Winter 1997, pp. 27-44.

15. The Governor-elect in Okinawa (November 13, 1998) supported keeping U.S. bases on the island. He was elected over a candidate that wanted U.S. forces out. Susan M. Schafer, "Cohen Urges Asian Allies to Support U.S. Troops," *Pacific Stars and Stripes*, November 1, 1998, p. 1; Clinton's Asia trip in mid-November.

16. China's only major open ocean naval deployment in modern times was an 18-ship task force to the area of the Fiji Islands in support of an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) test in May 1980. Xiandai Junshi, *Contemporary Military Affairs*, June 1980, pp. 13-15. See also Stuart Harris and Gary Klintworth, eds., *China as a Great Power: Myths, Realities, and Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995; Joseph S. Nye, "China's Re-emergence and the Future of the Asia-Pacific," *Survival*, Winter 1997-98, pp. 65-79; John W. Garver, "China's Push to the South China Sea: The Interaction of Bureaucratic and National Interests," *The China Quarterly*, December 1992, pp. 999-1026; Larry M. Wortzel, ed., *China's Military Modernization: International Implications*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1988, pp. 27-66, 159-192; Larry M. Wortzel, "China Pursues Great Power Status," *Orbis*, Spring 1994, pp. 157-176; Larry M. Wortzel, *China's Military Potential*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1998.

17. An excellent discussion of the positive role played by the U.S.-Japan Alliance may be found in Tsuchiyama Jitsuo, "The Role of Alliance in the Post-Cold War East Asia: A Case of the U.S.-Japan Alliance," a paper prepared for the International Workshop of the US-ROK Alliance, October 5-7, 1995; Hanhyu Park, "Between Caution

and Cooperation: The ROK-Japan Security Relationship in the Post-Cold War Period," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. X, No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 121-140. A useful exploration of the utility of multilateralism versus bilateralism is in Tae-Am Oh, "Toward a New Phase of Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region: Limited Multilateralism or Issue-Based Regionalism," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. IX, No. 2, Winter 1997, pp. 137-164.

18. In 1990, then Major General Henry C. Stackpole III, commander of Marine Corps bases in Japan at the time, raised a furor in Japanese newspapers when he said that "No one wants a rearmed, resurgent Japan, so we are a 'cap in the bottle,' if you will." General Stackpole went on to say that "none of Japan's neighbors want a rearmed Japan, so if we were to pull out of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, it would be a destabilizing factor in Asia." *The Washington Post*, March 27, 1990, pp. A14, A20.

19. See *China's National Defense*, July 28 1998, Information Office of the State Council of the PRC; and Chi Haotian, "Dali Jiaqiang Guofang he Jundui Xiandaihua Jianshe," [exert great strength in building national defense and military modernization and construction], *Qiu Shi*, No. 15, August 1998, pp. 13-19. Chi Haotian is a general in the People's Liberation Army, the Minister of National Defense, and a vice chairman of the Communist Party Central Military Commission.

20. The co-authors had this theme repeated by senior officers of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and by defense intellectuals in China during their visit there in August 1998. This was a recurrent theme heard by Colonel Wortzel during his tour of duty as Army Attaché in China (1995-97).

21. Assuming that our current defense treaty with Australia embodied in the ANZUS Treaty remains intact and that the people of Australia remain tolerant of the pre-positioned U.S. equipment there. *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Vol. 30, No. 24, December 16, 1998, p. 25; U.S. Navy, Office of Naval Intelligence, Map 0036513.

22. This was a concern of General Douglas MacArthur's even before the Korean War. See James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998, and Noel Annan, "Dean of the Cold War," *The New York Review*, November 19, 1998, pp. 11-17.

23. The concept of extended deterrence is embedded in the two treaties and is part of the basis for the U.S. refusal to agree to a "no first

use" policy on nuclear weapons in the region. Another reason that the United States eschews a "no first use" policy is that, while the United States has forsworn the use of chemical and biological weapons, other nations have not. This allows the United States to retain the deterrent option to respond to biological or chemical attacks asymmetrically, with other weapons of mass destruction.

24. Discussion with Japanese Defense Agency official, September 11, 1998.

25. Michael O'Hanlon, "Keep U.S. Forces in Korea After Reunification," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. X, No. 1, Summer 1998, pp. 5-10.

26. Barry Posen and Andrew L. Ross, "Competing Visions for U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 3, Winter 1996/97, pp. 15-16.

27. John K. Fairbank, Edwin O. Reishauer, and Albert M. Craig, *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973; John King Fairbank, *China: A New History*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.

28. The Japanese claim is best set forth in *The East Asian Security Situation*.

29. See John Garver, "China's Push to the South China Sea," *The China Quarterly*, December 1992, pp. 999-1026. See also Greg Austin, *China's Claims in the South China Sea*, Canberra: Australian National University, 1998.

30. See Greg Austin, *China's Ocean Frontier*, Canberra: Allen and Unwin, 1998; Larry M. Wortzel, *The ASEAN Regional Forum: Asian Security Without an American Umbrella*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1996.

31. Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, New York: Viking Press, 1983; Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *A History of East Asian Civilization*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.

32. Harlan W. Jencks, *From Muskets to Missiles: Politics and Professionalism in the Chinese Army, 1945-1981*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982.

33. James Chace, *Acheson: The Secretary of State Who Created the American World*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1998, pp. 220-23, 268-69.

34. Dean Acheson, "Relations of the People's of the United States and the People's of Asia: We Can Only Help Where We are Wanted," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, January 12, 1950, p. 5.

35. *East Asian Strategic Review, 1997-1998*, Tokyo: The National Institute for Defense Studies, 1998, p. 22-25.

36. *The Europa World Book, 1998*, 2 Volumes, London: Europa Publications Limited, 1998.

37. *Ibid.*

38. See NSC 68, which set forth our containment policy, and its antecedents, the "X" cable from Moscow by George Kennan and his article "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4, July 1947, pp. 566-589. This seminal piece outlined the basis of the containment policy.

39. *National Security Strategy*, p. 1. See also *National Military Strategy of the United States of America: Shape, Respond, Prepare Now: A Military Strategy for a New Era*, Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, 1997 (cited hereafter as *National Military Strategy*).

40. The rationale for this 100,000-man strength is based on the same logic as informed the debate in Europe as much as it is in avoiding the perception that the United States places less importance in Asia as a potential major theater of war. Asians remember that in World War II, the Asia-Pacific Theater was relegated to second place in the Allied "win-hold-win" strategy, which called for a holding action in Asia while first defeating Germany in Europe.

41. *National Security Strategy*, pp. 41-42.

42. Statement of Admiral Dennis C. Blair, U.S. Navy, Commander in Chief, U.S. Pacific Command, to the House Armed Services Committee, March 3, 1999. <http://www.house.gov/hasc/testimony/106thcongress/99-03-03blair.htm>

43. See Phillip Methven, *The Five-Power Defense Arrangement and Military Cooperation among the ASEAN States*, Canberra: Strategic and Defense Studies Center, Australian National University, 1992. The FPDA was established in November 1971.

44. Australia had long been wary of Indonesia, treating that nation as a potential threat. In response to the bellicose actions by China in the South China Sea, Australia and Indonesia concluded a cooperative security agreement in 1996.

45. This was the analogy used in justifying the Chinese participation in the Korean War in 1950. Larry M. Wortzel, "China Seeks Traditional Great Power Status," *Orbis*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Spring 1994, pp. 157-175. The concept is explained on p. 159.

46. According to an Associated Press report of November 1, 1998, Hyundai Corporation, South Korea's largest conglomerate, recently concluded a deal with the North to operate a tourist site in Diamond Mountain off the North Korean coast, which Hyundai hopes will attract 2,000 domestic tourists from the South a day. Hyundai will pay the North \$906 million over a 6-year period for the right to develop the island. See *The Washington Post*, November 1, 1998, p. A26.

47. Discussions in Seoul, August 24-28, 1998.

48. For a discussion of the "sunshine policy" in the context of security issues, see Victor D. Cha, "Is There Still a Rational North Korean Option for War?" *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 29, No. 4, December 1998, pp. 477-490, especially the discussion on pp. 483-485.

49. Here, a review of the post-Soviet debate in Europe is useful. See Johnsen and Young, *Defining U.S. Forward Presence in Europe: Getting Past the Numbers*, pp. 4-10.

50. Joseph W. Prueher, "The Asia-Pacific Region: A U.S. Pacific Command Perspective," remarks at the 1997 Pacific Symposium, April 28, 1997, Honolulu, Hawaii. <http://www.pacom.mil/ref/sst-01.htm>

51. Interviews in the United States and Seoul, August and September 1998.

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