

THE 2015 TRANSITION OF WARTIME OPERATIONAL CONTROL:  
A THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ROK / US ALLIANCE

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Strategic Studies

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

## ABSTRACT

THE 2015 TRANSITION OF WARTIME OPERATIONAL CONTROL: A THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ROK / US ALLIANCE, by Major Sanghun Lee, 107 pages.

By mutual agreement, in 2015, the Republic of Korea (ROK) assumes wartime operational control (OPCON) of its forces with the U.S. continuing to provide support as the ROK expands its Peninsula security responsibilities. Given North Korea's provocative stance on nuclear weapons, challenges to the Armistice Agreement, and overall belligerent attitude to the world, ROK leaders have expressed concerns over whether or not this wartime OPCON transition is a prudent move in 2015. This study begins with the primary question, "Will the transfer of wartime OPCON from the U.S. to ROK pose a negative effect on the military effectiveness of the ROK / U.S. security alliance?" In order to respond to the research question, this study explored the regional security framework through bilateral and multilateral lenses, and applied a critical factor analysis using an ends, ways, means, as well as strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats (SWOT) analysis. The findings of this study include recommendations regarding the future of the ROK / U.S. security alliance after wartime OPCON transition.

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## ACRONYMS

AA	Armistice Agreement
C2	Command and Control
C4I	Command, Control, Communication, Computer and Intelligence
CC	Critical Capability
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CG	Center of Gravity
CPV	Chinese People's Volunteer
CR	Critical Requirement
DICC	Defense Industry Consultative Committee
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DTICC	Defense Technology and Industrial Cooperation Committee
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICBM	Intercontinental Ballistic Missile
JCC	Joint Communiqué Committee
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSA	Joint Security Area
KPA	Korean People's Army
KWP	North Korean Workers' Party
LCC	Logistics Cooperation Committee
MAC	Military Armistice Commission
MC	Military Committee
MCM	Military Committee Meeting

MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MND	Ministry of National Defense
NK	North Korea
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
OPCON	Operational Control
PLA	Chinese People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRS	Policy Review Subcommittee
R&D	Research and Development
ROK	Republic of Korea
RSOI	Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration
SCC	Security Cooperation Committee
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
SDF	Self-Defense Forces
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat
TCSC	Technological Cooperation Sub-Committee
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
USFK	United States Forces in Korea
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WTO	World Trade Organization

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

It seems that some things never change. History is replete with accounts of war, terror, and veiled aggression that threaten human and nation-state freedoms. These accounts have common components that include clashing wills between leaders, evil designs to elevate one group over another, and the role of how alliances mitigate challenges to a stable environment.<sup>1</sup> Alliances are the key to maintaining a stable security environment. The United States (U.S.) maintains a system of security alliances around the world. Across all security alliances, the Republic of Korea (ROK) has been steadfast in its support to U.S. efforts to maintain stability, particularly in Northeast Asia. U.S. commitment to ROK security is unwavering as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) also known as North Korea (NK) remains a provocative threat to regional Security.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. projects to continue exercising wartime Operational Control (OPCON) over ROK forces until 2015. By mutual agreement, in 2015 the ROK assumes wartime OPCON of its forces with the U.S. continuing to provide support as the ROK expands its Peninsula security responsibilities.<sup>3</sup> Given North Korea's provocative stance on nuclear weapons, challenges to the Armistice Agreement, and overall belligerent attitude to the world, ROK leaders have expressed concerns over whether or not this transition of security roles is a prudent move in 2015. That is the overarching topic for this study.

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<sup>1</sup>White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Joint Chief of Staff, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2011), 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the security framework, the research problem, research questions, and definitions for primary terms, delimitations, and relevance of the study. In chapter 2, sources describe the ROK / US security framework, security challenges, and regional concerns. Chapter 3 is a discussion of the research methodology. Sources describe the research model, data development, evaluation criteria, and analysis techniques. Chapter 4 deals with analysis of the data and presentation of findings. Chapter 5 is a discussion of conclusions from the study and recommendations for future research.

### Background of the Northeast Asia Security Framework

As in other areas, Northeast Asia geopolitical factors and ideology play a key role in the security environment. As for geopolitical factors, superpowers such as China, Russia, and Japan are located closely to each other. Historically, these countries engaged in still unresolved territorial claims. In regard to ideology, the post-World War II security arrangements remain a source of contention. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the U.S. established claims on the Korean Peninsula. Japanese forces north of the thirty-eighth parallel surrendered to the USSR while forces to the south surrendered to the U.S. In the north, the government soon devolved to a communist dictatorship while the south moved more to a market-based, democratic form of government. As the Cold War opened, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north joined a security alliance with the USSR. In contrast, in the south, the Republic of Korea (ROK) looked to the U.S. and west for its security alliances. Thus divided, the Korean Peninsula became a point of contention among major world powers. In effect, the Korean Peninsula was a buffer zone for superpowers in decades following WW II.

This study begins in 1950. In July of that year, the United Nations (UN) asked the United States (US) to establish and lead the United Nations Command (UNC) to counter the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) invasion of the Republic of Korea (ROK). As part of that response, the UN called on member nations to provide forces to the UNC.

Approximately three years later in July of 1953, representatives from the United Nations Command (UNC), the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), and the North Korean People's Army (KPA) signed the Armistice Agreement (AA) that ended three years of fighting on the Korean Peninsula. The UNC and AA are foundations for the Northeast Asia regional security. Over the following sixty years, the regional stability framework expanded to meet new opportunities and threats.

If among all additions to the framework there is a single element that keeps all challenges to stability in balance, it is the ROK / US Mutual Security Agreement of 1954. While the UNC and AA remain active, it is the 1954 security agreement that shapes security calculations among all major regional actors. Under provisions of that agreement, the US maintains forward deployed forces on the Peninsula. It provides the basis for ROK / US strategic and operational security consultations. This security agreement is a critical factor in bi-lateral and multi-lateral talks involving the US, ROK, People's Republic of China (PRC), DPRK, Russia, and Japan. The often contending national interests of those six nations coincide on the Korean Peninsula.

Whether in the U.S., ROK, Japan camp or the PRC, Russia, DPRK camp, the issues tend to be the same. The perspective of an issue is an entirely different matter. Security issues range from territorial claims for economic goals, to large standing military forces, to weapons of mass destruction. In each of these issues, the Armistice Agreement and the ROK / US Mutual Security Agreement frame a major influence on

behavior among all regional actors. The issue becomes, what happens to regional stability if the ROK / US partnership starts to unravel?

### Problem Statement

The DPRK's forward deployed conventional forces and its nuclear programs are strategic threats to Peninsula stability. The DPRK's longtime strategic allies, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia, are making efforts to expand their influence across the Pacific. Whether due to an overt act or as the result of a miscalculation, the Northeast Asia security environment exists inside a shroud of threats to stability. Under such an unstable security environment, ROK / U.S. representatives to the Military Committee Meeting (MCM) / Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) agreed to transfer operational control from the U.S. led Combined Forces Command (CFC) to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in 2012. Then, due to North Korea's nuclear capability and weapons of mass destruction (WMD), they agreed to delay the transition shift to 2015. Now in 2014, the U.S. government is seeking ways to reduce budget requirements for national defense. In the ROK, the Park administration prefers to postpone the transfer of wartime OPCON to a later time, because the DPRK has constantly escalated threats in terms of nuclear tests and long range rocket launches. Accordingly the ROK needs to invest in forces modernization to serve in the lead of a bi-lateral security construct. There are strong concerns that the transition of wartime OPCON might weaken the ROK / US security alliance. On the other hand, some security analysts support the transition of wartime OPCON from political and economic perspectives. However, even though the alliance originated around military forces to counter a common threat, there is very little research concerning the influence of transfer of wartime OPCON on the ROK / U.S. security alliance from the military perspective, especially in terms of critical factor analysis.

### Primary and Secondary Research Questions

The primary question of this study is whether or not the transfer of wartime OPCON from the U.S. to ROK will pose a negative effect on the military effectiveness of ROK / U.S. security alliance. The secondary questions are as follows:

1. Will the OPCON transition have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. internal strengths or worsen internal weaknesses of the security alliance?
2. Will the OPCON transfer have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. external opportunities or worsen external threats to the alliance?

### Purpose of this study

The purpose of this research was to develop a response to the primary question; “Will the transfer of wartime operational control from the U.S. to ROK pose a negative effect on the military effectiveness of ROK / U.S. security alliance?” To answer this question, it was necessary to consider the security environment in Northeast Asian region, and domestic issues of two countries. This research applied critical factor analysis using an ends, ways, means, combined with strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities framework. This analysis approach provided insights into relationships that supported identifying findings on which to draw conclusions concerning the secondary questions for a response to the primary question.

### Key Definitions

Alliance: Edwin H. Fedder defined alliance as a limited set of states acting in concert regarding the mutual enhancement of the military security of the members.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Edwin H. Fedder, “The Concept of Alliance,” *International Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (March 1968): 68.

He stressed that the key actors are nation-states, and they do not merge while nations may congregate in an alliance.<sup>5</sup> Morgenthau described alliance as a necessary function of the balance of power operating in a multiple state system.<sup>6</sup> Walt defined alliances as a formal or informal arrangement for security cooperation between two or more sovereign states.<sup>7</sup>

As mentioned above, scholars addressed the definition of alliance. However, most definitions above are very broad for the ROK-US alliance, as Stefan Bergsmann pointed out. Thus this study followed his definition of military alliance: an explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a potential contingency the arising of which is uncertain.<sup>8</sup>

Center of Gravity (CG): Center of Gravity (CG) is physical or moral entities that are the primary components of physical or moral strength, power, and resistance. They do not just contribute to strength; they are the strength. They offer resistance. They strike effective (or heavy) physical or moral blows.<sup>9</sup>

Critical Capability (CC): Critical Capability (CC) is the primary ability (or abilities) that make it a CG in the context of a given scenario, situation, or mission,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 86.

<sup>6</sup>Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, 4th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), 175.

<sup>7</sup>Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>8</sup>Stefan Bergsmann, *Small States and Alliance* (Physica-Verlag HD, 2001), 28-29, [http://www.bundesheer-oesterreich.info/pdf\\_pool/publikationen/05\\_small\\_states\\_04.pdf](http://www.bundesheer-oesterreich.info/pdf_pool/publikationen/05_small_states_04.pdf) (accessed March 11, 2014).

<sup>9</sup>Jack D. Kem, *Campaign Planning: Tools of the Trade* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, updated 2013), 182.

including phases within campaigns or operations. Within a CC, the key word is the verb: for example, to destroy something, to seize an objective.<sup>10</sup>

Critical Requirement (CR): Critical Requirement (CR) is the condition, resource, or means that enable a critical capability (CC) to become fully operational.<sup>11</sup>

Military Committee Meeting (MCM): Military Committee Meeting (MCM) is the annual meeting by the Chairmen of the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (ROK CJCS) and the U.S. CJCS in order to deliver strategic directives and operational instructions to the Commander of the Combined Forces Command (CDRCFC).<sup>12</sup>

Operation Control (OPCON): Operational Control (OPCON) is the authority to perform functions of command over subordinate forces involving organizing and employing commands and forces, assigning tasks, designating objectives, and giving authoritative direction necessary to accomplish the mission. Operational control includes authoritative direction over all aspects of military operations and joint training necessary to accomplish the missions assigned to the command.<sup>13</sup>

Security Consultative Meeting (SCM): Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) is a ministerial level annual security meeting under the Secretary of Defense and Defense Minister between the U.S. and ROK.<sup>14</sup> The main function of the SCM is

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 183.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 91-92.

<sup>13</sup>Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP 1-02, *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, November 2010), 200.

<sup>14</sup>Soonkun Oh, "The U.S. Strategic Flexibility Policy: Prospects for The U.S.-ROK Alliance" (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 21.

consultation on and adjustment of major security/military policies, and to convey strategic guidelines to the ROK-U.S. Military Committee (MC).<sup>15</sup>

SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat): Strengths mean internal competences and capabilities (What we have) while weaknesses stand for the lack of internal competences and capabilities (What we lack). Opportunities mean external positive circumstances (What we could get) while threats are external negative circumstances (What we could lose).<sup>16</sup>

### Assumptions

There are four major assumptions that underpin this research. First, the alliance between ROK and the U.S. will endure based on the “Strategic Alliance 2015” between the ROK and U.S. administrations, as well as the U.S. National Security Strategy after the transition of wartime OPCON. Second, the agreement for transition of wartime OPCON will be fulfilled even if delayed again. Third, North Korea’s threats will affect the stability on Korean Peninsula as long as the current regime remains in power. Fourth, the U.S. defense budget constraints will not be a major driving force to affect ROK / U.S. security alliance.

### Limitations and Delimitations

The most significant limitation of this thesis was that there are few open resources about the future command and control structure of ROK Army after it takes over wartime OPCON from the U.S. led Combined Forces Command. Most sources

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<sup>15</sup>Jeongwon Yoon, “Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises, and the CFC's Roles” (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, May 2003), <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=100658> (accessed March 11, 2014).

<sup>16</sup>Thomas J. Chermack and Bernadette K. Kasshanna, “The Use of Misuse of SWOT Analysis and Implications for HRD Professionals,” *Human Resource Development International* 10, no. 4 (December 2007): 388-390.

concerning the command and control structure are confidential based on military security concerns. Therefore, this research relied on open sources that included newspapers, articles, analysis, and reports of individual and research institutions.

Furthermore, this thesis did not consider territorial issues among China, Japan, Russia, and South Korea. Even though each country's territorial disputes bring high tension around Korean Peninsula, these territorial issues have no direct relation to the alliance between ROK and the U.S. In addition, this thesis did not explore historical issues among China, Japan, and South Korea in order to avoid an excessively wide topic. Thus, this thesis focused on current North Korea's threats as the main threat factor for South Korea and the U.S.

### Significance

The significance of this study takes on increasing importance as the ROK JCS prepares to assume wartime OPCON from the U.S. led Combined Forces Command. This paper incorporates scholarly articles, senior leader testimony, national policy documents, and national and military strategies, books, and other open source data. In addition, this thesis provides new analytical perspectives on the security alliance between ROK and the U.S. through the military critical factor analysis. Furthermore, this paper responds to the voices of concern regarding the chance of reducing the deterrence capability of two countries toward North Korea due to the current U.S. military budget constraints and the transition of wartime OPCON. Lastly, this thesis provides a unique perspective for the future direction of the security alliance of two countries.

## Summary

This chapter provided a general introduction of the security environment on the Korean Peninsula. In recent decades, North Korea's current threats became quite different from the past, changing from conventional forward forces to a nuclear threat and WMD. The new leader of North Korea escalated instability on the Korean Peninsula by continuing the 'Military First' policy which the former leaders insistently maintained. North Korea seems to be moving away from government reform and opening to economic markets. On the other hand, the U.S, the key ally to South Korea, is facing budget problems, which necessarily reduces the military budget, while concurrently the national strategy shifted to the Pacific region. The ROK also suffered from the DPRK's torpedo attack on the ROK Navy ship Cheonan, resulting in 46 ROK navy sailors killed on March 26, 2010, as well as the DPRK's artillery attack on Yeonpyeong Island left two ROK Marines and two civilians dead on November 23 of the same year. In this context, there are many concerns of the transition of wartime operational control in Korea in terms of a possibility of weakened deterrence against the North Korea's provocative actions. This chapter helped to establish understanding of the current security issues used to frame the research questions and problems. Finally, it framed the research within specific limitations. The next chapter is a literature review regarding the research questions.

## CHAPTER 2

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to ascertain whether the transfer of wartime OPCON of Korean forces poses a negative effect on the ROK / US security alliance and, by extension, security on Korean Peninsula. The first chapter of this study provided background concerning the importance of the security environment of the Korean Peninsula. The aim for this chapter is to frame key factors affecting the regional security environment. This chapter consists of four major sections. The first section explores regional security through a bilateral lens. Sources describe economic and security alliances for major regional actors. The second section explores the regional security framework through a multilateral lens. Sources describe critical security venues involving multiple regional actors. The third section deals with ROK / US security arrangements. Sources describe the mutual security treaty and trace the evolution of transfer of OPCON from the Korean War through current times. The final section is a review of the review of literature.

The Northeast Asian region is the intersection for security and economic interests of four major powers, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Russia, Japan, and the United States. In economics, the PRC and Japan accounted for over one fifth of world population and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and one sixth of world trade, which is the third largest economic scale in the world.<sup>17</sup> In 2012 GDP ranking, the U.S., China, and Japan ranked, in order, first, second, and third while Russia ranked

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<sup>17</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs Republic of Korea, "Information on the region: Korea-Japan-China Trilateral Cooperation," [http://www.mofa.go.kr/countries/regional/cooperation/outline/index.jsp?mofat=001&menu=m\\_40\\_70\\_160](http://www.mofa.go.kr/countries/regional/cooperation/outline/index.jsp?mofat=001&menu=m_40_70_160) (accessed March 25, 2014).

eighth.<sup>18</sup> Although recent history and differing political systems suggest competition between the U.S. and China, in economics, China was the largest import trader of the U.S. goods in 2012.<sup>19</sup> In addition, Japan and the ROK were the 5th and 6th largest import traders of U.S. goods in 2012.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, China, Russia and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) have bilateral security interests and have similar political systems. The U.S. maintains bilateral alliances with the ROK and Japan. European and South American nations have ties to regional security through the United Nations Command headquartered in the ROK. To paraphrase Edward Lorenz’s butterfly effect, a security hiccup in Northeast Asia signals symptoms for concern in the U.S. and Europe.

#### NE Asia Security Framework Overview: Bilateral Components

When it comes to the relationship between the U.S. and China, there have been many studies on this issue. In sum, the U.S. and China tend to compete as rivals in regional military and political matters. However, their economic interdependency has been growing. George W. Bush argued during his presidential election campaign “considering China’s ideological preference and ill-conceived ambitions, it was inappropriate for the U.S. to regard China as a strategic partner. Rather, China should be labeled as a strategic competitor to the U.S.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Chinese

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<sup>18</sup>World Bank, “GDP Ranking,” <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/GDP-ranking-table> (accessed March 25, 2014).

<sup>19</sup>World Trade Organization, “World Trade Organization International Trade Statistics 2013,” [http://www.wto.org/english/res\\_e/statis\\_e/its2013\\_e/its2013\\_e.pdf](http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/its2013_e/its2013_e.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2014).

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>Jia Qingguo, “Learning to Live with the Hegemon: evolution of China’s policy toward the US since the end of the Cold War,” *Journal of Contemporary China* (August 2005): 401.

government announced that they would expand their maritime capability. Moreover, Chinese economic power has been showing rapid growth. China has also spent huge amount of money in research and development (R&D). According to *Global Times*, China's spending for R&D in 2012 was over 1 trillion yuan which is equivalent with 162.24 billion US dollars.<sup>22</sup> Some experts predict China's rate of spending on R&D will continue to grow faster than 10 percent each year and China's R&D spending can be expected to match or surpass that of the U.S. by 2023.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, some experts view China as a potential threat to the U.S. national interests.

In contrast, Ross argued that the rising Chinese economic power could not be a threat to U.S. strategic interests.<sup>24</sup> He assessed the Chinese military threats and pointed out that China's improving maritime capability looked like a significant threat for the U.S. interests. However, China faces barriers to obtain a naval power-projection capability. First, China has technological obstacles to maintain a naval power-projection capability. Unlike sea-denial capabilities, power-projection capabilities must be developed indigenously.<sup>25</sup> Second, China cannot win an arms race because the U.S. military capability in East Asia provides enough deterrence against the Chinese intervention. Furthermore, the Chinese naval buildup is such a costly effort that Chinese leadership at some point must recognize the limited benefit

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<sup>22</sup>Xinhua, "China's R&D spending hits 1 trillion yuan," *Global Times*, February 22, 2013, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/763530.shtml> (accessed January 11, 2014).

<sup>23</sup>Mackenzie Eaglen and Julia Pollak, "US Military Technological Supremacy Under Threat," *American Enterprise Institute* (November 2012): 2, [http://www.aei.org/files/2012/11/26/-us-military-technological-supremacy-under-threat\\_172916742245.pdf](http://www.aei.org/files/2012/11/26/-us-military-technological-supremacy-under-threat_172916742245.pdf) (accessed January 12, 2014).

<sup>24</sup>Robert S. Ross, "Assessing the China Threat," *The National Interest* (Fall 2005): 81.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 86.

of naval expansion. As for land forces, Kaplan notes in “The Geography of Chinese Power” that the Chinese Army has 1.6 million soldiers, which is the largest in the world. Still, it will not have an expeditionary capability for years to come. It can move troops from one end of continental China to another, but cannot yet move supplies and heavy equipment at the rate required for military deployments.<sup>26</sup>

Dr. Friedberg used liberal, realist, and constructivist political lenses to frame potential China / U.S. relationships (figure 1). He asked: “Could the competition-enhancing tendencies inherent in the growth of China’s wealth and power eventually be overcome by the cooperation inducing tendencies produced by the liberalization of its domestic political system?” He concluded that while a possibility, it is by no means a certainty.<sup>27</sup> In drawing from a historical example of the Anglo-German relationship, he predicted that it is feasible for the U.S. and China to become peaceful partners for each other in the long run.

Theorists	Optimists	Pessimists
Liberals	Interdependence Institutions Democratization	PRC regime: Authoritarian/insecure The perils of transition U.S. regime: A crusading democracy Interactive effects
Realists	PRC power: limited PRC aims: constrained Security dilemma: muted	PRC power: rising PRC aims: expanding Security dilemma: intense
Constructivists	Identities, strategic cultures, norms: flexible and “softening” via institutional contact	Rigid and “hardening” via shocks and crises

Figure 1. Optimists, Pessimists, and the Future of U.S.-China Relations

Source: Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 39.

<sup>26</sup>Robert D. Kaplan, “The Geography of Chinese Power,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2010): 32.

<sup>27</sup>Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” *International Security* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 44.

As for the U.S.-Japan bilateral relations, Japan is one of the U.S.'s strongest and most reliable allies in the Pacific area. The U.S. and Japan have maintained a Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement since 1951. Under this agreement, Japan provides military bases to the U.S. in return for U.S. commitments of protection for Japan's security. Despite difficult issues such as the relocation of U.S. military basing, the cooperation in response to the 2011 earthquake and tsunami represent a good example of the strength of this security alliance. Operation Tomodachi was the first time that Self-Defense Forces (SDF) helicopters used U.S. aircraft carriers to respond to a crisis, and the first time that U.S. military units operated under Japanese operational control in actual operations.<sup>28</sup>

When it comes to economic relations, there is no question about the importance of a strong and mutually beneficial economic relationship. The U.S. and Japan are significant trade partners for each other. Japan was the United States' fourth-largest merchandise export market (behind Canada, Mexico, and China) and the fourth-largest source for U.S. merchandise imports (behind China, Canada, and Mexico) at the end of 2012. At the same time, the United States was Japan's second-largest export market and second-largest source of imports as of the end of 2012.<sup>29</sup> Even though Japan has suffered from economic depression for several decades, Japan is ranked as the third-largest world economy behind the U.S. and China in 2012.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Emma Chanlett-Avery, Mark E. Manyin, William H. Cooper, and Ian E. Rinehart, *Japan-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, August 2013), 17-18, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33436.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2014).

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*

The U.S.-Russia relationship is notable for unexpected twists and turns. In World War II, they were allies against the Germans. During the cold war, they were on opposite sides of most security issues and led opposing military alliances. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, Russia became less confrontational yet continued actions in security matters that were less than fully supportive of U.S. efforts. Russian backing of Bashar Assad in Syria diverged from U.S. efforts and Russian activities regarding the Iranian nuclear program were not fully supportive of U.S. objectives.

However, the crisis in Ukraine over Crimea brought a new environment to both countries. Thomas Nichols, professor of national security affairs at the US Naval War College, pointed out in the interview with the Global Post that Russia's attempt to control Ukraine would be the most severe foreign policy challenge to the Russia / U.S. relationship. He concluded that Russian hegemony reopened the question about whether the peaceful outcome of the Cold War was sustainable.<sup>31</sup>

From an economic perspective, Russia is not a major trade partner for the U.S. in the same manner as China and Japan. However, there are flashes of interest toward improving the Russia-U.S. economic relationship. Over the period from 2004 to 2011, U.S. exports to Russia increased by an average of 16 percent per year. After being invited to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) in December 2011, Russia began to open its market and trade; actions that support jobs and economic growth for both Russians and Americans.<sup>32</sup> In 2011, U.S. exports to Russia rose by 40 percent.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ambika Kandasamy, "What does the crisis in Crimea mean for US-Russia relations?" *GlobalPost*, March 4, 2014, <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/europe/russia/140304/what-does-the-crisis-crimea-mean-us-russia-relations> (accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>32</sup>U.S. Department of State, "U.S.-Russia Economic Cooperation," June 18, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/193103.htm> (accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

To sum up, through growing economic trade and dependency, tensions between the U.S. and Russia remain noticeably lower than those same relations with China and Japan. Additionally, Russian military deployment around Ukraine's Crimea region at the end of February 2014 has deteriorated the U.S.-Russia relationship. President Obama announced that he would not attend a G-8 meeting hosted by Russia in Sochi in June 2014, thereby straining economic relations.

Along the same lines, the Sino-Japan relationship shows recurring tectonic shifts. Japanese culture, religion, and other traditions were deeply influenced by China due to geographic proximity. However, geographic proximity did not necessarily bring good relations. Japan's territorial ambitions brought two Sino-Japanese wars; one from 1894 to 1895 and one from 1937 to 1945. With U.S. efforts to establish a normalized diplomatic relationship with People's Republic of China, Japan started to examine ways to establish Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations in 1971. On September 29, 1972, both countries signed the "Joint Communiqué of Government of Japan and Government of People's Republic of China," establishing mutual diplomatic relations.<sup>34</sup>

With the end of Cold War in the early 1990's, growing suspicions between the two countries led to increased regional tension. From the Chinese perspective, the U.S.-Japan alliance seemed biased because a review of the guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation in 1997 indicated a mutual cooperation not just in Japan's defense but "in areas surrounding Japan," although without mentioning Taiwan.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Emma Chanlett-Avery, Kerry Dumbaugh, and William H. Cooper, *Sino-Japanese Relations: Issues for U.S. Policy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 2008), 5, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40093.pdf> (accessed March 26, 2014).

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

The Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee in 2005 officially mentioned their concerns on the Taiwan issue for the first time.

On the other hand, Japan started to see the PRC as a regional rival as China expanded its maritime military capabilities and conducted military modernization. In addition, Chinese efforts to improve its long-range missile force seemed to focus on not only Taiwan but also on near island countries. Furthermore, territorial issues represent highly sensitive problems to both countries. The Senkaku boat collision incident in 2010 is a good example of how a small incident escalates into major diplomatic disputes. Following the boat collision, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the Senkaku Islands fell under the protection of the U.S.-Japan security treaty, which illustrated that this crisis was related with not only Japan but also the U.S.<sup>36</sup> Even though China was the most important trading market for Japan, Japanese exports to China declined 11 percent in 2012, which some observers pointed out that the political tensions caused by the confrontations over the Senkaku / Daioyu islands may have spilled over in the commercial arena.<sup>37</sup>

The relation between Russia and Japan has similar peaks and valleys. Their historical relationship has been punctuated by two major wars. There are longstanding territorial disputes over islands they both present claims: Etorofu, Kunashiri, and Shikotan. In November 2013, Russia and Japan held their first-ever “two plus two” meeting when foreign and defense ministers discussed security cooperation. Fiona Hill described this attempt at a bilateral effort to improve relations a significant shift

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<sup>36</sup>Sheila A. Smith, “Japan and the East China Sea Dispute,” *Council on Foreign Relations* (Summer 2012): 370.

<sup>37</sup>Chanlett-Avery, Dumbaugh, and Cooper, 8.

in Northeast Asia's political dynamic.<sup>38</sup> However, Russian and Japanese motivations were quite different. Japan's objective was to use Russia to check a rising Chinese regional power. In contrast, Russia declared China as a strategic partner and stressed the importance of inviting Chinese participation in any regional exercises that might come out of the new agreements in discussions with Japan.<sup>39</sup>

The PRC and DPRK developed a close relationship, historically called a blood alliance. First, Kim Il-sung and his leading group of the DPRK cooperated with the Chinese Communist Party and conducted an armed struggle against Japan during the Japanese colonial period. During the Chinese Civil War, the DPRK also supported Mao. Accordingly, the PRC participated in the Korean War and Mao dispatched over 850,000 Chinese People's Volunteers (CPV) to the DPRK leading to over 181,000 CPV deaths. Furthermore, "while the hot phase of the Korean War lasted three years, Chinese forces remained on the Korean Peninsula for an additional five years, many assisting in national reconstruction projects."<sup>40</sup> The two countries maintained a mutual military alliance through the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance which committed either party to come to the aid of the other if attacked.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, there is no doubt the two countries are viewed as having a blood alliance historically and legally.

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<sup>38</sup>Fiona Hill, "Gang of Two: Russia and Japan Make a Play for the Pacific," *Foreign Affairs* (November 2013), <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140288/fiona-hill/gang-of-two> (accessed March 27, 2014).

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup>Dongjin Jeong, "China's Foreign Policy toward North Korea: the Nuclear Issue" (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2012), 35.

<sup>41</sup>Dick K. Nanto and Mark E. Manyin, *China-North Korea Relations* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, December 2010), 5, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41043.pdf> (accessed April 25, 2014).

However, the change of strategic environments caused a crack in their concrete alliance. In other words, the close relationship between PRC and DPRK seems to have weakened and gradually changed into cooperative ties based on shared mutual national interests. On the one hand, continuous economic development is a vital national interest for China. China decided to normalize diplomatic relations with the ROK in 1992, which led to vigorous economic trade. However, this normalization of relations between the ROK and PRC further isolated DPRK from the world. From the DPRK view, the two fulcrums of communism, the PRC and the Soviet Union, started developing good relations with the main DPRK enemy. The Soviet Union normalized diplomatic relationship with the ROK earlier in 1990. The PRC opposes DPRK unpredictable threats such as nuclear tests and rocket launches. For Russia and China, instability on Korean Peninsula impedes their economic growth.

From the economic perspective, China is the largest trade partner of DPRK as well as the single largest source of economic aid for DPRK. According to 2009 estimates, China accounted for 42 percent of exports and 57 percent of imports of DPRK.<sup>42</sup> In 2009, China's major imports from North Korea included mineral fuels (coal), ores, woven apparel, iron and steel, fish and seafood, and salt/sulfur/earths/stone, China's major exports to North Korea included mineral fuels and oil, machinery, electrical machinery, vehicles, knit apparel, plastic, and iron and steel.<sup>43</sup> These trade items show that China provides essential materials for DPRK's

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<sup>42</sup>David M. Mrosek, "China and North Korea: A Peculiar Relationship" (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2011), 65.

<sup>43</sup>Nanto and Manyin, 16.

industry. Furthermore, Chinese economic aid to DPRK accounts for over half of all Chinese foreign aid. In 2008, Chinese investment in DPRK reached \$ 41.2 million.<sup>44</sup>

In short, China has continuously maintained its huge influence on DPRK through economic assistance and historical legacy. However, DPRK's movement to obtain nuclear and ICBM capabilities caused discord with China. Recently, the PRC foreign minister, Wang Yi, announced a 'red line' on North Korea, saying that "The Korean Peninsula is right on China's doorstep. We have a red line, that is, we will not allow war or instability on the Korean Peninsula."<sup>45</sup> Therefore, national interests rather than historical and ideological bond provide a good lens to understand the changing relations between the DPRK and PRC.

In summary, bilateral relationships around the Korean Peninsula have changed in response to the changing security environment as well as evolving national interests of major powers. These relationships are closely tied in terms of economic and security perspectives. The Sino-DPRK relationship has adjusted as Chinese national interests changed with rising Chinese economic and military power. The relationship between the U.S. and China in the post-Cold War era differs from that during the Cold War. They seemingly seek balance between cooperation and balances for their own national interests. This bilateral lens of the Northeast Asia security framework suggests that the impact of transition of wartime OPCON on the ROK / U.S. security alliance should be examined at the strategic level with a broad lens rather than from an operational or tactical perspective.

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 17.

<sup>45</sup>Taylor Schlacter, "China and North Korea: An Uncompromising Relationship," *Liberty Voices*, March 9, 2014, <http://guardianlv.com/2014/03/china-and-north-korea-an-uncompromising-relationship/> (accessed April 27, 2014).

## NE Asia Security Framework Overview: Multilateral Components

The security situation in the Northeast Asia region has been described as growing in tension and unpredictability. The rising power of China and nuclear tests and ballistic missile launches by DPRK allowed multilateralism to emerge as an effective means to improve regional security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Multilateralism is defined as a process or framework used by a group of nations to discuss and resolve issues of an international nature.<sup>46</sup> While bilateral relations are important, multilateral associations serve as venues to enhance bilateral relations for greater effects in regional stability. In other words, as Matthew J. Jordan pointed out, multilateral efforts will complement and not supplant established bilateral treaties.<sup>47</sup> Multilateral components include military and governmental elements. Key regional actors participate in each of these venues.

### Multilateral component: United Nations Command

United Nations Command (UNC) is a key security framework on the Korean Peninsula as well. The main mission of UNC is to carry out terms of the 27 July 1953 Armistice agreement and to execute directives from the U.S. National Command Authority through the U.S. JCS.<sup>48</sup> The historical background of UNC goes back to the Korean War. The United Nations Security Council passed a resolution which was the basis for United Nations forces to participate in the Korean War. Under this context, UN forces needed unity of command for multinational military operations.

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<sup>46</sup>Matthew J. Jordan, “Multilateralism in North East Asia” (Master’s Naval War College, February 2003), 1.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 12.

<sup>48</sup>Hyun-kwon Joe, “United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula: Is December 2015 the End” (Master’s Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2013), 11.

Therefore, President Truman established the UNC in Korea in 1950 and U.S. JCS assumed the responsibility of conducting the Korean War on behalf of United Nations. The UNC has greatly contributed to security on the Korean Peninsula since the Armistice Agreement was signed. According to Joe, UNC roles are managing the buffer zone which prevents military conflict between the South and the North, supervising the compliance of the Armistice Agreement by the two parties: UNC Military Armistice Commission (MAC) within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) and Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) outside the DMZ, to investigate alleged Armistice Agreement violations, to negotiate with the communist side in resolving security issues, and, if necessary, to enforce compliance.<sup>49</sup> The command structure of UNC in Korea is outlined at figure 2.

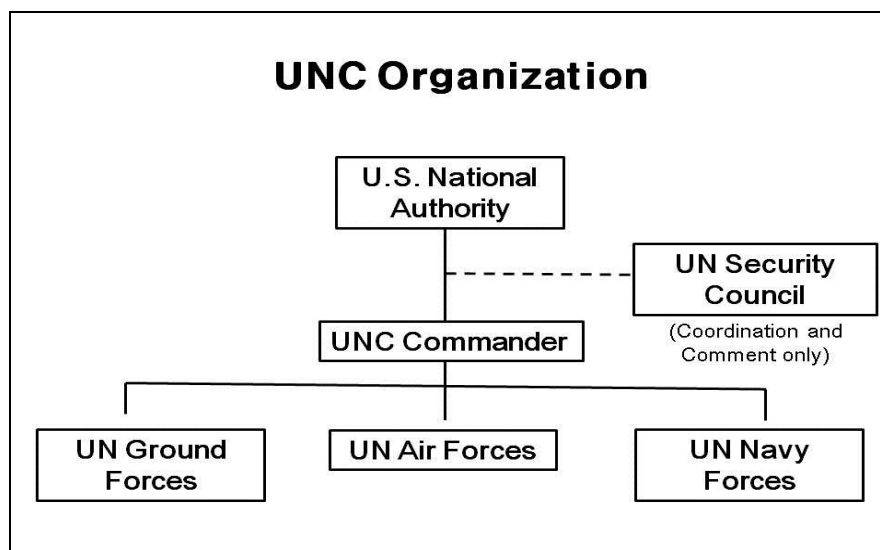


Figure 2. UNC Organization

Source: Modified by author from John Hilen, *Blue Helmets: The Strategy of UN Military Operations* (London: Brassey, 2000), 231.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 15.

### Multilateral component: Military Armistice Commission (MAC)

The Military Armistice Commission is the primary venue to resolve Armistice Agreement issues. The MAC mission is to supervise, investigate, report and negotiate resolution of violations of the Armistice Agreement.<sup>50</sup> The MAC consists of ten members, five from the UNC side and five from the KPA / CPV side. Under the Armistice Agreement (AA), each side established and runs secretariat offices of MAC in Seoul and Kaesung. There are also Joint Duty Offices at Pamunjom to handle working level contacts, routine administrative matters, and to facilitate communication between the two sides.<sup>51</sup>

However, the MAC has yet to meet all roles, because the KPA / CPV sides have never participated in coordinated investigations of Armistice violation issues. Thus, investigations on any Armistice violation have been conducted individually from each side's perspectives. In addition, the original agreement on MAC daily meetings agreed to by both sides has been ineffective since 1994. Even though MAC meetings were conducted 459 times by 1991, The DPRK refused to attend further MAC meetings after a ROK General Officer was appointed as the spokesman or senior member for the Commander-in-Chief of UNC.<sup>52</sup> The DPRK refused meetings stating that ROK was not a participant on the Armistice Agreement. The DPRK and China formally withdrew from the MAC in 1994, although lower-level (colonel level)

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Won-il Jung, "The Future of UNC in ROK" (Strategic Research Project, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2004), 6.

meetings between military officers continue to take place in the Joint Security Area (JSA).<sup>53</sup>

In summary, even though the MAC was established as the primary forum to deal with Armistice violations, it still exists so far, it is difficult to imagine its revitalization in terms of functions and coordination with communist sides.

#### Multilateral Component: Six-Party Talks

The six-party talks provide a critical contribution to the security framework on the Korean Peninsula. The multilateral talks involve the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia, and the U.S. The purpose is to use diplomacy for dismantling DPRK's nuclear program. The impetus for these talks emerged in 2003 when the DPRK revealed its uranium enrichment program. This enrichment program created many concerns within the region and around the world. To make matters worse, the DPRK declared that they would withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation (NPT) in 2003. China arbitrated between the U.S. and DPRK and hosted initial talks to manage a nuclear crisis in April 2003. The U.S. suggested multilateral talks involving all regional actors and, ultimately, the DPRK agreed to participate in six-party talks in August 2003. Despite widespread interest, success has been difficult to achieve. After six rounds of talks, the DPRK's intention to obtain a nuclear capability remains active. They conducted a third nuclear test in early 2013.

As mentioned above, six-party talks face several obstacles. First, the main challenge is the unpredictable DPRK regime. The September 2005 pact saw Pyongyang agree to abandon its nuclear program, rejoin the NPT, and allow the reentry of IAEA monitors in exchange for food and energy assistance. However, after

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<sup>53</sup>Joe, "United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula," 17.

the U.S. restriction on Macao-based Banco Delta Asia bank accounts held by DPRK, the DPRK proceeded to launch missiles and conduct underground nuclear tests in 2006.<sup>54</sup> Second, it is difficult to find convergence of participants because each has their own objectives and interests related to the six-party talks.

The Six-Party Talks initially seemed to be very encouraging and many experts expected a favorable outcome to control and dismantle the DPRK's nuclear program. However, what we should focus on is that six-party talks lack authority to enforce agreements. Thus, if the DPRK refuses inspections on its uranium enrichment program in Yongbian, the other five parties have no option to verify compliance.

#### Multilateral component: ROK/US Security Agreements

The security environment around the Korean Peninsula is quite complicated and interdependent among key regional players. However, for almost sixty-five years the ROK-U.S. security alliance has maintained stability and security on the Korean Peninsula. The purpose for this section is to provide an overview of key components of this enduring security framework. Sources address the basic ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty, Policy-Security venues. This component was the focus for this study.

The ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty was signed in 1953, two months after the end of the Korean War. This treaty provided the foundation for a security framework. In addition to a commitment for U.S. response to any threat to the ROK, it establishes consultation mechanisms, grant and return of facilities and cost etc.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Jayshree Bajoria and Beina Xu, "The Six Party Talks on North Korea's Nuclear Program," Council on Foreign Relations, September 30, 2013, <http://www.cfr.org/proliferation/six-party-talks-north-koreas-nuclear-program/p13593> (accessed March 30, 2014).

<sup>55</sup>"Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea; October 1, 1953," Yale Law School Lillian Goldman Library, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/kor001.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kor001.asp) (accessed March 27, 2014).

Article II stipulates that the parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of either of them, the political independence or security of either of the parties is threatened by external armed attack. In addition, Article III stipulates each party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific area on either of the parties in territories now under their respective administrative control, or hereafter recognized by one of the parties as lawfully brought under the administrative control of the other, would be dangerous to peace and safety and declares that both parties would act to meet the common danger in accordance with their constitutional processes.<sup>56</sup>

The meaningful contributions of this treaty are to provide the Republic of Korea with a favorable environment to achieve economic growth and military power.<sup>57</sup> This treaty gave a legal basis for the U.S. military to station forces on the Korean Peninsula. U.S. military presence in the ROK served as a strong deterrence against aggression by the DPRK. In addition, this treaty enabled both countries to establish and develop further effective security mechanisms, which led to establishments of SCM / MCM as well as the Combined Forces Command (CFC).

#### Multilateral component: MCM/SCM

The Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) and Military Committee Meeting (MCM) compose the primary ROK and U.S. venues to establish policies and provide directives to the combined military forces. The SCM, begun in 1971, is an annual meeting of defense ministers. In the SCM, defense ministers consult and coordinate

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>David S. Maxwell, “The ROK-U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty at 60 Years: Relevant Now and in the Future,” *Korea Economic Institute blog*, October 1, 2013, <http://blog.keia.org/2013/10/the-rok-u-s-mutual-defense-treaty-at-60-years-relevant-now-and-in-the-future/> (accessed March 28, 2014).

major security and military policies, and convey strategic guidelines to the ROK-U.S. Military Committee (MC).<sup>58</sup>

The SCM has five working committees as shown in the figure 3 below. The Policy Review Subcommittee (PRS) mainly deals with policy issues related to both sides' security interests so that it plays a key role to advise defense ministers for their meeting. The Security Cooperation Committee (SCC) coordinates issues involving security assistance for matters that include equipment and professional education.<sup>59</sup> The Logistics Cooperation Committee (LCC) expands and improves mutual cooperation for defense and also shares technological data in military science.<sup>60</sup> The Joint Communiqué Committee (JCC), in which foreign affairs officials take part, prepares joint communiqués.<sup>61</sup> The Defense Technology and Industrial Cooperation Committee (DTICC) coordinates issues related to military acquisition and technological cooperation, which are indispensable to conduct combined military operation. DTICC has two subcommittees the Technological Cooperation Subcommittee (TCSC) and Defense Industry Consultative Committee (DICCC).

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<sup>58</sup>Yoon, "Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises, and the CFC's Roles," 88.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 89.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

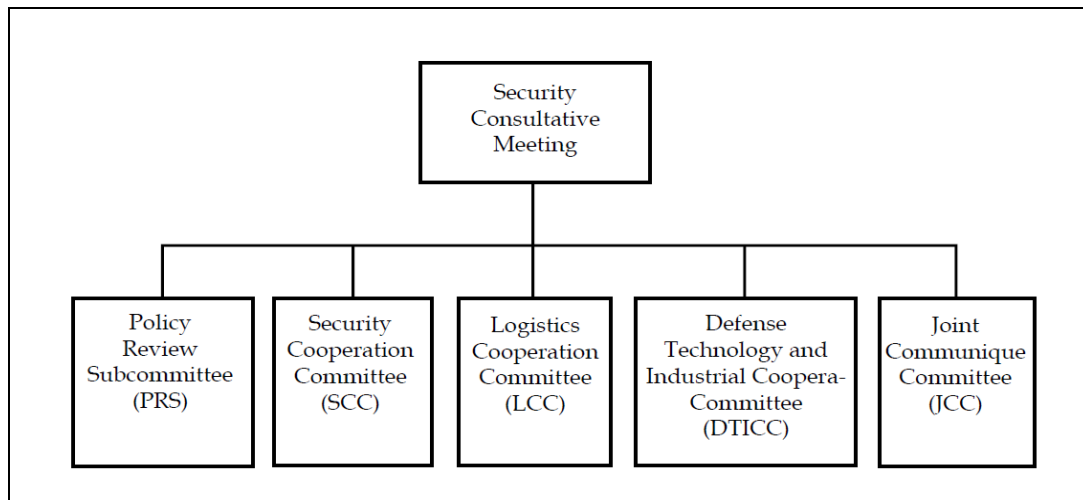


Figure 3. SCM Organization

*Source:* Jeongwon Yoon, “Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises, and the CFC’s Roles” (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, May 2003), 88, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=100658> (accessed March 11, 2014).

Moving from policy to the operational side, the MCM is the venue for each country’s Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Established in 1978, MCM conveys strategic and operational directives from SCM to the commander of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). The MCM conducts plenary and standing meetings. Plenary meeting occur shortly before the SCM meeting. In the MCM Plenary meeting, senior ROK and U.S. military officers frame key security issues for the SCM.<sup>62</sup> Through the plenary and standing meetings, the two countries consult and coordinate the current military issues for CFC. The MCM consists of five members, 2 from the ROK side and 3 from the U.S. side. The ROK participants are the chairman of JCS and chief director strategic planning, while the U.S. participants are the chairman of JCS, US Commander in Chief, Pacific and the commander of CFC.

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 92.

## Korean War OPCON Arrangements

The SCM / MCM have been the primary venue to discuss OPCON arrangement. In the early 1990s, defense ministers began to assess the security environment and issue strategic and operational directives to ROK and U.S. JCS. The transition of wartime operational control is a significant event for both ROK and the U.S. Army in that for the ROK, the transfer of wartime OPCON is a matter of national pride to regain their military authority. For the U.S. transition satisfies a longstanding objective to return wartime OPCON to Korea. Upon OPCON transfer, the ROK JCS assumes the leading role for preparing forces, developing war plans, and integrating combined capabilities in defense of the ROK. The process to assume that role has been measured and deliberate. The aim for this section is to provide a brief historical review of the transition process.

This section has three sub-sections or transition phases. The first runs from 1950 to 1977 which covers events from the war until just before establishment of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). The second covers events from establishment of the CFC in 1978 to transfer of peacetime OPCON in 1994. The third covers the current transition process of wartime OPCON.

On June 25, 1950, North Korean forces launched a surprise attack. The aim was a quick and decisive victory to establish control over the entire Korean Peninsula. In the U.S., President Truman viewed the North Korean attack as part of a larger effort to extend Communist influence into new areas. To counter this effort, he initiated efforts to contain the spread of Communist influence. In response, the United Nations (UN) passed a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire and the withdrawal of DPRK forces from the ROK. The UN asked member countries to help defend ROK. Accordingly, 16 member countries dispatched troops and medical

personnel to Korea. To establish unity of effort, the UN asked the U.S. to assume command of UN forces. In response to the UN's request, President Truman designated General Douglas MacArthur as the commander of United Nations Command (UNC). General MacArthur assessed the crisis and judged that the UN forces had no time to hesitate. Seoul, the capital of ROK, was occupied by aggressors just three days after they crossed the border. The North Korean Army overwhelmed the unprepared ROK Army quickly. In response, General MacArthur on June 30, 1950 deployed the U.S. 24th Infantry Division to counter North Korean forces.<sup>63</sup>

As North Korean forces advanced, ROK Army units provided little resistance. For myriad reasons, the ROK Army was poorly trained and unprepared to defend the country. According to analysis of Spencer C. Tucker, the North Korean Army was far superior to the South when the Korean War broke out.

Korean People's Army (KPA) numbered some 130,000 men with heavy artillery, 151 T-34 tanks, and about 180 aircraft, including fighters and twin-engine bombers, while the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) had just nine divisions which numbered about 95,000 men. No ROK Army unit had progressed beyond regimental level training, and the ROK Army lacked heavy artillery, tanks, and even anti-tank weapons to include mines. Its sole aircraft were trainers and liaison types. Worse, ROKA ammunition stocks were sufficient for only six days of combat.<sup>64</sup>

Facing an unfolding disaster, President Rhee Syung-man gave operational control of ROK forces to the Commander-in-Chief of the UNC on July 14, 1950. Accordingly, the ROK Navy and Air Force came under OPCON of the Far East Naval and Air Forces Commands, respectively.<sup>65</sup> Following the Armistice Agreement, the

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<sup>63</sup>"History," U.S. Eighth Army, <http://8tharmy.korea.army.mil/history.asp> (accessed October 25, 2013).

<sup>64</sup>Spencer C. Tucker, "The Korean War, 1950-53: From Maneuver to Stalemate," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 22, no. 4 (December 2010): 425.

<sup>65</sup>Won-gon Park, "The United Nations Command in Korea: Past, Present, and Future," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 4 (December 2009): 487.

ROK and U.S. agreed to maintain UNC OPCON of ROK forces and for ROK defense. This agreement established the UNC as the lead for enforcing the Armistice Agreement and defense of the ROK with continuing OPCON of ROK forces, unless both sides agreed that mutual and individual interests would be best served by any changes. Afterwards, the changed security environment and increased ROK defense capabilities created a domestic pressure that the ROK military should regain OPCON from the U.S.

#### OPCON Transition Point: Peacetime Transfer

The second transition phase has two significant events. The first is establishment of the Combined Forces Command (CFC). At the 10th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in 1977, defense ministers decided to establish the ROK-U.S. CFC with the Military Committee (MC) as an operational supervisory organization of the CFC. The Combined Forces Command was officially established in 1978.<sup>66</sup> MC Strategic Directive No. 1 assigned the CFC commander responsibility to defend South Korea with the operational control of ROK forces, excluding the 2nd ROK Army, Capital Defense Command, and Special Operations Command.<sup>67</sup> The Directive placed CFC under authority of the ROK-U.S. combined decision making of the Military Committee (MC) and Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). As a U.S. command with a signatory Armistice Agreement role, the UNC remained under control of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. As the command and control headquarters for U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) retained control of United States Forces in Korea

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<sup>66</sup>Yoon, "Alliance Activities: Meetings, Exercises, and the CFC's Roles," 91.

<sup>67</sup>Jin-bu Kim, "The Most Effective South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command Structure after Returning Wartime Operational Control of the South Korean Military" (Master's Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2009), 10-11.

(USFK). In practice, the U.S. assigned one four-star general officer as commander for the UNC, CFC, and USFK.

As a combined headquarters, both the U.S. and ROK assigned officers to develop war plans and provide command and control for wartime operations. In conjunction with CFC activation, OPCON of ROK forces shifted from the UNC to CFC as the lead planning and war-fighting headquarters.

In 1981 at the 13th MCM and 1994 at the 26th MCM, defense ministers carried forward initiatives to transition defense roles. In 1981, they agreed to return peacetime OPCON of ROK forces to ROK JCS between 1993 and 1995.<sup>68</sup> In 1994, defense ministers implemented transition of peacetime OPCON by giving the CDR CFC Combined Delegated Authority (CODA). Under CODA, the CDR CFC retained authority to plan and prepare for combined military operations in wartime.<sup>69</sup>

Concurrently, the ROK JCS gained peace time OPCON of ROK Forces on December 1, 1994.

In the early 1990s, the security environment across the region began a larger transition. In 1991, defense ministers agreed to transition the UNC Military Armistice Commission (MAC) Senior Member from a US flag officer to a ROK flag officer. From this point, the MAC no longer served as the primary venue for resolving AA violations. A part of the regional security framework weakened. In this same time period, the DPRK's nuclear ambitions began to emerge as a significant concern across

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<sup>68</sup>Joe, "United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula," 30.

<sup>69</sup>Donald W. Boose, Jr., Balbina Y. Hwang, Patrick Morgan, and Andrew Scobell, "Recalibrating the U.S.-REPUBLIC of KOREA Alliance" (Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, May 2003), [http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/ssi\\_boose-hwang-morgan-scobell.pdf](http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2003/ssi_boose-hwang-morgan-scobell.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2014).

the region. As a result, government-to-government talks replaced military talks as the primary means to address security concerns. At the same time, the U.S. transferred the last two DMZ guard posts to the ROK. As a result, the ROK JCS assumed sole responsibility for forward defense across the DMZ. Under these conditions, defense ministers continued efforts to transition wartime OPCON to the ROK JCS.

#### OPCON Transition Point: 2015 Wartime Transfer

As the economic and military power of South Korea increased, there was a strong voice to return the wartime OPCON back to the ROK. During a 2006 summit meeting, the Presidents of the United States and Republic of Korea, George W. Bush and Roh Moo-hyun, agreed to the basic principle that wartime OPCON should be transferred to ROK JCS.<sup>70</sup> Subsequently, there was mutual agreement from the U.S.-ROK Defense Ministers that wartime OPCON transition would be completed by 2012. To guide the process, the defense ministers established the Combined Implementation Working Group to develop a Strategic Transition Plan to transfer wartime OPCON from CFC to the ROK JCS. The transition plan for 2012 was signed by the ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Senior U.S. Military Officer assigned to Korea.<sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, the regional security environment deteriorated due to unexpected North Korean provocations. In 2006, the DPRK generated concerns after announcing a nuclear test; however, the DPRK accepted a fuel assistance offer from

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<sup>70</sup>Richard C. Bush III, "Searching for a Strategy: The Bush-Roh Summit," *Brookings East Asia Commentary*, September 2006, <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2006/09/southkorea-richard-c-bush-iii> (accessed November 2, 2013).

<sup>71</sup>Joe, "United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula," 33.

Six-Party Talks and agreed to close their main nuclear reactor. In 2007, the DPRK upheld the agreement by discarding three nuclear facilities; an apparent move to stability on Korean Peninsula. However, inter-Korean relations took a sudden turn for the worse. In 2008, a North Korean soldier killed a South Korean female tourist in the Kumgang Mountain Tourism area. In that same year, the DPRK announced the possibility of further tension. In 2009, Pyongyang declared they had successfully conducted an underground nuclear test. To make matters worse, the DPRK attacked the South Korean warship Cheonan and Yeonpyeong Island. This attack killed 50 ROK personnel.

In this context, the two administrations agreed to postpone the transition date to December 2015. Based upon the ROK-U.S. 'Strategic Alliance 2015,' the delay of transition of wartime OPCON from April 2012 to December 2015 provides additional time to consider the OPCON issue in the context of future of the ROK-U.S. alliance.

#### Summary of the Review of Literature

This chapter reviewed the literature to frame key factors affecting the regional security environment and explored regional security through both bilateral and multilateral perspectives. In addition, ROK / U.S. security arrangements described the 1953 Mutual Security Treaty and progression of command and control shifts from the U.S. to the ROK. The literature review highlights that the mutual defense treaty is the basis to maintain stability and deterrence on Korean Peninsula, compared to other security mechanisms. The next chapter describes the research methodology to create and analyze data to answer the research questions.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to determine if the agreed wartime OPCON transfer to the ROK in 2015 poses a negative effect to Korean Peninsula stability. Chapter 1 provided background to frame the problem. Chapter 2 sources discussed existing security relationships and primary venues to resolve threats to regional and Peninsula stability. Sources explained the tenuous nature of the security framework and the “brinkmanship” nature of security talks involving primary regional actors.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methodology applied to develop responses for the primary and secondary research questions. This chapter consists of five sections dealing with research design, critical factor analysis, Strength Weakness, Opportunity and Threat (SWOT) analysis, evaluation criteria analysis, and the chapter summary.

The research design section introduces the qualitative research approach including critical factor or Center of Gravity (COG) analysis, SWOT analysis, and evaluation criteria analysis. Critical factor or COG analysis focused on the two key security components, the DPRK and the ROK / U.S. alliance conditions before and after OPCON transfer. In this section, COG and SWOT analysis describe the process to develop a data set of security conditions before and after OPCON transfer for detailed analysis against evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria section discusses the process to analyze findings against evaluation criteria or conditions for a continuing stable security environment. The summary section highlights key issues that provide the basis for applying findings that support conclusions in chapter 5.

## Research Design

This study followed a three-phase qualitative approach. The first phase involved critical factor analysis on the DPRK and the ROK / U.S. Security alliance. The aim was to identify the relationships of critical capabilities (ways) and requirements (means) of the ROK / U.S. alliance and the DPRK, before and after OPCON transfer. The critical factor analysis on DPRK provided insight concerning the adversary's center of gravity and its relations with critical factors. In contrast, the ROK / U.S. critical factor analysis highlighted the relations between critical capabilities and requirements to understand how the ROK and the U.S. have maintained a stable security environment over the past sixty years.

In the second phase, the focus moved to SWOT analysis on the relations between critical factors of ROK/U.S. alliance before and after OPCON transfer. The SWOT analysis highlighted how OPCON transfer affected internal strengths or available capabilities and weaknesses or capabilities that are insufficient or lacking. Likewise, SWOT analysis highlighted external opportunities or potential gains and threats or circumstances that can cause degraded security conditions.<sup>72</sup> This phase produced findings for the study.

In phase three, evaluation criteria analysis was a quality control step to ensure alignment between analysis and the desired end state or conditions following OPCON transfer. The aim was to protect against bias in analysis of drawing findings from the data developed in SWOT analysis. The dataset captured conditions before and after OPCON transfer. Evaluation criteria analysis included key considerations for the post-OPCON transfer security environment for continuing ROK sovereignty as well

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<sup>72</sup>Chermack and Kasshanna, 383-399.

as regional stability. In other words, conditions that extend the past sixty years of stability into the distant future.

The summary of this chapter also includes the findings from outcomes of SWOT analysis before and after wartime OPCON in order to respond to the secondary research questions. Figure 4 summarizes the entire research design of this study.

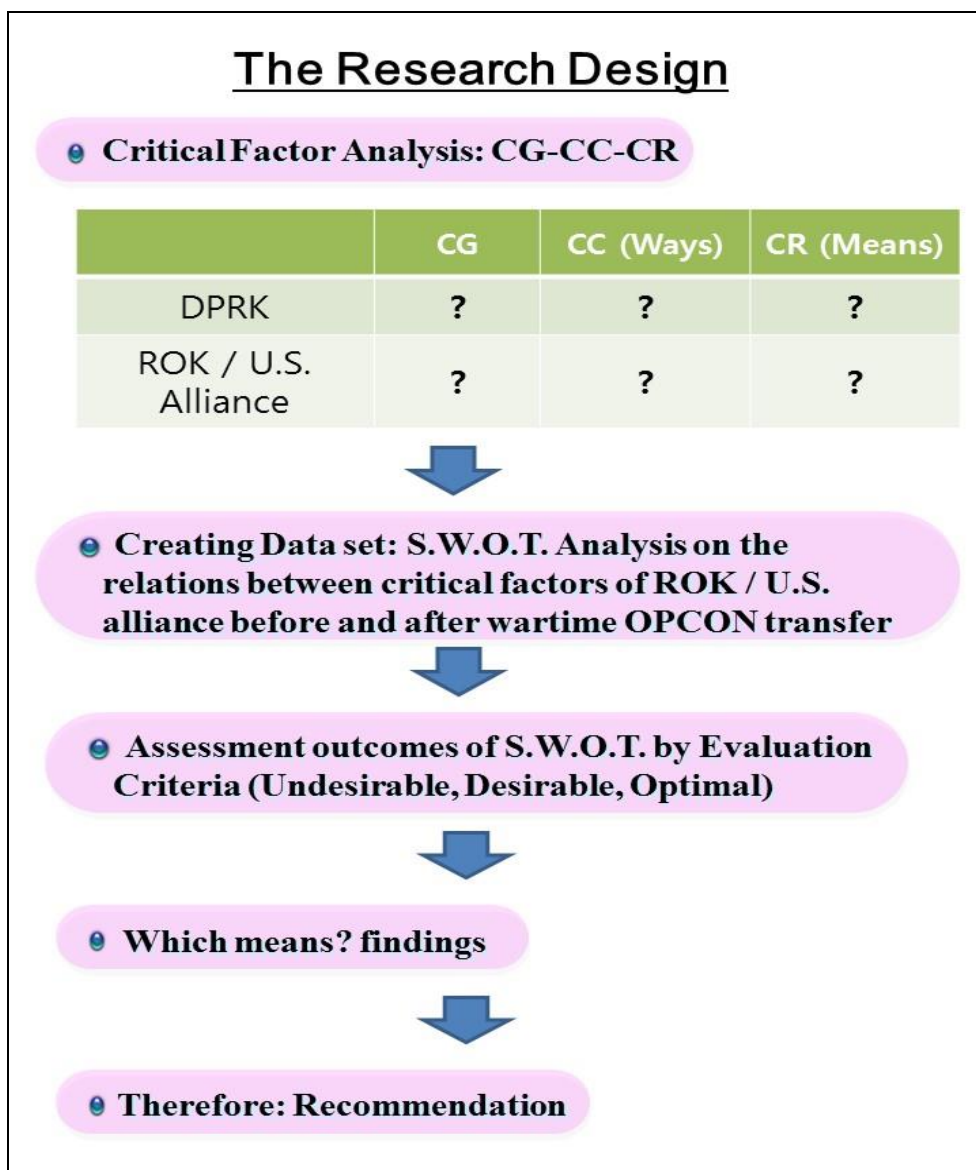


Figure 4. Research Design

Source: Created by author.

### Critical Factor Analysis

The critical factor analysis strategy was initially developed by Dr. Joe Strange. He described a five-step critical factor analysis as the “CG-CC-CR-CV Process” listed below.<sup>73</sup>

1. Identify enemy and friendly centers of gravity
2. Identify those “critical capabilities” inherent in each center of gravity which enable it to function as a center of gravity
3. Identify those “critical requirements” which enable each of the “critical capabilities” to be realized.
4. Identify “critical requirements” or components thereof which are deficient, or vulnerable (or potentially so) to friendly neutralization, interdiction or attack. These are the enemy’s “critical vulnerabilities.”
5. Devise a strategy, campaign plan, or plan of attack which takes maximum advantage of one or more enemy “critical vulnerabilities.”

Dr. Jack D. Kem recommended an additional consideration, critical weaknesses analysis before critical vulnerability analysis. He believes “you must first determine what the weakness or deficiencies are in a force’s critical requirements before you can determine what is vulnerable to attack.”<sup>74</sup> He defines a critical weakness as those critical requirements or components that are deficient or lacking for the enemy. A critical weakness differs from a critical vulnerability in that a critical weakness may not significantly contribute to achieving critical capabilities, it may not be vulnerable to attack by friendly forces, or it may not be targetable.

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<sup>73</sup>Jack D. Kem, *Campaign Planning: Tools of the Trade*, 3rd ed. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College), 180.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 185.

In this research, critical factor analysis was modified to insert SWOT analysis as a measure to add depth to understanding. SWOT analysis segregates along strengths and weaknesses as internal considerations. In addition, threats and opportunities draw attention to external factors. As a result, SWOT adds focus to both the analytic lens as well as depth to analysis. The result is a richer dataset to develop findings related to specific research questions. This study focused on the “CG-CC-CR” process, because the transition of wartime OPCON will create some changes of relations between CC (ways) and CR (means). In other words, CC and CR frame conditions that can be analyzed using SWOT analysis in the next section.

### SWOT Analysis

This research had two conditions or cases for critical factor analysis, the DPRK and the ROK / U.S. alliance. First, critical factor analysis on each case focused at the strategic level. The ROK-U.S. alliance has successfully maintained stability over sixty years since the end of Korean War. The ROK-U.S. alliance has played a key role for significant economic and political developments in Republic of Korea. Thus, for this study, critical factor analysis was appropriate at the strategic level rather than operational level.

Second, the analysis on critical capabilities of the ROK / U.S. alliance included a DPRK desired end state with associated CC (ways) and CR (means) to destabilize the Korean Peninsula. While this study focused on security ways and means, the ROK / U.S. alliance also includes economic, political, and other trans-national issues. Those matters were outside the scope for this study. The matter of wartime OPCON is one of command relationships in terms of the military, so that the limited scope of analyzing critical capabilities supported a deep understanding of

ROK / U.S. security alliance in accordance with transition of wartime OPCON transfer.

SWOT analysis was the process of collecting data from the perspectives of pre and post transition of wartime OPCON. In SWOT analysis, strengths and weaknesses are a matter of internal issues, which are described as the relationships among and between the ROK, USFK, and UNC. On the other hand, opportunities and threats are considered as external factors, the DPRK in this study.

The outcomes from SWOT analysis on the previous results of ROK / U.S. alliance’s critical factor analysis produced the assessment of significant considerations according to the transition of wartime OPCON. Figure 5 shows the process of SWOT analysis based on previous critical factor analysis on DPRK and ROK / U.S. alliance.

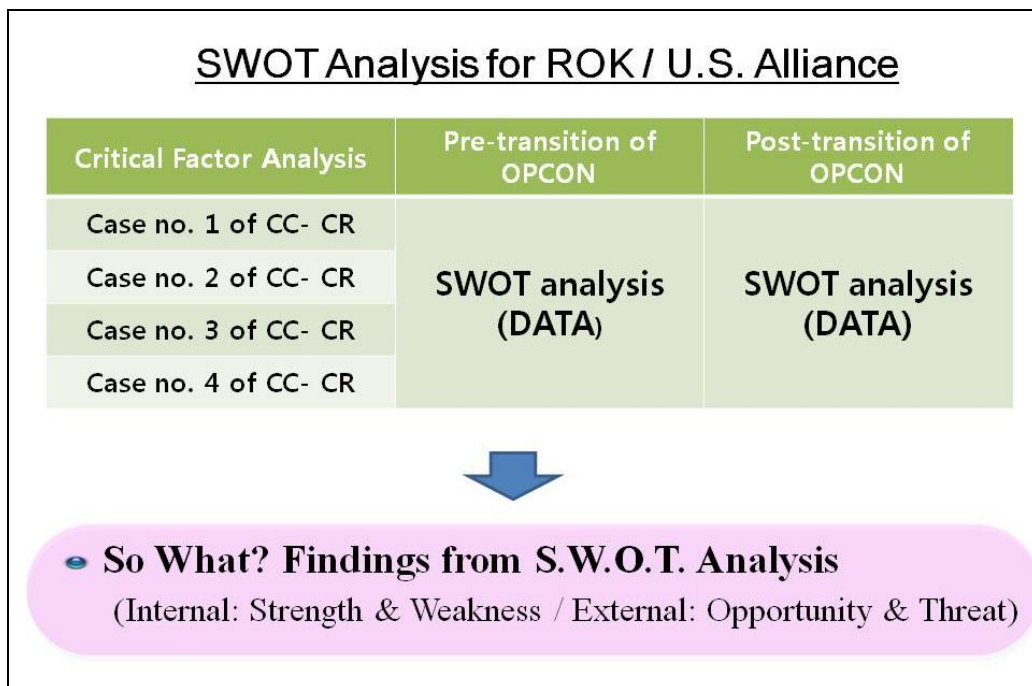


Figure 5. SWOT Analysis on ROK / U.S. Alliance

Source: Created by author.

The outcomes from SWOT analysis provided a data set of relevant information to develop findings that framed responses to secondary research questions:

1. Will the OPCON transition have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. internal strengths or worsen internal weaknesses of the security alliance?
2. Will the OPCON transfer have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. external opportunities or worsen external threats to the alliance?

### Evaluation Criteria

The next step in the research methodology dealt with analysis quality control or evaluation criteria. In applying findings to evaluation criteria, the aim was to compare results from SWOT analysis against predetermined standards to guard against bias in the findings from this study. The outcomes from evaluation criteria analysis supported validity of the findings for responses to research questions as well as alignment with the desired end state for regional and Peninsula security environment.

The U.S. National Security Strategy (2010) and the ROK defense ‘White Paper 2010’ provided complementary visions for Peninsula and Northeast Asia security. The overarching objective is to guarantee ROK sovereignty. The end state is to deter, or that failing, defeat any military threat to ROK existence as an independent and sovereign nation. The second objective is to remain true to the longstanding principle of peaceful reunification of the Peninsula. The end state is to achieve either a philosophical reunification with two sovereign states or a physical reunification that combines the two currently independent states as one national entity. The third objective is to be an active participant in initiatives for regional stability. The end

state is for all disputes to be resolved through diplomatic channels free from military measures.

The connecting thread for these three security objectives is legitimacy. For this study, legitimacy is defined as a framework that supports three necessary conditions. First, the ROK is a sovereign state with capabilities to deter, or that failing, defeat any external threat; to citizens having freedom for economic prosperity; rights to participate in the political system; and finally, a government consistent with and responsive to the will of the governed, citizens of the ROK.

Accordingly, legitimacy is, in plain terms, an extension of current conditions both within the ROK as well as the longstanding ROK / U.S. security alliance. This means a continuing presence of U.S. forces in the ROK with capabilities for reinforcement in the event of hostilities. It means combined military presence to guarantee terms of the Armistice Agreement regarding the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and supporting Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Korean states. Finally, it means critical Armistice Agreement requirements. This includes UNC member states to join in meeting any breach of the Armistice Agreement. It includes continuing the U.S. UNC leadership role for enforcing Armistice Agreement provisions. Finally, it means the UNC (Rear) uninterrupted Japanese support for basing, staging, and transit of forces into the ROK during any resumption of hostilities.

A three-point scale guided evaluation criteria analysis. The scale ran along a continuum from issues being Undesirable (U), Desirable (D), to Optimal (O). Undesirable matters reflect conditions where the security framework is less capable of meeting necessary security conditions following OPCON transfer than before transfer. Desirable matters reflect conditions where the security framework supports necessary

conditions with no significant change following transfer. Optimal matters reflect a security framework supporting necessary conditions is enhanced following transfer.

### Summary

This chapter described the research methodology that provides the way to create data and guidelines to identify the findings from data set. The aim of this chapter was to illustrate the approach to analyze data and develop findings that help respond to research questions. Figure 4 illustrated the modified research approach for the findings. This chapter modified critical factor analysis originally designed by Dr. Joe Strange, focusing on “CG-CC-CR” process for ROK / U.S. alliance. SWOT analysis covers the CV-CW analysis and created a data set based on criteria of pre and post transition of wartime OPCON. Then, findings from the data set get conditions to develop a response to the secondary research questions. The next chapter applies this research approach to develop a data set and develop findings that support a response to research questions.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research was to identify whether the transfer of wartime OPCON from the U.S. to ROK will pose a negative effect on the military effectiveness of ROK / U.S. security alliance. This chapter applies the research design described in the previous chapter. The aim was to create data and analyze findings to develop responses to research questions.

This chapter consists of five major sections. The first section deals with critical factor analysis on the DPRK. This aim of this section is to identify the center of gravity and relationships between ways and means to support that center of gravity. The DPRK remains the fundamental challenge for the ROK / U.S. security alliance. Thus conducting critical factor analysis to understand the DPRK sets conditions for analysis of the ROK / U.S. security alliance following OPCON transfer. The second section deals with critical factor analysis on the ROK / U.S. alliance. This purpose of the section is to identify the center of gravity and relationships between ways and means that support the center of gravity. The third section deals with SWOT analysis. The purpose is to develop insight into internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats before and after OPCON transfer. The fourth section deals with findings relating to secondary research questions based on the SWOT analysis. Each finding was analyzed against evaluation criteria to determine if the finding represented an undesirable change, a desirable condition with no negative impact, or an optimal change that overall improved the security framework. Thus, critical factor, SWOT, and evaluation criteria analysis supported a response to each secondary research question. Lastly, the summary provides a review of key findings

and responses to research questions to set conditions for drawing conclusions from the study in chapter five.

### DPRK Critical Factor Analysis

The first step in critical factor analysis is to establish the desired end state or desired conditions at a particular point in time. The desirable end state for the DPRK regime is North Korean-style communization of the whole Korean Peninsula under the dynastic Kim family. The Korean Workers' Party (KWP) charter, which has higher precedence over all other laws including the constitution, was revised in 2010. The revision shifted immediate goals from "achieving complete victory of socialism in the northern half of the Republic" to "establishing a strong and prosperous socialist nation in the northern half of the Republic." The ultimate objectives changed from "placing the entire society under Juche ideology and creating a communist society" to "realizing the complete independence of the masses by placing the entire society under the banner of Juche."<sup>75</sup> As the KWP charter states, the long term goal of the regime is to communize the whole Korean Peninsula through North Korean-style Juche Ideology.

The DPRK faces both external and internal threats. As for external threats, North Korea has constantly pointed to the U.S. and ROK as threats to DPRK's sovereignty. For example, whenever the ROK and the U.S. Forces conduct annual combined military exercises, the DPRK has publicly denounced these military exercises as an intolerable provocation and the clear preparation to invade the DPRK. In addition, regional isolation poses a significant threat to the Kim regime. Because of the DPRK nuclear and ballistic missile programs, the UN Security Council passed

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<sup>75</sup>Ministry of Unification, The Institute for Unification Education, *Understanding North Korea* (Seoul: Ministry of Unification, 2012), 40.

resolution 2087 on January 22, 2013. While not imposing new sanctions, it did expand existing sanctions. Importantly, the DPRK's major benefactor, the PRC, drafted this agreement with the U.S. In terms of isolation within the international community, China's support of the resolution represented a significant diplomatic blow to Pyongyang.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, the DPRK continues to struggle with economic depression and severe food shortages. These economic challenges are a significant internal threat for Kim's regime. In 2011, the ROK per capita GDP was about \$31,700, while North Korea's was about \$1,800. The ROK per capita GDP is almost 18 times greater than that of North Korea.<sup>77</sup> Until mid-1990s, the DPRK's economy achieved growth due to the Chinese subsidies. However, under UN economic sanctions, the gradual Chinese reduction of economic subsidies is a threat for the DPRK. During a famine, in mid-April 2012, twenty thousand people died of starvation in three provinces of South Hwanghae Province; Baechon, Yeonan and Chungdan.<sup>78</sup>

In summary, considering the security situation described above, the desirable end state of DPRK regime is defined as the achievement of the unification of the Korean Peninsula under the North Korean-style communism and the regime survival against external and internal threats.

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<sup>76</sup>The Hanhyoreh, "UN passes resolution to expand sanctions on North Korea," *The Hanhyoreh*, January 23, 2013, [http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english\\_edition/e\\_northkorea/570924.html](http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_northkorea/570924.html) (accessed April 23, 2014).

<sup>77</sup>Bruce W. Bennett, "Preparing for the Possibility of a North Korean Collapse" (Research Report, RAND Corporation, 2013), 26, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR300/RR331/RAND\\_RR331.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR300/RR331/RAND_RR331.pdf) (accessed April 23, 2014).

<sup>78</sup>*Ibid.*, 34.

## DPRK Center of Gravity (CG)

Lieutenant Colonel John E. Stone, United States Marine Corps, conducted an analysis of the DPRK's center of gravity at the strategic level. In his study, he pointed out two strategic CGs of the DPRK. By his analysis, the CG incorporated the head of the Kim family and the DPRK nuclear weapons capability.<sup>79</sup>

In contrast, this study defines the DPRK CG as the DPRK ruling elites. The logic for the shift is because it appears that the current young leader of DPRK, Kim Jung-un, has seized absolute power in DPRK. Some experts concluded that the frequent changes of the second position within the power structure in less than three years since the Kim Jung-un came to power mean that the young Kim is successfully controlling any challenges to his absolute authority.<sup>80</sup>

As for the nuclear weapons capabilities, the former leader, Kim Jung-il, took advantage of the nuclear program as a bargaining chip to gain benefits from the U.S. and other developed nations. Accordingly, the nuclear weapons program appears as a means to achieve its desired goal. In 2009, the DPRK announced that they resumed reprocessing nuclear fuel rods. Experts analyzed that this resumption of the nuclear program is another bargaining chip for the U.S. and other participants of six-party talks.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>John E. Stone, "Clash of Strategies: Pax Americana and the Nuclear Ambitions of North Korea" (Strategic Research Project, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2004), 6-7.

<sup>80</sup>Hong-joon Ahn, interview by YTN, Seoul, December 20, 2013, [http://www.ytn.co.kr/\\_ln/0101\\_201312201659570582\\_001](http://www.ytn.co.kr/_ln/0101_201312201659570582_001) (accessed May 16, 2014).

<sup>81</sup>Meghan Rafferty, "N. Korea seen as using bargaining chips," *CNN*, April 28, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/04/28/nkorea.analysis/index.html?iref=24hours> (accessed May 16, 2014).

In summary, the DPRK CG or primary component of physical or moral strength, power, and resistance is the ruling elites group. Since shortly after WWII, the Kim family dynasty with the supporting ruling elites have ensured the governing system remains in balance to maintain near absolute control over all aspects of that nation.

### DPRK Critical Capabilities (CC)

The DPRK's external and internal environment frame critical capabilities. From the external perspective, the ROK / U.S. alliance is a significant enemy and threat for the Kim regime. Before 2014 combined ROK / U.S. military exercises, the DPRK spokesman condemned combined military exercises as ROK / U.S. rehearsals for invading the DPRK. The DPRK contended that "The U.S. and its followers that harbour hostility towards our republic . . . are viciously attacking us from the very moment our rockets soared towards the sky."<sup>82</sup> Thus, one of the critical capabilities of DPRK can be regarded as the ability to deter the ROK / U.S. alliance. Some argue that the verb "deter" should be replaced by "defeat" or "destroy." However, it does not sound reasonable. If the DPRK seeks the critical capability to destroy or defeat the ROK / U.S. alliance, they would have likely have exploited and enlarged the scope of military operations after the success of the surprise attack on South Korean warship on March 26, 2010. A second critical capability is to disintegrate the ROK / U.S. Command and Control System. It is widely accepted that the DPRK attempted to hack the network of ROK and the U.S. governments as well as other commercial networks. In addition, several cases of DPRK espionage attempts were detected by ROK

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<sup>82</sup>Matt Carney, "North Korea defends missile tests, condemns US-South Korea military exercises," *Australia Network News*, March 6, 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-03-06/an-north-korea-defends-missile-tests2c-condemns-joint-exercises/5302110> (accessed May 5, 2014).

National Intelligence Service (NIS). Most of cases had the purpose to disintegrate the relationship between ROK and the U.S.<sup>83</sup>

From the internal view, the DPRK requires a CC to compel and control its population. The DPRK has faced internationally isolated situations such as the rapid economic growth of ROK, the collapse of the former Soviet Union, and the Chinese market opening. In spite of these events that posed threats to internal stability, the DPRK has used measures to control the internal environment in ways that allowed the guiding ideology and Kim regime to survive for over 60 years.

Therefore, the critical capabilities of DPRK are described as the ability to deter the ROK / U.S. alliance, the ability to disintegrate the ROK / U.S. C2 system, and the ability to compel and control population and society.

#### DPRK Critical Requirements (CR)

As Dr. Kem explained, critical requirements are the conditions and resources, the means that make a critical capability fully operational. One critical requirement can support more than two critical capabilities.

To deter the ROK / U.S. alliance, the DPRK links with many critical requirements such as an alliance with China, WMD, asymmetric warfare capabilities, and conventional forces. First, the alliance with China is critical to deter the ROK and U.S. interference with DPRK internal and external affairs. As discussed in chapter 2, the current relationship between China and the DPRK is quite different from the past. However, they still maintain their military alliance signed in 1961. Even though the DPRK induced regional instability has influenced Chinese foreign and economic

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<sup>83</sup>Lee Joo-hee, "Prosecutors probe Lee for links to North Korean spying," *The Korea Herald*, September 3, 2013, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130903000836> (accessed May 5, 2014).

policies in a negative manner, Chinese leadership needs the DPRK as a buffer and cannot allow the DPRK to collapse. Recent evidence of Chinese support is the bilateral summit meeting in May, 2011, following the DPRK's nuclear test and sinking of the South Korean naval ship, Cheonan. President Hu emphasized the importance of enhancing friendly relations between China and North Korea and indirectly expressed his support for North Korea's hereditary succession of power by stating that China "highly respects the spirit of the Conference of Party Representatives," according to DPRK's report.<sup>84</sup>

Second, WMD is a significant requirement for deterring the ROK / U.S. alliance. DPRK's WMD can be divided into three parts: nuclear weapons, chemical weapons, and ICBM. When it comes to the nuclear program, the DPRK conducted a nuclear test on October 9, 2006. The U.S. and South Korea authorities confirmed there was nuclear underground explosion of less than one kiloton. Following the nuclear test in 2006, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1718, which included the abolition of nuclear and ballistic missile programs, and restriction on the sale of missile related materials to North Korea. The U.S. Intelligence Community assessed that North Korea probably conducted an underground nuclear explosion in the vicinity of P'unggye on May 25, 2009, which yielded approximately two kilotons.<sup>85</sup> Based on nuclear tests of 2006 and 2009, many experts now believe that North Korea developed a five megawatt reactor and plutonium reprocessing plant

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<sup>84</sup>Ministry of Unification, 93-94.

<sup>85</sup>Jonathan Medalia, *North Korea's 2009 Nuclear Test: Containment, Monitoring, Implications* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, November 2010), 3, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/R41160.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2014).

with its own resources and technology.<sup>86</sup> Regardless of many warnings from the world, North Korea conducted its third nuclear test in February 2013. Following the 2013 test, Pyongyang announced the test as successful. The ROK Meteorological Administration and Institute of Geo-science and Mineral Resources viewed North Korea's nuclear capability as the explosive power between 6 and 7 kilotons. Germany's state-run geological research institute BER estimated nearly 40 kilotons, and the U.S. Geological Survey reported a 5.1-magnitude tremor, which indicates a 10-kiloton explosion.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, nuclear analyst Dr. Siegfried Hecker pointed out, based on his North Korea trip in 2010, that North Korea must have a covert centrifuge facility to produce highly enriched uranium.<sup>88</sup> The reason he claimed was that plutonium production requires a sizable plant and the reactor cooling tower of reactor gave off the visible steam which can be detected by satellite. However, the 2013 nuclear test did not provide any visual imagery as convincing evidence. Thus, considering DPRK's attempt to obtain ICBM capability, a nuclear weapon is a powerful means for deterring both ROK and the U.S.

Regarding a chemical weapon capability, many experts estimated that the DPRK currently runs several biochemical research centers in Kanggye and Yongsong,

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<sup>86</sup>Larry A. Niksch, *North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Development and Diplomacy* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 2010), 16, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/nuke/RL33590.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2014).

<sup>87</sup>Shin Hyon-hee, "Differing estimates stir controversy on N.K. nuke capability," *The Korea Herald*, February 17, 2013, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130217000276> (accessed November 10, 2013).

<sup>88</sup>Beth Duff-Brown, "Hecker takes hard look at North Korea's nuclear test," *FSI Stanford In the News*, February 14, 2013, [http://cisac.stanford.edu/news/hecker\\_takes\\_hard\\_look\\_at\\_north\\_koreas\\_nuclear\\_test\\_20130214/](http://cisac.stanford.edu/news/hecker_takes_hard_look_at_north_koreas_nuclear_test_20130214/) (accessed November 10, 2013).

as well as chemical weapons facilities in Hungnam, Manpo, Aoji, and Chongjin.<sup>89</sup> In addition, North Korea is known to maintain an estimated stockpile of 2,500 to 5,000 tons of 17 different types of toxic gases, including blister, nerve, choking, and blood agents as well as mustard gas.<sup>90</sup> Thus, it is a feasible threat for ROK / U.S. alliance, given that DPRK has the capability to deliver these biochemical weapons.

As for the ICBM capability, the DPRK has attempted to acquire an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capability since the early 1990s. Ballistic missiles are classified by range as follows<sup>91</sup>:

1. Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs) = 150 - 799 Km.
2. Medium Range Ballistic Missiles (MRBMs) = 800 - 2,399 Km.
3. Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) = 2,400 - 5,499 Km.
4. Intercontinental Range Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) = 5,500 Km and greater.

The main ballistic missile programs of DPRK are called Taepo Dong I and Taepo Dong II. The reported design objectives for the Taepo Dong I system were to deliver a 1,000 to 1,500 kg warhead to a range of 1,500 to 2,500 km and for the Taepo Dong II to deliver the same warhead to a 4,000 to 8,000 km range.<sup>92</sup> North Korea tested a Taepodong- I missile in August 1998. The first stage of the Taepodong- I fell into international waters 300 km east of Musudan-ri and the second stage flew over the Japanese island of Honshu and fell into the water 330 km away from the Japanese

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<sup>89</sup>Ministry of Unification, 136.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Steven A. Hildreth, *North Korean Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, February 2009), 1, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/76930.pdf> (accessed May 5, 2014).

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 4.

port of Hachinohe for a total distance of approximately 1,646 km.<sup>93</sup> On July 4, 2006, North Korea launched the Taepo Dong II. The launch failed, because after about 40 seconds into the flight, it fell into the Sea of Japan according to USNORTHCOM (U.S. Northern Command).<sup>94</sup> Likewise, an April 2009 launch also failed. Recently, the new young leader of North Korea conducted a successful test in December 2012. Ilan Berman, vice president of the American Foreign Policy Council, stated that the successful 2012 missile test moved the DPRK from a regional to a global threat. The successful missile test demonstrated that the North has developed the ballistic missile launch technology to fly a missile possibly 2,460 to 3,730 miles, which can affect even the west coast of the continental United States.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, some analysts believe that a sea-launched version could pose the greatest menace by threatening the continental United States. These experts suggest that a North Korean sea-launched missile capability could complicate intelligence collection efforts as well as present challenges for South Korean, Japanese, and U.S. ballistic missile defense systems.<sup>96</sup>

Third, asymmetric warfare capabilities such as cyber warfare units and espionage are essential to deter the ROK / U.S. alliance. Kim, Jung-Il, the former leader of North Korea, told his subordinate military leaders that victory or defeat in a modern war depended on electronic warfare.<sup>97</sup> The North Korean military maintains

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 5.

<sup>95</sup>Ilan Berman, "BERMAN: Why North Korea's missile launch matters," *Washington Times*, December 20, 2012, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/dec/20/why-north-koreas-missile-launch-matters> (accessed November 3, 2013).

<sup>96</sup>Hildreth, *North Korean Ballistic Missile Threat to the United States*, 8.

<sup>97</sup>Ed Barnes, "North Korea's Cyber Army Gets Increasingly Sophisticated," *Fox News*, May 17, 2011, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2011/05/17/north-koreas-cyber-army-gets-increasingly-sophisticated/> (accessed January 23, 2014).

as many as 30,000 electronic warfare specialists and they became the elite corps of the military.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, Lee Dong-hoon, a professor at the Korea University Graduate School of Information Security, pointed out that North Korea has a 3,000-strong cyber army under the direct control of leader Kim Jong-un.<sup>99</sup> Finally, North Korea maintains a cyber warfare unit of around 3,000 hackers and cyber experts under the Reconnaissance General Bureau, a prime intelligence body.<sup>100</sup>

Espionage is also a critical requirement to both deter and disintegrate the ROK / U.S. alliance. The DPRK's strategy emphasizes the key role of the fifth column in the ROK in order to disintegrate unity of effort for the ROK / U.S. alliance. As evidence, Lee Seok-ki, a ROK law-maker and a member of the minor Unified Progressive Party, was accused of conspiring to stage an armed revolt and forming an anti-state organization called "Revolutionary Organization" in 2013.<sup>101</sup> According to the Defense Ministry, even though Lee belonged to the Science, ICT, Future Planning, Broadcasting and Communications Committee in Congress, he requested the Defense Ministry to provide information on ROK / U.S. joint counter-provocation plans.<sup>102</sup> The important fact is that Lee's case was not the only case of espionage. In 2011, key figures of underground organization called "Wangjaesan" were arrested by NIS. They collected and sent military information to the DPRK.

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Shin Hyon-hee, "Seoul faces growing cyber warfare challenges," *The Korea Herald*, March 21, 2013, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130321000980> (accessed January 23, 2014).

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Lee Joo-hee, "Prosecutors probe Lee for links to North Korean spying."

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.

Deployed conventional forces are an essential means to deter the ROK / U.S. alliance. According to the ROK 2010 Defense White Paper of Ministry of National Defense, the standing strengths of DPRK are estimated to be approximately 1.2 million troops in total, which is 1.8 times that of ROK military, which consists of around 650,000 troops.<sup>103</sup> Of note, the DPRK deployed and fortified long-range artillery that can reach Seoul and other metropolitan areas. DPRK artillery includes 170mm self propelled guns with a range of over 50km and 240mm multiple rocket launchers with a range of over 60km.<sup>104</sup>

DPRK critical requirements to disintegrate the ROK / U.S. C2 system has several integrated means that include cyber warfare units, espionage, and anti-American sentiment led and sponsored by the DPRK government. Both cyber warfare units and espionage were discussed above. Anti-American sentiment comes from multiple sources. Some research showed that the ‘preemptive policy’ and designation of DPRK as an ‘axis of evil’ in Bush administration brought South Koreans great anxiety of possible armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula. To make matters worse, a U.S. armored vehicle killed two ROK female students and this accident escalated anti-American sentiment in 2002. Likewise, there are some pro-DPRK groups in South Korea. As Kim Seung-Hwan pointed out, these groups are influenced by the North Korean political ideology of Juche (self-reliance). This group openly displayed their anger toward the United States through violent street protests and made demands that

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<sup>103</sup>Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011), 340.

<sup>104</sup>Ministry of Unification, 121-122.

were often identical to those made by North Koreans, including the expulsion of U.S. forces from the South.<sup>105</sup>

The critical capability to compel and control population and society in DPRK needs effective means such as information operations and coercive measures. First, the DPRK has totally controlled all mass media and information networks. This level of control makes the DPRK appear as very concealed and mysterious to outsiders. The main purpose of controlled mass media in the DPRK is to influence its population and indoctrinate the Juche ideology. North Korean people are continually exposed to manipulated facts and distorted news by KWP. In this regard, the North Korean mass media is simply a tool for maintaining the Kim regime and supporting elites. According to the Freedom of the Press 2014 report, the DPRK ranked as the country with the most restricted media environment in the world for 14 consecutive years.<sup>106</sup>

The Kim regime makes dedicated measures to control its population. The most well-known method involves political camps. North Korean authorities have violated human rights and let inmates die from gruesome torture, deliberated starvation, and illness. Reuters reports that the DPRK operates over twelve political prisoner camps with over 80,000 political prisoners.<sup>107</sup> Another coercive measure involves surveillance through officers from the national police. For example, one such program assigned one KWP official to monitor up to five homes. Finally, DPRK citizens have

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<sup>105</sup>Kim Seung-Hwan, "Anti-Americanism in Korea," *The Washington Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002-03): 113-114.

<sup>106</sup>Freedom House, "Freedom of Press 2014," [http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP\\_2014.pdf](http://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP_2014.pdf) (accessed May 6, 2014).

<sup>107</sup>Stephanie Nebehay, "U.N. documents North Korean torture chambers, prison camps . . . and luxury goods," *Reuters*, February 17, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/17/us-korea-north-un-excerpts-idUSBREA1G0OF20140217> (accessed May 6, 2014).

very limited freedom of movement and near border areas they have no freedom of movement.

In summary, this section discussed DPRK critical factor analysis. The discussion included the DPRK desired end state to control the entire Peninsula. The discussion also described the DPRK CG in terms of the dynastic Kim regime and ruling elites. This ruling elites group has several capabilities in terms of the ability to deter the ROK / U.S. alliance, the ability to disintegrate the ROK / U.S. C2 system, and the ability to compel and control its own population and society. In order to allow the ruling elites group to achieve the end state, there are some essential means, which are the alliance with China, WMD, asymmetric warfare capabilities, conventional forces, controlled information and mass media, and other coercive measures to control residents. The figure below summarized the critical factor analysis on DPRK. The next section highlights ROK / U.S. Security Alliance critical factor analysis.

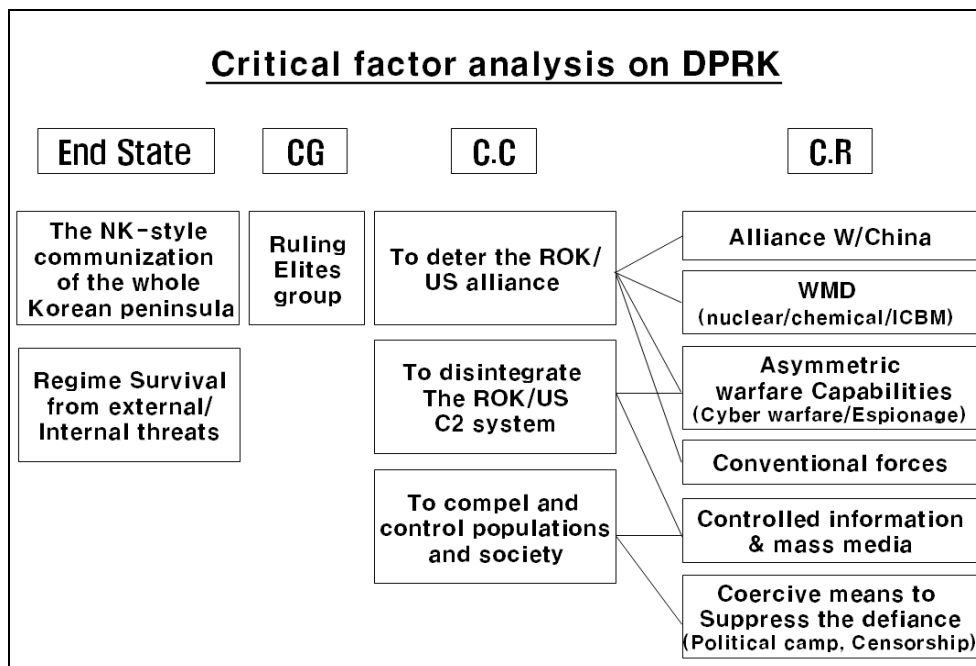


Figure 6. Critical factor analysis on DPRK

Source: Created by author.

## ROK / U.S. Security Alliance Critical Factor Analysis

The origin of the ROK / U.S. alliance goes back to the Mutual Defense Treaty signed in 1953. At that time, the ROK / U.S. alliance was an unequal relationship, given that ROK per capita GDP was 67 dollars according to the bank of Korea. The ROK was dependent on the U.S. However, the Mutual Defense Treaty provided legal basis for the U.S. military forces to be stationed on the Korean Peninsula. After the establishment of Combined Forces Command (CFC) in 1977, the ROK / U.S. relationship evolved toward a more equal partnership based on shared interests. Eventually, the ROK / U.S. alliance became the cornerstone of rapid economic development, the so called ‘Miracle of the Han River’ and a mature democracy in ROK. Today, the alliance has a key role for regional security stability across Northeast Asia. The aim for this section is to discuss critical factor analysis of the ROK / U.S. alliance.

### End-state

In order to address the end-state of the ROK / U.S. alliance, it is necessary to consider what goal or objective each country has. From the U.S. perspective, the 2010 National Security Strategy of the United States of America expressed four national interests such as security, prosperity, values, and international order. These U.S. national interests are too broad to apply to a specific area like the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, narrowed U.S. objectives in the East Asia Pacific region. He framed objectives to modernize and strengthen U.S. alliances and develop and strengthen ties with emerging partners. The U.S. wants to support effective regional institutions that strive to solve problems based on internationally-recognized rules and norms. In economics, the U.S. seeks to increase trade and investment and expand broad-based economic growth. For regional security, the U.S.

wants to ensure its military presence in the region and effectively supports the full range of our engagement to promote democratic development, good governance, human rights, and expand people-to-people ties.<sup>108</sup>

As for the ROK, the current Park administration has yet to issue a National Security Strategy. Thus ROK national security objectives can be identified in the 2010 Defense White Paper. The ROK government set its national security objectives as maintaining stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula; establishing the foundation for citizens' safety and national prosperity; and enhancing the country's international capacity and structure.<sup>109</sup>

Based on the reference above, the end state of ROK / U.S. alliance can be defined as the promotion of continued regional stability. Even though we can consider another end state such as the continued economic growth or the promotion of democratic development, this study will focus on the regional stability related with the DPRK's threat in order to respond the research questions.

#### Center of Gravity (CG)

The Center of Gravity of the ROK / U.S. alliance at the strategic level can be defined as the ROK / U.S. alliance itself. The ROK / U.S. alliance is the physical and moral power and strength. In addition, it is the primary protection against the external threats such as the DPRK aggression. Following Clausewitz, the ROK / U.S. alliance is the hub of all power and movement. It is what keeps all other systems in balance and functioning to achieve a common aim. Dr. Kem supports the idea that an alliance

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<sup>108</sup>John Kerry, "The East Asia-Pacific Rebalance: Expanding U.S. Engagement," U.S. Department of State, December 13, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/218988.pdf> (accessed May 6, 2014).

<sup>109</sup>Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011), 38.

can be a strategic center of gravity. A CG can be a military force, an alliance, political or military leaders, a set of critical capabilities or functions or national will.<sup>110</sup> In this context, the ROK / U.S. alliance is the cornerstone to maintain regional stability in Northeast Asia as a strong deterrence mechanism.

### Critical Capability (CC)

In accordance with the complicated and dynamic global and regional security environment, the ROK / U.S. alliance has grown into a strong partnership dealing with not only DPRK aggression but also with transnational issues. In this context, some may assess the capability of ROK / U.S. alliance as providing the U.S. with the basis for engaging in Northeast region's issues. In another perspective, a critical capability of the ROK / U.S. alliance can be viewed as checking the rising power of China. However, the critical capabilities of ROK / U.S. alliance are described with a focus on the DPRK's threats in order to respond the research questions. Thus, this section deals with three critical capabilities of ROK / U.S. alliance. The critical capabilities, or ways, are to deter, and if necessary, defeat the DPRK's attempts to destabilize the Korean Peninsula, the ability to reinforce deployed forces to sustain combat capabilities, and the ability to conduct combined and joint military operations.

The primary critical capability of the ROK / U.S. alliance is to deter and, if necessary, defeat DPRK threats. Whenever ROK / U.S. troops conduct combined and joint military exercises, North Korean national media express a highly critical response with rhetorical threats. However, it is extremely rare to find instances where the rhetorical threat is put into action. That restraint is attributed to strong deterrence of the ROK/ U.S. alliance. The ROK / U.S. combined forces maintain enough

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<sup>110</sup>Kem, 117.

strategic intelligence and strike assets to enable the ROK / U.S. to identify the DPRK's intent and allow the ROK / U.S. to neutralize DPRK's capabilities. In addition, the supporting force augmentation planning and execution system through the UNC and CFC are key factors to deter and defeat DPRK threats.

Second, the ROK / U.S. alliance has the critical capability to reinforce deployed forces and sustain combat capabilities. The ROK Army maintains approximately 650,000 troops and works with roughly 28,500 forward deployed U.S. troops. If the DPRK provokes conventional aggression, current forces will be reinforced through the UNC. In addition, ROK / U.S. forces conducted reception, staging, onward movement, integration (RSOI) exercises from 1994 to 2007 in order to improve and complement the reinforcement capacity. In addition, the ROK government provides USFK military bases and resources to sustain its combat capabilities.

Third, the ROK / U.S. alliance has the ability to conduct combined / joint military operations. The effective combined and joint military operation requires unity of command. In this regard, the 10th SCM established CFC in 1977 with activation in 1978. The current combined integrated C2 system is recognized as one of the most effective command and control systems in the world. In assessing the command and control system, Michael E. O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution argued that there is no need to change or abolish the CFC structure, because it has been working quite well.<sup>111</sup> In addition to large-scale conventional provocations, the ROK and U.S. agreed to respond together to small scaled local DPRK provocations such as when the DPRK fired artillery toward the ROK Yeonpyeong Island. That incident killed two

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<sup>111</sup>Michael E. O'Hanlon, "Don't Rush the U.S.-Korea Command Change," Brookings Blog, October 8, 2013, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/10/08-south-korea-command-change-ohanlon#> (accessed December 22, 2013).

marines and two innocent civilians. Moreover, combined and joint operation planning is the key for military operations at appropriate levels of response. Even for a small scale local provocation, the two countries seek to work together in order to form an appropriate level response. One USFK planner observed that “by completing this plan, we improved our combined readiness posture to allow us to immediately and decisively respond to any North Korean provocation.”<sup>112</sup>

### Critical Requirements (CR)

In order for critical capabilities to become fully operational, there must be associated critical requirements or means. This study frames critical requirements as four primary means. The CRs are a combined integrated command and control system, the UNC, the U.S. military presence with combat readiness in Korean Peninsula, and the SCM / MCM. This subsection provides a discussion of the combined integrated C2 system and the U.S. military presence with combat readiness in Korean Peninsula, because UNC and SCM / MCM were introduced in chapter 2.

The current combined integrated C2 system is defined as the Command Forces Command (CFC) in ROK. As mentioned before, it was established on November 7, 1978. The ROK / U.S. CFC is the war fighting headquarters with the mission of deterring, or defeating if necessary, outside aggression against the ROK.<sup>113</sup> In wartime, the CFC has OPCON over active-duty military personnel of both countries

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<sup>112</sup>Ashley Rowland, “US, South Korea agree on response plan if North Korea attacks,” *Stars and Stripes*, March 24, 2013, <http://www.stripes.com/news/us-south-korea-agree-on-response-plan-if-north-korea-attacks-1.213210> (accessed May 7, 2014).

<sup>113</sup>United States Forces Korea, “Mission of the ROK / US Combined Forces Command,” <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/content.combined.forces.command.46?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1> (accessed May 7, 2014).

on Korean Peninsula, including augmentation of ROK reservists and additional U.S. forces deployed from outside the ROK.

The CFC has an integrated command structure. A four-star U.S. general commands the CFC with a deputy commander, a four-star ROK Army general. Throughout the command structure, two countries' counterparts are integrated. If the chief of a staff section is a Korean officer, the deputy is a U.S. officer and vice versa. This integrated structure exists within the component commands as well as the headquarters.<sup>114</sup>

In addition, CFC has the vital roles of developing war plans and controlling combined military exercises. CFC develops a family of war plans against a full range of viable DPRK expected or unexpected attacks. By policy, CFC coordinates all plans with the U.S. and ROK JCS. In order to maintain a strong combat readiness, combined military exercises have been conducted annually. Throughout these exercises, the combined headquarters identifies and corrects problems as well as develops approaches to improve the C2 system.

United States Forces Korea (USFK) commands around 28,500 U.S. troops in Korea. Even though USFK does not have responsibility to patrol the DMZ or to guard the ROK coastal areas, they are immediately able to commit forces under the Mutual Defense Treaty in response to DPRK attacks on ROK forces or territory.

The U.S. military presence on Korean Peninsula provides strategic intelligence assets to ROK / U.S. alliance. This strategic intelligence maintains surveillance on the DPRK's military movements with supporting analysis concerning their intent to deploy their forces. It is no overstatement that strategic intelligence assets are key factors to deter DPRK aggression. Moreover, United States Forces Korea (USFK) has

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

strike capabilities to neutralize the DPRK's artillery and rocket launchers, and if necessary, nuclear test facilities. Furthermore, the USFK missile defense system is a significant resource. U.S. Forces Korea maintains the capability to intercept DPRK missiles in midair. With these assets, the U.S. military presence on Korean Peninsula serves as a strong deterrence against DPRK acts that could lead to a full scale armed conflict.

The DPRK has never stopped pursuit of WMD capabilities, to include a nuclear weapon. As part of a nonproliferation effort, the U.S. military presence provides a nuclear umbrella in accordance with existing treaties to compensate for the fact that the ROK has no nuclear capability. This nuclear umbrella is a cornerstone to regional stability, because if the U.S. withdraws from the Korean Peninsula, the ROK Army may attempt to regain nuclear capability. That ROK effort could stimulate Japan to obtain the nuclear capability as well. In this regard, the nuclear umbrella provided by the U.S. is the stabilizer not only for the Korean Peninsula but also the Northeast Asia region.

Finally, the USFK facilitates reception, staging, onward movement, and integration of U.S. forces from outside the ROK in the case of war. While the USFK is not a war fighting headquarters, its main role is to train U.S. forces in Korea to achieve their mission. Therefore, USFK provides essential support for annual combined military exercises. USFK annually participates in several combined military exercises. The Ulchi Freedom Guardian is the command post exercise that gives commanders and staff at all levels the opportunity to train for full spectrum operations in the case of DPRK's attack.<sup>115</sup> The Key Resolve Exercise is an annual training

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<sup>115</sup>Walter T. Ham IV, "Annual UFG exercise concludes in South Korea," *Army*, August 25, 2011, <http://www.army.mil/article/64339/> (accessed May 7, 2014).

event designed to ensure readiness to defend the ROK, as well to enhance readiness, protect the region, and maintain stability on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the U.S. military presence in Korea serves as a strong deterrence with capabilities to defeat DPRK aggression, if necessary.

In summary, this section illustrated the end state, CG, CCs, and CRs of the ROK / U.S. alliance. The end state of ROK / U.S. alliance is defined as continued regional stability. The center of gravity of the ROK / U.S. alliance is mutual military alliance itself. This alliance has three critical capabilities: the ability to deter, if necessary, defeat any DPRK attempt to destabilize the Korean Peninsula; the ability to reinforce deployed forces and sustain their combat capability; and, the ability to conduct combined and joint military operations. As for the critical requirements, there are four: a combined integrated C2 system, UNC, USFK, and SCM /MCM. The figure below summarizes the critical factor analysis on ROK / U.S. alliance. The next section shifts to SWOT analysis on the critical conditions according to before and after wartime OPCON transfer in 2015.

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<sup>116</sup>United States Forces Korea, “Exercise Key Resolve to start Feb. 27,” <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/press-release.exercise.key.resolve.to.start.feb.27.944> (accessed May 7, 2014).

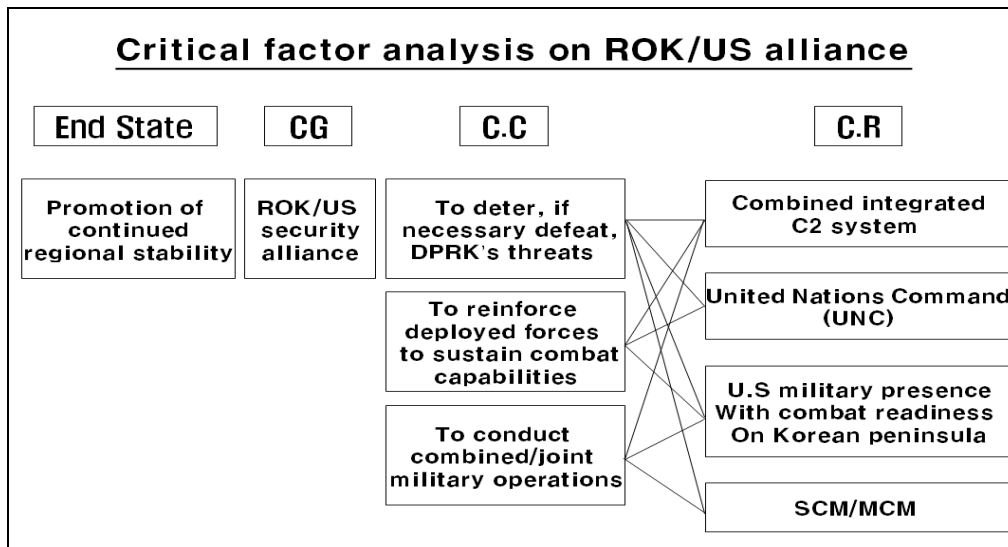


Figure 7. Critical Factor Analysis on ROK / U.S. alliance

Source: Created by author.

### SWOT Analysis

The Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat (SWOT) analysis on the conditions or means for ROK / U.S. alliance was conducted by a before and after wartime OPCON. The conditions are the four ROK / U.S. alliance's critical requirements discussed before (Fig7). The aim of this SWOT analysis is to create and develop the data set of security conditions before and after wartime OPCON.

#### Case 1: Combined Integrated C2 system

##### SWOT analysis before the transition of wartime OPCON

The current combined integrated C2 system enables combat readiness in the fact of an aggressive DPRK. This combat readiness is fully achieved by the combined operations planning, annual combined and joint military exercises, and combined and joint shared doctrine for operational terms, graphics, tactics, techniques, and procedures. In addition, this command structure creates unity of effort through the

coordination of both sides' commanders and staffs. The combined C2 system reflects shared national interests. The CFC commander receives strategic directives from SCM / MCM and implements them according to the guidance of both presidents. As for the commander of CFC, he has multiple roles as the commander of CFC, USFK and the UNC. In this regard, the combined C2 system has facilitated UNC to maintain the Armistice Agreement and carry out the other assigned missions.

Conversely, the primary weakness is the continued dependence of ROK officers on U.S. counterparts due to short falls in technology and intelligence capabilities. Even though ROK Army capabilities have improved significantly since 1980, the ROK Army still relies on U.S. strategic intelligence and strike assets. Another weakness is a growing criticism of the CFC in terms of ROK military sovereignty. The *Korea Times* newspaper expressed concern about the request for an additional delay for the wartime OPCON transfer. The discussion hinged on a perception that President Park and her top military generals are obviously reluctant to take over the sovereign right to defend the citizens of South Korea on their own.<sup>117</sup>

From the external perspective, the dominant opportunity is that the combined integrated C2 system has generated a strong deterrence against the DPRK. Given that the critical requirements of DPRK are the WMD, asymmetric warfare units, and conventional forces, the CFC maintains strategic intelligence and surveillance assets to watch and analyze the means for DPRK's center of gravity. Furthermore, the CFC has strategic strike capabilities to neutralize DPRK rockets and long range artillery. Likewise, the cyber threat of the DPRK is countered by the combined assets of both countries.

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<sup>117</sup>Kang Seung-woo, "Why is Korean military afraid of taking over OPCON?" *Korea Times*, October 3, 2013, [http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/10/116\\_143730.html](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/10/116_143730.html) (accessed May 5, 2014).

On the other hand, the primary external threat is the DPRK's intent to disintegrate the combined C2 system. As pointed out in the previous section, the DPRK has employed espionage to initiate anti-American sentiment inside the ROK and has conducted several cyber attacks. Moreover, the DPRK will likely expand and strengthen WMD capabilities for not only the direct means to threaten but also as a bargaining chip to gain benefits and time to further improve military strength.

#### SWOT analysis after the transition of wartime OPCON

The primary strength of combined C2 system after wartime OPCON transfer is to generate a new strategic relationship, so-called ROK 'leading' and U.S. 'supporting.' In this regard, if ROK JCS capabilities increase to counter a perceived weakness of ROK dependence on U.S., it will be beneficial for both sides. In addition, a new C2 system will generate domestic support by putting all doubts and criticisms on military sovereignty to rest in ROK, and by reducing U.S. responsibilities for wartime operations.

Conversely, the primary weakness is the dissolution of CFC. As retired general Walter Sharp pointed out, a new supporting-supported relationship between ROK JCS and the proposed U.S. Korea Command (KORCOM) will never be as effective as a combined command.<sup>118</sup> In addition, there is a concern over a supporting-supported relationship in terms of unity of command. The wartime OPCON transition does not mean wartime OPCON of all combined resources. For example, the 7th U.S. Air Force commander retains leadership for the air component command in wartime. In another perspective, the reflection of shared national

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<sup>118</sup>Walter Sharp, "OPCON Transition in Korea," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, December 2, 2013, [http://csis.org/files/publication/131216\\_OPCON\\_Transition\\_in\\_Korea.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/131216_OPCON_Transition_in_Korea.pdf) (accessed May 7, 2014).

interests between ROK and the U.S. will not be the same as before due to the dissolution of CFC.

As for the external perspective, the dominant opportunity is that deterrent effect will be greatly increased as the ROK JCS emphasizes force modernization to fill a gap created by dismantling the combined C2 system. The U.S. government has agreed to provide the same capabilities of Air and Navy components following the transition of the wartime OPCON. Moreover the Mutual Defense Treaty remains in effect so that the U.S. commitment will not be changed.

However, the dominant threat that the Kim regime may read the wartime OPCON transfer as reducing U.S. commitment on the Korean Peninsula. In this regard, the DPRK may attempt to provoke a small scale conventional conflict to test U.S. resolve. In addition, asymmetric threats such as WMD and cyber warfare will continue to grow regardless of wartime OPCON transition.

#### Findings and evaluation criteria analysis

Throughout the SWOT analysis on combined integrated C2 system before and after wartime OPCON transition, several findings emerge regarding the secondary research questions. One secondary question is whether or not the OPCON transition will have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. internal strengths or worsen internal weaknesses of the security alliance. The other secondary question is whether or not the OPCON transfer will have a negative effect on ROK / U.S. external opportunities or worsen external threats to the alliance.

The first finding for secondary question one is that the internal weakness of ROK / U.S. before the wartime OPCON transition will be overcome after the wartime OPCON transition. The basis for this finding is that it is highly probable for ROK JCS to modernize military forces in order to assume full responsibility for ROK security.

The upgraded ROK JCS should be the first step in developing the ROK / U.S. security alliance from a unilateral dependent relationship to a more balanced relationship. In addition, as the ROK will assume wartime OPCON, popular support for ROK / U.S. alliance in the long run will improve.

According to evaluation criteria analysis, this first finding is Optimal for the ROK / U.S. alliance. Evaluation criteria analysis suggests a security framework supporting necessary conditions is enhanced following transition of wartime OPCON. The improvement of ROK JCS capability contributes to ROK legitimacy in terms of abilities to deter or defeat any threat to national sovereignty.

The second finding for secondary question one is that internal weakness after the transition of wartime OPCON will degrade unity of command. The basis for this finding is that the new ROK leading and U.S. supporting relationship will replace the current combined integrated command structure. However, this relationship will not be as effective as the combined command structure in terms of unity of command.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding is undesirable for ROK / U.S. alliance. Until an acceptable CFC replacement is operational, internal capabilities are degraded following transition. The significance of this finding depends on the interval between disestablishment of CFC and establishment of a fully functioning new combined security framework. The new relationship does not necessarily mean that all elements in the combined security framework will be abolished. This is an appropriate topic for the SCM and MCM following transition.

The finding for secondary question two is that the external opportunity will be stronger than before in terms of the deterrence against DPRK. The basis for this finding is that current deterrence will be supported by ROK JCS investments in force

modernization. In addition, U.S. leadership support to the mutual defense treaty in the event of DPRK's another aggression remains solid.

Evaluation criteria analysis suggests this finding is optimal for ROK / U.S. alliance. The overall security condition is enhanced following transition. The improved deterrence against the DPRK's threat provides the necessary conditions for legitimacy such as improved stability in the region, a stable ROK political system, and robust economic prosperity.

#### Case 2: United Nations Command (UNC)

##### SWOT analysis before the transition of wartime OPCON

The major strength is that the UNC provides the command structure for the employment of U.S. and other UNC member nations in the case of armed conflicts between two the Koreas. When the DPRK violates the Armistice Agreement, the UNC offers the means to deal with the DMZ and maritime confrontations. The UNC role is to enforce Armistice Agreement provisions with DPRK through negotiation and, that failing, armed conflict to ensure ROK sovereignty.

However, the UNC has internal weakness as well. As Joe pointed out, the UNC has insufficient staffing in the current organization structure. Currently, the UNC consists of a small staff, a liaison group, and the UNC (rear) HQ at Camp Zama.<sup>119</sup> Another weakness is the ineffectiveness of MAC. As mentioned before, the DPRK rejected the appointment of a ROK general as the UNCMAC Senior Member and spokesman. In response to this appointment, they withdrew from the MAC in 1994. As a result, this multilateral venue no longer functions as agreed.

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<sup>119</sup>Joe, 61.

The primary UNC external opportunity is the ability to sustain all forces under the flag of the UN in the event of another DPRK invasion. The UNC has access to seven bases in Japan as long as UNC forces in Korea are based under the “UNC-Japan SOFA.”<sup>120</sup> In addition, the UNC is another venue for the U.S. to engage in the ROK through the U.S. JCS directives to the UNC.<sup>121</sup>

On the other hand, the dominant threat is constant DPRK small scale provocations. These reveal that the UNC’s capability to handle issues has become quite limited. In this regard, the DPRK can take advantage of the limitation of UNC.

#### SWOT analysis after the transition of wartime OPCON

After wartime OPCON transition, the existing strengths will remain effective. The UNC will provide its essential functions such as C2 and sustainment to all UN forces participating in another Korean War.

On the other hand, after wartime OPCON transition, several internal weaknesses are predictable. As Joe mentioned, the UNC will have limited abilities to handle and maintain Armistice Agreement when the CFC is abolished and no longer serves as the UNC major force provider. In addition, another weakness is the ambiguity of command relationships with some future Korea Command.<sup>122</sup>

As for external opportunities, the UNC can have more flexibility to manage the DPRK’s provocations compared to the pre-transition of wartime OPCON because the UNC receives operational guidance from the US JCS. In this regard, the UNC can be a possible venue to improve the mutual security ties between ROK and the U.S. In

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 62.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid.

addition, the ROK JCS will have more opportunity to participate in international talks to deal with DPRK provocations.<sup>123</sup>

Conversely, the dominant threat is as same as those before the wartime OPCON transition. If we add one perspective to that, we can expect DPRK continued attempts to abolish the UNC on Korean Peninsula by instigating anti-American sentiment in ROK.

#### Findings and evaluation criteria analysis

The first finding for secondary question one is that there will be a significant internal weakness in terms of effectiveness of UNC function to maintain the Armistice Agreement. The basis for this finding is that UNC suffers from the lack of staff and ready forces to maintain the Armistice Agreement. Due to limited staffing and an ineffective MAC, the UNC faces increasing challenges to meet all AA roles. Furthermore, following dissolution of the CFC, the UNC may have degraded abilities to play an active role in wartime operations. Still, the UNC retains full capabilities as force provider for member nations sending units to defend the ROK.

Evaluation criteria analysis suggests this finding is undesirable. The security condition appears less capable following OPCON transfer than before transfer. As the legitimacy was defined in chapter 3, the ROK / U.S alliance should assure terms of Armistice Agreement. However, after the transition of wartime OPCON, UNC's capability will be increasingly diminished in terms of employment of forces and enforcing key Armistice Agreement provisions to resolve disputes by negotiations. This issue has a negative effect on legitimacy.

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<sup>123</sup>Ibid., 68.

The second finding for secondary question two is that there is an external opportunity to provide a command structure to handle reinforcement of UN forces and support for basing, staging, and transit of UN forces into the ROK. After wartime OPCON transfer, only the UNC has a legitimate authority to command and control as well as sustain the multinational forces under the UN flag in the case of another Korean War.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding can be scaled desirable. There appears to be no significant change compared to pre-transition of wartime OPCON. The current strength of UNC is to provide a command structure and guarantee the sustainability of force flow during any initiation of DPRK hostilities. That main UNC function is not interrupted by the internal shortfalls. These UNC roles, external opportunities, have a positive effect on legitimacy.

### Case 3: U.S. military presence with combat readiness on Korean Peninsula SWOT analysis before the transition of wartime OPCON

The dominant strength of U.S. military presence is a strong military readiness posture. The foundation of this readiness is a well-organized combined operation plan supplemented with annual combined military exercises. After the DPRK's Yeonpyeong island attack in 2010, the ROK / U.S. senior leadership agreed to establish a strong combined posture against any future DPRK small scale provocations. This commitment enhances ROK / U.S. ability to match DPRK probes for an operational opening. Such commitments and recurring military exercises build mutual trust and solidarity between ROK and U.S. Army. A complementary strength is to build shared cultural understanding. Moreover, the U.S. military presence on Korean Peninsula helps the UNC conduct its mission to maintain the Armistice Agreement.

On the other hand, internal weaknesses of U.S. military presence on Korean Peninsula include differing views with the ROK in terms of sharing the expense of stationing. In 2011, the cost of stationing U.S. forces in South Korea was about \$1.769B. Of this \$1.769B, the U.S. contributed \$1.026B while the ROK contributed \$743M (812.5 billion won), approximately 42 percent of the cost of stationing U.S. forces on the Peninsula. The U.S. desires to see the ROK contribution increase to 50 percent.<sup>124</sup> However, the ROK burden-sharing in 2013 amounted to 869 billion won, which was short of the U.S. expectation.<sup>125</sup> Another internal weakness is a possible friction with ROK citizens. Some ROK citizen groups argue that the U.S. military stationing in downtown Seoul, the capital of ROK could generate a negative image for ROK / U.S. alliance. Moreover, crimes and environmental pollution associated with U.S. forces is a recurring point of contention, a blemish on the positive image of the ROK / U.S. alliance.

The primary opportunity is to maintain a strong deterrence against DPRK through U.S. strategic intelligence and strike assets. In addition, the U.S. 2<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division is located about 44 kilometers north of Seoul. This provides an immediate response to any DPRK violations of the Armistice Agreement through joint combined fire capabilities. Some have called this U.S. military stationing the tripwire effect. Forward deployment helps deter DPRK aggression. Moreover, in the event of major hostilities, the United States Forces Korea will help facilitate RSOI operations.

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<sup>124</sup>Tommy R. Mize, "U.S. Troops Stationed in South Korea, Anachronistic?" (Strategic Research Project, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2012), 23.

<sup>125</sup>Song Sang-ho, "Allies face tough burden sharing negotiations," *The Korea Herald*, March 5, 2013, <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130305000997> (accessed May 10, 2014).

Conversely, the dominant threat is that the DPRK can take advantage of the U.S. military presence for their justification of a Military First policy. Since the end of the Korean War, DPRK leaders have used forward deployed forces to influence their population that the current economic suffering has been caused by the enemy, the U.S. They also use forward deployed forces as justification for nuclear tests and ICBM launches as the mean for self defense. The DPRK's WMD program and ballistic missiles pose threats to a stable security environment.

#### SWOT analysis after the transition of wartime OPCON

The dominant strength after wartime OPCON transfer is to maintain the current U.S. military strength for forward deployed forces. These forces provide deterrence as strong as before transition. In addition, ROK / U.S. military leadership will continue to conduct combined military exercises to maintain a strong readiness posture. From the ROK perspective, following dissolution of CFC, the U.S. bases in Seoul will be relocated out of the capital city. This will improve domestic support for U.S. military presence in ROK.

Conversely, the primary internal weakness is that the two governments struggle over sharing the cost of U.S. military stationing. In addition, the future warfighting headquarters needs to establish a strong relation with the U.S. led UNC. The main role of warfighting headquarters is to support the ROK JCS in wartime. Thus the establishment of clear command and support relationship among UNC, ROK led warfighting headquarters, and ROK JCS will facilitate coordination and unity of command.

The primary external opportunity is that the U.S. support for ROK JCS is unchanged. As part of transition planning, U.S. leaders agreed to continue support under the Defense Treaty. After wartime OPCON transition, the U.S. strategic

intelligence and strike capability will remain. As the two governments agreed to the strategic flexibility of USFK, the USFK will allow the ROK / U.S. partnership to continue as a major actor in preserving regional stability.

The primary external threat is that the DPRK miscalculates the significance of relocation of USFK out of Seoul. It is possible that the DPRK interprets relocation as a lack of commitment and probes readiness through small scale local conflicts. As long as the U.S. military remains forward deployed in ROK, DPRK leaders will continue their justification of a Military First policy.

#### Findings and evaluation criteria analysis

The first finding for secondary question one is that internal weaknesses of deployed U.S Forces before wartime OPCON transfer will be mitigated. The basis for this finding is that the wartime OPCON transfer leads to the relocation of U.S. military bases out of Seoul. This relocation is an initiative that enhances the positive image of ROK / U.S. alliance. There will be improved conditions for leaders to dampen any possible dispute over sharing by drawing on improved domestic support for new arrangements matching the new leading and supporting relationship.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding can be evaluated as Optimal. This relocation of U.S. military bases contributes to legitimacy in terms of the continuing presence of U.S. forces in the ROK with capability for reinforcement in the event of hostilities. Some contend that the relocation of U.S. military base stands for the less commitment of U.S. forces in the frame of strategic flexibility. However, this relocation of U.S. military base poses no threat to strategic flexibility. The strategic flexibility concept has nothing to do with the transition of wartime OPCON.

The second finding for secondary question two is that the U.S. Military presence in ROK itself has generated a strong deterrence against DPRK. The basis for

this finding is that the combined readiness posture is the key factor in deterring DPRK from major Armistice Agreement violations. This combined readiness posture will not be changed by the wartime OPCON transfer. U.S. military senior leaders agreed to continue providing sufficient Air and Navy capability to ROK JCS including the strategic intelligence and strike assets.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding can be evaluated as desirable. The basic deterrence factors are still operating on the Korean Peninsula. As mentioned before, the mutual defense treaty remains in full force. In addition, strategic intelligence and strike assets are available against DPRK's threats. In this regard, there is no significant change to legitimacy compared to the pre-transition of wartime OPCON.

#### Case 4: SCM / MCM

##### SWOT analysis before the transition of wartime OPCON

The dominant strength of the SCM and MCM is a venue to share national interests and ensure efforts to achieve a shared end state. The SCM deals with comprehensive security issues related not only to the Korean Peninsula but also across the Northeast Asia region. The SCM assesses regional military threats and prepares countermeasures. The MCM has a standing meeting to manage the urgent military issues of the ROK / U.S. alliance. The MCM ensures appropriate responses to security challenges consistent with the two countries' national interests.

On the other hand, the primary weakness is that two sides cannot deal with crisis issues in the SCM. The SCM is held once per year. Before each meeting, there are three working level sessions. Moreover, given that the SCM covers many sensitive military issues, the SCM is a deliberate venue with policy implications. Alternatively,

the MCM is more guidance oriented. The MCM translates deliberation and policy into practical guidelines for military commanders.

The dominant opportunity is that the SCM and MCM oversee and evaluate the process of transition of wartime OPCON based on the shared national interests. In addition, the SCM and MCM can support the unity of effort through the coordination and supervision process in that the subcommittees of SCM share and adjust their issues between both sides every year.

Conversely, the dominant threat is that the SCM / MCM come under undue influence by urgent security issues. Since MCM members are key figures based with their respective ministerial level leaders, each MCM involves travel to either Washington, DC or Seoul. History shows that extended crisis situations can cause delays in these meetings.

#### SWOT analysis after the transition of wartime OPCON

After the wartime OPCON transfer, the primary strength is that the SCM will continue to function without significant change. Some expect that the SCM will be regarded as the primary venue for the U.S. to engage in comprehensive security issues concerning the Korean Peninsula. The SCM will cover the transnational and regional security issues as well as policy level issues such as cost sharing and directions for a CFC replacement headquarters.

Conversely, the dominant weakness would be as same as before the wartime OPCON. Some can argue that the MCM's role will be diminished due to the dissolution of CFC. Although plans call for CFC deactivation, there are no plans for significant changes to the SCM / MCM framework. The MCM's main function remains unchanged. The only change involves modification to the channel to communication rather than substance of content or level of importance.

The dominant opportunity is that ROK will take a leading role in policy and security matters while the U.S. takes on a supporting role. In not only the SCM but also the MCM, the ROK takes a leading SCM / MCM role. The associated opportunity is that ROK public opinion shows growing confidence in ROK government's ability to provide stability and ensure national sovereignty.

The dominant threat is that U.S. political leaders decrease the support for the current full involvement in Korean Peninsula security issues. With a supporting role, U.S. public opinion may view a diminished role as justification for less presence and investment in ROK security. The associated threat is that the DPRK attempts to exploit the U.S. supporting role with actions to destabilize the ROK government and isolate the ROK from the U.S.

#### Findings and evaluation criteria analysis

The first finding for secondary question one is that the main functions of the SCM and MCM will not be changed after wartime OPCON transfer. The basis for this finding is that the SCM and MCM are the primary venue for two countries to share their national interest. After wartime OPCON transfer, the range of discussion in the SCM and MCM should expand to include regional and transnational security issues, which will upgrade the ROK / U.S. alliance.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding is evaluated as desirable. The SCM and MCM remain a significant element in the security framework. This supports an extension of current conditions of ROK / U.S. security alliance. Thus, the SCM and MCM greatly contribute to the legitimacy of ROK. After the wartime OPCON transition, the SCM and MCM functions will continue to work. In this context, the legitimacy related with SCM and MCM may be improved, but there will be little significant change.

The second finding for secondary question two is that ROK government will have a leading role in the SCM and MCM after wartime OPCON transition. The basis for this finding is that the U.S. political leaders can diminish their involvement in the security issues in Korean Peninsula. Under the condition of ROK assuming wartime OPCON, the ROK government assumes the initiative to deal with its own security matters consulting with security-partners.

According to evaluation criteria, this finding can be evaluated as Optimal. The leading role of ROK in the SCM and MCM will generate ROK national pride and support. This also contributes to legitimacy of the ROK / U.S. Alliance.

### Summary

This chapter applied the research approach designed in chapter 3 in order to develop responses to research questions regarding the before and after wartime OPCON transfer. The focus was the critical factor analysis on the DPRK and the ROK / U.S. alliance at the strategic level in order to identify the center of gravity and its relations with critical factors in terms of ways and means. Based on critical factor analysis, SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat) analysis explored implications on the four means of ROK / U.S. alliance. The results from SWOT analysis provided a data set relevant to the secondary research questions. Finally, evaluation criteria analysis framed findings for the ROK / U.S. Security Alliance following transition as degraded, no change, or improved. Evaluation criteria analysis enabled fact based responses to each secondary research question. The following discussion frames the response and supporting rational for each secondary research question.

The response to secondary research question one concerning the internal factors in terms of strength and weakness of the ROK / U.S. alliance is that wartime

OPCON transition has a slightly negative effect on the military effectiveness of the ROK / U.S. alliance. The dismantlement of combined integrated C2 system will generate an undesirable condition until the new combined C2 structure settles out. The UNC poses an undesirable condition due to the dissolution of CFC as a primary force provider, but retains its role as a force provider for member states to support the ROK . The U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula will maintain its strong deterrence and create host nation's support; in this regard it will generate a better condition. The primary roles of the SCM / MCM will not have any significant change.

The response to secondary research question two regarding the external factors in terms of opportunity and threat is that the transition of wartime OPCON has overall positive effect on the military effectiveness of the ROK / U.S. alliance. The combined C2 system will have the optimal condition in terms of a much stronger deterrence against the DPRK, if the ROK JCS will invest in force modernization to fill the gap created by the abolishment of CFC and the U.S. will provide the same capabilities as before wartime OPCON transfer. The UNC and the U.S. military presence on the Korean Peninsula will have no significant changes in relation to the DPRK's threats. In addition, the SCM and MCM will also have the optimal condition from the external perspective, because the leading role of ROK in SCM and MCM will create the national pride and support.

The next chapter will provide the response to the primary research question, conclusions, recommendations, and the suggestion for further research.

Table 1. The result of Evaluation Criteria Analysis

Cases	Evaluation Criteria: Legitimacy	
	Secondary Question # 1: Internal Strength & Weakness	Secondary Question # 2: External Opportunities & Threats
Combined C2 system	Undesirable	Optimal
UNC	Undesirable	Desirable
The U.S. military presence in Korean Peninsula	Optimal	Desirable
SCM / MCM	Desirable	Optimal
Overall Assessment	Slightly negative	Positive

*Source:* Created by author.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to determine if the transition of wartime OPCON poses a negative effect on the ROK / U.S. security alliance. Chapter 1 described the background of the topic and purpose of this study. Chapter 2 illustrated existing security frameworks discussed by the bilateral and multilateral perspectives. Then chapter 2 dealt with the progression of C2 shift from the U.S. to ROK as well. Chapter 3 provided the research approach used to develop response to the research questions. Chapter 4 applied this research methodology defined in chapter 3 to create and analyze data to develop findings concerning the research questions. This chapter consists of three sections. The first section is conclusions and recommendations. The second section provides suggestions for future research. Summary concludes this chapter.

The primary research question was whether or not the transition of wartime OPCON poses a negative effect to the ROK / U.S. security alliance. Based on findings to secondary research questions discussed in the previous chapter, this study concludes that the answer is no. The transition of wartime OPCON poses no threat to the ROK / U.S. security alliance. In the long run, this wartime OPCON transfer will become the cornerstone to enhance the ROK / U.S. security alliance as well as to support regional stability.

The findings discussed in the previous chapter suggested that the means or conditions of ROK / U.S. security alliance after transition of wartime OPCON are relatively more desirable to the ROK / U.S. alliance than those of pre-transition of wartime OPCON arrangement with the U.S. in a leading role. It is clear that the transition of wartime OPCON creates an internal weakness of UNC in terms of a

limited capability led by the dismantlement of CFC. However, in another perspective, the transition will build up the ROK JCS capabilities given that ROK JCS invests in the forces modernization. In addition, the transition will reduce the internal weakness of the U.S. military presence in terms of host nation populations' sentiment. Besides, the basis of deterrence against DPRK, mutual defense treaty will be effective, which guarantees the commitment of U.S. forces in the event of DPRK's full scale mobilization.

The aim of this chapter is to summarize findings, to develop conclusions, to provide recommendations to ROK / U.S. security alliance, and suggest future research. In the next section, the findings related to the primary and secondary research questions hold up conclusions.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Using a SWOT analysis on four cases of critical conditions of the ROK / U.S. security alliance, findings suggest the wartime OPCON transition will have a positive effect on the ROK / U.S. security alliance. The wartime OPCON transition supports the improvement of critical capabilities of ROK / U.S. alliance and enhances the end state of promoting continued regional security. This study's findings support the following four conclusions and recommendations described internal and external aspects.

The first conclusion is that deterrence originating from the combined integrated C2 system will not be degraded from either an external or internal perspective after the wartime OPCON transfer. The ROK JCS has an opportunity to improve its capability to command and control as well as to make wartime operation plans in order to fill the gap before and after wartime OPCON transition.

The overarching recommendation regarding the combined integrated C2 system is both sides should form a combined coordination organization to play a bridging role between ROK JCS and a future ROK led war fighting headquarters as well as between ROK JCS and UNC in order to maintain unity of command effectiveness. This new combined coordination organization will facilitate both sides maintaining a strong deterrence against DPRK and fill the gap created by the dismantlement of CFC.

The second conclusion is that UNC has opportunities and threats according to the wartime OPCON transition. From the external perspective, UNC will still guarantee the flow of international reinforcements and provide the command structure in the event DPRK resumes hostilities. However, from the internal perspective, UNC faces challenges for future roles. The UNC continue to have a limited capability to respond to hostilities with a lack of forces due to the dissolution of CFC. In addition, unclear future command relationships among ROK JCS, a future ROK led war fighting headquarters, and UNC can degrade the effectiveness of unity of command.

The overarching recommendation regarding the UNC is that that ROK and U.S. need to establish complementary measures to address the UNC's shortcomings. There is longstanding concern that UNC is understaffed to fulfill all assigned roles and functions. The dismantlement of CFC highlights this challenge. In this regard, as a U.S. led organization, the UNC can remain a primary U.S. organization with ROK military personnel similar to the current CFC structure. This assures a fully functioning and capable UNC planning capability as well as a stronger ROK presence in managing Armistice affairs.

The third conclusion is that the wartime OPCON transition will have an overall positive effect on the ROK / U.S. alliance. The internal weakness of U.S.

military presence will be supplemented through the relocation of U.S. military bases in Seoul. This relocation serves to build popular support and enhance the positive image of the ROK Government and by extension the ROK / U.S. alliance. A critical element in this conclusion is that the current U.S. strategic intelligence and strike assets will continue to support ROK JCS after the wartime OPCON transition. Even though the DPRK has been trying to obtain nuclear weapons and other WMD capabilities, continued U.S. military presence maintains the existing nuclear umbrella for the ROK.

The overarching recommendation regarding the U.S. military presence on Korean Peninsula is to maintain the current 28,500 U.S. troops on Korean Peninsula as a deterrent force. As SWOT analysis pointed out, Kim's regime can initiate the armed conflict against the ROK in order to check the response of the ROK / U.S. alliance, given that there is great possibility for DPRK to regard the relocation of U.S. bases as a reduced commitment of U.S. forces. Therefore, maintaining U.S. military presence with its current combat readiness on the Korean Peninsula is critical to deter, and if necessary, defeat DPRK's operations.

The fourth conclusion is that SCM and MCM continue as a primary venue to discuss strategic security issues for the Peninsula as well as for the Northeast Asia region. The SCM remains the venue for ROK and U.S. national leaders to orient security policy along shared national interests. While the ROK government takes a leading role in combined planning and operations, the SCM remains a venue to develop comprehensive responses to shared security concerns. The transition to ROK OPCON of forces during wartime operations as well as a stronger voice in MCM directives supports ROK national pride and population support.

The overarching recommendation regarding the SCM and MCM is that it is desirable to set a standing meeting in the SCM to handle urgent security issues related to regional stability. Furthermore, given that the ROK takes a leading role in combined planning and operations after wartime OPCON transfer, it will create a positive effect on the MCM in terms of the effectiveness of communication if additional ROK participants engage in the MCM.

#### Future Research

This research began with a problem statement that there have been little studies from the military perspective concerning the ROK / U.S. security alliance after the transition of wartime OPCON in 2015. In this regard, this study tried to focus on military issues related with ROK / U.S. security. This study limited the scope of external threat as the DPRK's threat that is the original cause for the ROK and the U.S. to form and develop a security alliance. Thus this study contemplated the effect of wartime OPCON transition on the ROK / U.S. security alliance through the critical factor and SWOT analysis. It is highly recommended that further research on ROK / U.S. security alliance be conducted with a broader lens.

First, analysis on ROK / U.S. security alliance after the wartime OPCON transfer needs to consider economic and transnational issues. As chapter 2 discussed multilateral relationships, the Korean Peninsula is an intersection of major powers. Many sensitive matters for those major powers are very closely interrelated. In addition to the regional security, it is indispensable for the U.S. to maintain close economic ties with Northeast Asian countries. In this context, the ROK / U.S. alliance is able to support the two countries' national interests beyond the security matters.

The second suggestion is that it is necessary to conduct research on the ROK / U.S. alliance within the frame of the relationship between U.S. and China. It noticed

that DPRK has still maintained a military alliance with China as the critical factor analysis on DPRK. However, since China adopted the open-door policy, the relations between U.S. and China have developed and their economic interdependence has grown. In this context, the ROK / U.S. alliance will be affected by the changing relationship and role of China after wartime OPCON transition.

### Summary

The transition of wartime OPCON will have a positive effect on the ROK / U.S. security alliance. While it is noticeable that there will be some limitations to be mitigated after transition of wartime OPCON, external opportunities and internal strengths of the ROK / U.S. alliance will surpass the external threats and internal weaknesses. The ROK / U.S. alliance can maintain a strong deterrence against the DPRK's critical capabilities as well. In another perspective, this study pointed out the possible challenges after the wartime OPCON transition, and provided several recommendations for the ROK / U.S. alliance to be strengthened. Given that the DPRK never stopped nuclear tests and rocket launches, the combined defense framework is essential to protecting ROK sovereignty as well as maintaining a stable regional environment. Furthermore, the shortcomings of the ROK / U.S. alliance in terms of critical requirements should be mitigated and complemented in the case of DPRK's full scaled attack.

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