

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

US MILITARY PRESENCE IN A UNIFIED KOREA

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ABSTRACT

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Today, US forces forward deployed in Korea are a critical factor in deterring North Korean aggression. Once the Koreas unite: what will the situation be like in Korea and Northeast Asia and what will be the US strategic interests in Korea and Northeast Asia? This study analyzes the strategic situation, US and other regional power (China, Japan, and Russia) national interests, and the use of forward military presence in Korea to further US strategic security concerns in Northeast Asia.

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US MILITARY PRESENCE IN A UNIFIED KOREA

The alliance between the United States and The Republic of Korea—forged in the joint defense of freedom—has been central to the peace and stability of Northeast Asia for four decades. Today, it is a partnership of equals rooted in commonality of national interests and nurtured by enhanced understanding of each other's culture and perspectives.

- General Mathew B. Ridgeway

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

For over fifty years Americans helped South Korea defend against North Korean aggression, fulfilling its obligations to the bilateral alliance on the south side of the armistice demilitarized zone. Today, the Korean War is all but forgotten to most Americans. Focus shifted to winning the Cold War and protecting interests in the Middle East and the Americas. Now, the United States is engaged in a War on Terrorism (WOT) that threatens the American homeland and stretches military resources to the limit.

Recently, top aides to Defense Secretary Rumsfeld stated that the United States should consider reducing its military presence in Korea—without abandoning its responsibility to protect a close ally. They argue that with the tremendous capabilities provided by modern technology, coupled with a much more powerful South Korea military, an opportunity exists to drawdown forces.¹ According to many, Korean unification is no longer a question of “if”, but simply “when”.² Once it occurs, there will be demands from both sides of the Pacific for reduction, or complete withdrawal, of US forces from Korea. Although North Korea's public admission of a nuclear weapon program³ causes immediate concern, the greater issue may be whether a unified Korea maintains a nuclear weapon capability—or, whether Japan heads in that direction. While a unified Korea eliminates the long standing conflict on the peninsula, it will still be surrounded by several powerful neighbors, all of which happen to be critical partners in the global economy. Also, in the WOT the United States requires the assistance of many allies and friends for basing, transit through sovereign territory, and resource commitment in places far from America.

To maintain Northeast Asian regional stability, ensure nuclear weapon nonproliferation, access to key markets, and enhance force projection capabilities, the US must maintain a forward-based military presence in a unified Korea. This paper will review the historical

relationship between the United States and Korea and national interests of the regional powers. In following sections, this paper will examine the future Northeast Asian environment with a unified Korea, obstacles to US presence (i.e., rising anti-American sentiment), and recommend modifications to the US military “footprint” that began with the surrender of Japanese forces in southern Korea in the last weeks of World War II.

ROK-US PARTNERSHIP IN DEFENSE

For me, the relationship between America and Korea started with the innumerable combat operations we endured together, and I firmly believe such a close relationship between the two countries will continue to flourish in the future.

- General Paik Sun Yup

Throughout her history, Korea has been a bridge between mainland Asia (China and Russia) and island empire (Japan). Considering Korea’s geo-strategic position, it is easy to understand that many have sought to control this bridge through diplomatic, cultural, economic, and military methods.⁴ When Korea was opened to diplomatic and commercial relations with Western powers, she almost immediately became embroiled in disputes involving interests in East Asia.⁵ Neither China, nor Japan, nor Russia, dared ignore Korea—at the risk of losing to the others. In modern times we have witnessed three Korean wars, involving many foreign powers.⁶ During the last Korean War, the newly created Republic of Korea faced imminent collapse many times, before the United Nations combined forces halted the communist armies of China and North Korea. The quick and determined commitment of U.S. military, with over 26,000 Americans killed, played a decisive role in securing South Korea and cementing a partnership for future defense.⁷

Today, the United States Forces Korea (USFK) and United States Forces Japan (USFJ) continue to play a vital role in the security of South Korea, contributing greatly to regional stability in Northeast Asia. The U.S. holds the highest positions in three major commands in Korea: United Nations Command (UNC), Combined Forces Command (CFC), and USFK, dominating the command and control architecture. The U.S. Army presence in Korea consists primarily of the 2d Infantry Division, which consists of two ground brigades, an aviation brigade, and organic artillery. Also, there exists a set of pre-positioned equipment for a third ground brigade and pre-positioned stocks of support materials for U.S. forces and the ROK military.

These additional stocks are in Korea and Japan, but are primarily committed to a Korean conflict scenario.⁸ The U.S. Air Force maintains two bases in South Korea at Osan and Kunsan (plus, bases in Japan), with a varying number and type of aircraft. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps have little in Korea, being able to project from other bases in the Pacific region (notably, Okinawa for the Marines). In total, USFK occupies forty-one troop installations and an additional fifty-four small camps and support sites for the nearly 38,000 members. Many of these garrisons occupy land that in the past was open, but now sits opposed to spreading urbanized areas—causing some local resentment. In particular, the main U.S. base (Yongsan) occupies a key position in Seoul. Although an agreement was reached in 1990 to move the U.S. headquarters, funding deficiencies and site disagreements have shelved any further action. The current Land Partnership Program, however, will reduce basing to twenty-three installations and consolidate U.S. forces in Korea—reducing some of the tension between Americans and Koreans.⁹ These forward deployed forces provide the U.S. president with the means to act in support of national interests in the Northeast Asia region.

NATIONAL INTERESTS

Self-preservation is the first law of nature.
- S. Butler

THE UNITED STATES

According to the U.S. National Security Strategy, American interests concerning Northeast Asia are: U.S. security and freedom of action (safety of U.S. citizens abroad and protection of critical U.S. infrastructure), honoring international commitments (security and well-being of allies and precluding hostile domination of Northeast Asia and the East Asian littoral), and contributing to economic well-being (vitality and productivity of the global economy, security of international lines of communication, and access to key markets).¹⁰ The previous administration's U.S. National security strategy proposed that a strong military presence and strong bilateral security ties with the Republic of Korea (ROK) have been essential to peace and security in the Northeast Asia region.¹¹ Also, the U.S. Military Strategy states that overseas presence promotes stability, helps prevent conflict, and ensures the protection of U.S. interests.¹² Additionally, the U.S. Army policy is that the over 25,000 soldiers stationed on the

Korean peninsula remain a major factor for regional stability in Asia. Their presence underscores U.S. resolve, strengthens our nation's position in the U.S. and Republic of Korea relations with North Korea, and deters North Korean adventurism.¹³

Despite the current administration's focus on the WOT and Iraq—the issues of North Korean nuclear weapons and conventional capabilities, the geo-strategic critical position of Korea, and the tremendous stake of China (and Taiwan), Japan, Russia, and South Korea in the global economy (see chart 1) require that the region remains of great concern. Increasing national pride and world-wide importance of these competing regional powers (two of which—China and Russia—sit on the United Nations Security Council) cause a growing interest in each to influence events in Northeast Asia. Also, the historical rivalry between Korea, China, Japan, and Russia is a dominant theme throughout U.S. attempts to act in its national interest and maintain regional stability. Engagement with China, in particular, will be critical to protecting United States interests in the region.

	China	Japan	Russia	South Korea	Taiwan
GDP Per Capita	\$3,600	\$24,900	\$7,700	\$16,100	\$17,400
GDP	\$4,500B	\$3,150B	\$1,120B	\$765B	\$386B
Exports	\$232B 21% U.S. 18% Hong Kong	\$450B 30% U.S. 7% Taiwan	\$105B 9% U.S. 9% Germ.	\$173B 21% U.S. 11% Japan	\$148B 24% U.S. 21% Hong Kong
Imports	\$197B 18% Japan 11% Taiwan 10% U.S. 10% South Korea	\$355B 19% U.S. 15% China	\$44B 14% Germ. 11% Belar.	\$161B 21% U.S. 20% Japan	\$140B 28% Japan 18% U.S.

TABLE 1. NORTHEAST ASIAN GDP AND TRADE (2000 EST.)¹⁴

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CHINA

China's influence in the Korean peninsula began as early as the second century B.C., when refugees from the state of Yen usurped the throne of Chun, the king of Ancient Chosen.¹⁵ This influence, marked by sporadic conflicts initiated by both states, continued throughout the years to modern times. To say that China is unhappy with the current balance of power in the region would be a severe understatement. China's two primary concerns in the region are related to Japan's economic power and potential return to militarism and suspicion of what Beijing believes to be a calculated attempt by the United States to contain China. Although privately admitting that the bilateral treaties between the United States and South Korea and Japan contribute to regional stability, China views these treaties as an unabashed move toward containment. In most matters, China must defer to what Japan or the United States wants in Northeast Asia—which is completely dissatisfactory to Beijing. Simply put, China desires national unity (Taiwan) and regional hegemony.¹⁶ To achieve these ends China embarked on wide-scale ambitious economic development and focused military improvements. The military improvements include achieving a global nuclear delivery capability and a military able to enforce its claim over Taiwan. The economic goals include doubling the gross domestic product (GDP) and eliminating poverty in ten years.¹⁷ The continued emphasis on and increasing globalization of China's economy (number two in the world, see chart 1), coupled with unbending interest in annexing Taiwan, have had a dampening effect on overt support for North

Korea's repressive regime. China agrees that it is in everyone's best interest to have a non-nuclear Korean peninsula and supports multilateral engagement with Pyongyang to achieve that end.¹⁸ Throughout the Asian region (perhaps, especially in regard to the Korean peninsula), China will increasingly challenge Japan and the United States for markets and influence.

JAPAN

Japan's long and turbulent relationship with Korea is marked by conflict, from as early as defeat from the forces of Kwanggaet'o-wang, king of Koguryo, in 400 A.D., to brutal annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910.¹⁹ In the past few decades, Japan has worked hard to erase the memories it created throughout Asia, caused by war with China and imperialistic oppression in Korea and Southeast Asia during World War 2. As a mature democracy and global

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economic power, Japan has played a positive role in Asian affairs—particularly, in foreign aid to developing Asian economies and proactive diplomacy.²⁰ As allies throughout the Cold War, Japan and U.S. goals and interests were often linked and acted upon in concert. Once the focus on the Soviet Union disappeared, however, the two nations have drifted apart and approached many issues unilaterally.²¹ With Japan's dominant role in the global economy (number three in the world, see chart 1), reaching toward a regional network dominated by large Japanese corporations, competition with the United States increased.²² Perhaps, the only recent mutual security dialogues between the United States and Japan are engagement with North Korea and the War on Terrorism. One of Japan's main goals is the reduction of nuclear weapon stockpiles, since they sit at the crossroads of three nuclear powers—the United States, China, and Russia—and where nuclear proliferation continues in North Korea.²³ Also, Japan has territorial disputes with all of its neighbors, China, South Korea, and Russia. Although the chance of military conflict resulting from these disputes is small, they remain as issues in the region. The U.S.-Japan alliance may have stretched its bonds somewhat, but still remains an effective tool to facilitate military cooperation between Japan, South Korea, and the United States, and improved bilateral relations between Japan and Russia.

RUSSIA

The first approach by the Russian Empire toward Korea was in 1654, along the northern border on the Amur River. Conflict was constant between China, Japan, Russia, and Korea for several centuries, leading to Soviet occupation of Manchuria and Northern Korea at the end of World War 2.²⁴ From the Korean War onward, Soviet influence in North Korea was increasingly replaced by China. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian influence on the peninsula all but vanished. A major concern for all the regional powers, if not the world, continues to be the situation in Russia. As it manages conflict between central and individual republics, economic turmoil, and a declining position in world events—Russia still maintains a large nuclear weapons arsenal, great national resources, and a seat on the United Nations Security Council. It will want to be seen as an important player, to be included in the resolution of key regional issues.²⁵ In particular, Russia's major levers on events in Asia are arms sales and resource exports. While most countries produce about 80-90 percent of their arms for domestic use, Russia exported three times as much as they kept for their own military, with China as one of the

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primary buyers.²⁶ How the United States engages Russia and the other regional powers concerning unification and the future of Korea will play an important part in maintaining Northeast Asia regional stability.

A UNIFIED KOREA IN NORTHEAST ASIA

The optimist proclaims that we live in the best of all possible worlds; and the pessimist fears this is true.

- Branch Cabell

There are many theories concerning the timing and method of Korean unification. They run from one end of the scale, a final war between North and South to the opposite end, a peaceful merging. Most experts agree, however, that the timing is probably in a window from 2010 to 2025 and that the turbulent process will take many years at tremendous cost.²⁷ Plans already exist to deal with the full-scale war scenario and require significant U.S. military presence. Therefore, this paper will assume a more peaceful transition to unification—which implies a more difficult argument for continued U.S. military presence. Any scenario will be based on North Korea absorbed by South Korea, which will have severe implications on existing United States-Korean security command relationships.²⁸ Also, Korean unification in the next two or three decades will bring significant changes to their military, economy, and relationships with other regional powers.

TRANSITION IN KOREA

South Korea has already begun a shift toward a smaller, more modern, regional defense force. Recent acquisition of forty F-15K fighters, twenty KF-16 fighters, two multiple launch rocket system (MLRS) battalions with the army tactical missile system (ATACMS), three 8000 ton destroyers, and six 5500 ton destroyers, will be a foundation for the new Korean military. Future intended acquisitions include airborne early warning aircraft, air refueling aircraft, two battalions of advanced attack helicopters, two battalions of PATRIOT air defense missiles, eight P-3 maritime patrol aircraft, and sub-launched HARPOON missiles.²⁹ The Korean military is currently about eighty percent Army, compared to about twenty percent for all other services. The shift from Army predominant forces to a force that's about fifty-fifty (Army compared to all

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other services), including the systems identified above, will allow the Korean armed forces a greater capability to defend themselves and a greater ability to project power. A more modern defense force, however, will find it increasingly difficult to sustain itself as the South Korean economy absorbs the North Korean economic nightmare.

Some Korean analysts look to the West Germany situation as a model, or at least starting point, for Korean economic transition. It could take up to ten years for the Korean economy to incorporate North Korean untrained labor, international debt, and unemployed military. About one and two thirds million currently serve in the combined Korean armed forces (see table 2) and will be pared down to about four hundred thousand—requiring new jobs for over a million soldiers. Also, improving the standard of living in North Korea with transportation, education, communications, power, and housing infrastructure will consume tremendous capital.³⁰ During this transition period, Korea will look to U.S. support and its own diplomatic efforts to handle regional challenges.

	Active Military	Defense Budget
China	2,310,000	\$17B
Japan	240,000	\$40B
South Korea	683,000	\$12B

North Korea	1,082,000	\$1B
Russia	977,000	\$44B
Taiwan	370,000	\$8B

TABLE 2. MILITARY FORCES AND BUDGETS (2001 EST.)³¹

REGIONAL CHALLENGES

Northeast Asia is home to several of the largest armed forces in the world, including four nuclear powers (U.S., China, Russia, and North Korea). After the United States (\$331 billion), the next largest defense budgets are in Russia and Japan. All states in the region have increased defense spending and acquired more modern arms in the last ten years, with no

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indication that this trend will reverse. Russia, with yearly sales averaging \$3.2 billion from 1995 to 2001, and other former Soviet states will continue to look for markets to sell modern weapons as a way to invigorate their sagging economies.³² Even South Korea now has T-80 tanks and BMP infantry carriers, as payment from Russia for part of their debt. China, in particular, will take advantage of this opportunity to gain a generational leap in military technology—with a focus on building a military force capable of enforcing its demands on Taiwan. There have been substantial increases in capability of the military forces opposite Taiwan. Also, Chinese military experts are developing strategies and forces, applied to concepts such as “anti-access” and “area denial”, aimed at potential U.S. intervention.³³ In moving the Republic of Korea’s border north to the Yalu River, China may view a U.S.-Korea alliance as an escalation of containment and respond with further arms build-up. The potential for a conventional arms race, however, is not as dangerous as nuclear arms proliferation.

The potential for nuclear proliferation is one of the greatest challenges to U.S. interests in Northeast Asia. China is expanding its intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missile (SSBN) capabilities. Russia exports (primarily to Asian markets) about \$2.2 billion worth of nuclear material and technology annually.³⁴ The policies of Korea, Japan, and Taiwan are to have no nuclear weapon capability, relying instead on the protective umbrella provided by the United States arsenal. If the U.S. military presence in Korea and Japan disappears, however, these three governments may believe that the U.S. nuclear umbrella is not guaranteed—perhaps, causing nuclear weapon proliferation. Also, each is

interested in developing and/or obtaining a credible theater missile defense (TMD) system, which China may see as a danger. Japanese and South Korean leaders in the 1990's began seeking a TMD capability to counter the North Korean missile threat.³⁵ Since similar technologies exist in both types missile systems, TMD affords an opportunity to quickly obtain an offensive capability. If handled properly, U.S. engagement with China, Japan, and Korea, can diminish this risk and allow further peaceful globalization of the Northeast Asian economies.

PARTNERS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

The Northeast Asian markets are the second most important to U.S. trade, after the major trading partners of Canada and Mexico, and will become increasingly vital as China, Japan, and Korea continue to grow economically. Not only will these countries increase in

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importance to U.S. trade, but they will dramatically increase in importance to each other (see table 3). In 2002, Korea's leading exports to China were cell phones and computers, displacing steel and petrochemical goods. By 2010, the Korean government expects that China will be on a par with Korea in production of automobiles, semiconductors, and shipbuilding.³⁶ In one example, the Hyundai Motor Corporation, South Korea's largest car company, started building cars in China, with a \$1.1 billion investment designed to produce 500,000 cars by 2010. With its current emphasis on economic growth and regional hegemony, China may well overtake the United States as the primary economic presence in Asia. As Seong Y. Park, honorary chairman of the Kumho Group, which owns Asiana, stated, "I see big opportunities in China, I can imagine one billion passports." If the United States desires to stay competitive in Northeast Asian markets, then it must maintain a serious diplomatic, economic, and military presence.

Major Regional U.S. Trade (trillions of dollars)	North America	Western Europe	Northeast Asia	South/Central America	ASEAN
Total U.S. Trade	\$612	\$414	\$414	\$126	\$118
U.S. Exports to	\$265	\$175	\$117	\$58	\$43

U.S. Imports from	\$348	\$239	\$297	\$67	\$75
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North America—Canada, Mexico. **Western Europe**—Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, France, Germany, Gibraltar, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta and Gozo, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vatican City. **Northeast Asia**—China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan. **South/Central America**—Argentina, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Caribbean Islands, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, French Guiana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela. **ASEAN** (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)—Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand.³⁷

TABLE 3. TOP FIVE U.S. TRADE REGIONS

OBSTACLES TO US PRESENCE

Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations—
entangling alliances with none.

- Thomas Jefferson

ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT

Anti-American sentiment has become a widely expressed sentiment in many countries, including South Korea. Understanding the origins for this sentiment, may offer strategies to address and/or resolve the issues associated to this growing phenomenon and improve U.S. relations with Korea. The roots for anti-American sentiment in Korea can be examined in three parts, Korean historical aversion to foreign presence, US misunderstanding of Korean emotional nature, and North Korean instigation.

Foreigners, bringing Western science and technology, slowly made their way to China in the seventeenth century. Their ideas passed from China to Korea, but had little or no initial influence on Korean government or society. Western religion, however, arriving in the eighteenth century in form of Catholicism, took immediate root in the populace, and was seen as a threat to Korean rulers. They were shocked to hear doctrine in direct contradiction to Confucian concepts of society, especially that Catholics disapproved of ancestor-worship.³⁸ Parallel to a greater understanding of Western thought and techniques there emerged a new

national Korean identity and desire for the study of Korean history, literature (especially, poetry), and culture. After execution of several prominent persons, Korean Catholic leader Hwang Sa-yong requested a French battleship to protect Korean Catholics. Linking the threat of a foreign invasion to the spread of Catholic and Western influence only increased the concern in Korean leaders—who had plenty of bitter experience with foreign invasions.³⁹ Korean governments watched China, then Japan, yield to foreign (Western) interests and with each new encroachment hardened their determination to allow no foreigners on Korean soil. In fact, the Taewon'gun (Prince of the Great Court) refused all foreign contact and violently repressed all foreign ideas at home. About eight thousand Korean Catholics were executed and many more imprisoned, as persecution continued unabated from 1866 to 1872. Also, initial Korean successes against the U.S. merchant ship *General Sherman* and a failed French attack at Kanghwa city, gave Korean leaders the mistaken belief that foreign intruders could easily be

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driven off by force.⁴⁰ The invasion of Korea, however, was only postponed, not abandoned. Korean leaders, impressed by Western technology, sought for ways to acquire Western advantages, without falling victim to the Westerners themselves. Unfortunately, as Korean ports opened one by one, Japanese (wearing Western-style clothes and bringing Western-type products) merchants appeared in droves and achieved a near monopoly on trade. The Confucian scholars predicted that Korean national interests were in grave jeopardy from the spread of Catholicism, an inundation of Western goods, and the outflow of Korean rice. Emotions reached a boiling point when trade monopoly led to brutal colonization, and attempted assimilation, by Japan.

In another approach to understanding anti-American sentiment, consider it as an emotional phenomenon—a visceral reaction to the very idea of American. Real or perceived American arrogance results in more heated responses from the ordinary people on the street, who demonstrate and make demands on the Korean government. Complaints of water pollution from US military bases, crimes committed by US military gone unpunished, and South Koreans profiled as North Korean agents at US airports are only a few examples.⁴¹ General (retired, ROK Army) Kim Jae Chang, former deputy commander of the Combined Forces Command, now a key advisor to Korean leaders, offered an interesting comparison between American and Korean perspectives. He stated that Americans favor the opinion of “give me *liberty*, or give me death”, while Koreans favor the opinion of “give me *honor*, or give me death.”⁴² In this respect,

perhaps the United States loses credibility in South Korea because it addresses problems with policy instead of emotion. President Bush made a promise to Americans and the world that the United States would have a “humble” foreign policy, which is exactly what Koreans were looking for: a US president who would engage on a human level. Unfortunately, they perceive the opposite: a US president who uses Korea as a pawn on the global chessboard.⁴³ The bottom line is that high-handed American actions are an issue of pride. Until US leaders address the emotional side of its policy decisions, South Koreans will hold on to the notion that America does not understand or care about them. This dangerous trend is exactly the opportunity that North Korea would like to leverage.

Since the partition of Korea in 1945, North Korea has employed a vigorous and aggressive information campaign to drive a wedge between South Korea and the United States. Their approach has been along the four traditional axis of open warfare, attacking the enemy’s strategy, alliance, forces, and homeland, in succession. The United States, however,

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has tended to view open warfare only in terms of forces and homeland defense.⁴⁴ The lack of intensity and vigilance in protecting our strategy and alliance, while attacking the enemy’s, has allowed North Korea to succeed in feeding anti-American sentiment in South Korea. Korean and American leaders must develop and implement a strategy to address this issue.

One can make too much of this issue, however, since in the elite and popular circles in South Korea, Americans are very positively regarded on the whole. Also, Anti-Americanism seldom strikes a resounding chord in general public discourse. For example, during the 2002 World Cup soccer tournament radical students from the Hanchongnyon attempted to organize mass protests in utter, embarrassing failure.⁴⁵ Yet, several steps can be taken to mitigate anti-American sentiment. First, American leaders (particularly, military) must encourage better understanding of Korean culture, history, and nationalism. Second, American leaders must work to avoid perception of American arrogance and understand growing Korean pride in their increasing position in world affairs. Third, leaders from both countries can combine to establish an institution to deal with the war of strategy and alliance, working to forestall North Korea’s efforts. Finally, leaders from both countries must develop a combined information campaign to educate Koreans and Americans on each of the contentious issues (i.e., Status of Forces Agreement) and on the advantages of working together to protect shared interests. With the growth of democracy in Korea, so has the “voice” of the people grown. In this regard, the United States will have to come to grips with an ally that has increased dramatically in power

over the last two decades and desires to exert its own influence concerning national interests and regional affairs.

AN UNEQUAL ALLIANCE

Recently, some Korean government and military leaders have expressed concern over the “unequal” US-Korean relationship. American government actions, large and small, have played a great part in fueling this issue. American trade policies, such as the tariff on steel in 2002, are seen more and more as unilateral attempts to control international partners. Despite South Korea’s long-standing political and military alliances with the United States, two successive governments have expressed displeasure toward Washington policies. Most notable is the counter-productive effect of President Bush’s initial policy toward North Korea as a member of the “axis of evil”, in fact openly calling into question the “sunshine policy” of South

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Korean President Kim Dae Jung.⁴⁶ In response, Kim’s administration indicated in 2001 and 2002 that the cause for impasse in inter-Korean reconciliation efforts was in Washington, not Pyongyang. One representative of Kim’s party actually declared Bush to be “evil incarnate” and responsible for Kim Jong Il’s failure to visit the South.⁴⁷ Although not in serious jeopardy, the alliance is in need of repair and revision. As President Kim “passes the baton”, all will be anxious to see what the future holds for the United States and South Korea.

It seems apparent that President-elect Roh Moo Hyun will continue the trend toward South Korean assertion for the lead in dealing with North Korea, but continue strong support for the alliance. Despite initial indications that he would pursue reduced reliance on the U.S., Roh referred to the presence of the 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea as a cornerstone of security and prosperity.⁴⁸ Also, recent overtures from Washington indicate a desire to approach North Korea multilaterally, instead of unilaterally, which should be good news for South Korea. Along with the political, the military alliance has come under recent scrutiny.

Several ROK military leaders have characterized the relationship between the United States and South Korea as “at a crossroads” in time. While recognizing the unquestionable role played by the United States in South Korean survival, they point to the emerging cracks in the military alliance. The announcement by the United States Army at the August 2000 ROK-US annual security assistance review that all AH-1 and UH-1 helicopters (the backbone of ROK Army aviation) were scheduled for retirement from U.S. Army service in a couple of years—and

that all foreign military sales support to foreign users would end—caused a serious rift in relations. Despite having worked through a comprehensive system support buyout (SSBO), fair share sustainment program (FSSP), and potential program upgrades, the indication was that the United States approached the issue without regard for South Korean concerns. Many issues, such as declining U.S. support for other South Korean military systems (i.e., M-48 tanks), U.S. dominance in combined command and control, degradation of the war reserves stockpile for allies – Korea (WRSA-K), and the widening gulf in technological interoperability point to the need for a hard look at the alliance. Working together on the peninsula to resolve issues between political and military leaders of the two countries will go hand in hand with convincing the American people of the need to stay in Korea.

FUTURE US MILITARY PRESENCE

To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.

- George Washington

Once conflict on the Korean peninsula is over, there will be a large outcry from Congress and the American people to “bring the troops home”. The final decision, of course, will rest with the administration at that time, but much can be done to lay the groundwork for a changed U.S. military presence in a unified Korea. First, consider a future Northeast Asia with no U.S. presence in Korea, or Japan. Korea would have to reassure Japan of its nuclear-free intentions to prevent proliferation. Concern in both countries that the U.S. may not maintain its protective nuclear umbrella could have the same effect. Also, without U.S. presence to underscore U.S. resolve, Korea may look to China as a guarantor of their security concerns. The threat of a unified Korea under China’s umbrella could cause rearmament in Japan.⁴⁹ Regardless of these effects, the U.S. will have a smaller voice in regional affairs—particularly in regard to economic issues—and little ability to rapidly project forces into, or through, the Northeast Asian region. The question should not be whether or not the U.S. maintains a military presence in a unified Korea, but rather the form that it takes. A modified U.S. presence in both Korea and Japan should be addressed in terms of basing, forces/capabilities, and command relationships.

BASING IN KOREA

Rapid growth and urbanization in Korea will continue to create a demand for land and impact on bases occupied by U.S. forces. The population of South Korea is expected to grow from thirty-two million in 1985 to over fifty million in 2015, second only to Bangladesh in population density.⁵⁰ Unification will more than double available land area, with only a fifty percent increase in population, allowing an opportunity to shift some U.S. bases north. Great care must be taken now to expand the LPP for a future that addresses all Korean land issues and military basing. We must reopen negotiations over unresolved individual land use issues, some of which date back to 1982. Of special interest to many Koreans is the return of the Yongsan base camp, which should be a high priority in the LPP. Additionally, the U.S. should be prepared to give up one of its two air bases in Korea. Similar concerns must be addressed

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in Japan, as well as looking to alternative locations.

Since Guam Island is the nearest base to Northeast Asia, after Korea and Japan, the U.S. military may need to seek additional options to parallel the LPP. One option is to expand the Army Prepositioned Stocks – Afloat (APS-A), allowing a more flexible, mobile approach to basing at sea. Another option is to remove the permanent positioning of ground combat brigades in Korea, opting instead for a regular rotation of brigades from the United States. This option will decrease base requirements, the number of family members in Korea, and allow flexible (different locations each rotation) basing that spreads the impact more equitably. A key factor in the final decision about basing is the identification of the required forces and capabilities.

SIZE VS. CAPABILITIES

Without a North Korean threat the U.S. military presence must adapt to a new security environment of regional contingencies. Future China-Taiwan tensions and threats of terrorism, nuclear weapon proliferation, piracy, drug trafficking, and infectious diseases will be the likely U.S. security concerns.⁵¹ The military presence of each of the services will probably be smaller, more mobile, and focused on providing capabilities to the alliance that may not be shared in Korea and/or Japan.

As mentioned earlier, the Army presence in Korea is built around the 2d Infantry Division. With little threat of a ground war with China, and a continued robust Korean ground capability, the future Army presence in a unified Korea should be more expeditionary. One or two Interim Brigade Combat Teams (IBCT), or its replacement after transformation, would suffice. If employed as a rotation, instead of permanent basing in Korea, more U.S. Army units would gain experience in Northeast Asia in case a reinforcement capability is needed. Also, U.S. Army forces in Korea must maintain strong capabilities in TMD, attack aviation, and light rocket/missile artillery. Although Korea has expressed interest in these areas, budget constraints have kept those programs off the field and on the shelf.

While Air Force bases in Korea and Japan were useful to counter the North Korean threat, they are unsuitable to support air operations in most of the potential trouble spots of East Asia. Five hundred nautical miles is the unrefueled combat radius of the future F-22 and Joint Strike Fighter, but the distance to Taiwan is 800 nm from Korea; 1,400 nm from Japan; and

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1,500 nm from Guam.⁵² If the United States desires relevant land based air, then it must either develop long-range strike aircraft (to minimize the impact of having few bases), or turn over the strike mission to the Navy's carrier-based aircraft. Also, the U.S. Air Force in Korea must take advantage of unmanned vehicles with intelligence gathering (satellite, above the atmosphere, and aerial) and air refueling capabilities—both of which will be needed in the alliance. The U.S. Navy and Marine Corps permanent presence in Korea will continue to be small, relying on the two services' ability to project power in the Pacific. In addition to the change in forces, U.S. command and control organizations must address the changing nature of U.S.-Korean military alliance relationships.

NEW ROK-US SECURITY RELATIONSHIPS

The future security environment in Northeast Asia will necessitate a change in the organizations and relationships of the U.S.-Korean (United Nations Command, and Combined Forces Command) headquarters. Resolution of the armistice will probably cause an end to the United Nations Command. There is an opportunity, however, to consider transforming this command into a regional peacekeeping operations (PKO) command, with headquarters in Korea. There is much interest in PKO by Korean leadership and a headquarters in Seoul may offer advantages in future relationships with other Asian nations. Three possible options (not

mutually exclusive) for Combined Forces Command (CFC) are: keep it the same, but alternate U.S. and Korean commanders; reduce the size and scope to a much smaller force (similar to the French-German model); and completely separate the two forces (as in Japan), using combined exercises to enhance interoperability. It would be difficult to keep CFC the same, without causing China to believe that it is the target of that alliance. The other two are more likely, especially if well advertised as a regional security and defense alliance. Whichever path is agreed upon, the groundwork for future changes in these organizations should begin now and be publicly articulated as part of the overall strategy for change in a unified Korea.

A unified Korea will also impact on the U.S. military (United States Pacific Command, USFK, and subordinate service and component) commands. The role of PACOM is already shifting to broader engagement, with a push toward multilateral approaches to issues (such as in combating transnational threats). The joint headquarters supplying forces to CFC, USFK, will be unnecessary regardless of CFC's transformation. Instead, USFK should transition to a

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smaller, expeditionary standing joint force headquarters, with interagency process capabilities. Probably, USFJ could be eliminated, with a regional focus for one joint force headquarters based in Korea. It should be located in the southern part of Korea (to allay Chinese concerns), near a large city with good transportation, such as Busan. The evolving U.S. force presence in Korea will find itself in a complex multinational and regional security focused environment. This small, highly mobile, and highly capable force will contribute greatly to the stability in Northeast Asia, supporting continued growth in Korea and Japan, while posing less of a threat to China.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We build and defend not for our generation alone. We defend the foundations laid by our fathers. We build a life for generations yet unborn. We defend and we build a way of life, not for America alone, but for all mankind.

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

On July 27, 1953, against the will of the fledgling Republic of Korea (for fear of never realizing unification), an armistice went into effect on the Korean peninsula that put an end to three years of desperate fighting. Almost no U.S. military was present in Korea prior to the conflict, but U.S. forces remained to ensure the building and security of the ROK nation.⁵³ Historically, the armistice line in Korea has had three meanings: the line of contact between two

opposing armies (North and South Korean), the global dividing line between two ideologies (communism vs. democracy), and a bridge between the traditional continental and maritime powers of Northeast Asia (China and Japan).⁵⁴ Korean unification will eliminate the first meaning, move the second further north to the Chinese border, and offer an opportunity to rekindle the rivalry in the third.

As world events influence changes in U.S. interests, the objectives of the forward military presence in Korea already relate to more than just fulfilling a promise to the Korean nation and opposing North Korean aggression. Serious reduction of U.S. forces, or diplomatic and political activities, may be interpreted throughout Asia as a declining commitment to regional stability. After all, the United States maintains forces in Germany today, despite the demise of the Soviet Union and its threat more than ten years ago. In this region, with reliance on bilateral relationships, the effect of U.S. reduced effort in any way would be more profoundly felt. The time is ripe for the United States to lay a foundation and prepare for a future of opportunities,

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instead of waiting for the inevitable challenges. If the United States desires to protect its national interests in regard to Northeast Asian regional stability, ensure nuclear weapon nonproliferation, access to key markets and resources, and enhance force projection capabilities, the US must maintain a forward-based military presence in a unified Korea.

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