

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTERESTS IN KOREA

by

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ABSTRACT

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This paper will examine the decades of stalemate between the Korea's since the end of World War Two and the recent changes on the Korean peninsula and analyze the current policy objectives and interests for continued security on the peninsula and in the region. It will address these new growing tensions, and review the United States National interests and policy differences with South Korea. The paper will review whether U.S. policies and strategies for both South and North Korea should be changed, to include whether the United States should remain in Korea or reposition its current forces. Although the Cold War is over and a number of conditions on the Peninsula have changed, U.S. interests and objectives have remained relatively unchanged. The existing military alliance between South Korea and the United States should be continued with some modifications to meet the changing environment and even expanded to meet future regional security issues. Continued presence by United States forces in the region will deter North Korean aggression until eventual unification and act as a future regional stabilizer.

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AN ANALYTICAL REVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTERESTS IN KOREA

THE STRATEGIC CONTEXT

At the end of World War II, Japanese forces occupied the Korean Peninsula and were ordered to surrender by their government. To facilitate this surrender and their withdrawal, the Allied powers arranged for the Soviet Union to accept and monitor their withdrawal north of the 38th parallel and the United States to accept their surrender south of the 38th parallel. At the time, the United States supported the restoration of a sovereign Korean state and its right to self-determination. It never intended that this division between the southern and northern zones would become permanent. The United States and its allies had pledged that a unified Korea would become a free and independent nation.¹

North of the 38th Parallel, the Soviet Union left behind a ruthlessly disciplined, totalitarian Stalinist society under the control of Kim Il Sung. Russian advisors helped establish the central government and a national network of peoples committees. In February 1947 a Peoples Committee, heavily advised by the Russian advisors, met in Pyongyang and established the People's Assembly of North Korea.² On August 15, 1948 the Republic of Korea (ROK) was established in the southern half of the peninsula and on September 9, 1948, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was proclaimed.³ By the middle of 1949 U.S. Forces had withdrawn from the peninsula ending the temporary rule by the United States Military Government.

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean communist regime invaded the new Republic of Korea and brought the return of the United States and the United Nations to prevent the peninsula from falling under communist rule. On July 27, 1953, an armistice was agreed upon ending the fighting, but not the war. Today, still technically at war, the North Korean regime armed with both weapons of mass destruction and the 5th largest army in the world, still poses a very viable threat to peace on the Korean peninsula. During the past 50 years of armistice, North Korea has engaged in scores of incidents in violation of the agreement. These incidents have included attacks on UN personnel, sinking of South Korean military and civilian ships, tunneling under and random shooting across the Demilitarized Zone, and a plot to murder the president of the Republic of Korea.⁴ Today the separation between the two Koreas is still very much a reminder of that war and the following Cold War that came after, a war that ended elsewhere over a decade ago.

For nearly five decades, the United States has maintained a close defense relationship with the Republic of Korea as a result of a mutual defense treaty. However, over

the last few years the Republic of Korea and the United States have faced some of the biggest challenges since the end of the Cold War. Recently South Korea has experienced a rising nationalistic sentiment, beginning with the June 2000 inter-Korean summit meeting and fueled by the international spotlight and national pride of hosting the 2002 World Cup. This newfound confidence has also been exacerbated by recent incidents by U.S. Forces and drawn attention to their presence, their mission and other national interests. These factors have lead to a widespread debate for a review of the two country's policies, strategies and interests. There are some in the United States that believe the current situation in Korea is just an extension of the Cold War that should not be continued, and that since the South Korean economy is now many times greater than that of North Korea, South Korea can defend itself.⁵ Moreover, they feel that the South Koreans no longer want the U.S. there and demonstrate against the U.S. despite our protection and that U.S. forces could be better used elsewhere and are merely an obstacle and liability to a potential Korean rapprochement.

This paper will examine the decades of stalemate between the Korea's and the recent changes on the Korean peninsula and analyze the current policy objectives and interests for continued security on the peninsula and in the region. It will address the new growing tensions and policy differences between the U.S. and South Korea and their evolving policies toward North Korea. Finally, this paper will review whether U.S. policies and strategies for both South and North Korea should be changed, to include whether the United States should remain in Korea or reposition its current forces. Analysis will support the proposition that although U.S. objectives have remained relatively unchanged since the end of the Korean War, a growing number of tensions and policy views have changed. These changes and tensions both within and outside the Korean peninsula are putting pressure on the two governments and provide an opportunity to review and realign their strategies. The existing military alliance between South Korea and the United States should be continued with some modifications to meet the changing environment and even expanded to meet future regional security issues long after the threat of North Korea disappears. Continued presence by United States forces in the region will deter North Korean aggression until eventual unification and act as a future regional stabilizer from the possible growing rivalry between China, Japan and Korea.

THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTERESTS

The 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review delineates three national interests concerning Northeast Asia: (1) ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action, including the safety of U.S. citizens' abroad and protection of critical U.S. infrastructure; (2) honoring international commitments including security and wellbeing of allies and precluding the hostile domination of Northeast Asia and the Asian littoral; and (3) contributing to the economic growth and productivity of the global economy, security of international lines of communication, and access to key markets.⁶

On May 14, 2003, President George W. Bush and Republic of Korea President, Roh Moo-Hyun, held a summit meeting in Washington, D.C. In light of the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, "the two leaders pledged to work together to promote the values of democracy, human rights and market economy shared by the people of both nations and to build a comprehensive and dynamic alliance relationship for continued peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia."⁷ Consistent with claims from previous national strategies that overseas presence promotes stability, helps prevent conflict, and ensures the protection of U.S. interests,⁸ President Bush reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to a robust forward presence on the peninsula and in the Asia- Pacific region. President Roh likewise reaffirmed the need for a U.S. presence for the security of Korea's interests.⁹

A few months later (after the six party talks addressing North Korea's nuclear weapons program, with delegations from North Korea, South Korea, the United States, China, Japan and Russia), Secretary of State Colin Powell reaffirmed this policy, saying:

The United States remains committed to a close relationship with South Korea, both as an ally in terms of security and as a partner in dealing with North Korea's programs for weapons of mass destruction. There is absolutely no change or slackening in the commitment that the United States has to the safety and security of our partner and ally in South Korea.¹⁰

The United States also supports the peaceful reunification of South and North Korea on terms acceptable to the Korean people and has repeatedly stated that it is primarily a matter for the two Korea's to decide. The United States has also stated that it will participate in negotiations between North and South Korea if the two Korean Governments desire and provided that both are full and equal participants in any talks.¹¹

KOREA'S NATIONAL INTERESTS

The current national goals and strategy of South Korea are “guaranteeing its national security, developing its liberal democratic system, promoting economic development for the further prosperity of the Korean people, and enhancing its international standing by contributing to world peace.”¹²

Until the end of the Cold War South Korea's defense and foreign policy stances were dominated by the United States, the country that came to its rescue in 1950. Since the end of the Cold War South Korea's purview has expanded considerably. It has established diplomatic links with Russia and China and has strength its position within the Asian littoral. In February 1998, when President Dae-jung became president he initiated a concerted effort at rapprochement with North Korea, through a policy labeled the Sunshine policy, a policy continued by his successor Roh Moo-Hyun.¹³

Sunshine policy

President Kim Dae-jung, outlined a new policy of engagement during his inauguration, “The Sunshine Policy.” The policy had three fundamental principles: first, no tolerance of provocations from the North; second, that South Korea had no intention to absorb the North; and third, the separation of political cooperation from economic cooperation.¹⁴ This policy of open-ended, unilateral engagement with North Korea reached its apex with the inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang in June 2000 and had a dramatic effect on South Korean perceptions of the U.S. role in dealing with North Korea.¹⁵ The policy required no reciprocation by the North and the potential for the policy's failure being blamed on them was low. The United States was caught in the middle in an unenviable position which caused the South Koreans to become intolerable of the U.S. military footprint.¹⁶

During the December 2002 presidential campaign, there was a rising tide of anti-US sentiment, with calls for the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to be revised and in some cases for US troops to leave the peninsula. Roh's election support was deeply rooted in those making these cries for change, and he publicly called for the development of an independent security policy to satisfy these constituents. However, shortly after his inauguration, he has since reiterated his backing of US involvement in Korean affairs.¹⁷ In March 2003, Roh stated “The staunch Korea-US combined defense arrangement is greatly contributing to our national security. The solid alliance should be maintained even more so, there can be no change whatsoever in that principle.”¹⁸

Ironically, South Korea is faced with two very different, but equally compelling and devastating scenarios with their neighbors to the north. First, is a full-scale war. North Korea is fully postured for such a scenario with 70% of their 1.1 million strong armed forces,¹⁹ positioned in close proximity to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), established after the 1953 armistice to separate the two countries. This scenario would likely begin with an artillery and missile assault on Seoul that could potentially kill millions within the first hours and days of hostilities. The second scenario, although less apocalyptic, is the total collapse of North Korea. This would confront South Korea with the absorption of the North, with huge long-term costs and one many predict to be more volatile than what Germany experienced. Hence the South has a strong incentive to keep the North a separate but hopefully less threatening entity and this explains why many westerners believe South Korea is not overly active in pursuing unification. A fundamental principle of the former President Kim Dae-jung's policy of "no intention to absorb" the North, a policy carried on by his successor President Roh.

THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT, DIVERGENT VIEWS AND OBSTACLES

STRATEGIES TOWARD NORTH KOREA

South Korea's strategy toward North Korea is to: 1) deter aggression and provocation by North Korea; 2) prepare against possible contingencies in North Korea; 3) promote détente and reconciliation to alleviate the burden of national division; 4) save the North Korean people from hunger and prevent the North from violating human rights; and 5) promote economic cooperation based on a principle of reciprocity, and achieve peaceful nation unification in the long run on the basis of the superiority of its economics, politics, society, and culture.²⁰

Over the last decade South Korea has experienced a boom in economic and political development. This newfound growth and independence has brought on a more self-confident public with a more independent attitude toward itself and the United States.²¹ This independent attitude has fostered a growing anti-American sentiment by a minority and has begun to accentuate the differences in regional policy views. At the forefront of these growing policy differences and a root cause of the growing anti-Americanism is concern over the US strategy toward North Korea. This small but growing anti-American segment of the population also questions the need for the U.S. military presence on the peninsula. They see the U.S. troops not as guarantors of security but as obstacles to reunification.²² Because the new younger generations (who are assuming more prominent positions in Korean

society) have no first-hand memory of the war, they see North Korea as less threatening and the possibility of another war less likely. They feel the United States is bullying the North and causing an unnecessary crisis on the peninsula.²³

While the United States takes a hard-line stance towards North Korean weapons of mass destruction, South Korea is somewhat less aggressive in this area. One would assume that North Korea's recent revelation and pronouncement of its revised nuclear capabilities would concern the South Koreans as much as it does the United States. This is not the case. South Koreans in general are less concerned with North Korea's pronouncement that they now possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In their eyes these weapons do not pose any more of a threat to their national security than North Korea's formidable conventional weapons and forces already poised along the DMZ.²⁴ If someone has a knife at your throat, the gun in their pocket seems immaterial. Similarly, South Koreans perceive North Korea's nuclear and other WMD as deterrent measures against the United States and not offensive weapons to be used against South Korea. To many South Koreans it is inconceivable that the North would use WMD against other Koreans. Most Koreans tend to emphasize "intentions" as opposed to "capability."²⁵ President Roh, during his inaugural address, spelled out two alternatives North Korea faces. First, North Korea can choose to go down the path of having nuclear weapons and face further isolation and impoverishment, or it can renounce nuclear weapons and receive assistance from both the Republic of Korea and other members of the international community.²⁶ On February 3-4, 2003, a special envoy from President Roh's government visited Washington. The delegation was pressed as to which was worse a nuclear North Korea or the collapse of the regime; the representatives gave priority to avoiding collapse even at the expense of the proliferation issue.²⁷ These views reflect important cultural differences as much as they are policy differences.

U.S. EFFORTS ON DENUCLEARIZATION

North and South Korea began talks in 1990, which resulted in the 1991 denuclearization accord. Lack of progress on implementation however, led to North Korea's March 12, 1993, announcement of its withdrawal from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).²⁸ In June 1993 the U.S. held political level talks with North Korea that led to dialogue and North Korea's "suspending" its withdrawal from the NPT. Further talks were held in Geneva in July 1993 and again in 1994 that set guidelines for future talks between the U.S. and the D.P.R.K., as well as restarting inter-Korean talks, but these further negotiations

deadlocked. The talks were recessed upon the news of the death of North Korean President Kim Il Sung. On October 21, 1994, representatives of the United States and the D.P.R.K signed an Agreed Framework for resolving the nuclear issue.²⁹

The 1994 Agreed Framework includes several requirements. North Korea agreed to freeze its existing nuclear program to be monitored by the IAEA. Both sides agreed to cooperate to replace the D.P.R.K.'s graphite-moderated reactors for related facilities with light-water (LWR) power plants, to be financed and supplied by an international consortium (later identified as KEDO). The U.S. and D.P.R.K. would work together to safely store the spent fuel from the five-megawatt reactor and dispose of it in a safe manner that does not involve reprocessing in the D.P.R.K. The two sides agreed to move toward full normalization of political and economic relations.³⁰ In accordance with the terms of the 1994 Framework, the U.S. Government in January 1995 responded to North Korea's decision to freeze its nuclear program and cooperate with U.S. and IAEA verification efforts by easing economic sanctions against North Korea.

North Korea appeared to adhere to the Agreed Framework "freeze" on its declared plutonium production facilities at Yongbyon. In 2002, however, it became apparent that North Korea had been covertly pursuing for several years another track to acquire nuclear weapons, a uranium enrichment program and restarted its reactor at Yongbyon.³¹ According to Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, "A nuclear North Korea could change the face of Northeast Asia and undermine the security and stability that have underwritten the region's economic vitality and prosperity, and possibly triggering a nuclear arms race that would end prospects for lasting peace and settlement on the Korean Peninsula".³²

On 14 May 2003, President Bush reaffirmed that he would not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea, and noted with concern North Korea's statements about reprocessing, possession of nuclear weapons, and its threat to demonstrate or transfer these weapons.³³ He stressed that an escalatory move by North Korea will only lead to its greater isolation and a more desperate situation in the North.

Both President Bush and President Roh reiterated their strong commitment to work for the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program through peaceful means based on international cooperation.³⁴

The different views toward the nature of the threat from the north have also lead to a divergent view on the United States missile defense policy. Since Pyongyang has denounced the U.S. missile defense initiative as an active policy of aggression and a direct

threat to North Korean security, some Koreans believe that if the South Korean Government participates in the missile defense plan it could antagonize and provoke its neighbors to the north, including China.³⁵

THE UNITED STATES, SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA AND CHINA TRIANGLE

China remains North Korea's main ally and this relationship has had some impact on relations with South Korea in the past. However, since the resumption of diplomatic ties between China and South Korea in 1992, bilateral trade and investment has grown dramatically. In 2002, China has grown exponentially in importance for South Korean import and export markets, to the point where it is catching up with and may soon surpass the United States as South Korea's largest trading partner.³⁶ Hence, many South Koreans believe that a unified Korea may turn to China rather than the United States to fulfill more of its strategic interests. Although Chinese specialists have insisted that U.S. analysts have overstated the possibilities of upheaval in the North, in lieu of a more favorable relationship with South Korea, there has been a recent quiet change in Beijing's emphasis and tone with respect to the future of the Korean peninsula.

During President Roh Moo-Hyun's visit to China in July 2003 he called for the two nations to prepare for the "era of the north-east Asia," outlining his hopes that the region will develop into a major economic block that parallels Europe and North America. Roh specified a target of increasing bilateral trade to over \$100 billion within the next five years, and named 10 fields of focused economic cooperation. Since diplomatic relations were normalized in 1992 bilateral trade has increased eight-fold to around \$40 billion.³⁷ Roh however, did stress that without peace in Korea as a precondition, it would be impossible to talk about peace and prosperity in northeast Asia.

Some Chinese analysts voiced increased concerns over North Korea's weapons of mass destruction activities and assert that the United States is simply using it as justification for enhancing their Theater Missile Defense (TMD) development. A United States missile defense system in South Korea could complicate South Korea's relations with China, especially if China believes that the real target of the U.S. systems is its own ballistic missile capability. China may believe that once there is a missile defense system in Korea it may create a strategic imbalance in favor of the United States and reduce the effectiveness of their capabilities, and also curtail their power projection capabilities in the region.³⁸

Although South Korea has not officially denounced the United States' pre-emption policy, it is highly unlikely that it would, for fears that any military confrontation on the

peninsula would lead to war with North Korea. Tensions over this policy add to the anxiety as North Korea continues to rattle its nuclear saber.

During a recent trip to Asia, President Bush said that he would be willing to commit to a written guarantee not to attack North Korea in exchange for the steps by the country toward abandoning its nuclear weapons programs. According to the Washington Post, President Bush's aides said he wanted to have a proposal ready for North Korea to consider by the end of 2003, when the administration hoped to restart the six-Nation nuclear talks with North Korea that began in August.³⁹ Although ruling out a formal nonaggression treaty, President Bush said he would sign a security declaration if it were a joint agreement with the four other countries participating in the talks with North Korea—China, Japan, Russia and South Korea. President Bush ruled out a bilateral agreement on the principle that if North Korea violated a multiparty pact, they would not only be dismissive of the United States, but they would also be dismissive of the other parties that participated in the assurance. According to the Washington Times, President Bush, while in Bali, Indonesia, said that an U.S.-Chinese alliance to deal with North Korea's nuclear threat and the efforts by three other Asian countries are sending a strong message to the North Korean dictator. President Bush sees China as a major presence in the region. The fact that China is willing to take the same message to North Korea as the United States, along with the other nations, is a powerful statement to President Kim Jong-il, that it is in his national interest that he abandon his nuclear weapons program.⁴⁰ At the end of the six-nation Asian-Australian tour, President Bush said

His meetings with Chinese President Hu Jintao, Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun have helped move the North Korean threat from a purely U.S. issue to a regional problem. Kim Jong-il is used to being able to deal bilaterally with the United States, but the change in policy now is, that he must deal with other nations, mostly China. What's changed is, we've gotten five countries involved and the neighborhood is now speaking...and now he's got his big neighbor to the right on his border, he's got his neighbor to the south, he's got Japan, he's got another neighbor, Russia, all saying the same thing. It's a different dynamic.⁴¹

This change in policy by China and its apparent readiness to cooperate with the United States on these types of issues constitutes one of the largest uncertainties faced by both Washington and Seoul in trying to predict possible Chinese motives.

THE STATUS OF NORTH KOREA

No government in the world is more reclusive, more suspicious of contact with the outside world, more isolated, and more devoted to absolute control and secrecy than North

Korea.⁴² The economic crisis of the 1990's, led to a famine that killed more than 2 ½ million people, or 10% of the population of the country, and has caused irreversible changes to the order and the system that supports it.⁴³ Over the last decade North Korea has continued to experience an economic decline: food shortages in many regions of the north, significant drops in industrial production as well as aging military weapons systems, resulting in a relative decline in economic capacity and military readiness.⁴⁴ At the same time they continue to allocate nearly 25 percent of their declining GNP to military expenditures and the number of people serving in the armed forces has remained largely constant if not even increased in some ways.⁴⁵ Despite this, North Korea's military is faced with major fuel shortages, reduced defense industrial output, and has been routinely observed performing duties outside the scope of its conventional duties. Coupled with limitations on spare parts these constraints have certainly impeded any advancement in military preparations. Unfortunately, the degree of degradation in military capabilities is difficult to accurately depict.⁴⁶

In contrast with the economic instability, and in spite of it being more than ten years since the fall of the Soviet Union, and nearly eight years since the death of long time leader Kim IL Sung, the political arm of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's remains relatively intact. In fact, the designation of Kim IL Sung's son, Kim Jong IL as successor to leading positions in the party, state, and military channels suggest both the full confirmation of his personal power and the absence of any immediate challenge to his political dominance.⁴⁷ However, in spite of North Korea's political durability and resiliency, Pyongyang's deteriorating economic and strategic fortunes over the past decade suggests that the status quo in North Korea will ultimately become unstable. Over time, absent a level of sustained external support and an ability to exploit the opportunities afforded by international food, energy, and humanitarian assistance, some systematic disruption or challenge at either the regime or state level appears increasingly likely.⁴⁸

Over the years the North Korean Government has recognized and even managed to leverage its acute economic situation and its energy and food shortages by playing to the international community for support for aid in hopes of preventing a major humanitarian crisis. Until recently, the North Korean government operated a public distribution system, or PDS, which was used to provide both food and many material needs to the majority of the population. The PDS was used to promote loyalty to the regime and prevent or limit the travel of the population and distributed based on a combination of social rank, the importance of one's profession to the state, and political status.⁴⁹ Along with South Korea's

openly stated policy to not starve out the North Koreans, the United States also contributes food and energy supplies prolonging an economic collapse. A policy of continued international assistance may be necessary with respect to provisions of energy supplies and foodstuffs if the intent is to keep North Korea alive economically at least in the near to mid term. A policy North Korea has taken full advantage of to include using it as a past and recent negotiating tool with the United States over its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Despite the North's capacity to leverage both the United States and South Korea and the mixed signals it may send, both countries have concluded that keeping North Korea afloat in the near term serves the interests of both countries. At the same time, the Republic of Korea's stated policy of nonabsorption can be viewed as a means to reassure the North about the South's intentions.⁵⁰ Although this may again send mixed signals to many around the world, to include the North Koreans, it is assumed that this is closely managed to only sustain or prolong the North and not to fully resurrect it or prevent unification. It should also be seen as an effective strategy to facilitate meaningful change within North Korea, and be understood that it does not lessen the possibility of instability. In fact, depending on the distribution of international aid (stuffs and energy supplies), it may even enhance North Korean military capability as it is well suspected that the DPRK military gets a good portion of the aid that pours in from the outside.

REALIGNMENT OF FORCES

As the United States weighs its interests in Korea against the current tension caused by its military presence, especially in the capital of Seoul, it should seize the opportunity to realign its forces. Realigning its forces should ease some of these tensions; improve living conditions on its bases, and better posture itself to meet the current existing threat, as well as future threats in and outside the region. Long before Secretary Rumsfeld introduced the idea of moving the presence forces to two bases south of the capital, a US/ROK Joint Committee under the authority of the Status of Forces Agreement initiated a plan to consolidate their forces south of the DMZ area to better posture themselves to meet the current threat. The Status of Forces Agreement gives the Joint Committee the authority and responsibility to determine the facilities and areas required for U.S. use, but falls short of authorizing a major realignment.⁵¹ This initiative is known as the Land Partnership Plan. U.S. Forces are currently scattered across 41 troop installations and an additional 54 camps and support sites. The living and working conditions on these camps are the worst in the

Department of Defense, and the investment required to bring them up to standard would be enormous.⁵² Rapid growth and urbanization in Korea over the last several decades has created an even greater demand for available land and increased encroachments and pressures on areas utilized by U.S. forces. Many of the smaller U.S. camps and training areas, originally in isolated locations, are now in the center of large urban areas. (Figure 1.) This causes even more tension between the US forces and the population surrounding these camps. Negotiations over individual land issues have been deadlocked and backlogged, with some unsolved issues dating back as far as 1982.⁵³

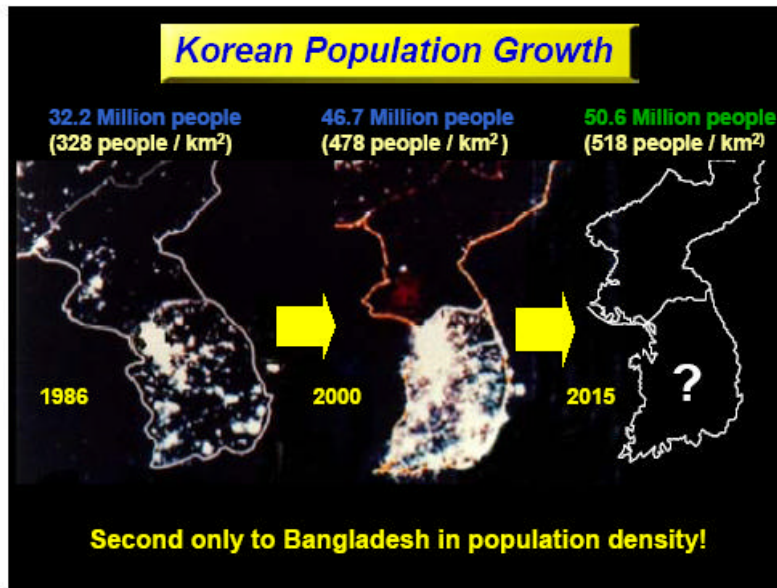


FIGURE 1.

The Land Partnership Plan is a joint U.S. and ROK solution to some of these problems but only at the tactical level. The plan provides for a more efficient and effective stationing of U.S. Forces within their current sector, in particular, nearly 14,000 of the 37,000 US troops stationed in South Korea near the Demilitarized Zone. The intent of the plan is to strengthen the ROK-US alliance, improve the readiness posture of the forces, reduce the overall

amount of land occupied by US Forces, and ease some of these tensions. More importantly, it will also posture forces to meet current security requirements.

The Land Partnership Plan is a good initiative started mainly by the leadership of those who have served in Korea and saw a growing need to make some necessary changes based on the changing environment and threat. Under the current situation, a heavy artillery barrage would precede any North Korean attack into South Korea. Based on years of realigning forces and a gamut of revolving requirements, U.S. forces and camps have become extremely dispersed. An artillery barrage like the one anticipated by the North would make it extremely difficult for many units to consolidate and organize, especially if they were under fire. The Land Partnership Plan, which consolidates forces together and would facilitate units organizing in localized areas for future movements, did not authorize units to move south of Seoul and did not remove units from artillery range, thus only addressing the lesser of the current challenges. The new option, recently opened by Secretary Rumsfeld, of consolidating further to the south, would move them outside immediate artillery range, addresses both the current tactical shortfalls and posture U.S. forces for possible future strategic requirements.

In Secretary Rumsfeld's view, moving U.S. troops away from the DMZ and consolidating them at perhaps two main hub bases south of Seoul will create a more formidable fighting force and strengthen South Korea's defenses, not weaken it.⁵⁴ This will also give the forces more flexibility to train for missions elsewhere in the region. In addition to the forces along the DMZ this new plan, if implemented, would also move most of the 8th Army, headquartered in the capital of Seoul, to the south as well. This realignment not only makes both tactical and strategic sense, but also serves to diminish public hostility toward these forces and those occupying the capital of Seoul, a source of political controversy.

UPGRADING TO REGIONAL SECURITY

Although a lot can happen between now and the time that the two Korea's unify, both the U.S. and the ROK need to be preparing for the eventuality of a collapse of the North and the new challenges that will occur within the region beyond unification. Assuming that the South Korean government requires U.S. assistance, or the U.S. acts unilaterally in its best interests, both governments will be faced with a variety of scenarios and missions. In the event of a rapid and unexpected collapse, and assuming that South Korea accepts responsibility for rebuilding the North, (versus a scenario where the Chinese government steps in and annexes North Korea prior to total collapse) both the United States and the

South Korean armed forces would immediately be faced with a broad range of missions: possible humanitarian assistance, various peace operations, dismantling and management of weapons of mass destruction, and assisting in the demobilization of the North Korean armed forces as required are only a few.⁵⁵ If the Kim Jong Il regime is ousted in a military coup or by other means and replaced with another undetermined form of government, the immediate requirement would be to determine the new regime's political and military objectives, and the threat it may pose toward the South.⁵⁶ A fragile or fractured government could produce a fractured and segmented army with the potential for rouge units outside the control of the new regime. This could result in accidental escalation or deliberate military strikes by units no longer under control of the government. In this case a vulnerability assessment may be required of key North Korean units and a credible response determined for each of these units.⁵⁷ If a state collapse does occur it could result in an unstable but still dangerous military, one without political direction and still presumed a threat from the South. This would also require a gamut of responses in order to maintain stability. Direct negotiations with key leaders within the army to determine control, intentions, and whether effective control over key WMD still exists would be a priority.

Any one of these scenarios or combinations of any of these pose a significant operational challenge for the combined forces of both South Korea and the United States. Rather than a seamless unification, any one of these scenarios will bring potentially unanticipated problems requiring a long-term commitment.

It should be clear that both governments agree that North Korea is still a viable threat to the security of the peninsula and that U.S. presence is still required for ROK security. In addition, it is only natural that even allies do not always see eye to eye on every national interest and some differences in policy views are likely. The fact that the United States views North Korea as a threat to its national security may not be a welcome view with all Koreans. The differences between U.S. and ROK strategy toward North Korea might even strain relations and cause tension in South Korea. This is to be expected. Korean attitudes towards the United States are layered and complex. One option is for the South Korean government to step up their own commitment by moving to a professional military force, away from the use of conscripts and commit more of their newfound prosperity toward their own defense. This would also require increasing the size of their army to meet the threat posed to them and allow the United States to consider other options. If this option is discarded, the South Korean government has the responsibility to convince its public that the U.S. presence is still required.

Even after the threat of North Korea disappears, the existing military alliance between South Korea and the United States should be continued and even expanded to a regional alliance to meet the future-changing environment. The presence of United States forces in the region will act as a stabilizer from the possible growing rivalry between China, Japan and Korea. The United States' relationship in the region should move from a bilateral alliance with South Korea aimed at keeping North Korea in check, to one of a regional focus with the intent of maintaining stability in Northeast Asia.⁵⁸ Establishing closer and favorable ties with China will be crucial in this process in light of the possibility of instability that each of these scenarios could trigger. Intentions should be reviewed and outlined during the six party talks and direct country-to-country negotiations to avoid possible unilateral action, should there be an unexpected collapse.

The United States has few options short of abandoning its commitment with South Korea but to exercise its hegemonic powers in support of its interests.

Consistent with previous national strategies, stating that overseas presence promotes stability, helps prevent conflict, and ensures the protection of U.S. interests. The United States should continue to remain in Korea to protect against the current threat from North Korea and to promote peace and regional stability within the region beyond unification. In the near term, the U.S. should move its bases to facilitate both current tactical readiness issues but also posture itself for the challenges of the future and to facilitate its interests as a strategic deterrent within the region. The United States has maintained that an adjustment of its forward-deployed forces in Korea is a sovereign choice that requires neither approval nor permission from the host nation.⁵⁹ However, to prevent the rising tide of anti-Americanism from spiraling out of control putting the South Korean government into a predicament between their population and U.S. interests, both Washington and Seoul need to convey that any troop rebalancing is not a manifestation of fears and snap decisions made on a deteriorating alliance, but rather an investment in the long-term resiliency of a more equal and mature alliance with greater capabilities and less intrusive footprint.⁶⁰

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