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**THE UNITED STATES AND ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL  
ALLIANCES AS AN INFLUENCE ON STABILITY AND THE GOAL  
OF A DEMOCRATIC REUNIFICATION OF KOREA**

**BY**

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## ABSTRACT

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This strategic research project will focus on the potential for convergence of national interests between the United States, China, Japan, North and South Korea, and other ASEAN member states. I will address major political and economic issues in the Asia-Pacific region in relation to how the relevant actors in the region play an integral role in a potential, democratic-like reunification of North and South Korea. I propose to present some feasible strategies that could frame the ways and means for an U.S. / China agreement, working collectively with other regional powers, to affect a reunified Korea focused on democratic goals, regional stability and lasting security. By applying the theory of the carrot and the stick, I will demonstrate how U.S resolve to maintain a military presence in South Korea could be mitigated through the collective effort of regional alliances, coalitions and improved economic and political relationships with the major powers in the region. I will also address some of the issues concerning Theater Missile Defense (TMD) with regard to potential responses to U.S. policy among Asian-Pacific regional actors. This paper will attempt to illustrate how the complexities of evolving economies, political alignments, and evolving military powers in the region interact to influence tendencies toward isolationism or openness to the outside world.



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## THE UNITED STATES, AND ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL ALLIANCES AS AN INFLUENCE ON STABILITY AND THE GOAL OF A DEMOCRATIC REUNIFICATION OF KOREA

If an enemy has alliances, the problem is grave and the enemy position is strong; if it has no alliances the problem is minor and the enemy's position weak.

— Wang Hsi<sup>1</sup>

This quote, from the readings of "Sun Tzu, The Art of War," is especially important as applied to competing priorities of power and economics within the Northeast Asian region. It illustrates the importance of strong alliances working together for regional security and raising the level of awareness toward threats to that security. Perceived economic, political or military weakness is potential vulnerability in regionally unstable areas of the world. Korea is in the heart of just such instability. There are many diverse regional actors that can potentially influence the final steady state.

The United States played a continuous role for over a half century in the stabilization process of the Asia-Pacific region. In the beginning of this process, after World War II, there were no well-developed alliances in the region. The United States was in occupation of both South Korea and Japan, helping to rebuild a South Korean government and developing a new constitution for the demilitarized, sovereign government of Japan. The focus of the United States has been identification of common national interests, free governments that encourage open markets, promoting human rights, a sharing of economic and political influence, and regional stability through political, economic and military commitment.

If the Asia region is to reach a level of stability and respect in world markets, it must work collectively to bolster the strengths each nation-state brings to the table. North Korea's continued isolation from the world and archaic, dynastic rule will leave it behind to wither and collapse as neighboring nation-states progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Association of Southeastern Asian Nations (ASEAN) has already made great inroads over the past two decades toward mutually supporting economic measures in the world market. As major Asian powers play a more prominent role in free world markets, the opportunity for western democratic ideals to influence a Korean reunification emerges. There are diverging interests, however, with economic issues taking precedence over security issues within the ASEAN member states. This paper will compare and contrast those competing priorities among developing Asian states as they vie for position in the global arena. Lessons can be derived from ASEAN progress as we look at the future of North / South Korean cooperation, and the influences of other Asian states toward a stable resolution to a half century of conflict. Figure 1 below lists the ASEAN nations with their respective governments and leaders. This list also includes China, not as a member of ASEAN, but as an important economic influence in the region.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Leader</b>
<b>Brunei</b>	<b>Constitutional Sultanate</b>	<b>Sultan and Prime Minister His Majesty Paduka Seri Waddaulah</b>
<b>China</b>	<b>Communist state</b>	<b>President Jiang Zemin</b>
<b>Indonesia</b>	<b>Republic</b>	<b>President Gen. Soeharto</b>
<b>Laos</b>	<b>Communist state</b>	<b>President Nouhak Phoumsavan</b>
<b>Malaysia</b>	<b>Constitutional Monarchy</b>	<b>Paramount Ruler JA'AFAR ibni Abdul Rahman</b>
<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>Military Regime</b>	<b>Gen.Than Shwe</b>
<b>Philippines</b>	<b>Republic</b>	<b>President Ramos</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>Republic within Commonwealth</b>	<b>Prime Minister GOH Chok Tong</b>
<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>Multiparty democratic regime</b>	<b>President Li Teng-hui</b>
<b>Thailand</b>	<b>Constitutional Monarchy</b>	<b>King Phumiphon Adunyadet</b>
<b>Vietnam</b>	<b>Communist State</b>	<b>President Le Duc Anh</b>

Figure 1: ASEAN Member States (plus China)<sup>2</sup>

## INITIAL U.S. INVOLVEMENT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

To set the stage for the involvement of the United States in the Asian-Pacific region and discuss emerging national interests, we must review the litany of events evolving after World War II. The period after the conclusion of World War II left Korea a divided nation and Japan under the occupation forces of the United States. The United States was not a major economic or political player in this part of the world prior to the war. Perhaps well-developed alliances in the region could have precluded the unfortunate results of an ill-prepared U.S. military force being surprised by an unexpected communist invasion from North Korea in July of 1950, but the aftermath of world war left the entire region in an unstable state of rebuilding and redefining itself. At the conclusion of World War II, president Harry Truman focused on the task of addressing remedies for ailing domestic issues. That political focus, fostered by four years of diverted priorities directed toward the war effort, left the United States unprepared for the rapid military build-up necessary to face the North Korean invasion.

There were also other world issues requiring the attention of the United States and its limited resources. The contrasting political ideologies between the Soviet Union and the West at the end of World War II continued to tug at the pants leg of the United States. The adversarial nature of the USSR cued the need for strong European alliances formed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to secure a hard earned peace and collective security in Europe through mutual support of nation-states focused on similar security goals. The evolution of a new Bi-Polar super power environment emerging between the U.S. and the USSR illustrates the complexities of bringing war, even through victory, to full closure. This model also plays an important role in understanding how we engage relations in the Asian-Pacific region today.

The end of WWII introduced the world to the destructiveness of nuclear weapons. Initially, the U.S. was the only power with this capability. It is arguable that this capability perpetuated the belief that large wars fought with mass conventional armies were no longer necessary. Further evidence of this is reflected by the reduction of U.S. conventional military force structure by 75 percent (3.5 million to 400 thousand troops) between 1945 and 1946.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet Union was an ally only until the accomplishment of its own objective, the abolished threat of its homeland from Western Europe. With renewed vigor and confidence, the Soviet Union began to focus on communist expansionism throughout the more vulnerable, less developed countries of the world. Thus, the U.S. found that continued alliance through NATO was necessary to contain this new potential enemy. The threat of the Soviet Union as a monolithic world communist power, with ideological aims on expansionism, refocused national interests to consider deterrence of threats to democracies important to the security of world economies and lasting peace. With reduced forces, options against aggression from the USSR were limited to nuclear retaliation, or the more proportioned strategy of containment and limited conventional response.

As relations between the West and the Soviet Union became strained, and even hostile in the years after WWII, the vital need for strong alliances became more relevant and the containment strategy evolved to deterrence through strength. In later years, well into the Eisenhower administration and beyond, this ideology manifested itself as the arms race emerged. Visionaries in Truman's National Security Council produced NSC 68 in 1950 as the cold war stimulated argument that continued reliance on political and economic measures to facilitate control over communist expansionism would place the West in jeopardy, and that the West needed large, ready military forces.<sup>4</sup> Although President Truman's priorities for domestic restructuring conflicted with the need for resources to implement NSC 68, his embracement of this document was fortuitous with the advent of the Korean War in 1950. Although not yet resourced, this document provided a clear and logical path toward meeting the challenges of proportioned response to a perceived Soviet backed communist expansion in Northeast Asia. The following quote illustrates President Truman's response to the Korean invasion with relation to Soviet-style, communist expansionism:

“...The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war.”

— Harry S. Truman<sup>5</sup>

The primary mission of the victorious U.S. forces in the Pacific region after WWII was one of occupation and assistance in the effort to rebuild and stabilize the defeated Japanese nation, and serve as a stabilization and advisory force in Korea. As the unchallenged victor, the U.S. was positioned to dictate a new constitution for Japan's future sovereignty, securing a heightened level of security in the region. Additionally, a principal task for U.S. forces in Korea was to advise Korean leaders on military matters. The U.S. equipped the South Korean Army with WWII vintage materials as a result of this effort to provide the South Korean Government with the means to defend itself against communist aggression. These Asian nations were just rebuilding themselves and did not have a sufficient infrastructure or economic maturity to provide the United States with credible alliance support. This lack of strategic advantage, exacerbated by a poorly equipped and poorly trained 'occupation army' in Japan as the only available force to respond to the North Korean invasion of 1950, cost the U.S. dearly with the initial devastation of 'Task Force Smith' and ultimately several thousand lives.

The aims of the North Korean communists were not well understood by the U.S. in the post war period leading to the 1950 invasion. The U.S had no strong alliances in the region for intelligence resources or political support, nor was there a perceived threat of critical interest to the United States.

Nuclear retaliation was not an appropriate, proportioned response against North Korean aggression. In this scenario, the objective was clear for the U.S., -- stop communist expansionism. The way was clear, -- an immediate, proportioned, conventional response with forces available and a build-up of follow-on forces. The means were initially inadequate but quickly bolstered through rapid U.S. mobilization. The U.S. strategy for a larger force structure to contain communist expansionism, as articulated in NSC 68, facilitated a quick military build-up in response to this fractured stability in Korea. Korean War veteran T.R. Fehrenbach understood that, although we often forget the advantage of history and lessons learned, we quickly adapt and relearn. He aptly stated in his book, *"This Kind of War."*

“Americans in 1950 rediscovered something that since Hiroshima they had forgotten: you may fly over a land forever; you may bomb it, atomize it, pulverize it and wipe it clean of life - - but if you desire to defend it, protect it, and keep it for civilization, you must do this on the ground the way the Roman legions did, by putting your young men into the mud.”

— T. R. Fehrenbach<sup>6</sup>

## COMPARING REGIONAL STRATEGIES

It is still arguable today that a continued strategy of both containment and deterrence against North Korea could eventually lead to the same success achieved in Europe. Two possible end-states could occur within in the Kim Jong Il regime if he persists down the road of isolationism. One thought is that North Korea could face the same fate as the East European countries resulting from the break-up of the USSR after the cold war. The USSR finally faltered when its economy could no longer withstand the strain of maintaining a large, standing military to face the Western alliances. Another potential outcome is the possibility that Kim Jong Il will allow his government to become more open to the outside world and accept a gradual reform of archaic economic policies so as to avoid certain economic collapse.<sup>7</sup> This second possibility would require a radical change in philosophy within the Kim Family Regime (KFR) and its approach as a governing body. Kim Jong Il would have to admit to the population of North Korea that his current system is flawed, that he is something less than a supernatural, chosen leader, and that help from the outside world is required to survive as a nation. The KFR sees this softening of philosophy as a danger to their hold on power. Outside influences and a less restrictive hold on information from the outside world could cause Kim Jong Il's power grip to fracture from within.

Alliances with South Korea, China, Japan, other developing ASEAN states are essential to the effort of moving all the Asian-Pacific nations toward a more stable and economically sound region. During this growth process, a strong U.S. military presence in the region continues to foster stability and deter any potential aggression from North Korea as it struggles to maintain its identity and power. The caution here, however, is that the North Korean economy is already in critical condition and yet, the will of its very large populous and dangerous army is under the iron grip of an unstable and rogue actor, Kim Jong Il. The 'Great Leader' as his people fondly call him, is extremely distrustful of the United States. China is also distrustful of the United States, and has supported North Korean ideologies in the past. The changing structure of the world economy, however, with a more prominent role for ASEAN, places China's continued support for North Korea in question. Similarly, the break-up of the Soviet Union also left Kim Jong Il more isolated than ever. It is essential, therefore, that U.S. goals in the region be achieved through patience, continued diplomacy, economic growth and by building trust through regional alliances without appearing overly aggressive.

The ability of the U.S to maintain a strong alliance with South Korea, Japan, and ASEAN member states is crucial to the security of this unstable region and the on-going nonproliferation effort to prevent North Korea from becoming a threatening nuclear power. Continuing to foster economic working relationships with China, with a careful eye toward their growing might as a potential global threat, is also essential to their continued participation in free market economies. Working toward more favorable relations with Russia will further serve as a catalyst to ease tensions between Russia and China resulting in reduced paranoia toward the West. Stronger U.S., China and Russian relations compliment containment of the North Koreans and the deterrence of any attempt to repeat their desire to reunite the Korean peninsula under communist rule. This strategic objective is therefore complimentary to the U.S.

goal of maintaining regional stability, free market economies, and foundations for growing democracies. A containment strategy as a limited measure against communist aggression, with limited resources, cannot be accomplished without strong politico-military and economic alliances. Security through alliances is more influential as a deterrent than any unilateral approach.

Stabilization in the Asian-Pacific region is far more complex than can be resolved by simple military action. While the U.S. is not prepared to reduce military presence in South Korea, mitigation of this resolve could play an important role in future relations with China and Russia as a means to cooperative stabilization through collective security. With the fall of the Soviet Union, North Korea no longer has the security blanket previously provided by their strongest communist supporters. China may conclude that the economical benefits of the rising ASEAN financial framework outweigh the political backing of the North Korean communist regime. In a summary of Asian Affairs by analyst Rinn-Sup Shinn, he alludes to North Korea's distrust of outsiders by stating that North Korea is:

“... reined in by two major constraints: fear that any political or economic reform would have the same fatal consequence for itself as it had for the former Soviet Union and other erstwhile allies; and fear that the United States, South Korea and other “enemies” would stop at nothing to overthrow the communist regime in the North.”

— Rinn-Sup Shinn<sup>8</sup>

U.S. strategy is extremely delicate in that it must achieve its aims of deterring communist aggression in the Asia-Pacific region without appearing to be threatening to an unstable, paranoid nation already on the brink of economic collapse. It is difficult in a post cold war world without clear-cut enemies to articulate U.S. regional interests and grand strategies to both the American public, and potential allies. Continuing to maintain strong alliances with South Korea, Japan, and ASEAN member states while working to strengthen a political and economic relationship with China is a non-threatening, yet progressive policy option to demonstrate resolve that regional alliances can stifle North Korean aggression and communist expansion in the region.

It could also be argued that a potential policy geared toward stabilization would be to convince China that U.S. and Chinese national interests are in alignment to achieve mutual goals in the Korean peninsula. China, like Kim Jong Il however, has a similar distrust of U.S. intentions and strong military presence in the region. We must convince China, through working relationships within the ASEAN network, that the primary U.S. objective is stability in the Korean peninsula through a unified government that respects the rights of its citizens, fosters an open economy and is non-threatening to world or regional peace. This proactive strategy is mutually beneficial, and could lead to further reduction of U.S. military presence in the region. This policy approach, with China in agreement, could serve to undermine Kim Jong Il's power, forcing him to capitulate to the will of stronger pro-Western alliances.

North Korea's goals of political self-preservation, undermining South Korea – and by extension, U.S. military presence in the South, and obtaining economic and security support from the outside world have not been realized by Kim Jong Il.<sup>9</sup> He views the United States as his sworn enemy and believes that the

North is under economic siege by the West. The power of the U.S., with its proactive support for Western democratic values, and its willingness to use force unilaterally, is intimidating and could be viewed by North Korea as antagonistic.<sup>10</sup>

While it may be optimistic to obtain agreement with China on national values, it is certainly feasible to reach agreement that common national interests could result in a Korean confederation as a first step. This confederation should still recognize two Korean governments with common cultural, economic, and social interests. Maintaining strategic partnerships with both Japan and South Korea enhances a collective security approach. Adding China and possibly Russia to that collective security effort eases the U.S. primacy role while achieving the desired ends through full cooperation of neighboring nation-states. The caution here is developing a better understanding of China's ultimate goal for power within the Asian-Pacific region and ultimately, the world.

## **ROLES FOR MAJOR, STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

### **CHINA:**

It is important to look at China as a separate entity with regard to U.S. national interests in the Asia-Pacific region. We cannot afford to overlook the desires of China to become a global power over the next decade. China's overall plan for becoming an Asian, and ultimately a global power, involve developing global influence through economical, political and military means. Leveraging the positive benefits of ASEAN provides the footpath for China to gain strength in the Asian and world markets as a more passive approach. This forum also enables China to establish itself as a legitimate leader while optimizing opportunities for intelligence gathering and political influence.

Over the past eight years of the Clinton-Gore administration, China gained significant advantages through the sharing of technologies and achieving 'most favored nation' status. The Clinton-Gore administration took great pains to downplay China as a strategic, or national threat in order to enhance opportunities for U.S. financial interests in Asia. In a letter to Congress in early 2000, President Clinton sought legislative support for granting China permanent and normal trade status. Overlooking China's track record for human rights abuses, President Clinton wrote, "We will continue to protect our interests with firmness and candor, but we must do so without isolating China from the global forces empowering its people to build a better future."<sup>11</sup>

This view of China as a strategic partner in the world economic process serves a political agenda designed to promote U.S. business opportunities. The potential danger inherent in this approach to U.S. / China relations is a failure to recognize that China distrusts the West and especially the United States. China seeks to attain a higher level of power status in the world and could ultimately impose restrictive trade controls throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This rise in power status is achieved in several ways, overt and covert. This is better illustrated by what the Chinese call their "Sixteen-Character Policy," (See figure 2).

軍 民 結 合  
平 戰 結 合  
軍 品 優 先  
以 民 養 軍

### *The Sixteen Characters*

Figure 2<sup>12</sup>

This policy outlines China's plan to obtain military technology by whatever means it can. Bill Gertz, in his book "The China Threat, How the People's Republic Target America," clearly illustrates this policy by identifying the Sixteen Character Policy to mean: "Combine the military and the civil; combine peace and war; give priority to military products; let the civil support the military."<sup>13</sup> The Clinton-Gore administration reversed the more protective approach of previous administrations by paving the way, through open sharing of technologies with defense contractors and American businesses, for China to improve their military might and enhance their nuclear missile programs. In reality, China is a strategic competitor of the United States, not a strategic partner. Failure to recognize this crucial difference places the U.S. national security at great risk. The Republican National Committee stated quite succinctly, "We will deal with China without ill will – but also without illusions."<sup>14</sup>

China is mostly concerned about sovereignty issues and tends to focus on territorial rights to the South China Sea because of its natural resources and strategic importance. China lays claim to the largest area of any of the countries in this South Asia region and has expressed its strong hand in the region on numerous occasions. As one of the most likely belligerents in the region, China has shown its military muscle with both the Philippines and Vietnam in recent years over disputed islands among the Spratly chain. China has steadfastly and deliberately extended its reach of influence in the South China Sea by increased air and sea patrols and establishing outposts on reefs and islands throughout the area.

Through the 1970s and 1980s the main opponent to China in the South China Sea was South Vietnam. With the fall of the South Vietnam regime in 1974, China seized the Paracel Islands and fourteen years

later battled Vietnam again to capture several islands in the Spratly chain. While these conflicts continue to be a source of tension in the region, outside powers focus their primary interests on the potential oil and natural gas reserves, vast fishing grounds, and perhaps most importantly, freedom of navigation through this very strategic waterway.<sup>15</sup>

China's role in the world economy is very important, but China is not the center of Asian policy. Asian-Pacific nations must be viewed collectively as source of interdependent stability. When Mao died in 1976, after years of delighting in frustrating world powers, China moved slowly toward a more peaceful approach to the outside world. China's second revolution brought new leadership from Deng Xiaoping. He recognized China's economic position as poor, and worked to enhance trade and cooperation. The return of Hong Kong to China and allowing it to continue functioning was seen as bait for Taiwan to view this as an example for unification. China was still ever determined to recover Taiwan.

### **TAIWAN:**

Taiwan suffered the strain of occupation by Japan from 1895 to 1945 when it was finally liberated at the end of World War II. The Chinese endured a civil war as the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) battled with Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalists Party in the late 1940s. The leader of the defeated KMT, General Chaing Kai-Shek fled to Taiwan creating a standoff between the two states that still exists today. The United States has been interested and involved in supporting Taiwan's movement toward independence as a democratic nation-state since 1950. With the CCP in firm control of most of main land China, however, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) began plans for the invasion of Taiwan. This effort was interrupted when Kim Il Song of North Korea invaded South Korea in the summer of 1950. Neither the North Koreans nor the Chinese believed that the United States would intervene militarily in the region. This belief was further reinforced when Secretary of State Dean Acheson made a public statement in January 1950 that Korea was outside the U.S. defense perimeter in Asia. The Chinese, and Mao Zedong, viewed President Truman's ordering troops and the Seventh Fleet to Korea as a major event that required redirection of forces that were preparing for the invasion of Taiwan. Mao decided to shift forces from Fujian Province adjacent to the strait to Manchuria near the Korean border to counter any threat from U.S. troops.<sup>16</sup> As already mentioned, with the passing of the two prominent leaders, Chaing Kai-Sek in 1975 and Mao Zedong in 1976, ties between Taiwan and China began to improve, but the ultimate goal of Taiwan unification was not defused.

China still lays claim to ownership of Taiwan and strongly resists any movement toward independence. The relationship between China and Taiwan is extremely complex and economically interdependent. Although China wants unification with Taiwan under their "One China Policy," they see major disadvantages, mainly economic, with promoting aggression or conflict. On the other hand, without a firm hand on Taiwan's movement toward independence, especially with recent elections giving the Taiwan presidency to the opposition party, China sees Taiwan slowly slipping away.

Some believe that China was preparing for war in 1995-1996 with the military leadership leading the way. China's reaction to Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui visiting the United States to present an inflammatory speech regarding Taiwan / China relations to Cornell University in 1995 was provocative. The resulting series of military exercises and missile tests in the vicinity of the Taiwan Strait over the next nine months served notice to Taiwan that the PRC was displeased. This Chinese show of force progressed over time until, in March 1996, the Beijing announced it would soon begin another round of missile tests to be targeted at seas less than fifty miles from Taiwan's busiest ports.<sup>17</sup> These intimidating measures were certainly aimed at warning Taiwan against pursuing independence. This was also a clear message to the United States regarding China's intentions toward Taipei. China wanted to make clear it was prepared to use military force to protect their interest in the region and deter the United States from encouraging Taiwan independence. The United State's continued interest in promoting democracy in the region, and consideration of offering Theater Missile Defense (TMD) in support of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan will certainly be a source of continued strain to relations with China.

#### **JAPAN:**

The ASEAN member states typically view Japan, although not a member, as an economic leader among the Asian-Pacific nations. Japan is also a very key partner, both politically and economically, of the United States. This U.S.- Japan alliance is critical to stability in the Asian-Pacific region. In the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Japan viewed itself as the savior of the Asian nations from Western domination. After World War II, Japan was substantially weakened in the world market and torn away from prewar economic ties. Japan then began to emulate the West, particularly the United States, as this change in direction dominated the Japanese economy, politics and culture.<sup>18</sup> In the 1990's, Japan's role as an Asian economic leader was termed 'emerging regionalism.'<sup>19</sup> One of the dangers with this new, stronger role for Japan was growing resentment from other Asian countries that still have held-over resentment of Japan from years of Japanese occupation and other atrocities experienced during WWII. This resentment still exists to a great extent even today.

There were two shifts in attitude in 1985 attributing to regional trade connections for Japan:

1.) Receptivity to manufactured goods from developing countries; and 2.) Japanese discussion of intra-industry trade placed in a regional context. This is somewhat of a phenomenon as intra-industry trade typically takes place between industrial nations rather than between industrial and developing nations.<sup>20</sup> The influence of ASEAN serves as somewhat of a catalyst to this trend.

In the years preceding the 80's and early 90's, there were many obstacles to Japan's influence in Asian markets. Some of these obstacles were merging communist influence in Asia, the legacy of hostilities from World War II, and Japan's orientation on U.S. relations resulting from post war occupation.<sup>21</sup> For many years the Japanese public, embarrassed by the hostilities of WWII and Japan's history of disruptive behavior, believed that a lack of world involvement was good. Some viewed a lack of involvement as Japan's contribution to world peace. Japan is heavily reliant on U.S presence in the region. They view

this more important than Korean reunification which is not likely to occur for at least the next thirty years. Even if the Korean peninsula is unified, Japan will likely want U.S. presence to remain to ensure continued stabilization.

### **SOUTH KOREA:**

The government of South Korea celebrated its anniversary on August 1998. Its fledgling government was established in 1948 with a foundation based on the American-style presidential system as opposed to a system with a parliamentary cabinet. The first South Korean president, Syngman Rhee, ruled for twelve years with a firm hand until ousted by a student uprising in April of 1960.<sup>22</sup> A series of government regimes, including one short-lived military regime, emerged over the next several years. Major General Park Chung Hee reestablished the presidential system and led South Korea for eighteen years until he was assassinated in 1979. General Hee's legacy was a series of economic development plans, which catapulted South Korea into a high rate of economic growth.

South Korea's development of a democratic government has progressed significantly since 1987. Old Korean culture, however, presented obstacles to this effort. The influence of Confucianism for over five hundred years created a political culture that was primarily authoritarian and bureaucratic. To enable South Korea to accept democratic ideals, the government had to overcome three decades of military dictatorship to establish a separation of powers among the executive, legislative and judicial branches; and introduce laws honoring human rights and civil liberties.<sup>23</sup> This evolution sets South Korea apart from North Korea as the South continues to develop a strong democracy while struggling to compete in a market economy. South Korea now enjoys the status of having the eleventh largest economy on the world.

South Korea will need many more years of economic growth, however, before it can support a reunification of the Korean peninsula. South Korea recognizes that, although reunification is an ultimate goal, it may take an estimated one trillion dollars and thirty or more years to economically support such an event. Much like the problems experienced in Germany with the reunification of the West with the East, the economical impact of shoring up North Korea's financial collapse, and dealing with a potential 22 million refugees could be devastating to South Korean stability and progress.

### **NORTH KOREA:**

As South Korea continued to prosper, North Korea continued to falter, and tensions continued to grow. While support from China and Russia tapered off for North Korea, South Korea's economy maintained an 8 to 9 percent economic growth rate and gained the status of an advanced industrial country.<sup>24</sup> North Korea anticipated improved diplomatic relations with the United States as the Soviet Union began diplomatic relations with South Korea in 1991. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) concluded that since the Soviet Union recognized the Republic of South Korea (ROK), the United States and Japan, as allies of the ROK, would in turn recognize the DPRK. Unfortunately for the DPRK, the

subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War left the North with only China as an ally.

Korea divided was created by the cold war and the United States interests in the region is primarily that of deterring war, maintaining peace and stability in the region, fostering economic prosperity, and promoting democratic governments. Recent changes in this policy from containment to engagement were demonstrated by the U.S. negotiations with North Korea regarding nuclear missiles in the 1990s. North Korea began to withdraw from its 1985 commitment to the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). That was seen as a direct threat to the security of South Korea, and the overall nonproliferation efforts of the United States. Three years of negotiations with North Korea resulted in an agreement reached in October 1994 known as the "Geneva Agreed Framework between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea."<sup>25</sup> Although viewed as a somewhat vague document, the Clinton administration believed that it could serve as a tool toward Pyongyang reform.

### **THE INFLUENCE OF THEATER MISSILE DEFENSE IN THE REGION**

With North Korea continuing to develop its nuclear capability, and China flexing its muscle in the Asian-Pacific arena, the United States is considering more proactive measures for defending its allies and securing operational flexibility throughout the region. A particularly controversial measure for accomplishing this is the employment of theater missile defenses (TMD). As the United States looks toward the development of a smaller, faster, more lethal force that is less forward deployed, it must be able to employ other methods of providing security to its allies. This is an extremely provocative issue that is strongly opposed by both North Korea and China. The dangers involved in pursuing this path are associated with a more aggressive approach to nuclear missile development in North Korea, and China feeling forced to expand its missile arsenal, and intensify efforts to modernize its nuclear forces.

The United States must consider these concerns with great care to avoid provoking either China or North Korea into reacting militarily out of paranoia or fear. The deployment of TMD unilaterally, or in concert with our Asian allies could also cause Chinese or North Korean noncompliance with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty (FMCT), and further hinder efforts toward nonproliferation efforts. There are complimentary concerns on the part of China and Japan regarding a U.S. TMD deployment in the Asia-Pacific region includes:<sup>26</sup>

#### **CHINA'S CONCERNS:**

1. The impact of TMD on the credibility and effectiveness of China's strategic deterrent capabilities.
2. The impact of TMD on the regional credibility and effectiveness of China's conventional arsenal.
3. An increase in confidence by Japan, possibly leading to an increase in Japan's military profile in East Asia.
4. An increase in confidence by Taiwan, leading to an increased sentiment on the island for independence from the mainland.

5. The provision of TMD-related missile technologies to Japan, such as propulsion and guidance, which could potentially contribute to a Japanese offensive ballistic missile program.
6. The militarization and/or weaponization of space, including space-based sensors and/or space-based interceptors.
7. The fueling of an offense/defense arms race in East Asia, undermining regional security and stability.
8. The impact of highly capable missile defenses on the ABM treaty

**JAPAN'S CONCERNS:**

1. The likely effectiveness and cost of TMD.
2. The impact of TMD on Chinese policy toward Japan.
3. The potential incompatibility with preexisting Japanese laws that ban participation in collective defense.
4. The possibility that THAAD may incorporate space-based sensors, since the Japanese government has enacted legislation against the militarization of space.
5. The strong resentment, which Japan still faces from its East Asian neighbors, especially China, for its prior militaristic policies in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Although South Korea supports deployment of a TMD system in strategic defense against northern aggression, it is uncertain what impact this would have economically. Not only would employment of such a system strain current economic relationships with China and North Korea, the cost-sharing burden of a TMD system may be unachievable. The total estimated cost of a U.S. TMD system is approximately \$47.3 billion. The U.S. has urged South Korea to purchase American TMD systems rather than looking elsewhere. Other potential options could be the Russian S-300 Grumble (SA-10) air defense system or BMD systems from Israel.<sup>27</sup>

Taiwan has already purchased Patriot missile systems from the United States, and is pursuing efforts to acquire Stinger SAMs and Avenger air-defense missile systems. Recently, Congress introduced legislation proposing strengthened U.S.-Taiwan TMD cooperation. These Congressional actions, combined with Taiwan's recent requisition of TMD-capable systems, have raised the ire of the Chinese. China views employment of TMD in Taiwan as a threat to regional strategic balances and the deterrent effect of China's missile forces. The U.S. persistence toward the employment of TMD systems in cooperation with Taiwan are due, in part, to Chinese missile tests against Taiwan in 1995-1996.

**REVIEWING UNITED STATES POLICY**

While the United States is prepared to provide military support to South Korea and presence in the Asian-Pacific until stability can be affirmed, this is but one status quo measure to a long-term approach. North Korea appears to be looking favorably toward reconciliation with South Korea by a pact of non-aggression, reciprocal cooperation and denuclearization of the entire Korean Peninsula.<sup>28</sup> These are also the aims of South Korea and the U.S., but Kim Jong Il is considered a rogue actor who is irrational and cannot be trusted. Until true stability can be achieved and guaranteed, the U.S. is committed to maintaining over 37,000 troops in South Korea. The situation is far too unstable to risk removing this

support without further commitment from China to work collectively toward a regional security effort. Without the Soviet Union as North Korea's backer the North must consider its old enemies in a more favorable light. Asian Analyst Rinn-Sup Shinn surmises that:

“Pyongyang’s current concerns about its own survival are cumulative and derived from three main sources: slow economic productivity since the 1970s, South Korea’s insurmountable economic lead over North Korea in the crucial inter-Korean rivalry, and a deepening isolation since the breakup of the Soviet Union – Pyongyang’s most important source of weapons and economic assistance through 1990. In the past, as North Korea became less secure, it sought to attribute its economic troubles to the actions of the United States and its allies, South Korea, Japan and others.”

— Rhinn-Sup Shinn<sup>29</sup>

Kim Jong Il must consider that old thinking, without outside help, will continue to drive North Korea into further isolation. Although he is instinctively cautious about opening the North to perceived vulnerability in a dangerous and complex world, he must relate to the rest of the civilized world or his archaic communist government will perish.

One approach for the U.S. is to continue engaging its influence of political, economic and military power in the Asia-Pacific region to provide the means and ways through a completely proactive, rather than defensive national security policy, to achieve regional stability.<sup>30</sup> Western democratic pressures and influence are causing the North Koreans to look outside themselves and recognize that the world is leaving them behind. U.S. steadfast alliances in the Asia-Pacific region, and extending influence through China to seek common ground in the region, are the best strategic measures to convince Kim Jong Il that his influence, without traditional support from the Soviet Union, is no longer sustainable.

Western persistent faith in democratic freedom, through strong alliances, is playing out in Northeast Asia as it did in Eastern Europe with the final collapse of the Soviet Union. There is potential for further alliances with major players in the region, like China, to eventually see a reunified, free Korea. Strategic security in the region is of vital national interest to the U.S. and its Asia-Pacific allies. China would also like to see a more stable region, but under its own terms, with more strategic control, and with the United States removed from the equation. To soften China’s approach, the U.S. must continue to strengthen existing alliances and foster non-traditional alliances geared to collective security, while taking a less dominant role. As China continues to grow as an economic and military power, the world continues to move toward a more multi-polar, dangerous environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>31</sup>

An alternative policy approach, or perhaps supplement to engaging North Korea and China politically is the more firm position of showing the resolve to protect U.S. allies through a cooperative theater missile defense system. While this approach is certainly more provocative, it takes away an important strategic advantage from both China and North Korea and places them in a position of seeking reconciliation. The disadvantages of such a policy are clearly stated, as outlined above. The advantages of pursuing this more treacherous approach are more vague, but potentially provide a much

larger payoff with regard to focusing regional priorities and interest on economic growth and cooperation. As with most strategies, assuming some level of risk is necessary to gain an advantage. The complexities of the Asian-Pacific region, with its centuries of historical controversies, cannot be resolved in the interest of democracy and free markets through passive observation. There are far too many cultural, religious and political ideologies serving as barriers in the region to achieve harmony without the stable hand of U.S. intervention continuing to play a significant role.

## CONCLUSION

It is doubtful that stability throughout the Asian-Pacific region can be maintained without U.S. intervention, or at least participation as a strategic partner to its allies. While regional stability is vital to U.S. national interest, it must be recognized that indefinite U.S. military presence is only a partial solution, and is primarily focused on deterrence of North Korean, and Chinese aggression. The Republican National Committee (RNC) commented on Republican priorities in a featured article published on August 29, 2000. The article focused on strengthening alliances with Japan, deterring aggression on the Korean peninsula, and countering regional proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, to include their delivery systems. The Republican policy also took this stance one step further in stating that the U.S. will deploy, in cooperation with our allies, effective theater missile defenses.<sup>32</sup> Although extremely controversial and provocative, theater missile defense system deployment/employment, in cooperation with allies, is a very strong political leverage point. It is clear from the RNC position that this will be a priority agenda in the new administration that will bear careful watching to determine how Asian-Pacific nations will react.

Implementation of these U.S. policy initiatives must not be viewed as overly aggressive, or intentionally provocative if there is any hope of gaining the confidence of North Korea and its sole ally, China. Continued U.S. support to ensure freedom of navigation throughout the vast Asian-Pacific sea-lanes, support for open markets and global economic competition, and continued assistance in providing security to our established allies is essential to the long term goal of Korean reunification. South Korea must become stronger economically to enable this costly effort to succeed, while the strains of other relationships among adjacent nations must be carefully mitigated to deter disruption of a fragile stability. Modern governments must subordinate ancient cultural differences and territorial claims to optimize the benefits of economical interdependence. These are difficult achievements that may take several generations to attain. One of the most positive effects of the Asian culture that is shared by the majority of the actors in the region is that of patience. Similarly, the U.S. approach to achieving lasting harmony in the Asia-Pacific region is patience with potential adversaries, a resolve to support established alliances, and demonstrated will to protect vital interests.

WORD COUNT = 7057



## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>18</sup> Edward J. Lincoln, Japan's New Global Role, (The Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.), 1993. 162.
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<sup>22</sup> Ilpyong J. Kim, Two Koreas in Transition. 1999. 9.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid. , 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. , 13.

<sup>26</sup> Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Theater Missile Defense in Northeast Asia. Available from <<http://cns.miis.edu/research/neasia.htm>>; Internet. Accessed 17 February 2001.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

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