

## A RAND NOTE

THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT IN EAST ASIA AND  
U.S.-KOREAN SECURITY RELATIONS IN THE 1980s

Norman D. Levin

March 1983

N-1960-FF

Prepared for

The Ford Foundation

A Series in International  
Security and Arms Control

35<sup>th</sup>  
Year



# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>MAR 1983</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-1983 to 00-00-1983</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>The Strategic Environment in East Asia and U.S. - Korean Security Relations in the 1980s</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>The Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 90406</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>This report replaces ADE750901</b>					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>44</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

This publication was supported by the Ford Foundation under Grant No. 790-0061.

The Rand Publications Series: The Report is the principal publication documenting and transmitting Rand's major research findings and final research results. The Rand Note reports other outputs of sponsored research for general distribution. Publications of The Rand Corporation do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of the sponsors of Rand research.





## PREFACE

In late 1978, The Ford Foundation provided grants to The Rand Corporation and several university centers for research and training in international security and arms control. At Rand, the grant is supporting a diverse program. In the Rand Graduate Institute, which offers a doctorate in policy analysis, the grant is contributing to student fellowships for dissertation preparation, curriculum development, workshops and tutorials, and a series of visiting lecturers. In Rand's National Security Research Division, the Ford-sponsored projects are designed to extend beyond the immediate needs of government sponsors of research by investigating long-term or emerging problems and by developing and assessing new research methodologies. The grant also is being used to fund the publication of relevant sponsored research that would otherwise not be disseminated to the general public.

All research products are being made available to as wide an audience as possible through publication as unclassified Rand reports or notes, or in journals. The Rand documents may be obtained directly or may be found in the more than 300 libraries in the United States and 35 other countries that maintain collections of Rand publications.

This Note is a slightly revised version of a paper prepared for a conference on "Korea-U.S. Relations: The Second Century," co-sponsored by the Korea Development Institute and The Asia Society and held in Kyongju, Korea, November 8-10, 1982. The paper was written in October 1982 and stylistically revised in January 1983. Support for the publication of this Note was provided by The Ford Foundation under Grant 790-0061.



## SUMMARY

This Note assesses the likely influence of the evolving strategic environment in East Asia on U.S.-Korean security relations in the remainder of the 1980s. To assess this influence, the Note briefly examines recent trends in several main factors: (1) the great power military balance, the Soviet military buildup in the Far East, and Soviet policies toward the Korean peninsula; (2) the vagaries of the Sino-Soviet split and U.S.-USSR-PRC triangular relations; (3) the character of the Japanese-American relationship and the nature of the role of Japan; and (4) the evolving political, economic, and military situations in both North and South Korea. The Note also examines the probable role of the United States in the region. On the basis of this examination, the Note fashions a number of propositions concerning the likely future evolution of the strategic environment in East Asia, assesses their implications for U.S.-Korean security relations, and suggests several issues for future consideration.

The principal conclusions are that: the heightened geo-strategic importance of the Far East to the Soviet Union and its continuing military buildup will create the need for compensatory actions by the United States and its allies; the continued reliance on a "swing strategy" by the United States for guaranteeing regional security will become increasingly risky; the likely evolution of Sino-Soviet relations will limit the ability of the United States to interest China in significantly expanded security cooperation and make the task of maintaining security in the region more complex; and the recent trends in several important areas in North and South Korea will increase the possibility for destabilizing developments on the Korean peninsula in the remainder of the 1980s. The main issues identified for future consideration concerning U.S.-Korean security relations are the questions of deterrence vis-a-vis North Korea, the appropriate military strategy to deal with the North Korean threat, the measures for moderating North Korea's behavior, and the role of Japan in Korea's defense. Two issues relevant to the region as a whole concern the

position of East Asia in U.S. global strategy and the appropriate combined role of U.S. and Korean forces in the larger framework of East Asian security.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am very much indebted to Richard Solomon for his support in preparing this Note, and to Aaron Gurwitz, Paul Langer, Richard Nelson, Shigeki Nishimura, and Jonathan Pollack for their responsiveness to my efforts at various stages in the preparation process. I am also indebted to Harry Gelman and Richard Sneider, from whose knowledge and insights this study has greatly benefited.



CONTENTS

PREFACE .....	iii
SUMMARY .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii

Section

I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. RECENT TRENDS IN THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT .....	2
THE MILITARY BALANCE AND SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD THE KOREAN PENINSULA .....	2
THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT AND U.S.-USSR-PRC TRIANGULAR RELATIONS .....	7
THE CHARACTER OF U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS AND JAPAN'S ROLE IN THE REGION .....	13
THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA ....	17
THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES .....	22
III. EAST ASIA AND U.S.-KOREAN SECURITY RELATIONS .....	24
PROPOSITIONS .....	24
IMPLICATIONS .....	25
FUTURE ISSUES .....	28



## I. INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the 1980s, the evolving strategic environment in East Asia will have an important influence on U.S.-Korean security relations. Four factors will be particularly important: (1) the great power military balance, the Soviet military buildup in the Far East, and Soviet policies toward the Korean peninsula; (2) the vagaries of the Sino-Soviet split and U.S.-USSR-PRC triangular relations; (3) the character of the Japanese-American relationship and the nature of the role of Japan; and (4) the evolving political, economic, and military situations in both North and South Korea. Also important, of course, will be the role of the United States in East Asia. This Note briefly examines recent trends in these factors and assesses their likely implications for U.S.-Korean security relations in the remainder of the 1980s.

## II. RECENT TRENDS IN THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

### THE MILITARY BALANCE AND SOVIET POLICIES TOWARD THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Until the late 1960s, there was a marked asymmetry in the geopolitical positions of the United States and the Soviet Union. The U.S. was a global power with both the military capability and political will to act accordingly. The Soviet Union, despite pretensions to the contrary, was basically a regional power, with its over-riding concern focused on Europe.

Today the situation has changed considerably. This change is particularly dramatic at the strategic level, with the Soviet Union achieving at least rough parity with the United States. Nearly ignored in the often arcane discussion of the theoretical vulnerability of U.S. land-based missiles that accompanied this achievement was the decreased U.S. ability to deter lower levels of conflict with its nuclear power, and the consequent increased importance of conventional forces and local theater balances. Here, recent trends have been even more disturbing, as indicated by the huge conventional imbalances favoring the USSR in crucial theaters of potential conflict. The Soviet Union, moreover, has demonstrated its willingness to use its growing military power to expand Soviet influence--both directly, as in the 1979 invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, and indirectly, through military assistance and the use of surrogate or proxy forces in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. As a result, by the beginning of the 1980s it had become clear that, in the military sphere at least, the Soviet Union had attained the status of a global power.

This change in status is particularly noticeable in East Asia, where a remarkably rapid buildup of Soviet military capabilities over the course of the 1970s was accompanied by a concomitant diminishing of those of the United States. As is often pointed out, this buildup took place in two broad stages.<sup>1</sup> The first, from the late 1960s to the early

---

<sup>1</sup> For similar American and Japanese assessments, see Richard Solomon, *East Asia and the Great Power Coalitions: An Analysis of Regional Developments in 1981*, The Rand Corporation, P-6733, February

1970s, emphasized the rapid buildup of ground forces deployed primarily against China. After a hiatus of some five or six years, the Soviets resumed their buildup. This second stage involved the deployment of a new generation of intermediate-range nuclear weapons, the major expansion and qualitative improvement of the Pacific Fleet, and the development and extension of Soviet bases in the territories north of Japan. As a result, the USSR now has a formidable array of military forces in the Far East. These include some 35-40 percent of its ICBM force and ballistic missile submarines, 25 percent of its ground forces and fighter aircraft, and more than 30 percent of its strategic bombers and general purpose naval forces.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these forces now have received some of the most modern weapons in the Soviet inventory, including a *Kiev*-class carrier (the *Minsk*), an amphibious assault ship (the *Ivan Rogov*), Delta-class SSBNs, Mig 25 "Foxbat" fighters, Tu-26 "Backfire" bombers, and SS-20 IRBMs. Together with a major reorganization of the Soviet command structure through the establishment of a theater-level command, this buildup in the Far East has taken the Soviet Union a considerable way along the road toward its goal of becoming a truly global power. In the process, it has begun to alter the basic structure of power in the East Asian region.

Three broad conclusions concerning the Soviet military buildup seem relevant to an assessment of the likely strategic environment in East Asia over the remainder of the 1980s.<sup>3</sup> First, having begun with the objective of protecting Soviet borders with China, the military buildup now serves far broader Soviet interests. At a minimum, it is designed

---

1982, and Hisahiko Okazaki, "Far Eastern Strategic Balance," a paper prepared for a workshop entitled "Challenges to Security in East Asia," organized by the Security Conference on Asia and the Pacific (SeCAP) in Palm Springs, January 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Dibb, "Soviet Capabilities, Interests and Strategies in East Asia in the 1980s," *Survival*, July/August, 1982, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> For a recent insightful analysis from which these conclusions are largely drawn, see Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Far East Buildup and Soviet Risk-Taking Against China*, The Rand Corporation, R-2943-AF, August 1982. Also see John Erickson, "The Soviet Strategic Emplacement in Asia," *Asian Affairs*, February 1981; and Richard Solomon, "Coalition-Building or Condominium? The Soviet Presence in Asia and American Policy Alternatives" in Donald Zagoria (ed.), *Soviet Policy in Asia*, Yale University Press, 1982.

to deter any attack on the Soviet Far East region and secure the SLBM missile forces, both of which have become crucial for the USSR's future military and economic security. Beyond this, its objectives now appear to include: creating a military force able to counter U.S. air and naval deployments in the Pacific and interdict the sea and air lines of communication linking the United States to the region; neutralizing potential developments in U.S.-PRC-Japan relations; and giving the Soviet Union the ability to operate independently in Europe and the Middle East without sacrificing its position in Asia. A final objective may be tying down U.S. forces in the region and impeding their move elsewhere in a crisis.

Second, the Soviet military presence in Asia and its future as a global power are now inextricably mixed. Whether from a military or economic perspective, the Far East has become a focal point of Soviet efforts to attain global power standing. Accordingly, as symbolized by the establishment of a permanent theater command, the Soviets appear resolved to prepare for a two-front war contingency to protect their global power standing.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, any "swing" of Soviet forces in wartime from the Far East to Europe or elsewhere would now appear unlikely.

A third conclusion follows from the first two: the Soviet buildup in the Far East is likely to remain a constant feature of the strategic environment throughout the 1980s. A strong military presence and capability in the region has simply become too important for the Soviets to neglect. Indeed, there are many reasons for strengthening this capability even further. Although the magnitude and speed of the buildup may vary, it seems unlikely that the USSR will completely stop, let alone reverse, the process.

If a basic continuation of Soviet policies in the military sphere is the likely prospect for the coming five to seven years, the situation in the political sphere is more uncertain. As is frequently pointed

---

<sup>4</sup>Michael Sadykiewicz, "Soviet Far East High Command: A New Developmental Factor in the USSR Military Strategy Toward East Asia," a paper prepared for the Fifth International Symposium on "Soviet Union-East Asia: Problems and Prospects of Korean Security in the 1980's," sponsored by Kyungnam University, Masan, Korea, August 24-25, 1982.

out, Soviet political measures in East Asia in the past decade have been broadly unsuccessful.<sup>5</sup> The Soviets have not succeeded in pressuring the PRC into an accommodation. On the contrary, their efforts to encircle and weaken China have only helped further the creation of a de facto, if very loose, U.S.-Japan-PRC anti-Soviet coalition. Similarly, the Soviets have failed to push Kim Il-song into a more pro-Soviet position. If anything, recent trends suggest an even more pronounced pro-Chinese tilt on the part of Pyongyang. And relations with the non-Communist states of Asia range from cool, in the case of most of the nations of ASEAN, to frigid, in the case of Japan. Lacking the requisite political and economic instruments to expand its position, the Soviet Union has been almost totally dependent on its military and arms assistance capabilities to expand its influence in Asia. Thus far, with the notable exception of Vietnam, this has not proved a particularly potent weapon. From this perspective, the incentives for significant changes in Soviet policies appear substantial. This perhaps partially accounts for the expectation among numerous observers for a spate of new Soviet initiatives and for a more "variegated" set of Soviet policies in the coming period.<sup>6</sup> Should such changes occur, perhaps in the context of Soviet leadership succession, the effect would be to encourage somewhat greater fluidity in political relations throughout the region.

Given the growing geo-strategic importance of the Far East to the Soviet Union, however, and the fundamental and long-term nature of its competition with the PRC, the Soviets are not likely to dramatically change their *basic* policy orientation. They are particularly unlikely to do so in regard to such security-related issues as Mongolia, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Japan's northern territories--issues that continue to define and circumscribe the nature of Soviet relations with the states of the region. Although some attempt may be made to improve atmospherics in these relations, the USSR's desire to reinforce its military structure and expand its bilateral ties in an effort to counter U.S. and Chinese influence will probably remain paramount.

---

<sup>5</sup> See, for a representative example, Donald Zagoria, "The Soviet Quandary in Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 56, January, 1978.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Robert Scalapino, "The U.S. and East Asia: Views and Policies in a Changing Era," *Survival*, July/August, 1982. Also see an interview with Seweryn Bialer in the *Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 1982.

This has particular relevance to Korea. For a number of reasons, Korea is of inherent geo-strategic importance to the Soviet Union. To the Soviets, Korea represents: the only place in the Asia-Pacific region where the interests of the four major powers come into direct conflict; the only territory on the Asian continent where U.S. military forces are deployed; and the only overland bridgehead for the United States to the Soviet Far East. This geo-strategic importance is heightened further by the Sino-Soviet competition. In the context of this fundamental competition, the Korean peninsula serves not only as a "dagger" pointing at Japan and U.S. bases in the Western Pacific but as a potential "knife" poised at China's back. For these reasons, it seems doubtful that the Soviet Union will be greatly interested in dramatic policy departures toward South Korea. The potential economic benefits to the Soviets would not equal either the security losses or political risks. Although there may very well be some expanded informal contacts and modest political and economic exchanges--as indeed may have already begun--these will probably reflect a desire to limit Pyongyang in its tilt toward China more than indicate Soviet interest in greatly expanded dealings with Seoul.

A possibility of even greater potential consequence for the strategic environment in East Asia is a major improvement of relations between the Soviet Union and North Korea. Over the years, these relations have fluctuated widely: from extremely close until the mid-1950s, to almost a total break in the early 1960s, to varying points in between from the mid-1960s until today. This fluctuation indicates the difficulty inherent in the bilateral relationship, as well as the mutual distrust and hostility imbedded therein. Coupled with serious differences concerning the other's recent policy practices and orientations, this makes any major improvement of relations difficult to foresee. If there is any strategic imperative underlying Soviet policy, however, it lies in the direction of bolstered relations with Pyongyang. Not only would the position of the Soviet Union in Asia be substantially strengthened vis-a-vis the United States and Japan, but any dramatic improvement of Soviet-North Korean ties would also further the objective of encircling China. Although such an improvement appears unlikely at

this time, the possibility that the Soviets might move in this direction in the next few years should not be rejected out of hand.

## THE SINO-SOVIET SPLIT AND U.S.-USSR-PRC TRIANGULAR RELATIONS

For well over a decade, one of the central facts of the strategic environment both globally and in East Asia has been the Sino-Soviet rivalry. This rivalry not only created diplomatic opportunities that the West could exploit to its own advantage, it also established a de facto "zone of peace" which effectively allowed the United States to turn its attention to more pressing problems in other areas. Given this centrality, the likely evolution of Sino-Soviet relations will be a crucial question in any assessment of the prospects for the strategic environment in the remainder of the 1980s. There are several broad possibilities.

The first is a dramatic improvement and reconciliation of USSR-PRC ties. This would involve full resolution of the major issues currently dividing the two sides and a return to an alliance relationship. There are some incipient signs that the two antagonists may have begun to move in this direction. Beginning in the fall of 1981, for example, the Soviets renewed their efforts to resume the long-suspended border negotiations with the Chinese and to seek an improvement in USSR-PRC relations. At the same time, a quiet expansion of bilateral economic, technical, and cultural exchanges began, culminating in a visit by Soviet Vice-Foreign Minister Leonid Ilyichev to Beijing in October to explore opportunities for renewing the Sino-Soviet dialogue. According to news reports, both sides seemed "quietly pleased" with the visit, suggesting that some progress was made.<sup>7</sup> Most significantly, these developments have taken place against the backdrop of seriously strained U.S.-PRC relations and what appear to be small steps toward adjusting China's broad foreign policy posture. These include considerably greater equation in Chinese policy pronouncements between the Soviet and American "hegemonists," far broader condemnation of U.S. policies in key areas of the world, and a new Chinese effort to align itself with Third World positions. Although these developments might not represent major measures, they appear ominous to many to the extent that they presage more fundamental departures.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> The *Los Angeles Times*, October 23, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Harry Gelman, "Prospects for Soviet Expansionist Pressures in

Despite such developments, there are many reasons to believe that a dramatic improvement of Sino-Soviet relations and full reconciliation between the PRC and the USSR is highly unlikely. Among these reasons, three seem over-riding. First is the weight of history. As a result of their bitter experiences over the past two decades, suspicion, resentment, and fear pervade the feelings of both sides. In certain ways these feelings have developed a life of their own. Although such memories may fade over time, the basic antipathy and mutual distrust seem unlikely to diminish sufficiently in the coming period to allow a complete reconciliation.

Second is the commitment to economic and technological modernization as China's highest policy priority. This commitment was not only reconfirmed at the recent Party Congress, it has also been accompanied by sweeping leadership changes designed to ensure its long-term implementation. As long as the Chinese maintain such domestic priorities, they are unlikely to turn in a major way toward the Soviet Union. The past performance and poor prospects of the Soviet economy severely limit the potential usefulness to the Chinese of a turn to the Soviets, while such a move would endanger the involvement of the West--upon which present Chinese leaders so heavily rely--in China's modernization. Barring a major change in the international and domestic environments, and especially in the nature of the Chinese leadership, China's commitment to modernization seems likely to similarly limit the potential for a full Sino-Soviet reconciliation.

Finally are the realities of geo-politics. Over the years, the Sino-Soviet rivalry has evolved from a highly personalized, largely ideological struggle to a nearly institutionalized geo-strategic competition. Today, the Chinese are effectively surrounded by Soviet and Soviet-allied forces on three sides: in Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet border in the north, in Afghanistan to the west, and in

---

Asia and the Sino-Soviet-U.S. Triangle," a paper prepared for the Workshop of the Security Conference on Asia and the Pacific (SeCAP), held in Okinawa, Japan, May 11-13, 1982. For another recent, in-depth analysis of the prospects for Sino-Soviet relations, see Jonathan Pollack, *The Sino-Soviet Rivalry and the Chinese Security Debate*, The Rand Corporation, R-2907-AF, October 1982.

Vietnam and Kampuchea to the south. From this perspective, Chinese opposition to Soviet "hegemonism" is not merely a matter of rhetoric-- it is a matter of national security. As such, it is hard to imagine the Chinese making major concessions on these basic issues. Such concessions would only legitimize the Soviet military posture and solidify the encirclement of the PRC. As Chinese leaders continue to emphasize, the "root cause" of the problems in Sino-Soviet relations is "the fact that the Soviet Union practices a policy of hegemonism against China as well as the world. So long as the Soviet Union adheres to its hegemonist policy," they stress, "an improved relationship between China and the Soviet Union will not be a possibility."<sup>9</sup>

For its part, the Soviet Union shows little inclination to meet the basic Chinese demands. Given the importance of the present Soviet posture in Asia to its global position, it is difficult to imagine any such inclination in the foreseeable future. Although some drawdown of Soviet forces along China's northern border is conceivable, permitting a lessening of tensions between the two Communist powers, the exigencies of national security and the objective realities of geo-politics will continue to dominate Sino-Soviet relations. In the absence of major intervening conditions, therefore, it does not appear likely that a dramatic improvement and full reconciliation of Sino-Soviet ties will occur in the coming period.

A second possible evolution of Sino-Soviet relations is at the other end of the spectrum--a serious exacerbation of Sino-Soviet strains and major deterioration of the bilateral relationship. This possibility is probably not as remote as recent trends might suggest. Indeed, any number of factors could precipitate such a development. These include: a re-personalization and re-ideologization of the Sino-Soviet dispute (perhaps through the processes of leadership succession); Soviet actions that are directly threatening to China (such as further deployments or military pressures along the Chinese border, Soviet measures in support of Vietnam in the event of another Sino-Vietnamese conflict, etc.); and Soviet actions taken in other parts of the world that indirectly affect

---

<sup>9</sup> This statement was made by Li Huichuan, Director of the Institute of International Studies, in a discussion with a high level Japanese delegation, and was quoted in the *Asahi Shinbun*, October 8, 1982.

China's threat perception (such as Soviet moves in the Mideast, Soviet support to India in the event of a conflict with Pakistan, etc.). Were any of these to occur, they would create greater strains in Sino-Soviet relations and further set back bilateral relations.

At the present time, however, there are a number of over-riding reasons why both sides will try to avoid such a development. Militarily, the Chinese are clearly no match for the Soviets. In any direct confrontation, they stand to lose considerably. Moreover, the Chinese have committed themselves, under the "Four Modernizations," to policies of economic and technological development. This commitment, as is stressed by both Chinese leaders and foreign observers, requires a "long-term peaceful international environment" and domestic stability to be successful. In the coming period, therefore, the Chinese, while continuing to oppose "hegemonist" expansion, will undoubtedly do everything possible to avoid a serious exacerbation of Sino-Soviet tensions and deterioration of Sino-Soviet ties.

For its part, the Soviet Union faces the likelihood of stepped-up competition with a militarily strengthened United States, while confronting dismal economic prospects and major foreign policy difficulties. Moreover, Moscow recognizes that heightened tensions with the PRC will only help further expand U.S.-PRC cooperation, while it can be only uncertain, at best, about U.S. actions in any direct Sino-Soviet confrontation. With the priority objective of driving a wedge between the United States and China and impeding the establishment of a full anti-Soviet coalition in Asia, the Soviets will similarly be likely to attempt to avoid any further deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations. As the late Soviet President Brezhnev remarked at a meeting of top Soviet military commanders shortly before his death, "We sincerely want a normalization of relations with that country [China] and are doing everything in our power to this end."<sup>10</sup> Given the objective difficulties confronting the Soviet Union, this sentiment will probably remain strong. For these reasons, a major deterioration of the present Sino-Soviet relationship, while certainly possible, is unlikely.

---

<sup>10</sup> Although "no radical changes" have yet been seen in China's foreign policy, he added, "the new things which appear must not be ignored by us." *The Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1982.

This raises the third broad possibility--continuation of the status quo. By "status quo" is not meant unmitigated and unabated hostility. Rather, what is meant is a continuation of the *basic* underlying components of the long-term competition between the two Communist powers, combined with efforts to direct this competition in a mutually beneficial direction on the one hand and to prevent the more incendiary elements of the relationship from becoming explosive on the other. Such a course of action would reflect increased PRC interest in establishing greater balance in its relations with the United States and the Soviet Union and allow greater Chinese latitude in defining the nature of triangular relations among China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. It would also reflect increased Soviet efforts to wean China away from the United States--to the extent that it can do so without making any fundamental concessions--and to impede the development of a full-fledged anti-Soviet alliance between the U.S., Japan, and the PRC.

Such an evolution could involve a range of policy measures. These measures might include: a drawdown of military forces from the border regions (although such a drawdown, if it occurred, could be more apparent than real, given the inflated Chinese estimates of Soviet military forces along the northern border and the fact that Chinese forces are already stationed well behind the border areas); a moderating of the mutually antagonistic tone in Sino-Soviet propaganda; and a modest expansion of political, economic, and cultural exchanges. One consequence of such an evolution would be the coexistence of key elements of competition and cooperation between the two Communist powers. Continuing rivalry and, at a moderated pitch, hostile activities would be likely to occur along with slowly increasing Sino-Soviet exchanges. More normal "state-to-state" relations, perhaps similar to those between the Soviet Union and the United States, are a conceivable product of this process.

Another consequence would probably be diminished leverage for the United States in manipulating Sino-Soviet rivalry and heightened ambiguity in U.S.-USSR-PRC triangular relations. To the extent that the two rivals move in this direction, the ability of the United States to interest China in greatly expanded security cooperation and participation in any direct anti-Soviet coalition will be limited.

Finally, such an evolution of Sino-Soviet relations would increase the likelihood that the region will avoid the more extreme forms of polarization in the coming period. By striving to channel their competition into areas that are more mutually beneficial, the two Communist powers would contribute to making relations within the region more differentiated and diffuse as time passes. Especially if coupled with increased strains between and among the Western allies, this differentiation would encourage other states in the region to maximize their room for maneuver while minimizing their involvement and potential losses. To the extent that this situation materializes, the alliance and coalition-building potential of Asian states would be even further constrained, and the ability of the United States to enlist their direct participation in anti-Soviet activities would be even more limited.

So long as the basic, underlying competition between China and the Soviet Union continues, however, regional developments will be heavily influenced by the rivalry. This seems particularly true concerning the Korean peninsula. At a minimum, neither Moscow nor Beijing will be willing to tolerate a Korea reunified under a hostile power. For this reason, each is likely to prefer continued division of the peninsula. Beyond this, each will seek to prevent North Korea from tilting too far in the opposite direction. This will continue to limit the influence of China and the Soviet Union on Pyongyang while constraining their actions toward South Korea. Finally, should the PRC dramatically increase its influence with the North, continued rivalry may force the Soviet Union to compete more actively for Pyongyang's favor. Although the Soviets have not shown such an inclination over the past decade, heightened Chinese involvement could persuade the USSR to increase its economic and military support as a device for expanding its influence in North Korea. This suggests that Soviet support of de-stabilizing North Korean activities will remain a possibility, and that an increase in Chinese influence in North Korea is not necessarily an unmixed blessing.

## THE CHARACTER OF U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONS AND JAPAN'S ROLE IN THE REGION

In the last few years, it has become commonplace among Japanese political figures, academics, and leaders of the mass media to describe Japan today as standing at a crucial crossroads. Although this notion frequently refers to the future course of U.S.-Japan relations, it more broadly relates to the growing realization that the policies and propensities of the past are no longer appropriate to the realities of the 1980s, and that Japan must now be prepared to make some painful choices. Whether such a crossroads actually exists or not, it is clear that Japan has entered a period of transition. The principal elements of this transition involve at least three important issues: whether Japan, beyond maintaining the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty, should identify itself as a full member of the Western alliance, or should seek to maintain a more "independent" position; whether Japan can continue to maintain an essentially reactive, "minimalist" foreign policy oriented almost exclusively toward the preservation and protection of Japan's economic interests, or must adopt a broader, more activist policy that seeks to maximize opportunities rather than minimize risks; and whether Japan, on the basis of these decisions, can devise a coherent defense strategy that is both timely and extensive enough for the security threats Japan may face in the coming period.

Recent trends suggest that Japan has taken some significant initial steps toward resolving these issues. There are indications, for example, that Japan is increasingly prepared to align itself forthrightly with the nations of the West. This is most apparent in Japan's strong supporting stance on the issues of the Iranian hostages, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and the turmoil in Poland. Prime Minister Ohira gave verbal endorsement of this alignment when he told President Carter in Washington in the spring of 1980 that such problems as Iran and Afghanistan "are problems of world order," and that Japan would cooperate closely with the United States with the aim of building "credible alliance relations."<sup>11</sup> And newly elected Prime Minister Nakasone has shown early signs of a willingness to move even further in this direction. The growing public acceptance of the U.S.-Japan

---

<sup>11</sup> The *Yomiuri Shinbun*, May 2, 1980.

Security Treaty and tolerance of expanded defense cooperation with the United States further underline the very real movement that has taken place in Japan compared with the situation prior to the mid-1970s. All this indicates the basic strength of U.S.-Japan relations, which often gets overlooked in the daily headlines.

Similarly, and related to its growing identification with the West, Japan has made some modest moves in the last few years away from a "minimalist" foreign policy in the direction of a broader definition of national interest. The most obvious example is the forthright position Japan has adopted toward the Soviet Union since the invasion of Afghanistan. Japan has stuck to this position consistently, despite increased political strains in Soviet-Japanese relations and forgone economic opportunities. Other examples include Japanese plans to expand economic aid to both South Korea and China in ways that would allow these nations to use their money for greater military spending, and to target countries of political importance to the West, such as Pakistan and Turkey, for increased economic assistance. Even in the area of trade Japan has taken steps, at certain domestic political cost, to lower remaining tariffs and provide greater access to the Japanese market. Such trends suggest an increased Japanese inclination to act upon its greater identification with the West--even if it involves increased risks or potential economic losses--as part of a broader foreign policy orientation. The key question is whether this inclination will develop far enough, and fast enough, to satisfy Japan's principal partners and prevent the kinds of political pressures that produce a Japanese backlash.

Recent trends concerning defense strategies are more ambiguous. On the one hand, Japan decided to increase defense spending by 7.75 percent in fiscal year 1982 despite serious fiscal constraints and domestic opposition. It has approved a five-year defense program (1983-1987) estimated to cost \$62-\$65 billion over the next five years, including an \$18 billion increase in spending on advanced weapons. And it is giving priority in its procurement and weapon modernization programs to air and maritime defense, areas that improve its ability to respond to certain kinds of potential threats and that generally mesh with U.S. emphases.

Japan has also agreed to further expand U.S.-Japan defense cooperation in several critical areas, notably joint training and military exercises and joint planning studies. At the same time, it has begun to cautiously expand its military exchanges with other nations and to address the question of how actions not involving direct attacks on Japanese territory might still represent major security threats for which Japan must prepare. All this is being done on the basis of significant changes in the domestic environment in Japan, changes which reflect heightened concern about the Soviet Union, broader acceptance of the need for defense, and increased support for the security relationship with the United States.

On the other hand, there is considerable room for doubt as to whether these developments will permit a defense strategy appropriate to the potential threats Japan may face in the coming period. Although there is heightened concern in Japan with Soviet actions, the general perception of threat remains both low and, in important respects, divergent from that of the United States. Similarly, although there is somewhat broader acceptance of the need for defense, the general mood seems less characterized by this than by a "don't rock the boat" attitude. Most important, the increases planned in Japan's defense strength seem hardly enough for the strict defense of Japanese territory, let alone for the broader perimeters many feel necessary. Even if they were, it is doubtful that Japan could overcome the powerful bureaucratic obstacles to the formulation and implementation of a coherent defense strategy that could put this strength to good use. Continued popular opposition to Japan's becoming a major military power and strong resistance to Japanese participation in anything that smacks of "collective" defense make resolution of this issue highly unlikely within the next several years.

Should these recent trends continue, Japan would play a growing, if still somewhat modest, role in the region. Popular interest in security issues should continue to increase, and close ties with the United States should enhance support for broader regional security arrangements. The economic dimension of security is likely to receive particular emphasis, with considerably increased Japanese economic and technological support for development objectives throughout Asia.

Although Japan will not be much of a factor militarily in the coming few years, its increased concern with the Soviet military buildup, given its proximity to the Soviet Far East and the vulnerability of its sea lines of communication, will allow incremental improvements in its defense capability. Such concern should also facilitate continued progress of the sort that has recently been achieved in defense cooperation with the United States, particularly in the form of military exercises and joint planning at the shirt-sleeve level. Although this would not represent either a greatly altered Japanese role in U.S.-Japan defense relations or a dramatic expansion of Japanese-American security cooperation, it would strengthen Japan's identification with the West and bolster the defense partnership between Japan and the United States. It would also decrease the likelihood that Japan's policies toward North Korea would advance beyond those of the United States. Together with increased Japanese support for U.S. forces in Japan, such progress would contribute indirectly, but not insignificantly, to the security of Korea.

Although this seems to be the most likely evolution of recent trends, there is also a more "under-the-surface" trend that could alter the course of development. This concerns a gradual process of erosion taking place in U.S.-Japan relations stemming from the divergent positions of the two partners and reflecting important differences in their policies, perceptions, and priorities. Although this process of erosion is most evident in heightened tensions over trade issues, it affects other parts of the bilateral relationship as well. Coupled with a new tone of racism on the U.S. side, and of arrogance on the Japanese side, this erosion has precipitated early signs of Japanese nationalism and ethnocentrism that undermine the foundation upon which greater Japanese internationalism must be built. In the absence of corrective measures, this erosion would pose potentially serious problems for the bilateral relationship and threaten to undermine Japan's growing identification with the West.

Which of these trends will predominate in the coming period is difficult to say. Clearly much will depend on the behavior of the Soviet Union and the broad evolution of U.S.-Japan relations. In the absence of dramatic developments in one or both of these areas, however,

it seems likely that the conflicting pressures of Japan's continuing vulnerability and ongoing tensions with the United States will prevent any fundamental resolution. If so, Japan's identification with the West will coexist with more "separatist" inclinations. To the extent that this situation develops, Japan will probably continue to maintain its broad policy orientation while seeking to diminish the "special-ness" of its relationship with the United States and expand its interactions with China, the nations of Southeast and Southwest Asia, and to a lesser extent, the Soviet Union. This would further limit the possibility for a major expansion of U.S.-Japan security cooperation and decrease Japan's inclination to participate actively in any anti-Soviet coalition. It would also encourage a heightened Japanese role in the region predicated more directly on Japanese self-interest.

#### THE EVOLUTION OF THE SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Among recent trends on the Korean peninsula, six seem particularly significant for the evolution of the strategic environment in East Asia in general and for U.S.-Korean security relations in particular. The first, and most obvious, concerns the ongoing North Korean military buildup. This buildup has been by all estimates enormous, consuming roughly 20 percent of North Korea's GNP and 30 percent of the national budget. Although its general scope and magnitude over the past decade or so are well appreciated, several characteristics should be emphasized.

First, North Korea's military buildup has taken place in the context of serious economic constraints and limitations. Although there is room for disagreement about the degree of these difficulties, there seems little question that they are both serious and fundamental. Second, despite these difficulties, the high level of military effort has been sustained over a protracted period of time. Although there is some reason to believe that the rate of growth in military spending has slowed somewhat in the past few years, by all accounts it remains inordinately high, both in absolute terms and relative to almost all other nations. And third, there are very few signs of any inclination on the part of North Korea to significantly reduce its military spending and to re-order its national priorities.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, the sense

---

<sup>12</sup> For further details see Norman D. Levin, *Management and*

of burden necessary to precipitate a major reduction in military spending appears to be relatively low in North Korea, while many of the broad political trends argue against any dramatic reassessment and reordering of national priorities. Given its patently offensive orientation, North Korea's ability and apparent intention to maintain its high level of military effort assumes a particularly ominous quality. Should present trends persist, South Korea will not be able to overtake the North militarily in the coming five to seven year period.

A second important trend concerns the question of reunification. Although the aspiration for reunification is widely held on both sides of the 38th parallel, it has played a particularly crucial role in structuring the behavior of North Korea throughout the postwar period. The strength of the commitment to reunification stems not only from North Korean ideology and its peculiarly virulent brand of nationalism, but from the manner in which it has become linked over the years to the basic legitimacy of the ruling regime. Accordingly, North Korea has maintained an unwavering commitment to reunification on North Korean terms. In the past few years, a number of trends in both the North and South have induced North Korea to rely primarily upon political and diplomatic measures to further this objective. Given the conditions North Korea attaches to these measures, however, the prospects for success are not bright. If past experience is any guide, failure will precipitate a turn back by North Korea toward more militant measures. This possibility is heightened by recent developments in North Korean politics, particularly those associated with the emergence of Kim Chong-il and the increased power of the military. The bolstering of the U.S. position in Korea, the strengthening of South Korean military capability, and both the recovery of political stability in South Korea and the resumption of steady economic growth further increase the prospects for renewed militancy by Pyongyang. Should such trends continue, the potential for destabilizing developments would appear substantial.

A third trend concerns economic growth in South Korea. By almost all measures, this growth over the past decade has been dramatic. Moreover, after several years of difficulty, economic growth has resumed, with annual growth rates in the 6-8 percent range probable for the coming period. Two potential consequences of this growth for the broad strategic environment in East Asia and U.S.-Korean security relations should be mentioned.

One concerns the growing economic gap between South and North Korea. Unless North Korea changes its approach to economic development, the present gap between the South and the North will grow even larger. Such changes are, of course, a possibility, either as a result of objective economic difficulties or of increased Chinese influence. At the present time, however, there are few indications of North Korean inclinations to move in this direction. That does not necessarily mean North Korea will be unable to sustain a high level of military effort. Indeed, although the rate of growth in military spending may decline somewhat, the North may very well be able to sustain its general level of effort throughout the coming period. Rather, the growing gap suggests that at some point the North Korean leadership will be confronted with some unattractive choices: doing nothing, and watching South Korea effectively "win the race" economically while acquiring the base for ultimate military superiority; opening its economy to foreign capital and technology and reordering domestic priorities, at the risk of a potential loss of some independence and domestic political control; and taking direct or indirect military action to undermine or set back South Korean economic progress. Any of these choices would have important implications for the strategic environment in East Asia. Both past patterns and recent trends, however, suggest that the third alternative bears careful watching.

The other consequence of South Korea's economic growth concerns the potential fallout on the ROK's broader political and security relations. If economic growth occurs as currently projected, the linkage between economic and security issues will become increasingly close. Over time, South Korea will become viewed not as a fledgling younger brother but as a mature adult whose continued advances come at the expense of other

family members. As this happens, the same kinds of tensions as now exist between the United States and Japan will gradually seep into U.S.-ROK relations as well. Indeed, such tensions may develop rather rapidly given America's previous experience with Japan. Even if these tensions do not approach crisis proportions, they may very well increase sentiment in the U.S. questioning the heavy American defense involvement in Korea. This too would have obvious implications, both for the broad strategic environment in East Asia and for U.S.-Korean security relations.

A fourth trend concerns generational change and leadership succession in North Korea. In the past several years, North Korea has begun a leadership transition that, at least in contrast to that of China, appears relatively smooth and harmonious. Kim Il-song has made clear his intention of passing the baton to his son, Chong-il, and several people closely identified with him have begun to appear in high positions. By all accounts, the succession process is considerably more advanced than one might have expected. Nevertheless, as periodic reports of internal opposition suggest, the prospects for Kim's ultimate success are at best uncertain. Key questions include: how long a time the succession process takes; whether during this time Chong-il can establish his own leadership credentials apart from his illustrious parentage; whether he is able through this effort to gain and maintain control over the Party; and whether he can prevent the military from siding with the technocrats in favor of a more acceptable figure. Although the prospects for Chong-il's succession are thus problematical, it is possible to speculate on the implications should he succeed. To the extent that Kim's efforts represent an attempt to protect against possible "revisionist" tendencies and to ensure the continuation of his "revolutionary" tradition, Chong-il's succession would likely be accompanied by a heightening of the salience of political and ideological objectives, and an increased North Korean motivation to maintain a high level of military effort. Whether Kim is ultimately successful or not, however, the process of succession will increase the range of uncertainty regarding North Korean behavior.

A fifth recent trend concerns the political situation in the South. Since the assassination of President Park, South Korea has come a long way in establishing domestic stability. In particular, important initial steps have been taken to remedy the excessive personalization of political power and the limited institutionalization of democratic processes. The awarding of the 1988 Olympics to Seoul can be interpreted as an international vote of confidence in the long-term prospects for stability in South Korea. The task of developing a mature industrial democracy, however, will remain central throughout the coming period. Although this situation is not unique to South Korea, it is particularly delicate given the fact that pressures from a rising and well-educated middle class for greater political participation occur in an environment permeated with an objective security threat and sense of danger. If domestic stability is to be maintained in the long term, however, continued progress in developing a mature industrial democracy is essential. The absence of such progress would enhance the prospects for subversive North Korean activities, while weakening U.S. domestic support for a long-term political and military involvement in Korea.

A final recent trend concerns Korean-Japanese relations. In the best of times, these have been difficult. Despite their close geographical proximity, a whole panoply of historical, political, and cultural factors combine to ensure that the two countries will have uneasy relations at best. In the past year or so, however, these relations have deteriorated significantly, particularly on the Korean side, with increasingly vocal calls for a "reassessment" of the bilateral relationship. Given the history of relations between the two countries and the nature of their present policy differences, this sentiment is not incomprehensible. Given the broader trends in and around the Korean peninsula, however, and the objective importance of each country to the other's well-being, this trend is counterproductive. Prime Minister Nakasone's visit to Seoul should prove helpful in ameliorating this situation. Whether it will reverse the basic trend, however, remains to be seen.

## THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES

Crucial to the evolution of the strategic environment in the coming period will be the response of the United States to global and regional developments and the role of the U.S. in East Asia. Here recent trends seem reasonably unambiguous. For a variety of domestic and international reasons, the United States has committed itself to reversing adverse trends in the global balance of power and reestablishing its position as the leader of the Free World. This involves efforts to: renew the U.S. commitment to treaty allies; substantially increase U.S. military spending and expand military emphasis in U.S. policy deliberations; dismantle previous restraints on overseas arms sales and expand both U.S. military aid and security-related assistance; build a loose grouping or coalition of friendly powers to combat Soviet expansion; and expand the U.S. position in Southwest Asia while seeking a more equitable division of labor and sharing of the defense burden between the United States and its principal allies. The policies of the United States in Asia appear largely a function of these broad objectives, with the U.S. seeking to end American ambivalence and vacillation, check Soviet expansion, and reassert American leadership.<sup>13</sup>

This is immediately evident in the case of U.S. security policies toward South Korea. In the last few years the United States has: forcefully reaffirmed its defense commitment to Korea, including its nuclear umbrella; canceled plans to withdraw U.S. ground forces and moved to strengthen the American military presence both quantitatively and qualitatively; maintained a forward deployment strategy to underline its commitment to Seoul's defense; increased support for South Korea's military modernization programs through expanded military assistance, including appropriate sophisticated technology, advanced equipment sales, and improved Foreign Military Sales credits; and broadened the range of security-related economic concessions. At the same time, the United States has promised to rule out any bilateral discussions with

---

<sup>13</sup> For further details, see Norman D. Levin, *In Search of a Strategy: The Reagan Administration and Security in Northeast Asia*, The Rand Corporation, P-6801, August 1982.

North Korea unless South Korea is a full participant. These measures have been designed to show an unequivocal U.S. commitment to treaty allies and imply a heightened role for the United States in the region.

In the context of the trends described above, the United States will probably adhere to this general orientation throughout the coming period. The U.S. will maintain a significant presence in East Asia, including a capability to back up its regional commitments militarily. It will also expand its capability to reinforce that presence rapidly in the event of an emergency. The emphasis, however, will be upon air and sea capability; barring an unforeseen crisis, U.S. ground forces will probably not be expanded in Asia and may be reduced over time.<sup>14</sup> Given the global nature of the Soviet challenge and the continued constraints on U.S. resources, the United States will probably also maintain some form of "swing" strategy. This will increase the importance of expanded self-defense efforts on the part of the states of Asia and pressures for greater burden-sharing on the part of U.S. allies. Although the constraints will be formidable, U.S. interest in coalition-building to counter Soviet expansion will undoubtedly continue. The United States will therefore encourage steps on the part of Asian nations toward greater regional integration.

Although this appears to be the likely evolution, three broad developments within the United States could cause significant alterations. One would be a further deterioration of the domestic U.S. economy. Such a development would affect not only the prospects for the planned U.S. military buildup but the ability of the United States to play a major international leadership role. A second would be a growth of isolationist sentiment within the United States. Resulting perhaps from ongoing economic difficulties and heightened tensions with U.S. allies, this would undermine the basic principles upon which a continued U.S. role is predicated. Finally, would be a change of administrations in Washington. If such a change were to represent a repudiation of the Reagan Administration, it might result in modified security policies toward South Korea, most probably on the issues of human rights, arms transfers and military assistance, and contacts with North Korea.

---

<sup>14</sup> For more on this same view, see Scalapino, *op.cit.*, p. 149.

### III. EAST ASIA AND U.S.-KOREAN SECURITY RELATIONS

#### PROPOSITIONS

A number of propositions concerning the likely evolution of the broad strategic environment derive from this assessment of recent trends in East Asia.

Proposition 1: *The Soviet military buildup will continue throughout the period.* Although the magnitude and speed of the buildup may vary, the Soviet Union will continue to reinforce and expand its military capabilities in the Far East throughout the 1980s.

Proposition 2: *The USSR will continue to focus its efforts on bolstering its geo-strategic position in East Asia.* Although the Soviets may very well attempt to develop a somewhat broader, more variegated set of policies, their basic interest will remain in strengthening their position in the region vis-a-vis the United States and China.

Proposition 3: *The Soviet Union will remain uninterested in dramatic policy departures toward South Korea and may seek instead to strengthen its relations with Pyongyang.* Although some expanded informal contacts and modest political and economic exchanges with South Korea are likely, these will be designed more to limit the North's tilt toward China than to develop relations with Seoul.

Proposition 4: *The basic, long-term competition between China and the Soviet Union will continue but will be accompanied by efforts on both sides to direct the competition in ways that are less potentially explosive and more mutually beneficial.*

Proposition 5: *Such competition with the Soviet Union will seriously constrain China's interest in expanded relations with South Korea, and will motivate Beijing to compete more actively for North Korea's favor. Because of its greater vulnerabilities, the constraints upon China in approaching Seoul are likely to be greater than those upon the Soviet Union.*

Proposition 6: *Japan will maintain its broad policy orientation in the coming period while seeking to diminish the "special-ness" of its relationship with the United States and expand its interactions with China and the nations of Southeast and Southwest Asia. To a lesser extent, and far more cautiously, Japan will also seek to improve relations with the Soviet Union, and possibly with North Korea. The scope and pace of these efforts will be heavily influenced by the degree of tension in Japan's relations with its Western allies.*

Proposition 7: *Military, political, and economic trends in North and South Korea will increase the possibility for destabilizing developments in the Korean peninsula in the 1980s.*

Proposition 8: *The United States will maintain a considerable presence in East Asia, including a capability to back up its regional commitments militarily; it will continue to maintain some form of "swing strategy," however, with the emphasis in U.S. military deployments in the region on air and sea capabilities.*

## IMPLICATIONS

A number of implications for U.S.-Korean security relations follow from these propositions. First, the heightened geo-strategic importance of the Far East to the Soviet Union and its continuing military buildup will create the need for compensatory actions by the United States and its allies. No matter what the administration in Washington, therefore, some form of "containment" policy--for Asia as for the world at large--will be almost inevitable. In this context, Korea will assume enhanced

importance, with the U.S. defense commitment increasingly representing not merely the solution to a local problem but a measure integral to the security of the entire East Asian region.

Second, the global nature of the Soviet challenge, coupled with serious constraints on U.S. resources and pressing problems in vital and unstable parts of the world, will require the United States to maintain some form of "swing strategy" in East Asia, at the same time that reliance upon such a strategy for guaranteeing regional security will become increasingly risky. As the Soviet Union expands its theater nuclear and conventional forces in the Far East, the possibility of some form of coercive diplomacy will increase. Given the Soviet achievement of rough strategic parity, the ability of the United States to use its nuclear capability to deter such diplomacy will be diminished. This will increase both the importance of conventional forces and the need for greater U.S. attention to the local balance of power in the East Asian region. It will also heighten the need for expanded self-defense efforts on the part of the states of Asia and increase pressures within the United States for greater burden-sharing among U.S. allies.

Third, a relationship between China and the Soviet Union characterized by the coexistence of competition and cooperation will diminish the leverage of the United States in manipulating the Sino-Soviet rivalry and limit the ability of the United States to interest China in significantly expanded security cooperation and participation in an anti-Soviet coalition. At the same time, such a relationship will increase the likelihood that the region will avoid the more extreme forms of polarization in the coming period. Especially if accompanied by heightened strains among the Western allies, this will contribute to making relations within the region more differentiated and diffuse as time passes. It will also increase the need for a U.S. effort to adapt its basically bi-polar military orientation to the exigencies of a more fluid, multi-polar political milieu.

Several military, economic, and political trends in North and South Korea are of even greater consequence for U.S.-Korean security relations. Militarily, the continuation of North Korea's extraordinary level of effort not only threatens to maintain the present superiority of the North Korean forces, but to put considerable strains on South

Korea in its effort to keep up. At the same time, the offensive configuration of North Korea's military forces and the development of a large commando capability to operate deep behind front lines raise the possibility that Korean and American defenders may be overwhelmed in any actual conflict, and a North Korean *fait accompli* achieved before reinforcements from the United States could arrive.<sup>14</sup> Both of these possibilities will require careful study by U.S. and Korean defense planners.

Economically, North Korea's apparent ability to sustain its general level of military effort throughout the coming period bodes ill for those who see in its economic difficulties the likelihood of a major reassessment and reordering of North Korean priorities. The possibility that North Korea may be able to derive further increments in military capabilities with the same or lower share of GNP devoted to military spending as a result of the huge investment in military infrastructure over the past 10-15 years and a gradually rising gross national product further diminishes the significance, in the short to mid-term at least, of these economic difficulties. Meanwhile, although continued South Korean economic growth should enhance the long-term prospects for both political stability and military expansion in the South, it may help stimulate North Korean adventurism in an effort to set back South Korea's growing economic ascendancy. The possibility that trade tensions might spill over and induce strains in Korean-American security relations as well should also receive consideration.

---

<sup>14</sup>On the North Korean commando capability, see Rhee Sang-Woo, "North Korea's Military Capabilities and Its Strategy Toward South Korea," in The Asiatic Research Center, *Triangular Relations of Mainland China, the Soviet Union and North Korea*, Korea University, 1977, esp. pp. 268-269. For a North Korean emphasis on this new factor, see the article by Kim Chol-man, "The Characteristics of Modern Warfare and the Factors in Victory," in *Kulloja*, August 1976, pp. 34-40. A recent Western account describes Pyongyang as "now placing more emphasis than ever on its highly trained and numerically strong commandos," and quotes General John Wickham, then Commander of U.S. and U.N. Forces in Korea, as saying that the commando units "pose a major problem for us here because we must ensure that we have solid rear area security and a solid capability to intercept these forces as they seek to come South." See "The North's behaviour is not at all reassuring," *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 30, 1980, pp. 44-45. On the emphasis on a quick decision, see Choi Young, "Military Strategy of North Korea," a paper prepared for the International Symposium on Changing Security Situation

Finally, a number of trends in the political sphere suggest an increased potential for de-stabilizing developments. At a minimum, the ongoing process of political succession in the North will increase the uncertainty concerning North Korean behavior; at a maximum, it will heighten the importance of ideological objectives and increase North Korean motivation to maintain a high level of military effort. Continued commitment to reunification on North Korean terms (reflected, for example, in the conditions Pyongyang attaches to political and diplomatic discussions with Seoul) makes any peaceful resolution of this issue in the coming period appear unlikely. Based upon past patterns of behavior, one would expect failure in the North's recent diplomatic initiatives to precipitate a swing back to a more militant posture.

On the South Korean side, the implications of recent trends in the political sphere for U.S.-Korean security relations are more reassuring. The bolstering of the security relationship with the United States in the past few years has done much to allay South Korean anxieties regarding the U.S. defense commitment, as well as to strengthen allied military capabilities in South Korea. The task of political development, however, will remain a central question for domestic stability, as it will for Korean-American security relations.

## FUTURE ISSUES

This assessment suggests a number of issues for future consideration. In regard to the Korean peninsula, four are likely to be particularly important. The first concerns the question of deterrence vis-a-vis North Korea. Although the United States will remain committed to deter any effort by North Korea to achieve reunification by force throughout the coming period, its ability to ensure this objective unilaterally will probably decrease over time. Fortunately, so long as there is sufficient combined U.S.-Korean capability to balance North Korean forces, there need be no fixed level for the American military presence. The question will remain, however, of how to configure the balance between U.S. and South Korean forces to best achieve the

---

in Asia and the Pacific sponsored by the Korean Association of International Relations and held in Seoul on October 6-7, 1980.

objective of deterrence. This seems a question with which Korean and American defense planners will increasingly have to grapple.<sup>15</sup>

A second future issue concerns the question of the appropriate military strategy to deal with the threat from North Korea. At the present time, as mentioned above, the deployment and employment of U.S. and ROK forces in Korea are based upon a forward defense strategy. In this strategy, Korean and American forces are deployed in forward areas with the objective of repelling an enemy attack north of Seoul. Whether this strategy will remain appropriate in the remainder of this decade given the developments described above will require increased attention.

A third issue concerns measures for moderating North Korea's ongoing military buildup. In the past, primary emphasis has been placed upon compensating actions on the part of the United States, and to a lesser extent South Korea, to counter North Korea's military efforts. Although such compensatory actions will still be essential, ongoing trends in the strategic environment will require increasing attention to alternative measures. In this investigation it will be important to begin to consider what kinds of opportunities or incentives can be created along with these compensatory actions to encourage North Korea to decrease its extraordinarily high level of military effort and to take steps to reduce the level of tension on the Korean peninsula.

Finally is the question of the role of Japan in Korea's defense. Clearly this will be the most difficult and long-term question to answer. Korea neither seeks nor wants a direct military contribution. Japan is not prepared to make one even if asked. Moreover, as suggested above, Korean-Japanese relations have recently deteriorated, setting back further any prospects for stronger security ties. If recent trends continue, however, the need for closer relations in the security field is almost certain to grow. What sort of role Japan can usefully play, if any, and how we can move toward such considerations, is similarly likely to be an important issue.

Beyond these are two further issues relevant to the region as a whole. The first is the position of East Asia in U.S. global strategy.

---

<sup>15</sup> For further treatment of this and related issues, see Norman D. Levin and Richard L. Sneider, *Korea in Postwar U.S. Security Policy* (The Rand Corporation, P-6775, June 1982).

In the past decade there has been a general lowering of the *relative* importance of East Asia in U.S. policy planning, a result partly of the perception of adverse trends in the military balance between the United States and the Soviet Union and the urgency of pressing needs elsewhere and partly of the widespread sense of satisfaction in Washington with the general situation in Asia relative to other regions. Recent trends and developments in the region suggest, however, that East Asia will be of *increased* security concern to the United States in the coming period. Taken as a whole, these trends suggest the need for greater attention to East Asia, with the need to both look at the region *as a region* and to establish greater equality between the Far East and other principal theaters in U.S. security planning.

The other broad issue concerns the appropriate combined role of U.S. and Korean forces in the larger framework of East Asian security. As suggested above, the U.S. position in Korea is vital not just to the defense of Korea but to the security of Japan and the broader Asian region. With the ongoing buildup of Soviet forces, U.S. bases and forces in Korea can play a larger deterrent and strategic role. In combination with the United States, so too can South Korea. This strategic role has become even more important recently, given the inhibitions on U.S. military actions from Japanese bases and Japan's reluctance to assume a larger security role. As the United States confronts the growing Soviet military challenge, its position in Korea should be more clearly weighed in its regional and global strategy.



