

UNITED NATIONS COMMAND ARMISTICE ROLES ON THE
KOREAN PENINSULA: IS DECEMBER 2015 THE END?

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
General Studies

by

HYUNKWON JOE, MAJOR, REPUBLIC OF KOREAN ARMY
B.A., the Korean Military Academy, Seoul, Korea, 1999
M.S.M.A.S., the University of Texas at Dallas, 2007

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
2013-01

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 14-06-2013		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2012 – JUN 2013	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula: Is December 2015 The End?			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Major Hyunkwon Joe, ROKA			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORG 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 Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT With the agreement of the transition of command relationship of Operational Control (OPCON) between Combined Forces Command (CFC) and ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in 2015, which is guided by the "Strategic Alliance 2015," there has been much written about ROK and U.S. military structure after OPCON transition with primary focus on dismantlement of CFC. Historically, the president of South Korea handed OPCON of ROK military forces over to the UNC commander during the Korean War in 1950. With establishment of CFC (ROK / U.S.) in 1978, OPCON of ROK forces was transferred to the CFC commander to enhance effectiveness in deterring war on the Peninsula. Current agreements between the ROK and U.S. governments call for the ROK JCS to assume wartime OPCON of ROK forces in late 2015. The problem is that there is little research concerning a role for the United Nations Command after the transition of OPCON from CFC to ROK JCS. Accordingly, the findings of this study include recommendations regarding the future role of the United Nations Command after the wartime OPCON transition and the dismantlement of Combined Forces Command in 2015.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Operation Control(OPCON), Strategic Alliance 2015, United Nations Command(UNC), ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff(JCS), Combined Forces Command, UNC (Rear) HQ, Joint Policy Declaration, Conventional War, Unconventional War, Natural Disaster, Humanitarian Assistance, Five Islands, Northern Limit Line(NLL)					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	106	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Major Hyunkwon Joe

Thesis Title: United Nations Command Armistice Roles on the Korean Peninsula:
Is December 2015 The End?

Approved by:

_____, Thesis Committee Chair
Thomas G. Clark, Ph.D.

_____, Member
Brian C. Leakey, M.A.

_____, Member
Marty M. Leners, MMAS

Accepted this 14th day of June 2013 by:

_____, Director, Graduate Degree Programs
Robert F. Baumann, Ph.D.

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

ABSTRACT

UNITED NATIONS COMMAND ARMISTICE ROLES ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA: IS DECEMBER 2015 THE END?, by Major Hyunkwon Joe, 106 pages.

With the agreement of the transition of command relationship of Operational Control (OPCON) between Combined Forces Command (CFC) and ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) in 2015, which is guided by the “Strategic Alliance 2015,” there has been much written about ROK and U.S. military structure after OPCON transition with primary focus on dismantlement of CFC. Historically, the president of South Korea handed OPCON of ROK military forces over to the UNC commander during the Korean War in 1950. With establishment of CFC (ROK/U.S.) in 1978, OPCON of ROK forces was transferred to the CFC commander to enhance effectiveness in deterring war on the Peninsula. Current agreements between the ROK and U.S. governments call for the ROK JCS to assume wartime OPCON of ROK forces in late 2015. The problem is that there is little research concerning a role for the United Nations Command after the transition of OPCON from CFC to ROK JCS. Accordingly, the findings of this study include recommendations regarding the future role of the United Nations Command after the wartime OPCON transition and the dismantlement of Combined Forces Command in 2015.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank my lovely wife Ayoung Park and my proud son Joonsoo Joe for their love and extreme patience in getting through this process. I would also like to acknowledge the love and support I received from my family in South Korea.

In addition, I would like to express the deepest appreciation to my committee chair, Dr. Thomas G. Clark, who has the attitude and the substance of a genius, who is continuously setting many examples of life. Without his guidance and persistent help, this thesis would not have been possible.

Furthermore, special thanks go to my readers, Mr. Brian Leakey and Mr. Marty M. Leners for your patience and understanding on this project. Undoubtedly, your commitment and support have had a strong impact on my life.

As an Army officer of the Republic of Korea, I am grateful to my country and the Command and General Staff College for the opportunity to pursue this study.

Finally, with highest honor and respect, I praise my Lord and creator for blessing me with many talents and abilities. Without Him, I would not have been able to take on such a project.

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ACRONYMS

AA	Armistice Agreement
CFC	Combined Forces Command
CINCUNC	Commander-in-Chief of United Nations Command
COA	Course of Action
CODA	Combined Operational Delegated Authority
CPX	Command Post Exercise
C2	Command and Control
C4I	Command, Control, Communication, Computer and Intelligence
DIME	Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economy
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
Gen.	General
GOT	General Officer Talks
HQ	Headquarters
ISR	Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSA	Joint Security Area
KORCOM	Korea Command
KPA	Korean People's Army
KTO	Korean Theater of Operations
KWAA	Korean War Armistice Agreement
MAC	Military Armistice Commission
MC	Military Committee

MCM	Military Committee Meeting
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MND	Ministry of National Defense
MNF	Multinational Forces
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NK	North Korea
NLL	Northern Limit Line
NNIT	Neutral Nations Inspection Team
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
NWI	North West Islands
OPCON	Operational Control
PCC	Patrol Combat Corvette
ROK	Republic of Korea
ROKN	Republic of Korea Navy
RSOI	Reception, Staging, Onward movement, and Integration
SC	Security Council
SC	Strategic Communication
SCM	Security Consultative Meeting
SCR	Security Council Resolution
SKE	Safe Korea Exercise
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, and Threat
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNC	United Nations Command

UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
U.S.	United States
USFK	United States Forces in Korea
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WWII	World War II

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. is using the “United Nations Command” in South Korea as a tool for its hostile policy towards the DPRK. Unless this “United Nations Command” is dismantled, the UN can never get rid of its humiliation of having had its name misused by the U.S. The DPRK delegation strongly urge to put an end to the history of the abuse of the UN by an individual country at an earliest date possible by immediately dismantling the “United Nations Command” in South Korea according to the resolution of the 30th Session of the United Nations General Assembly.

— DPRK Counselor Yong-song, the United Nations, 11 October 2012

Background

The Korean Peninsula lays in the heart of Northeast Asia with a landmass twice the size of the American state of Indiana. The Republic of Korea (ROK) is about twice the size of Kansas. Currently, a military demarcation line (MDL) separates two countries sharing the Peninsula and runs generally along the 38th parallel. The two countries are the communist Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to the north and the democratic Republic of Korea (ROK) in the south.

On 15 August 1945, World War II (WWII) ended when the Japanese unconditionally surrendered to Allied Forces. With that surrender, the United States (U.S.) and the Soviet Union agreed to disarm the Japanese Armed Forces on the Korean Peninsula. By mutual agreement, Japanese forces north of the 38th parallel surrendered to Soviet forces while Japanese forces south of the 38th parallel surrendered to U.S. forces. In the months following, the Soviet Union empowered Kim Il-sung as the leader in the north while in the south U.S. officials arranged democratic elections to choose a new leader. With these new governments, the 38th parallel became the de facto boundary

separating two new countries; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the north and the Republic of Korea in the South.¹

Interestingly, Americans never anticipated fighting Japanese armies on the Peninsula. At the close of WWII, few military or civilian officials knew much about Korean affairs or invested effort planning for the liberation and independence of the territory. Korea remained, as it had been throughout of its history, a pawn in maneuvering among greater powers whose main priorities were elsewhere.²

In 1948, the United States decided to withdraw forces from the Peninsula in order to concentrate resources to Europe and Japan, which were strategically more important.³ With a shift in budget priorities to domestic needs and post-war recovery, the United States needed to withdraw and adjust forces forward deployed to areas of greatest strategic importance. In the face of competing demands, on 29 June 1949, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) withdrew all U.S. forces in Korea except 500 military. No less important was the fact that the lack of U.S. strategic interests in Korea during the last phase of the Pacific War contributed to the division of the Korean Peninsula in 1945. Furthermore, the precipitous withdrawal of American occupation troops from Korea in 1949 made it easier for North Korea (NK) to invade South Korea (SK) in 1950.⁴ As a result, one year later on 25 June 1950, the North Korean People's Army (KPA) forces invaded the Republic of Korea.⁵

In response to the attack across the 38th parallel, the United Nations (UN) Security Council (SC) resolutions of 25 and 27 June, and 7 July 1950 set conditions to defend the Republic of Korea as a sovereign state. Security Council Resolution (SCR) 82 required withdrawal of DPRK forces. Security Council Resolution 83 called for member

nations to provide military forces to thwart the DPRK attack. Resolution 84 recommended that member nations make forces available to a U.S. led unified command with a concurrent request for the U.S. to designate the commander. The unified command had authorization to fly the UN flag.⁶

Throughout the war, fifty-three nations supported the United Nations Command (UNC) with some type of support; sixteen nations provided combat forces, five sent medical, and hospital units. After three years of hostilities, the commanders of the warring sides signed the Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953.⁷ The day the Armistice Agreement was signed, the peak strength for the UNC was 932,664.⁸ By signing the Korean War Armistice Agreement (KWAA), UNC Commander-in-Chief (CINC) General (Gen.) Mark W. Clark, the Korean People's Army Supreme Commander Kim Il-Sung and the Chinese People's Volunteers Commander Peng The-huai agreed to three provisions. First, the Armistice Agreement provided for a Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that established space between combat forces. Second, they established a Military Armistice Commission (MAC) to supervise and investigate KWAA violations in the DMZ. Finally, they agreed to a Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) to supervise, observe, inspect and investigate alleged violations of KWAA outside the DMZ.⁹

While not direct signatories, the 16 UN member nations that had sent combat forces signed a Joint Policy Declaration supporting the Armistice with a pledge that "if there is a renewal of the armed attack, challenging again the principles of the UN, we should again be united and prompt to resist."¹⁰ While the KWAA ended actual combat, the troops remained. Each side pulled back 2,000 meters from the last line of military

contact to ensure peace, to watch the Demilitarized Zone, and to guard against any resumption of hostilities.

From 1953 to the year of Combined Forces Command (CFC) establishment in 1978, the UNC was the principal command responsible for defending the ROK. In 1978, as CFC became the new ROK-U.S. alliance warfighting command, the UNC continued its Armistice Agreement roles and responsibilities by utilizing CFC organizations and staff.

Sixty years later, the UNC has the continuing support of sixteen active UNC member nations. In addition, the UNC honors the negotiated framework to maintain the UNC Military Armistice Commission (MAC) to oversee joint investigation of violations occurring within the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). Likewise, the UNC continues to support Armistice Agreement provisions for the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) role to observe, investigate, and report any violations relating to the Armistice occurring outside the DMZ.

Since the KWAA took effect, both sides have modified security arrangements to meet changes in the diplomatic, economic, and technological environments. In the north, DPRK leaders built a large standing Army that enabled departure of all Chinese and Soviet forces. Today, DPRK leaders operate with minimal consultation and an independent security strategy. In the south, ROK leaders followed suit in creating a large standing Army. In contrast, the ROK/U.S. security alliance remains intact. Leaders have daily consultations on operational security matters and annual strategic consultations to manage the alliance.

A common thread is that as sovereign nations, leaders on both sides of the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) continue to balance desires to control their own destiny while continuing in collective security arrangements. In the ROK, the shift from total reliance on external support to the goal of decisive control of military forces continues to evolve. The U.S. continues to have substantial security interests centered on the Peninsula. Rather than disengage, the U.S. now seeks to leverage increasing ROK capabilities as an opportunity to decrease forward deployed forces. The UNC role in the face of security transitions on both sides of the MDL frames critical questions regarding Armistice maintenance, ROK security, and regional stability.

The purpose of this research is to find answers to the primary question, “Is there a role for the United Nations Command (UNC) after wartime Operational Control (OPCON) transfer in 2015?” An in-depth study of various historic sources, case studies, and operational environments of South Korea could address important considerations in determining the future role of the United Nations Command (UNC) in Korea. As a result, this research evaluated critical security events, which included major conflict (conventional war), Armistice-related incidents (unconventional war), and natural disaster (humanitarian assistance) by utilizing the analysis of strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat (SWOT) analysis.

Problem Statement

Historically, the president of South Korea handed OPCON of ROK military forces over to the UNC commander during the Korean War in 1950. With establishment of CFC (ROK/U.S.) in 1978, OPCON of ROK forces was transferred to the CFC commander to enhance effectiveness in deterring war on the Peninsula. Current

agreements between the ROK and the U.S. government's call for the ROK JCS assume wartime OPCON of ROK forces in late 2015. There has been much written about the ROK/U.S. military structure after OPCON transition. The main focus has been on dismantlement of CFC. The problem is that there is little research concerning a role for the United Nations Command after the transition of OPCON from CFC to ROK JCS.

Primary and Secondary Research Questions

The background framed the problem for this research, which addresses the UNC's future role after wartime OPCON transfer in 2015. This problem exists within the context of the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO) as the ROK military has been fighting against NK's constant attacks since the Korean War supported by the UNC. Therefore, the primary question was whether or not there is a role for the UNC after wartime OPCON transition from the U.S. to ROK in 2015. To determine whether or not there is a role for the UNC, three secondary research questions were used to focus the primary question on the future role of the UNC. The secondary questions are as follows:

1. What is the role of the UNC in terms of history and background?
(Conventional War)
2. What is the role of the UNC relating to the issue of five islands and the Northern Limit Line (NLL)? (Unconventional War)
3. What is the role of the UNC in the perspectives of humanitarian assistance?
(Natural Disaster)

Assumptions

The following necessary assumptions underpin this research:

1. According to the “Strategic Alliance 2015” agreement between ROK President Myung-bak Lee and President of the United States (POTUS) Barak Obama, the blood relationship between ROK and U.S. will be kept and step will continue according to the initial plan.
2. The KWAA security environment will remain through 2015 and beyond.

Limitations and Delimitations

This paper focused on the role of the UNC relating to conventional war, unconventional war, and natural disaster at a strategic level. This research covered history and background relating to the origin of the UNC, and addressed considerations surrounding UNC roles in the KTO after wartime OPCON in 2015. In order to reach a conclusion, this research involved original resources in English and Korean languages related to the 1953 Armistice Agreement. Other sources included United Nations Resolutions 82 through 84. In addition to original resources, this research included valuable insights from other Korean officers attending at the Command and General Staff College and the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth.

To avoid an excessively wide topic, this research does not focus on the strategic environment with other countries that include China, Russia, and Japan. This research focused on original resources and current operational environment analysis done in South Korea and the United States relating to North Korea. In this regard, there are few open sources, particularly books, relating to this research. Therefore, many sources are from recent articles, analysis, reports, and research papers done by individuals and institutions.

Significance

This paper is significant to the “blood alliance” between the ROK and U.S. for three reasons. First, reviewing what kinds of consideration South Korea should take in terms of determining whether or not the UNC is needed offers valuable assessments for both ROK JCS and U.S. Korean Command (KORCOM), which is a future combined organization after OPCON transition. Second, a response to the primary research question provides senior leaders sound recommendations in terms of operational considerations in case of critical events that include conventional war, unconventional war, or natural disaster issues. Finally, this study provides a review of both historic and operational points of view for the two countries.

Summary

This chapter provided background to the problem of the UNC after OPCON transition in 2015. From the ROK perspective, there are legitimate concerns about the necessity of the UNC in terms of sovereignty and national defense. At the same time from the United States’ perspective, the U.S. is refocusing economic and security interests towards the Western Pacific and East Asia including the Korean Peninsula.¹¹ This chapter provided an introduction to current security arrangements on the Korean Peninsula to frame the research problem and state the research questions. The next chapter, chapter 2, provides a review of literature relating to the primary and secondary research questions for this study.

¹Won-il Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK” (Strategic Research Project, Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2004), 2.

²Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *The Origins and Evolution of the Korean-American Alliance-An American Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Asia/Pacific Research Center, 1998), 4.

³Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 3.

⁴Byung-joon Ahn, *The Origins and Evolution of the Korean-American Alliance-A Korean Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Asia/Pacific Research Center. 1998), 7.

⁵Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 4.

⁶Jae Pill Pyun, “Transfer of Wartime Republic of Korea Command Authority” (Strategic Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2007), 3.

⁷United States Forces Korea, “Strategic Alliance 2015,” *The New Korea: Strategic Digest* (October 2010): 13.

⁸United States Forces Korea, Homepage, <http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/content.united.nations.command.68> (assessed 10 September 2012).

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Young-hum Kim, *East Asia's Turbulent Century: With American Diplomatic Documents* (New York: Meredith Corporation, 1996), 358.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

I also institute regulations and procedures as UNC commander that maintain separation of opposing forces to ensure Armistice compliance. Further, I establish uniform Armistice Rules of Engagement applicable to all forces on our side that define the use of force when required. These rules of engagement preserve the inherent right of self-defense while preventing escalation and ensure a rapid return to Armistice conditions.

— Statement of General James D. Thurman,
Commander of UNC, 29 March 2012

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine if the UNC has a future role after OPCON of ROK military forces shifts to the ROK JCS in 2015. Chapter 1 provided background to the topic and described historical importance of the UNC in maintaining security on the Korean Peninsula. The review of literature has the purpose of developing a framework to guide decisions on whether or not the UNC is a necessary organization in Korean Peninsula security arrangements after the ROK assumes peacetime and wartime control of its military forces.

The literature review has four major sections. The first section deals with a review of the UNC in South Korea in terms of roles and missions. These sources describe events that made the UNC necessary and UNC assigned security roles and missions in an “ends-ways-means” framework. Section two is a review of OPCON shifts from the Korean War to the present. Sources describe a sixty-year process for a steady transfer of authority and responsibilities in a “crawl-walk-run” framework. Section three is a review of background about the persistently controversial five islands located at the northeast part

of the Korean Peninsula in the Yellow Sea. These sources explain disposition of responsibility for the five islands in the Armistice and current risks the islands pose to regional stability. The final section is a summary of the review of literature.

UNC Roles and Functions: The Core Issues

In both theory and practice, the Korean War remains without a final resolution. The KWAA provided a ceasefire for the two sides to reach a final political arrangement to end hostilities. Even after 60 years, the Korean Peninsula remains in a quasi-state of war because a peace treaty has not replaced the Armistice. As a result, the Peninsula is still in a state of conflict with varying degrees of intensity.¹ This section deals with the roles or ways that UNC interacts with other actors and functions or the systems the UNC employs to ensure Armistice Agreement requirements.

Within this section, there are three subsections. The first subsection reviews the creation of the UNC and the legitimate foundation of its creation, the mission and desired ends. The second subsection deals with a review of unique UNC roles and functions to ensure the Armistice, the ways and means. The third subsection explains unique vulnerabilities and threats to the UNC in accomplishing its mission and desired end states.

UNC Mission and Desired End State

Pending a political settlement, the UNC mission is to carry out terms of the 27 July 1953 Armistice agreement and to execute directives from the U.S. National Command Authority through the U.S. JCS.² Under that mission, the UNC desired end state follows a direct path from its creation.

The UNC was created through a series of United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR). On 25 June 1950, the UNSC reconfirmed its position that the ROK was the only legitimate government on the Korean Peninsula and passed a resolution condemning the North's attack. The resolution called for UN member states to make every possible effort to enforce the resolutions and immediately to cease all provisions of support to North Korea [S/1501].³ As the North continued its offensive, the UNSC passed another resolution on 27 June 1950, asking for an immediate end to the North's hostile acts and the withdrawal of its forces to north of the 38th parallel [S/1511].⁴ One month later on 7 July 1950 [S/1588], the UNSC published a resolution that welcomed member states agreeing to participate in the Korean War and announced the creation of a unified command for efficient support as follows:

The UNSC:

1. Recommends that all members providing military forces and other assistance pursuant to the aforesaid Security Council resolutions make such forces and other assistance available to a unified command under the United States of America.
2. Requests the United States to designate the commander of such forces.
3. Authorizes the unified command at its discretion to use the United Nations flag in the course of operations against North Korea concurrently with the flag of the various nations participating.
4. Requests the United States to provide the Security Council with reports, as appropriate, on the course of action taken under the unified command.⁵

In response, U.S. President Harry Truman took two actions. In the first, he established the United Nations Command in Tokyo. In the second, he designated the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as the organization acting on behalf of the UN. Accordingly, the U.S. JCS assumed the duty of carrying out the Korean War for and on behalf of the UN.⁶

One year later, in July 1951, the UNC added an additional role to represent the UN in ceasefire negotiations with North Korea and China. After three years of war and almost two years of negotiation, on 27 July 1953, the UNC commander signed the Korean War Armistice Agreement (KWAA) with representatives from North Korea and China and on behalf of the free world. Under the KWAA, the UNC commander took responsibility for supervising both execution of the agreement and the correction of violations. Concurrently, the UNC established the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) as executive agent for all UNC KWAA issues as well as to receive reports from the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC).⁷

In contrast to the end of WWII, when fighting ended with the KWAA, the U.S. and ROK entered into a Mutual Defense Treaty. Since the original transfer of control of ROK forces ran to the end of hostilities, the Treaty and Agreed Minutes of 18 November 1954 called for “continued cooperation in economic and military matters.”⁸ By exercising operational control over the ROK forces, the UNC emerged as a key player in the defense of the ROK as well as in the execution of the Armistice Agreement.⁹

The UNC acquired the following characteristics as a body that was created through such a process. The first, the basis for the UNC being stationed in Korea was not rooted in any treaty but by UNSCR, following the request from the ROK government. Second, the UNC had solid legal grounds to be in Korea until peace and security were restored in the region surrounding the Korean Peninsula. A question may be raised about the need for the continued existence of the UNC, given that with the signing of the Armistice, the North’s acts of invasion ceased with northern troops withdrawn to be north of the truce line. This can be interpreted as having fulfilled the purpose of the creation of

the UNC.¹⁰ In this regard, North Korea has persistently raised the issue of dissolving the UNC, which South Korea and the U.S. have been ready to accommodate under a political settlement. However, based upon the UNSCR 84, Security Council resolutions pertaining to the UNC specify no termination date. As long as there are factors of regional instability caused by North Korea that impede regional peace and security, the UNC exists in order to meet the conditions of regional peace and security. Third, the direct reason for prompting the creation of the UNC was to integrate military assistance supplied by UN members. Fourth, the right of command of the UNC was entrusted to the U.S. from time the UNC was established. Finally, the UNC became a crucial operational mechanism in the Armistice regime, which encompassed all the principles, norms, and decision-making systems related to the Armistice. The Armistice regime included the Armistice Agreement, the UNCMAC, the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission, and geographic designations such as Military Demarcation Line (MDL) and Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).¹¹

Given this historic background and foundation of the creation of the UNC, the desired end state of the UNC addresses three components. First, the primary end state component is that hostilities end with a political settlement that recognizes the ROK government as the sole legitimate authority in its security matters. Second, all UNC coalition partners continue a commitment to contribute support in the event of a new threat to the ROK as a sovereign state. Finally, the ROK/U.S. Security Alliance remains as a contributing factor to deter North Korea from any future armed aggression. Today, the primary outcome does not exist. The next section deals with UNC roles and functions while the Armistice Agreement remains in effect.

UNC Unique Roles and Functions

In this study, roles were defined as the ways the UNC interacts with actors in the security environment. Functions were defined as the systems within the UNC that enable how the UNC engages other actors within the security environment. UNC roles and functions must both be present in order to work. A role without the associated function has no means for execution. Similarly, a function without an associated role has no mechanism to take action.

The UNC has three unique roles that are intertwined with five functions. UNSC resolutions and Armistice Agreement provisions establish unique UNC roles to investigate alleged Armistice Agreement violations, to negotiate with the communist side in resolving security issues, and, if necessary, to enforce compliance. The UNC executes the negotiation and investigative roles through the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) and the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC). The UNC executes the enforcement role through UNC, U.S., and ROK forces.

The MAC mission is to supervise, report, investigate, and negotiate resolution to violations of the Armistice Agreement. The MAC is composed of five representatives drawn from the UNC member countries. The MAC was designed as the primary forum to find a peaceful resolution to any Armistice violation. The UNC and the Communist sides have MAC secretariat offices in Seoul and Kaesung, respectively. There are also Joint Duty Offices at Pamunjom to handle working level contacts, routine administrative matters, and to facilitate communication between the two sides.

Although both sides established their Armistice organizations in full compliance, there was less attention to meeting agreed Armistice maintenance roles. Under the

Armistice Agreement, the MAC investigative arm hinged on UNC and communist joint teams formed in response to each real or alleged violation. In fact, the communist side never participated in these investigations. Each side conducted independent investigations.¹²

The second investigation function is the NNSC. As the only Armistice organization with neither UNC nor communist members, the NNSC was designed to monitor the introduction into Korea of additional arms and personnel. Switzerland and Sweden on the UNC side and Poland and Czechoslovakia on the North Korea and China side all assigned officers to the NNSC. The NNSC was established as a part of the Armistice Agreement to supervise, observe, inspect, and investigate suspected violations of the Agreement outside the DMZ, especially the unauthorized introduction into the Peninsula of reinforcements. The commission was also responsible to establish twenty Neutral Nations Inspection Teams (NNIT). The NNSC could not perform its inspection role because of the suspicion that it was involved in espionage. The North Korean refusal, in violation of the Armistice Agreement, to allow access to designated ports of entry in the North left the UNC no choice but to respond in kind. These actions left the NNSC with a largely symbolic role. Then, with collapse of Warsaw Pact in Europe, it came under even more determined assault by the North Korean regime in the 1990s.¹³

North Korea expelled the Czechoslovakia and Poland delegations following the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. However, Poland continues to participate periodically in NNSC meeting since 1995.¹⁴ While the UNC and communist sides do not conduct joint investigations as agreed, the UNC continues to investigate and resolve Armistice Agreement violations south of the DMZ.

Even though both sides originally agreed to a MAC meeting every day, through 1991 the MAC met only 459 times. In 1991, North Korea boycotted all attempts to convene MAC meetings after the ROK and U.S. governments instructed the Commander-in-Chief of UNC to appoint a ROK General Officer, Won-Tak Hwang, as the UNCMAC Senior Member, or spokesman.¹⁵ North Korea rejected this because South Korea was not a signatory to the Armistice Agreement. North Korea and China formally withdrew from the MAC in 1994, although lower-level (colonel level) meetings between military officers continue to take place in the Joint Security Area (JSA).¹⁶

In order to ensure compliance, the final unique UNC role is to enforce all Armistice Agreement provisions. Coalition, UNC, and ROK forces are the means to execute the enforcement role. The UNC commander has authority to direct all military forces south of the DMZ on matters related to the Armistice. If hostilities resume, he can also request combat forces to deal with Armistice violations. There are no provisions to transfer that mission to any other entity.¹⁷ The Commander of the UNC can legally control the military forces of UN member countries. Conversely, the Commander of the CFC cannot control any forces except those of the U.S. and the ROK. Therefore, the UNC remains the only legal military command to control non-U.S. or ROK forces if there is a renewal of hostilities on the Korean Peninsula.¹⁸

The UNC can also lawfully support the ROK through its UNC (Rear) Command in Japan, which is located at Camp Zama. There are seven U.S. bases in Japan designated as UNC bases. When Japan regained sovereignty in 1952, the U.S. and Japan exchanged notes governing Japanese support of UN actions. This was formalized on 19 February 1954 when Japan, the U.S. “acting as the Unified Command,” and eight of the

participating states signed the UNC-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) providing for access, transit, and basing rights.¹⁹ When the UNC moved from Japan to Korea, the UNC on 25 July 1957 activated the UNC (Rear) Command and seven bases under the UNC-Japan SOFA. The UNC (Rear) Command in Japan is a subordinate unit of the UNC forces and personnel. The UNC (Rear) Command is composed of a commander, staff, and liaison officers from eight of the UNC participating states.²⁰ The UNC provides not only legitimacy for U.S. military action but also an opportunity to garner broader international support.²¹

Although the Armistice Agreement has succeeded in maintaining the ceasefire, there have been violations. Many violations of the Armistice Agreement such as unauthorized penetrations, hostilities, and introduction of additional arms and personnel have happened during the last five decades. The UNC investigated 430,612 NK violations in total. For the same time period, North Korea charged the UNC with 835,838 violations. Although the data is inflated for the purpose of propaganda, it is also true that many infringements of the Armistice Agreement happened.²²

Today, the UNC remains a military and legal entity separate from U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) and the ROK-U.S. CFC. As such, the authorities and responsibilities of the UNC are different from these other commands, even though the commander of UNC also serves as the commander of CFC, as well as the commander of USFK. The UNC organization includes the UNC Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC), the UNCMAC Secretariat and the UNC (Rear) Headquarters in Yokota, Japan. The UNC-Japan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) designates seven bases in Japan as UNC bases and allows basing and transit rights for forces of those nations (other than forces of the

U.S. and ROK) who provided forces to the UNC during the war.²³ Each of the organizations is multinational and, even today represents and symbolizes the enduring international commitment to the security of the ROK. UNC flagged bases in Japan can be used for the transit of UNC aircraft, vessels, equipment and forces following notification of the Government of Japan.

In the event of hostilities, all UNC forces would be placed under Commander UNC OPCON and would coordinate their operations with Commander CFC. The Commander CFC has the option of activating these troops and of organizing either joint, combined, or uni-service task forces as necessary.²⁴ In fact, a single U.S. general officer heads the U.S. Forces Korea, the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command, and UN Command. His tripartite role simplifies an otherwise complex command structure.

In summary, the ongoing commitment of the UNC to the KWAA serves as a very visible manifestation of international commitment to the security and stability on the Peninsula, despite North Korea's threats and provocations. The UNCMAC and the NNSC continue to ensure the terms of the Armistice are met and observed, investigated and reported when these terms may have been violated.

Vulnerabilities of the UNC

The previous sub-sections discussed the UNC mission, desired end state, and the unique roles and functions of the UNC. The KWAA states, "Neither side shall execute any hostile act within, from, or against the demilitarized zone."²⁵ However, in reality, NK has conducted small and large-scale provocations against the ROK since the KWAA was signed in 1953. In order to accomplish the desired end state of the UNC, there are some serious vulnerabilities or threats to the KWAA as discussed below.

First, conventional warfare in the KTO could be defined as when one of the sides in the KWAA determines to attack the other side by crossing DMZ. To make things worse, since adopting a “Military First Policy” in 1962, the North has continued to put military power first. The basic national goal of North Korea is “unification of the two Koreas under communist control,” which is unlikely to change as long as the current NK power structure remains.²⁶ According to a recent article, Pentagon experts have estimated that the first 90 days of such a conflict might produce 300,000 to 500,000 South Korean and American military casualties, along with hundreds of thousands of civilian deaths. The damage to South Korea alone would rock the global economy.²⁷

A second vulnerability or threat is to have unconventional operations conducted by NK. For example, NK’s 2010 torpedo attack sunk the ROK Cheon-An warship. The same year, there was an artillery bombardment on the Yeonpyeong Island killed innocent civilians. In relation to unconventional warfare, the five islands related issues have always been critical for both South and North Korea in terms of a matter of territorial sovereignty. A more detailed discussion relating to the five islands issues will be provided in following the section.

A third UNC vulnerability is to lose access to UNC (Rear) HQ and seven bases in Japan. This is a mutual agreement between the U.S. and Japan, not between the ROK and Japan. Therefore, there will always be potential for the ROK, Japan, and the U.S. to disagree on regional security issues. In this event, restoring political relationships between the three governments might not be easy due to vastly different historical perspectives toward several competing interests.

The fourth UNC threat is to lose its legitimacy in dealing with the NK Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) program. According to the KWAA, “In order to justify the requirements for combat aircraft, armored vehicles, weapons, and ammunition to be introduced into Korea for replacement purposes, reports concerning every incoming shipment of these items shall be made to the MAC and the NNSC.”²⁸ However, in reality, NK has been increasingly aggressive in WMD proliferation. Furthermore, the NK has conducted a series of nuclear tests without any notice to the UNC. Although a major threat, WMD is beyond the scope of the UNC and this study.

In summary, even with the ongoing commitment, the UNC has critical vulnerabilities that pose threats to regional stability. These threats make it difficult to accomplish the primary desired end state of the UNC. In this regard, the recognition of these vulnerabilities to the UNC is critical for the ROK and U.S. so that both countries develop contingency plans for mitigating these vulnerabilities and planning for future roles and systems of the UNC after the wartime OPCON transition in 2015.

OPCON Shifts: Crawl-Walk-Run

The ROK and U.S. have agreed to adjust the date for the OPCON transition from 17 April 2012, to 1 December 2015. The transition of wartime OPCON from the U.S. to the ROK is a significant military and political event. This transition allows the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) to exercise its full capability to deal with both peacetime and wartime operations within the Korean Theater of Operations (KTO). From a historical point of view, there has been significant progress from the Korean War to the present in this shift of responsibilities.

Within this section, there are three subsections, which are categorized in a frame of “Crawl-Walk-Run.” Each subsection deals with critical factors that include ROK economics, U.S. strengths, ROK strengths, NK’s threats, and OPCON transition events. The first subsection covers the period from 1950 to 1977. Sources review the very first OPCON transfer from the ROK to U.S. The second subsection covers the period from 1978 to 2004. Sources deal with a review of the establishment of CFC. This section also explains the progress of OPCON transition during this time period in terms of decision making and peacetime OPCON transition. The third subsection covers the period from 2005 to present. Sources explain the wartime OPCON transition in 2015. The following discussion deals with the Crawl phase from 1950 to 1977.

Crawl: 1950-1977

On 25 June 1950, Korean People’s Army (KPA) invaded the Republic of Korea. In response to the North Korean attack against the Republic of Korea, the United Nations (UN) asked President Truman to establish a unified command in UNSC resolution (UNSCR) 84 on 7 July 1950,²⁹ and authorized the UNC to fly the UN flag in the course of its operations. President Truman and the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff named General Douglas MacArthur as the UNC combined commander and recommended that other nations supplying forces and materiel contribute them to a single commander under the U.S. The 8th U.S. Army (EUSA), which was the Ground Component Command of the U.S. Far East Command, moved to Daegu, Korea. The EUSA exercised command and control of U.S. ground forces in Korea and carried out operations in cooperation with UNC ground troops. The Far East Naval Forces and the Far East Air Force of the U.S. Far East Command controlled operations of the UN Naval and Air forces.³⁰

On 14 July 1950, immediately after UNSCR 84, President Rhee Syung-man responded through command authority over the Korean military by transferring OPCON to the Commander-in-Chief of the UNC (CINCUNC). Subsequently, General MacArthur retransferred operational control of the ROK ground forces to the EUSA Lt. General Joseph Walker on 17 July 1950. The ROK Navy and Air Force, along with the UN Forces, were incorporated into the Far East Naval and Air forces of the U.S. Far East Command.³¹

By the end of hostilities, over fifty-three nations provided various types of assistance ranging from medical supplies and personnel, to combat air support and combat ground units. Before the end of 1952 over 32,000 multinational personnel were deployed to Korea and attached to the EUSA in Korea. The U.S. provided the principal sustainment logistical pipeline for UN forces by providing most aspects of logistical support including clothing, weapons, rations, equipment, and ammunition to support personnel.³² The U.S. contributed over 50 percent of the ground forces (another 40 percent were South Korean), 94 percent of the air squadrons, and 86 percent of the ships.³³

On 17 November 1954, operational control (OPCON) was defined for the first time in article 2 of the “agreed minutes and amendments thereto between the governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America relating to continued cooperation in economic and military matters and amendment to the agreed minute of 18 November 1954.”³⁴ By mutual agreement between the ROK and U.S., the UNC had been exercising OPCON over the ROK military. Furthermore, in 1957, the UNC headquarters moved from Tokyo to Korea, leaving a small UNC (Rear)

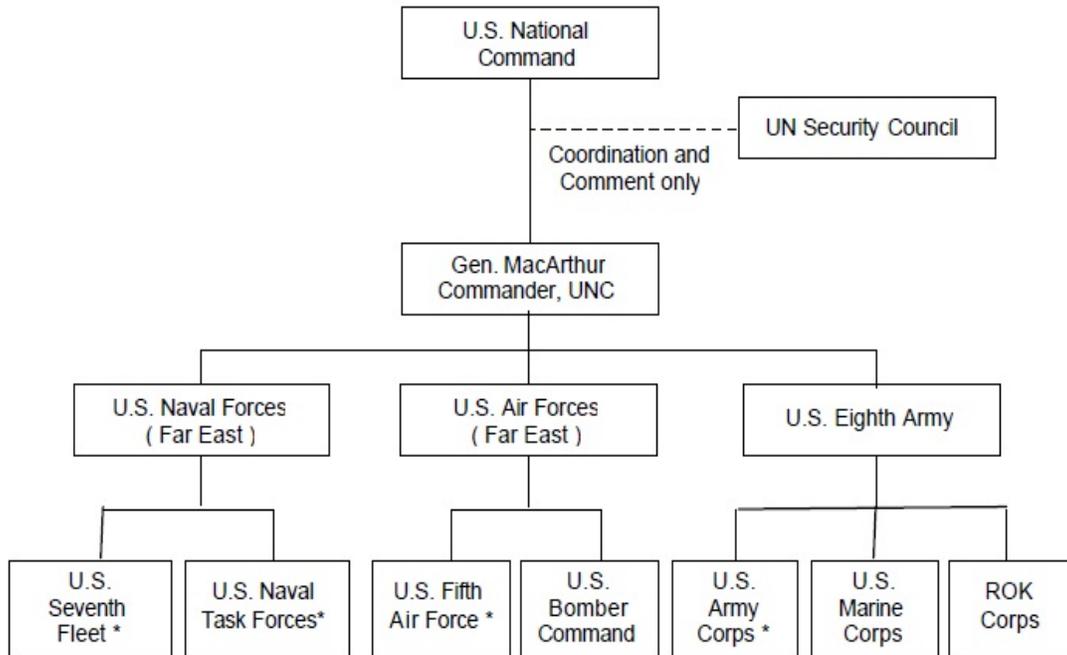
headquarters to coordinate with the Japanese government. Under the amendment, the ROK and U.S. agreed to:

Retain Republic of Korea forces under the operational control of the United Nations Command (UNC) while that Command has responsibilities for the defense of the Republic of Korea, unless after consultation it is agreed that our mutual and individual interest would best be served by a change.³⁵

In late 1960s, in order to demonstrate appreciation for ROK support during Vietnam War, President Lyndon Johnson had publicly promised President Park that U.S. troop levels in the ROK would not be reduced without thorough consultation with Seoul. However, by the 1970s, America's policy toward South Korea was changing. The Nixon administration unilaterally decided to withdraw one of two infantry divisions, the Seventh Infantry Division, from the ROK. The South Korean armed forces assumed responsibility for defending the southern part of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).³⁶

Despite different command structures, "from the beginning, the United States forces were the effective core of the UN forces and throughout the fighting the United States made by far the biggest and most effective contribution of any single nation."³⁷ The UNC is depicted in figure 1. However, within the chain of command, there were no ROK generals in any senior positions.

Chain of Command of the UNC in Korea



* Allied units attached at small unit levels with the exception of certain Commonwealth units after 1951.
Sources : John Hillen Blue Helmets (The Strategy of UN military operations) p. 231

Figure 1. Chain of Command of the UNC in Korea

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

Since the ROK military could not defend against the communists alone, there was a military necessity to place the South Korea military under the OPCON of the UNC. Importantly, the two agreed to a unified chain of command for the 16 allied countries that made up the UNC. General MacArthur did not have to report directly to the Security Council or the Secretary General. Therefore, the actual UNC chain of command ran from the President of the United States through the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Chief of Staff of the Army to CINCUNC.³⁸

In summary, during the period from 1950 to 1977, OPCON for both peacetime and wartime operations, was handed over U.S. at the request of the ROK President, because the ROK could not deal with such a crisis as the Korean War. The ROK did not have the capacity to deal with NK's threats due to lack of functional warfighting systems within ROK military. Despite NK's constant provocations that included unprovoked attacks in the Joint Security Area (JSA), most operations were directly reviewed and planned by UNC decision makers. Therefore, from the ROK perspective, except for directly defending the southern part of DMZ, there was not significant progress in exercising its own capabilities to deal with either peacetime or wartime operation of ROK forces. Table 1 is a summary of key events in this period.

Table 1. First Period (Crawl): From 1950 to 1977			
Economics (GDP)	Below than 1 (Billion U.S. dollars)		
U.S. Strengths (Person)	500,000 (two infantry divisions) ~ 41,000 (one infantry division)	ROK Strengths (Person)	600,000 (Korean War) ~ 550,000
NK's Threats	-1953. 7. 27. The war ends when a truce is signed. -January 1968. NK commandos launch a failed assassination attempt on then president of South Korea, Park Chung-hee. -1974. 8. 15. Another assassination attempt on Park Chung-hee, by NK agent in Seoul. Park survives, but the first lady is killed. -1976. 8. 18. The Axe Murder Incident results in the killing of two U.S. Army officers by NK soldiers in the Joint Security Area (JSA) located in the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).		
OPCON Transition	-1950. 7. 14. President Syngman Rhee transfers OPCON to the UNC -1954. 11. 17. UNC commander is given OPCON.		

Source: Created by author. Data from World Bank, “Trading Economics,” www.tradingeconomics.com (accessed 3 January 2013); Guardian, “Timeline: North Korea—Key Events since the End of the Korean War,” 23 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/23/timeline-north-korea-south-korea/> (accessed 2 December 2012); Sang-hoon Lee, *The Security Environment of the Korean Peninsula in the 21st Century and the Role of the USFK (in Korean)* (Sungnam: The Sejong Institute, 2001), 28; Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*. (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011); You-kyong Ko, “U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK), Their Realignment and the Damage Caused by Them,” http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp/c_4_english/4_resource/pdf_file/koyoukyong.pdf (accessed 3 March, 2013).

Walk: 1978-2004

In November 1978, the two countries agreed to establish the Combined Forces Command (CFC) so that the ROK side could gradually assume operational control over ROK forces. The South Korea–U.S. CFC was established on terms of reference (TOR) from the military committee (MC), signed at the 9th security consultative meeting (SCM) on 22 July 1978. The TOR prescribed the functions and missions of the CFC, as well as

the roles for the CFC commander. Strategic Directive No. 1 from the MC prescribed the CFC unit list and issued an order to the CFC commander to defend South Korea with operational control of the ROK forces, excluding the Korea 2nd Army, Capital Defense Command, and Special Operations Command.³⁹ In Armistice matters, the commander of UNC retained “directive authority”⁴⁰ including stopping the Korean conflict by maintaining demilitarized zone security through the Military Armistice Commission.⁴¹

The CFC is under the control of the higher ROK-U.S. combined decision making of the Military Committee (MC) and Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), while the UNC is under the control of U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. The United States Forces in Korea (USFK) are under the control of U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM).⁴²

The mission of the CFC is to deter NK’s attack on South Korea by leveraging its authority to control selected ROK armed forces in accordance with Combined Operational Delegated Authority (CODA)⁴³ during peacetime, and to defend the nation in the event of an attack by leveraging its OPCON over the First and Third ROK Armies in wartime. In addition, the CFC commander has the authority to control selected ROK armed forces in accordance with CODA during peacetime. CODA is the exercise of CFC’s daily Armistice authority over the ROK forces. Under the CODA, the CFC has six delegated roles:

1. Combined crisis management for deterrence, defense and Armistice compliance
2. Deliberate planning
3. Combined joint doctrine development
4. Planning and conducting combined joint training and exercises

5. Combined intelligence management

6. Interoperability of command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I).⁴⁴

Under this new arrangement, South Korean officers began to participate in military decision making and operations during peacetime. After the Korean War ended, the United Nations commander, always a U.S. general, retained operational control of Korean forces and with that the responsibility for the ROK national defense. However, with the establishment of CFC in November of 1978, a ROK General, Byung-hyun Ryu, became a deputy commander of CFC.

Despite the history of NK's constant hostilities against the ROK during this time period,⁴⁵ the total strength (numbers) of United States Forces in Korea (USFK) were decreasing because of political determinations made by ROK and U.S. More precisely, over the years there have been adjustments in the number of U.S. troops stationed in South Korea. Between the Korean War Armistice Agreement (KWAA) signed in 1953 and the early 1970s, U.S. troop numbers gradually declined from nearly 500,000 to approximately 41,000 under "the Nixon Doctrine."⁴⁶ In addition to "the Nixon Doctrine," the U.S. unilaterally decided to withdraw U.S. ground forces over South Korea's strong opposition in 1971, 1977, and 1989. By 2004, USFK strength fell to around 23,500 after the ROK/U.S. agreement on the reduction of USFK.

In this regard, discussions concerning the return of OPCON could be considered one of the crucial factors in national defense. In August 1987, the ROK Presidential candidate Roh Tae-woo proclaimed "OPCON Transition and relocation of the Yongsan garrison" to be his campaign pledge.⁴⁷ Thereafter, the matter of returning OPCON gained

importance and formally surfaced in the U.S. through the Nunn-Warner Amendment,⁴⁸ and the East Asia Strategic Initiative (EASI, 1990-1992).⁴⁹ As a result, the two nations began to pursue research and consultations regarding OPCON transition in earnest.

During the 13th ROK-U.S. Military Committee Meeting (MCM)⁵⁰ in November 1991, the two nations agreed to return peacetime OPCON to the ROK between 1993 and 1995 and to discuss wartime OPCON transition after 1996. In 1994, the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) regained peacetime OPCON of selected ROK Army forces, while the CFC commander retained wartime operational control over the South Korea military as well as Combined Operational Delegated Authority (CODA).⁵¹

In summary, during this time period, the peacetime OPCON shifted to the ROK JCS, while the CFC commander retained wartime operational control over the South Korea military as well as Combined Operational Delegated Authority. However, it is meaningful for the ROK to exercise peacetime operations over selected units for the first time after the Korean War. Thus, the ROK JCS was preparing capabilities to exercise control over wartime operations. At this same time, along with rapid growth of economic development, there were also constant NK threats against the ROK. With the CFC establishment, ROK senior leaders were involved in decision making within CFC, as well as in the MCM and SCM. Table 2 is a summary of key events during this time period.

Table 2. Second Period (Walk): From 1978 to 2004			
Economics (GDP)	Below 100~700 (Billion U.S. dollars)		
U.S. Strengths	41,000(two brigades in the 2nd Division)~ 23,500 (one brigade in the 2nd Division)	ROK Strengths	650,000 ~ 700,000
NK's Threats	<p>-1983. 10. 9. NK agents target the venue of a visit by South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan to Burma, killing more than 20 people including four South Korean cabinet ministers. The President escapes.</p> <p>-1987. 11. 29. NK blows up a South Korean civilian airliner, killing 115 people. The U.S. decides to include the North on its list of countries that support terrorism.</p> <p>-September 1996. A NK submarine lands commandos on the South Korean coast.</p> <p>-January 2002. The U.S. President, George Bush, makes his "axis of evil" speech, which links NK with Iran and Iraq.</p>		
OPCON Transition	<p>-1978. 11. 7. CFC is established; OPCON is transferred to the CFC Commander</p> <p>-1994. 12. 1. Peacetime operational control is transferred to the ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.</p>		

Source: Created by author, Data from World Bank, "Trading Economics," www.tradingeconomics.com (accessed 3 January 2013); Guardian, "Timeline: North Korea—Key Events since the End of the Korean War," 23 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/23/timeline-north-korea-south-korea/> (accessed 2 December 2012); Sang-hoon Lee, *The Security Environment of the Korean Peninsula in the 21st Century and the Role of the USFK (in Korean)* (Sungnam: The Sejong Institute, 2001), 28; Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*. (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011); You-Kyong Ko, "U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK), Their Realignment and the Damage Caused by Them," http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp/c_4_english/4_resource/pdf_file/koyoukyong.pdf (accessed 3 March, 2013).

Run: 2005-Present and Way ahead

For over 50 years, the United States military has remained on the Korean Peninsula with forces to meet its commitment to defend South Korea against North Korea. Furthermore, with the full support of U.S., South Korea has been achieving incredible economic growth. For example, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South Korea was worth 1,164 billion US dollars estimated in 2010,⁵² and more importantly, even despite the recent world recession, South Korea's economy expanded in the first quarter of 2013 at its fastest pace in two years.⁵³

While South Korea has been achieving rapid economic growth, it simultaneously had to deal with an aggressive adversary. In this period, the security status was risky due to NK's emergent nuclear program and an increasing number of direct attacks against the ROK territory around islands off the west coast of the Peninsula.⁵⁴

Despite the ROK's miraculous "standing up" on the world stage, which include rapid economic development and a successful 2002 World Cup, sharing the command relationship to deal with NK's new threats have not changed as much as people in South Korea desire. In this regard, since the ROK Minister of National Defense and the U.S. Secretary of Defense agreed to appropriately accelerate discussions on wartime OPCON transition' during the 37th ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in October 2005, the discussions have gained momentum. During the ROK-U.S. summit in September 2006, the two Presidents agreed to the basic principle that wartime OPCON would indeed be transferred.

In January 2007, the permanent ROK-U.S. Military Committee (MC) signed the "TOR on the Operation of the ROK-U.S. Combined Implementation Working Group,"

which was finalized in a February 2007. During subsequent Defense Ministerial Meetings, the two sides agreed to complete wartime OPCON transition on 17 April 2012. In accordance with this agreement, the Combined Implementation Working Group was formed to establish a Strategic Transition Plan to transfer wartime OPCON from the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command to the ROK JCS. The transition plan was signed by the ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Senior U.S. Military Officer assigned to Korea.⁵⁵

In October 2009, at the 41st ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), the ROK Minister of Defense and U.S. Secretary of Defense reaffirmed their 2008 decision for wartime OPCON transition to occur on 17 April 2012.⁵⁶ However, because of North Korea's volatile nuclear weapon posture in June 2010, the transfer date changed to December 2015. Based upon the ROK-U.S. 'Strategic Alliance 2015,' the delay of the wartime OPCON transfer from April 2012 to December 2015 provides additional time to consider the OPCON issue in the context of future of the ROK-U.S. alliance.⁵⁷

In summary, during this time period, the ROK exercised its peacetime OPCON mostly through its JCS, while the CFC commander retained wartime operational control over the South Korea military as well as Combined Delegated Authority. At the same time, the NK's nuclear threats emerged as a new threat to the ROK. Still, ROK and U.S. leaders adjusted the timeline without wavering in commitment to transfer OPCON by 2015. Table 3 summarizes key developments during this period.

Table 3. Third Period (Run): From 2005 to Present and Way Ahead			
ROK Economics (GDP)	700~1,164 and way ahead (Billion U.S. dollars)		
U.S. Strengths	23,500 and way ahead	ROK Strengths	700,000~560,000(planned)
NK's Threats	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -February 2005. NK claims to have built nuclear weapons. -2006. 10. 9. NK's first nuclear test, and the UN sets up sanctions. -March-May 2008. NK test-fires short-range missiles. -April 2009. NK launches a long-range rocket capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. -May 2009. NK conducts a second nuclear test. -November 2009. Shots are exchanged near the Northern Limit Line at the Yellow Sea. -March 2010. The South Korean warship Chen-an is sunk by a NK's torpedo, 46 sailors were killed. -September 2010. Kim Jung-un gains high-powered political & military posts. -October 2010. North and South Korea exchange shots across the border. -November 2010. NK gives a U.S. scientist a tour of a uranium plant, sparking alarm at the sophistication of its nuclear technology. -2010. 11. 23. NK fires artillery rounds on to an inhabited South Korean border islands. Two of its marines are killed. 		
OPCON Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -2006. 9. 16. ROK-U.S. Summit Talks in which OPCON Transition is agreed. -2007. 2. 23. ROK Minister of National Defense and U.S. Secretary of Defense agree to the timing (17 April 2012) for wartime OPCON Transition. -2007. 6. 28. ROK-U.S. agree on the Strategic Transition Plan. -2010. 6. 26. ROK-U.S. Summit Talks in which the two nations agree to adjust the timing of transition by the end of 2015. 		

Source: Created by author, Data from World Bank, "Trading Economics," www.tradingeconomics.com (accessed 3 January 2013); Guardian, "Timeline: North Korea—Key Events since the End of the Korean War," 23 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/23/timeline-north-korea-south-korea/> (accessed 2 December 2012); Sang-hoon Lee, *The Security Environment of the Korean Peninsula in the 21st Century and the Role of the USFK (in Korean)* (Sungnam: The Sejong Institute, 2001), 28; Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*. (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011); You-Kyong Ko, "U.S. Forces in Korea (USFK), Their Realignment and the Damage Caused by Them," http://www.shinfujin.gr.jp/c_4_english/4_resource/pdf_file/koyoukyong.pdf (accessed 3 March, 2013).

Five Islands: A Problem Left Over from History

This section has three subsections. The first subsection deals with the origin of the five islands problem. Sources explain key events related with the five islands. The second subsection reviews the validity of Northern Limit Line (NLL) in terms of authority of the UNC. The third subsection explains the strategic advantages of the islands from a ROK perspective.

The Origin of the Five Island Problems

Under Article 1 of the KWAA, the Military Demarcation Line (MDL) marked two-kilometer demilitarized zones on both sides. With this line, the portion of the Peninsula from the beginning point of the MDL on the Yellow Sea (that is, a boundary between Hwanghae-do and Gyeonggi-do province) to the 38th parallel was assigned to North Korea (refer to figure 2). The five islands were put under the jurisdiction of the UNC as provided under Article 2 Paragraph 13 (b) of the KWAA.⁵⁸ The KWAA did not mention the right to control neighboring waters and sea borders of the parties concerned. Paragraph 15 stipulates that “all opposing naval forces . . . shall respect the waters contiguous to the Demilitarized Zones and to the land area of Korea under the military control of the opposing side, and shall not engage in blockade of any kind of Korea.”

However, the breadth of the waters to be respected was not defined due to the disagreement over boundaries. In addition, NK’s nomination of the Soviet Union (SU) as a neutral nation made the UNC representative, Admiral Joy, refuse to enter into debate relating to a maritime border.⁵⁹ In keeping with international standards, the UNC proposed 3-mile waters, while NK and China demanded 12 miles. In the end, NK demanded that any reference to sea boundaries be removed in the final KWAA. This

failure to include the provision on the demarcation of waters of jurisdiction in the KWAA has led NK to insist that the waters around the five islands be its own territorial waters.⁶⁰ The following Figure 2 shows the locations of five islands and the Northern Limit Line (NLL).



Figure 2. The Five Islands and the Northern Limit Line

Source: Created by author.

According to the 'ROK Defense White Paper 2006,' the Northern Limit Line (NLL) was established on 30 August 1953 by the Commander of the UNC in order to

reduce and prevent the possible outbreak of various types of armed conflict, contingencies between the two Koreas, and limit patrolling activities by the ROK Navy and Air Force in the West and East Seas.⁶¹

Since the establishment of the UNC NLL, NK has repeatedly provoked South Korea in order to nullify its legitimacy as a unilateral UNC measure. With the NK's attempt to nullify the NLL, on 26 March 2010, the North orchestrated a torpedo attack on the ROK warship Cheon-An. The Cheon-An was conducting patrol operations before being sunk 2.5km southwest of Baengnyeong Island. A total of 46 ROK sailors perished in this attack which heightened the security crisis on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Moreover, the North threatened the South by stating that it would conduct an all-out war and a third round of nuclear tests in response to the South's measures against the North that were coordinated with the international community.⁶²

Furthermore, on 23 November 2010, the North indiscriminately fired approximately 170 artillery rounds at a ROK Marine detachment and the civilian residential area on Yeonpyeong Island. Two ROK Marines and two civilians were killed while 16 Marines and many other civilians were wounded, some severely. The rest of the world, including U.S., Japan, Germany, the U.K., and Russia denounced the North for this brutal act that killed and injured civilians.⁶³

Since 1953, NK has consistently argued that the foundation of the NLL is not legitimate. To make their point, NK seeks to leverage this position through military means. Given the murky aspect in the history of the NLL, absolute legitimacy can never be established. The KWAA provides no evidence to support the line as a mutually agreed measure. However, the fact that five islands, including Baengnyeong-Do, Taechong-Do,

Sochong-Do, Yeonpyeong-Do, and U-Do, shall be remain under the UNC control lend credence to the need for a control measure that ensures unfettered access and that provides a boundary to keep separate opposing forces.⁶⁴

Validity of Northern Limit Line

Most authors note that the line was drawn on 30 August 1953 by the UNC but do not cite a specific document. The line may have been a military control line that was used during the Korean War to separate enemy combatants and was maintained to keep UNC and ROK vessels from wandering too far north. The UNC approved of the 3-mile waters along the NK coast in the Yellow Sea waters and classified all the other waters as international waters.

A CIA report dated January 1974 notes that “no documentation can be found to indicate that the NLL was established prior to 1960.”⁶⁵ However, another document in the collection dated December 1973 states that the UNC declared the NLL “unilaterally in the mid-1950s,” a notation appears to narrow the timeframe of the NLL’s inception.⁶⁶ To support this, according to James M. Lee, a former international relations advisor of UNCMAC, the NLL was established in 1958 as the operational control line in order not only to control the NK vessels but also to control the ROK vessels including UNC naval forces.⁶⁷ He recalls that the NLL was established unilaterally by the UNC commander, as an operational control measure to prevent accidental armed clashes between the two Koreas in the waters around the five islands after the UNC and North Korea (NK) / China People’s Volunteers (CPV) representatives failed to produce an agreement on a maritime border.⁶⁸

Despite the fact that the NLL is not a part of KWAA, the UNC has urged NK to respect the NLL. Ironically, NK did not object to the NLL until October 1973, because it benefited the NK by serving as a protective fence for a country that did not have a viable naval force.⁶⁹ However, in October 1973, North Korea began a concerted effort to draw attention to its displeasure with the NLL. On 1 December 1973, at the 346th Military Armistice Commission (MAC) meeting, NK representatives asserted a claim of 12 nautical miles (nm) for their territorial waters, a claim that placed the five North West islands in their coastal waters. Accordingly, Pyongyang maintained South Korean vessels transiting to and from the islands were traveling in North Korean waters and were in violation of the Armistice. Moreover, North Korean representatives implied that the NLL was invalid and that any ships wishing to pass through these North Korean coastal waters would require Pyongyang's permission. Failure to do so would result in harsh punishment for any violations. Since then, NK has been elevating tension in the region, raising several serious security and legal issues concerning the NLL.⁷⁰

At the 347th MAC meeting, the UNCMAC Senior member presented the NLL establishment as lawful on the grounds that about 15,000 South Korean civilians live on the five islands and the UNC is obliged to support the citizens in these islands who go back and forth between the islands and the mainland. Like the Korean Peninsula, these islands are the "land area of Korea" and the waters around the islands should be respected as the "waters contiguous to . . . the land area of Korea" (KWAA, Paragraph 15)⁷¹ like the waters along the coast of the Korean Peninsula.⁷² The questions surrounding the NLL remain contentious and unresolved.

In summary, the establishment of the NLL is not directly based on the KWAA. The UNC unilaterally established the NLL without official agreement with NK. However, in the logic of South Korea, the NLL should be respected as their own land area and as a strategic interest.

Strategic Advantages of the Northern Limit Line (NLL)

From the ROK's perspective, the location of the five islands has provided several strategic advantages. First, the islands are ideal places for monitoring and providing early warning of suspicious activities of the NK military in the west coast area.⁷³ In the 1980s, the Korean People's Army (KPA) began to improve and expand its airborne and amphibious capabilities. They began developing high-speed air-cushion landing craft (speeds up 52 knots and carrying 40 to 50 troops) which magnified KPA amphibious assault capability, particularly into ROK rear areas.⁷⁴ More critically, the ROK military assessed that it would take less than 30 minutes from the closest NK naval base to the five islands by the air-cushion landing craft. Needless to say, it is critical for the ROK to monitor and provide early warning in terms of readiness to deter, and, if necessary, defeat this threat.

Second, the islands can be used as a base for special operations and as forward bases for amphibious operations as well as a forward base for humanitarian support operations in NK, when the situation dictates.⁷⁵ In February 1951, a special operations unit composed of anti-communist partisans from the NK was established on these islands.⁷⁶ Originally called "Task Force William Able," it was renamed "Task Force Leopard" in March 1951. Taking advantage of their maritime superiority and their proximity to the west coast, UNC naval forces landed ROK partisan commandos along

the west coast to conduct special operations behind enemy lines. In a major effort from 16 February 1951 to the end of the Korean War, these ROK special operations, along with the UNC naval forces, diverted 80,000 NK troops away from frontline duty.⁷⁷

The origin of the NLL is a UNC control measure to reduce and prevent the possible outbreak of various types of armed conflict and other contingencies between the two Koreas. To this end, the NLL limits patrolling activities by the ROK Navy and Air Force in the West and East Seas. Despite the fact that the NK persistently tries to nullify the NLL, the location of the five islands has been an ideal place for monitoring and providing early warning of the suspicious activities of the NK military in the west coast area. The five islands could also be used as a base for special operations and as forward bases for amphibious operations as well as a forward base for humanitarian support operations in the NK when the situation dictates.

Summary

This chapter was a review of literature necessary to set a framework to answer the research question of whether or not the United Nations Command in South Korea has a role after OPCON transition in 2015. This chapter was organized according to UNC roles and missions, OPCON shifts from 1950s to the present and the way ahead, and the five islands (a problem left over from history). The UNC roles and missions section included a review of the creation of the UNC, the organization and missions of the UNC, and the significant roles of the UNC. Each OPCON shift section described key transition points from 1950 to present by using the concept of ‘crawl-walk-run.’ The five islands section, a problem left over from history, included the origin of the five islands problem, validity of the Northern Limit Line (NLL), and the strategic advantages of the NLL.

The next chapter describes the research methodology used to generate and analyze data to answer the primary and secondary research questions.

¹Won-gon Park, “The United Nations Command in Korea: Past, Present, and Future,” *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 21, no. 4 (December 2009): 485.

²United States Forces Korea, October 2011, http://www.usfk.mil/usfk/Uploads/120/USFK_tri_fold_Oct_2011.pdf (accessed 10 September 2012).

³United Nations Security Council, “Security Council Resolutions,” <https://www.un.org/en/sc/documents/resolutions/> (accessed 20 December 2012).

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Park, “The United Nations Command in Korea,” 487.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Korea Ministry of Government Legislation, “Agreed Minutes and Amendment Thereto between the Government of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America relating to continued Cooperation in Economic and Military Matters and Amendment to the Agreed Minutes of 17 November 1954,” <http://www.law.go.kr/trtyInfoPWah.do?trtySeq=1377> (accessed 6 October 2012).

⁹Park, “The United Nations Command in Korea,” 487.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Se-Jong Institute and Asia Foundation, “From Armistice to Peace: Some Observation,” *International Conference* (September 2000).

¹⁴United Nations Command, “Guardians of the Armistice” (Military Armistice Commission Briefing, 2004).

¹⁵Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 6.

¹⁶Great Britain Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *Global Security: Japan and Korea*, Tenth Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Session 2007-08, Response of

the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (UK: Office of Public Sector Information, 2009), 101.

¹⁷Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 5.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ministry of National Defense Policy Planning Department, *ROK-U.S. Alliance and USFK* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2002), 29-30.

²⁰Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 5.

²¹Kyudok Hong, “The Continuing role of the UN in the Future of Korea Security,” in *Recalibrating the U.S.-Republic of Korea Alliance*, eds. Donald W. Boose Jr., Balbina Y. Hwang, Patrick Morgan, and Andrew Scobell (Carlisle Barracks. PA: USAWC, 2003), 75.

²²Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 7.

²³Donald W. Boose, Jr., “United Nations Command,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Korean War*, ed. Spencer C. Tucker (New York: ABC Clio, 2000). When Japan regained sovereignty in 1952, the United States and Japan exchanged notes governing Japanese support of UN actions. This was formalized on 19 February 1954 when Japan, the United States “acting as the Unified Command,” and eight of the participating states signed a UNC-Japan SOFA providing for access, transit, and basing rights. Eventually, sever U.S. bases in Japan were designated as UNC bases.

²⁴Ibid., 4.

²⁵Korean War Education, “Armistice Agreement Article I-6,” <http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/topics/armistice/> (accessed 13 September 2012).

²⁶Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011), 28.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Korean War Education, “Armistice Agreement Article II-A-13-(d),” <http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/topics/armistice/> (accessed 13 September 2012).

²⁹United States Forces Korea, Homepage.

³⁰U.S. Eight Army, “History,” <http://8tharmy.korea.army.mil/history.asp> (access 13 October 2012).

³¹Park, “The United Nations Command in Korea,” 487.

³²Philip M. Puch, Jr., “A Historical Analysis of Multinational Logistics and the Concept of National Responsibility in Coalition Military Operations” (Master’s Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2002).

³³U.S. Department of State, *United States Participation in the United Nations: 1951* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 1952), 273.

³⁴East Asia Institute Task Force, “The Undone Assignment: Transition of Operational Command,” *Korea-US Security Partnership: Institutional Transformation and Renovation* (February 2008): 128-129.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Koji Murata, *The Origins and Evolution of the Korean-American Alliance-A Japanese Perspective* (Stanford, CA: Asia/Pacific Research Center, 1998), 12.

³⁷Ministry of National Defense, *The History of UN Forces in the Korean War* (Seoul: ROK MND, 1974).

³⁸Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 4.

³⁹Jin-bu Kim, “The Most Effective South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command Structure after Returning Wartime Operational Control of the South Korean Military” (Master’s Thesis, Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2009), 9-11.

⁴⁰The CFC was established on 7 November 1978 according to Strategic Directive No. 1 of the first ROK-U.S. Military Committee Meeting (MCM). CFC has OPCON of GCC, NCC, and ACC.

⁴¹Korean War Education, “Armistice Agreement,” <http://www.koreanwar-educator.org/topics/armistice/> (accessed 13 September 2012).

⁴²Kim, “The Most Effective South Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command Structure,” 9-11.

⁴³Combined Operational Delegated Authority (CODA). This term is in the Joint Military Dictionary, http://www.jcs.mil.kr/views/jsp/dictionary/dic_korean.jsp?page=9&part=8 (accessed 4 December 2012).

⁴⁴Pill Pyun, *Transfer of Wartime Republic of Korea Command Authority*, 3.

⁴⁵The Guardian, “Timeline: North Korea- Key Events Since the end of the Korean War,” 23 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/23/timeline-north-korea-south-korea> (accessed 2 December 2012). (A chronology of clashes between North and South Korea since 1953.) The data refers that: 29 November 1987: North Korea blows up a South Korean civilian airliner, killing 115 people. The US decides to include

the North on its list of countries that support terrorism. 1991: North and South Korea become members of the United Nations. September 1996: A NK submarine lands commandos on the South Korean coast. January 2002: The U.S. president, George Bush, makes his “axis of evil” speech, which links North Korea with Iran and Iraq.

⁴⁶Princeton.edu, “Nixon Doctrine,” http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Nixon_Doctrine.html (accessed 4 December 2012).

⁴⁷Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 80.

⁴⁸The Library of Congress. “Congressional Record 101st Congress (1989-1990),” [http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/B?r101:@FIELD\(FLD003+d\)+@FIELD\(DDATE+19890724\)](http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/B?r101:@FIELD(FLD003+d)+@FIELD(DDATE+19890724)) (accessed 18 December 2012).

⁴⁹Ralph A. Cossa, Brad Glosserman, Michael A. McDevitt, Nirav Patel, James Przystup, and Brad Roberts, “The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration,” *Center for a New American Security* (February 2009), 12.

⁵⁰The highest body for military cooperation between the ROK and the U.S. and in which the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the senior general and flag officers participate.

⁵¹The authority delegated to the CFC Commander during peacetime for exercise over units of the Korean forces placed under wartime OPCON. It encompasses six areas: combined crisis management, operational plans establishment, combined exercises, combined joint doctrines development, ROK-U.S. combined intelligence management, and C4I interoperability.

⁵²Global Finance, “Korea, South Country Report,” <http://www.gfmag.com/gdp-data-country-reports/241-south-korea-gdp-country-report.html#axzz2Sjk9TEoq> (accessed 8 May 2013).

⁵³Irish Times, “South Korea GDP Growth Hits Two-Year High,” <http://www.irishtimes.com/business/economy/world/south-korea-gdp-growth-hits-two-year-high-1.1372488> (accessed 8 May 2013).

⁵⁴Guardian, “Timeline: North Korea—Key Events since the End of the Korean War,” 23 November 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/23/timeline-north-korea-south-korea/> (accessed 2 December 2012) (A chronology of clashes between North and South Korea since 1953.) The data refers that: 29 November 1987: North Korea blows up a South Korean civilian airliner, killing 115 people. The US decides to include the North on its list of countries that support terrorism. 1991: North and South Korea become members of the United Nations. September 1996: A NK submarine lands commandos on the South Korean coast. January 2002: The U.S. president, George Bush, makes his “axis of evil” speech, which links North Korea with Iran and Iraq.

⁵⁵Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 81.

⁵⁶U.S. DOD, “41st U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting Joint Communiqué, 22 October 2009,” <http://www.defense.gov> (accessed 3 March 2013).

⁵⁷O, Tara, “U.S.-R.O.K. Strategic Alliance 2015,” *Center for U.S.-Korea Policy* 2, no. 9 (September 2010): 1-4.

⁵⁸KWAA states that, “Within then (10) days after this Armistice Agreement becomes effective, withdraw all of their military forces, supplies, and equipment from the rear and the coastal islands and waters of Korea on the other side. If such military forces are not withdrawn within the stated time limit, and there in no mutually agreed and valid reason for the delay, the other side shall have the right to take any action which it deems necessary for the maintenance of security and order. The term ‘coastal islands’ as used above, refers to those islands which, though occupied by one side at the time when this Armistice Agreement becomes effective, were controlled by the other side on 24 June 1950; provided, however, that all the islands lying to the north and west of the provincial boundary line between Hwanghae-do and Kyunggi-do shall be under the military control of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People’s Army and the Commander of the Chinese People’s Volunteers, except the island groups of Paengyound-do, Taechong-do, Sochong-do, Yonpyong-do, and U-do, which shall remain under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command. All the islands on the west coast of Korea lying south of the above-mentioned boundary line shall remain under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command.”

⁵⁹Turner C. Joy, *Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Press, 1978), 267.

⁶⁰Ministry of National Defense, *2006 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2007), 275.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 27.

⁶²Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, section 3:26.

⁶³*Ibid.*

⁶⁴KWAA states that, “provided, however, that all the islands lying to the north and west of the provincial boundary line between HWANGHAE-DO and KYONGGI-DO shall be under the military control of the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's volunteers, except the island groups of BAENGYONG-DO (37 58' N, 124 40' E), TAECHONG-DO (37 50' N, 124 42' E), SOCHONG-DO (37 46' N, 124 46' E), YEONPYON -DO (37 38' N, 125 40' E), and U-DO (37 36'N, 125 58' E), which shall remain under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command. All the island on the west coast of

Korea lying south of the above-mentioned boundary line shall remain under the military control of the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command.”

⁶⁵Terence Roehrig, “The Origins of the Northern Limit Line Dispute,” *NKIDP (North Korea international Documentation Project)* E-DOSSIER #6 (May 2012): 1.

⁶⁶For an excellent discussion of these events, see Narushige Michishita, *North Korea’s Military-Diplomatic Campaigns: 1966-2008* (London: Routledge, 2010), 52-72.

⁶⁷Mun-whang Lee, *James Lee’s JSA-Panmunjum (1953~1944)* (Korea: Sohwa, 2001), 91-92.

⁶⁸Moo-bong Ryoo, “The Korean Armistice and the Islands” (Strategic Research Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2009), 14.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*

⁷⁰Terence Roehrig, “The Origins of the Northern Limit Line Dispute,” *NKIDP (North Korea international Documentation Project)* E-DOSSIER #6 (May 2012): 1.

⁷¹KWAA, Paragraph 15, “This Armistice Agreement shall apply to all opposing naval forces, which naval forces shall respect the waters contiguous to the Demilitarized Zones and to the land area of Korea under the military control of the opposing side, and shall not engage in blockade of any kind of Korea.”

⁷²Roehrig, “The Origins of the Northern Limit Line Dispute,” 2.

⁷³Ryoo, “The Korean Armistice and the islands,” 6.

⁷⁴Andrew Scobell and John M. Sanford, *North Korea’s Military Threat: Pyongyang’s Conventional Forces, Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Ballistic Missiles* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 44.

⁷⁵Ryoo, “The Korean Armistice and the island,” 7-9.

⁷⁶Donald W. Boose Jr., *Over the Beach: U.S. Army Amphibious Operations in the Korean War* (Ft. Leavenworth. KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2008), 256-259.

⁷⁷Department of the Navy, “Fact Sheet, U.S. Naval Operation in Korea,” <http://www.nj.gov/military/korea/factsheets/navy> (accessed 3 May 2013).

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine if the United Nations Command has a future role after the OPCON of ROK military shifts to the ROK JCS in 2015. Chapter 1 provided background to the topic and described historical importance of the United Nations Command to security on the Korean Peninsula. Moreover, chapter 2 dealt with the historical roles and missions of the UNC in an “ends-ways-means” framework, OPCON shifts from the Korean War to the present, and background of the controversial five islands matter.

The aim of this chapter is to describe the research methodology used to answer the primary research question of whether or not there is a future role for the UNC after OPCON transition from CFC to ROK JCS in 2015. This chapter has five main sections dealing with the research approach, wargame conditions, wargame and SWOT analysis, evaluation criteria analysis, and a summary.

The research approach section describes the qualitative research design and introduces all research procedures including a matrix wargame, SWOT analysis, evaluation criteria analysis, and findings. The wargame conditions section describes the sources for data collection, necessary assumptions applied, and the critical security events used to frame the data set. The wargame and SWOT analysis section describes the process for applying the data gathered from assessments including the matrix wargame and SWOT analysis against evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria section explains

how to compare wargame results against criteria in order for each UNC condition to fare in each critical security event. The last section summarizes key points of this chapter.

Research Approach

This research used a three-phase qualitative approach to develop responses to the primary and secondary research questions. The first phase included a matrix wargame, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis to identify areas of certainty and uncertainty¹ in the Peninsula security environment following OPCON transfer in 2015. The SWOT analysis aims to highlight internal strengths or available capabilities and weaknesses or capabilities that are insufficient or lacking. In another point of view, SWOT analysis highlights external opportunities or potential gains and threats or circumstances that can cause a loss.²

In phase two, the focus shifted to evaluation criteria analysis. The aim was to apply wargame outcomes against legitimacy factors of ROK land border security, sea border security, continuity of U.S. military presence on the Peninsula, a safe and secure environment on the five islands off the ROK as well as across the DMZ, and effective multinational operations. A secure land border is defined as no incursions from NK into the ROK across the DMZ. The continuity of U.S. military presence on the Peninsula is defined as a USFK command and control capability with ground, air, and sea forces dedicated to ROK security. A safe and secure environment on the five islands is defined as the ROK having uncontested sea access to the islands and the absence of NK military actions against the islands. Effective multinational operations is defined as having uninterrupted capability to deal with multinational actors from the international community.

Phase three applied results from the previous analysis. The aim was to develop findings in regard to conventional war, unconventional warfare, and natural disasters to develop responses to the research questions. The comparison of outcomes from the three critical events against whether or not the UNC existed produced evidence to analyze against specified criteria to develop a response to the primary research question. Figure 3 summarizes the entire approach of research methodology.

Research Methodology

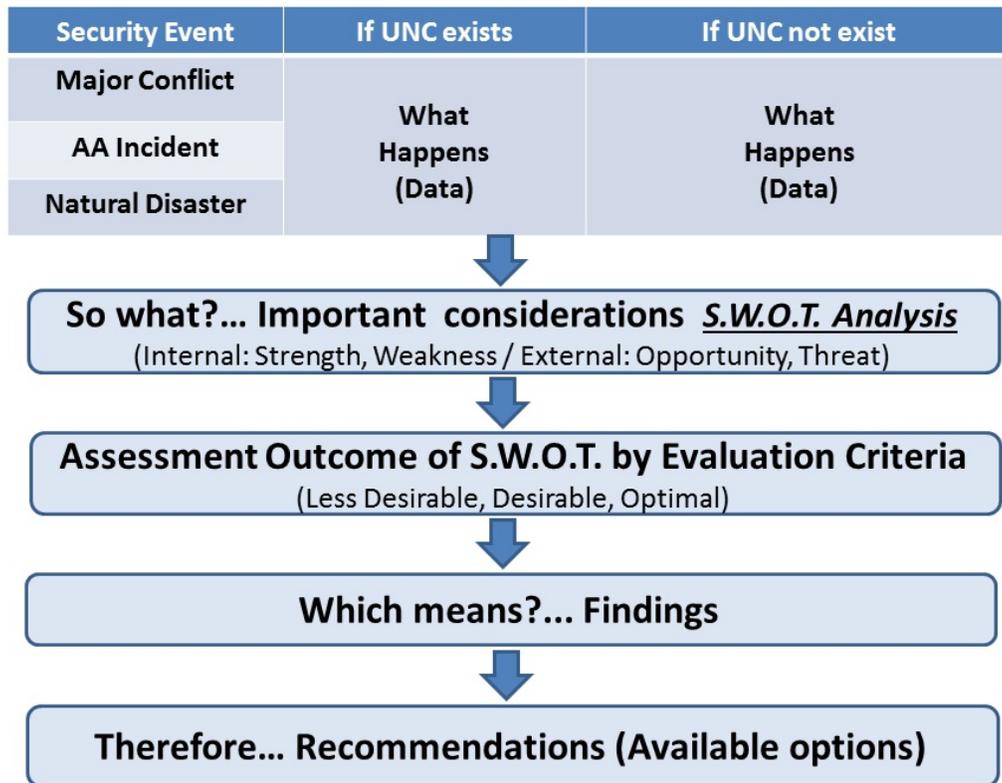


Figure 3. The Research Methodology

Source: Created by author.

Wargame Conditions

The matrix wargame is a tool to investigate outcomes across a range of opposing conditions. This wargame was designed as a tool to generate data from the interactions of various security situations that involved security situations against conditions of the UNC being present or absent. For the wargame matrix, the conditions the UNC existence or non-existence were on the horizontal axis. The data emerged from interactions that involved security situations of conventional warfare, irregular warfare, and natural disasters on the vertical axis.

This wargame operated on three assumptions. The first stipulated that in the event of conventional war, U.S. reinforcements would arrive with the same capabilities as current USFK forces could bring to the ROK. The second assumption held that ROK and U.S. strategic communication channels will operate in concert. Based on the ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) 'White Paper 2010,' the final assumption states that in the event of conventional war, U.S. reinforcements will consist of approximately 690,000 ground forces, 160 naval vessels, and 2,000 aircraft. Within this assumption, U.S. forces would act a flexible deterrent option (FDO), Force Module Package (FMP), or along the Time Phased Force Deployment Data (TPFDD).³

The first internal security event is a major conflict between the two Koreas. This event is conventional warfare in the KTO. The second internal event involves Armistice Agreement violations. This event is irregular or unconventional warfare that can rise to the level of a regional provocation. The external security event is a natural disaster. The event brings a requirement for humanitarian assistance to the ROK, NK, or both.

Wargame and SWOT Analysis

The wargame was the process of collecting data from two internal security events (major conflict and Armistice Agreement related incident) and one external security event (natural disaster). Each critical security event was assessed against both the case of UNC's existence and non-existence, and data was analyzed within the framework of SWOT.

The strengths and weaknesses were internal factors, while opportunities and threats were described as external factors. The results from wargame and SWOT analysis yielded an assessment of important considerations for each security event. Figure 4 below shows the model for the Matrix Wargame of critical security event against both cases of when the UNC does exist and when the UNC does not exist.

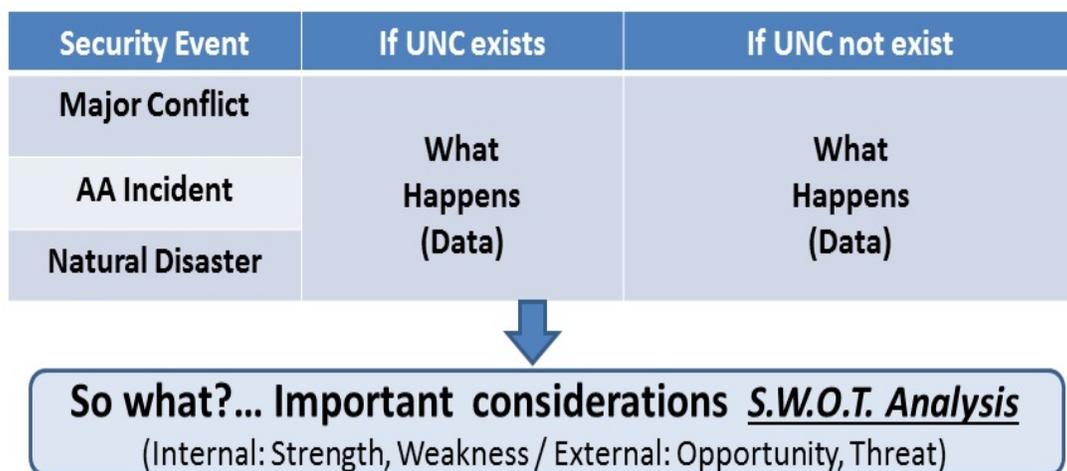


Figure 4. Matrix Wargame and SWOT Analysis

Source: Created by author.

As depicted at the figure 4, results from the wargame provided data required to analyze the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat in terms of internal factors (strength and weakness) and external factors (opportunity and threat). The important patterns and considerations identified from the results of the wargame fed into the evaluation criteria analysis. The result from the wargame and SWOT analysis provided the basis for the discussion to answer the secondary research questions:

1. What is the role of UNC in terms of history and background?

(Conventional War)

2. What is the role of UNC relating to the issue of five islands concerning the Northern Limit Line (NLL)?

(Unconventional War)

3. What is the role of UNC in a natural disaster?

(Humanitarian Assistance)

Evaluation Criteria

The next part of the research methodology was to apply the data collected from the wargame and SWOT analysis against the evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria analysis aims to compare wargame results against criteria to indicate how each UNC condition fares in each critical event. The outcome supports findings on which to base a response to each question. This process supported assessments to determine if UNC has a support role for the ROK after OPCON transfer.

According to the ROK MND 'White Paper 2010,' the foundation of ROK national defense orients on three objectives.⁴ The objectives are to defend the nation from external military threats and invasion, uphold the principle of peaceful unification, and contribute

to regional stability and world peace. Therefore, legitimacy is the overarching concept for evaluation criteria. Legitimacy is defined as the legality of the existence of the ROK government, and credibility that the ROK government to act in accordance with the law and its stated mission, and the capability of the government to execute its mandate. In addition, legitimacy also reflects the will and perceptions of the population, the collective will of the people through the consent of the governed.

The core condition of legitimacy has factors of ROK land border security, continuity of U.S. military presence on the Peninsula, a safe and secure environment on the five islands off the Peninsula West coast, and an effective multinational operation in the ROK. The first significant condition of legitimacy is secure border. This means no incursions from NK across the DMZ into the ROK. The second condition, the continuity of U.S. military presence, is defined as USFK and UNC command and control (C2) capabilities with ground, air, and sea forces dedicated to ROK security. The third core condition of legitimacy, a safe and secure environment on the five islands, is defined as having uncontested sea access to the islands and the absence of NK military action against the islands. The final legitimacy consideration, effective multinational operations in the ROK, is defined as having uninterrupted capability to deal with multinational operations with the international community.

The results of the comparisons are recorded on a three point scale of less than desirable (L), desirable (D), and optimal (O). The scale points are defined as less than desirable when legitimacy for the ROK is worse than current. The desirable point is defined as ROK legitimacy equal to or slightly improved. The optimal point is defined as

ROK legitimacy and the security environment is safer and more secure than the current condition.

Summary

This chapter dealt with the research methodology, how to generate data and information from the previous findings through chapters 1 and 2. The purpose of this chapter was to describe how to develop and analyze data and information to support responses to the primary and secondary research questions. This was a qualitative study designed to develop a response to the primary research question. Figure 3 showed how the research methodology supported finding by utilizing the Matrix Wargame against both the case of when the UNC does exist and when the UNC does not exist. The results of this study are presented in the next chapter followed by a discussion of responses to the research questions.

¹Thomas J. Chermack and Bernadette K. Kasshanna, “The Use of Misuse of SWOT Analysis and Implications for HRD Professionals,” *Human Resource Development International* 10, no. 4 (December 2007): 383-399.

²Ibid.

³Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper* (Seoul: ROK MND, 2011), 55.

⁴Ibid., 41-47.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this research was to determine if there is a future role for the UNC after wartime OPCON transition in 2015 from conventional, unconventional, and natural disaster perspectives. This chapter applies the research methodology described in chapter 3 to generate and analyze data to develop responses to the primary and secondary research questions:

Primary question: Is there a role for the UNC after the wartime OPCON transfer in 2015?

Secondary questions:

1. What is the role of the UNC in terms of history and background?

(Conventional War)

2. What is the role of the UNC relating to the issue of five islands with the

Northern Limit Line (NLL)?

(Unconventional War)

3. What is role of the UNC in the perspective of natural disaster?

(Humanitarian Assistance)

There are five sections in this chapter. The first section has case descriptions. The purpose of a case security event is to define and introduce the events which deal with two internal and one external security threats.

In sections, two, three, and four, each deals with a specific case. Each case section has four subsections that include conditions when the UNC does exist, when the UNC

does not exist, evaluation criteria analysis, and the findings. The first and second subsections deal with when the UNC does exist and when the UNC does not. These subsections include the matrix wargame and SWOT analysis. The matrix wargame aim is to generate data from the three different critical security events under conditions when the UNC does and does not exist. The generated data from the matrix wargame comes from the critical security event case analysis, original documentation, my research, and unclassified documentation from subject-related articles. The SWOT analysis aim is to analyze the data generated from the matrix wargame against both when the UNC does and does not exist in terms of ROK strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT analysis helped identify capabilities and limitations of the ROK around internal strengths and weaknesses along with external opportunities and threats.

The third subsection is a cross-walk of ROK internal and external SWOT against evaluation criteria representing the key conditions of legitimacy in terms of a secure border, continuity of U.S. military presence on the Peninsula, a safe and secure environment on the five islands, and effective multinational operations.

The fourth subsection describes findings from the analysis. The purpose of the findings subsection is to provide a discussion that responds to each research question by describing what capabilities and limitations the ROK military confronts over time. The final section is a summary of this chapter to review key finding concerning all critical security event cases.

Cases

By definition, each critical security event highlights ROK government perspectives about internal and external security conflicts relating to NK and the

Armistice Agreement. Each security event was drawn from events that have occurred. The following subsections deal with a conventional event, an unconventional event, and a natural disaster, in turn.

Case One: Major Conflict (Conventional Warfare) Event

Since adopting their Military First strategy in 1962,¹ under the cloak of the *Juche* ideology, North Korea's first priority is the military. Military requirements take precedence over other government interests such education, diplomacy, economics, etc. The philosophy known as *Juche* became the official state ideology of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in 1972. The author, NK leader Kim Il Sung explained:

Establishing *Juche* means, in a nutshell, being the master of revolution and reconstruction in one's own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance, and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.²

The basic national goal of North Korea is "unification of the two Koreas under communist control."³ In order to realize this goal, the Korean People's Army (KPA) has used surprise attacks, hybrid warfare, and a short-term blitzkrieg strategy. The KPA uses various tactics and mixed warfare to counterattack the ROK forces' high-tech weaponry and maneuver forces.⁴ North Korean's reunification aspiration strategy seeks to expel U.S. forces from the Peninsula and perpetuate the Kim family regime. Since the nation's foundation in 1948, these two goals drive NK and KPA activities.⁵

Case Two: Armistice Agreement Incidents (Unconventional Warfare) Event

North Korea continues to ignore the UNC imposed NLL in the West Sea. The North has fired at ROK patrol boats conducting routine assigned patrols. The NK Navy has fired torpedoes at a ROK patrol ship and sunk a Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) Patrol Combat Corvette (PCC). The KPA has fired artillery at Yeonpyeong Island. In the DMZ and along with MDL, the NK military challenges the ROK Army in order not only to maintain a state of crisis, but also to make the U.S. sit and negotiate directly with the NK without any political or military involvement of the ROK. NK seeks international recognition as the legitimate authority from the international community.⁶

Case Three: Natural Disaster (Humanitarian Assistance) Event

In recent decades, NK has experienced an ongoing challenge to feed its people. When droughts occur, the general population is reduced to eating grass and dirt. In response, the international community joins to provide food aid. Between 1995 and 2008, the U.S. alone provided NK with over \$1.3 billion in assistance: just over 50 percent for food aid and about 40 percent for energy assistance.⁷ Under severe conditions, there is a good probability that North Koreans begin to migrate as refugees to China and potentially to the ROK. These situations heighten NK concerns over security. The other serious humanitarian situation concerns the NK nuclear program. In the event of an earthquake, flood, or by accident a reactor malfunctions, radiation leaks will drift over China, the ROK, or Japan. In both situations, the crisis cannot avoid becoming a critical security event for the ROK and U.S.

Case One: Major Conflict Event

When the UNC does exist

Wargame

According to the ROK MND 'White Paper 2010, in the event that North Korea provokes a war, the ROK and the United States Forces Korea (USFK) will deny a surprise attack through the ROK-U.S. Combined Early Warning System and rapid response measures. The ROK-U.S. Combined Forces maintain a complete readiness posture against an all-out war. The overarching intent is to safeguard the Greater Seoul Metropolitan Area and seize the initiative within the shortest time possible. The CFC employs ground, air, and naval forces to make precision strikes against the North's core forces, such as its long-range artillery and missiles. CFC forces deny the NK forces freedom of maneuver and movement of air, ground, or sea.⁸

ROK mobilization capabilities mobilize the nation's available human, materiel, and other resources towards achieving the goals of war. This is an essential factor in meeting war goals and ensuring war sustainability. The ROK government maintains an immediate mobilization posture in order to be able to mobilize efficiently the nation's available resources in time of war.⁹

More specifically, as far as the UNC goes, the UNC will exercise operational control over all forces assigned to the Korean area of operation. In order to support reception, staging, onward movement and integration (RSOI) of sending nations, the UNC will activate the multinational command supported by UNC (Rear) HQ in Japan. Through its seven bases in Japan, the UNC takes a key role of waging war against the NK. The activation of the UNC (Rear) HQ will allow the flow of multinational military

support. The UNC would be the only legal military command to control non-U.S. or ROK forces. In the event of an armed attack, the Joint Policy Declaration ensures that all UNC means respond by sending forces.¹⁰ The UNC will execute its roles and functions in the ROK as directed by U.S. National Command Authority through the U.S. JCS in coordination with the ROK JCS.

SWOT Analysis

In the event of a major conflict when the UNC does exist, it is clear that the primary strength is that the UNC brings enduring capabilities to the ROK JCS for key mission areas. These include reinforcement to flow forces under an existing unified command structure. The command structure involves extended deterrence, Intelligence/Surveillance/Reconnaissance (ISR), precision strike, space operations, and combating weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Conversely, the primary weaknesses are the lack of staffing and ambiguity of command relationships with the future Korea Command (KORCOM). The current UNC consists of a small staff organization, a Liaison Group, and the UNC (Rear) HQ located at Camp Zama. After dismantlement of the CFC, which is the current force provider to the UNC in upholding the Armistice Agreement, the ambiguity of controlling the KORCOM would be to decrease the effectiveness of UNC roles in the ROK.

From an external perspective, the dominant opportunity is that the UNC is an essential factor in meeting the necessities of war and ensuring war sustainability for all forces as well as for the ROK. Furthermore, the UNC allows the U.S. National Command Authority to be involved in the ROK through the U.S. JCS directive to the UNC.

Together, accessibility to seven bases in Japan would remain valid so long as UNC forces in Korea are based under the “UNC-Japan SOFA.”

Conversely, the dominant threat is the growing pressure working against the future existence of the UNC after the wartime OPCON transfer in 2015. On the U.S. side, there are mounting calls to reduce the military and to refocus resources to internal projects. On the ROK side, national pride and a long standing desire to be in control of security work against continued UNC existence.

When the UNC does not exist

Wargame

In the event of a NK armed invasion into South Korea without the UNC existence, the ROK and the future KORCOM will need to employ sixteen or more multinational forces based upon its mutual agreement of a Joint Policy Declaration. The ROK JCS will take a key role to lead a multinational force (MNF) by establishing MNF HQ led by a ROK General. The ambiguity of the command relationship between the ROK JCS and multinational forces as well as between KORCOM and multinational forces would cause an operational pause, even if forces were in the ROK. Currently, there is little discussion about command relationships for KORCOM to control any UNC forces except those of the U.S and the ROK.

In order to sustain logistical requirements to wage a war against the NK, the ROK will manage capabilities to conduct RSOI either in the ROK and perhaps with Japan bases. The historical animosities and ongoing disputes between the ROK and Japan are unclear concerning the use of seven bases in Japan. Since the current agreement is between the U.S. and Japan, access to these bases outside the UNC framework agreement

will be problematic. It will take time to negotiate a political agreement for access to UNC bases in Japan. Furthermore, there is a distinct possibility that full access to all seven bases may not be possible.

SWOT Analysis

In the event of a major conflict when the UNC does not exist, it is clear that the primary strength is the enhancement of the ROK JCS's capabilities in terms of budget, time, and other resources to deal with complex operations. In dealing with RSOI of multinational forces, employing multinational forces, and establishing a new Command and Control (C2) structure elevate ROK interest and support to security matters. The ROK views this as an inevitable step to deter the NK's aggression and to fill the gap caused by the non-existence of the UNC.

Conversely, the primary weakness is an ambiguous chain of command between the ROK JCS and other multinational forces. The lack of an integrated command and control (C2) structure decreases the effective control of the ROK JCS. In addition, it is necessary for the ROK military to dedicate huge future defense budgets to developing new a C2 structure for multinational operations.

From an external perspective, the dominant opportunity is that the ROK government would have to increase its bilateral relationship with Japan with a mutual agreement for a defense strategy. Such a shift makes the two countries more interdependent in terms of not only countering NK's armed attack, but also countering regional security destabilizes.

Conversely, the dominant threat is that actual execution of a Joint Policy Declaration without UNC HQ and UNC (Rear) HQ in Japan is doubtful. Another threat

concerns different historical perspectives of both the ROK and Japan, which could work against the ROK to gaining full access to bases in Japan. The final threat is a lack of political will to forge a new relationship from both the ROK and Japanese national mindsets.

Evaluation Criteria Analysis for Major Conflict Event

In the case of the major conflict critical event, when the UNC exists, ROK legitimacy across all four considerations is better than when the UNC does not exist. The single advantage to the UNC not existing is that ROK JCS and MND must reinforce the Military Reform Plan to support and fill the gap of currently existing capabilities by the existence of the UNC.

Furthermore, access to UNC command and control (C2) as well as the capability to flow reinforcements through Japan tilt the scale decisively toward a continued UNC presence. The UNC helps fill currently existing capability gaps in ROK's cyber defense, surface-to-surface ballistic missile on the front line, and more importantly, the system to consolidate and disseminate multi-source intelligence to fighting units.¹¹

Findings

The first secondary research question concerns a role of the UNC relating to the case of conventional warfare: What is the role of the UNC in terms of history and background?

The first finding is that UNC (Rear) HQ is critical to success in a conventional war. In terms of the critical security event of major conflict between the ROK and DPRK, at minimum, the UNC has a role focused on multinational operations and sustainability to

wage a war on the Korean Peninsula by utilizing the UNC (Rear) HQ and seven bases in Japan under the agreement of UNC-Japan SOFA. However, it is still doubtful for a full execution of the UNC functions, because UNC organizations are not staffed to deal with complex multinational operations in crisis.

A second finding is that if the UNC is not present, the ROK defense budget must expand to fill gaps in a wide range of enablers. Absent the UNC, the ROK government and military will be forced to implement a supporting plan to replace UNC capabilities for force flow, and other wartime enablers. Although costly, this could have positive long-term effects on the ROK MND military Reform Plan in terms of independent development in leading combined operations. Absent the UNC, the ROK-U.S. 'Mutual Defense Treaty' takes on greater importance.

A third finding is that without the UNC framework, command and control for multinational operations become more difficult. The ambiguous command relationship between both the ROK JCS and the future KORCOM, between the ROK JCS and multinational forces, and between KORCOM and multinational forces from UNC member nations in the event of armed conflict could decrease operational effectiveness. Moreover, the non-existence of the UNC could have negative impact on member states covered under the Joint Policy Declaration. The consequence could result in their not returning to the KTO conflict again without the support of the UNC. The risk is a perception that the ROK JCS could not provide appropriate legitimacy to the international community and for their internal political procedures to gain a multinational coalition. Another risk concerns the seven bases in Japan. Given the historical context, a ROK-Japan agreement might be difficult to achieve. The UNC can help mitigate this animosity.

In response to the question, the UNC has a historical role to guarantee the Armistice, ensure a steady flow of reinforcements, and mitigate differences. The question becomes who fills these roles if the UNC goes away.

Case Two: Armistice Agreement Incident Event

When the UNC does exist

Wargame

The major functions of the UNC during peacetime are to maintain and supervise the Armistice Agreement and the CINCUNC has authority to direct CFC on problems related to the Armistice. He can also request combat forces to deal with Armistice violations.¹² The ROK military also maintains a complete readiness posture to safeguard ROK territory, which ranges up to the northwestern five islands and the territories in the East, West and South Sea areas. In the DMZ and other vulnerable areas, the military has been developing a security system based on advanced surveillance equipment in order to strengthen its security posture in those areas.

In terms of the five islands off the west coast, the UNC has authority to develop and disseminate Armistice-related rules of engagement. To this end, this UNC established the NLL to prevent unintended clashes. Both sides believe the NLL is an effective means of separating South and North Korea military forces and thus reducing military tensions. More incidents related with NK's attempt to nullify the NLL could be mitigated as long as the UNC is present to support the validity of the NLL. From the ROK perspective, recent opposition and arguments on this NLL issues inside and outside ROK could make the ROK move vulnerable to NLL issues. In this regard, it is important

to maintain consistent UNC support established by the UNSCR. The UNC also brings capabilities from member states supporting Joint Policy Declaration.

SWOT Analysis

The primary strength is that the validity of the NLL and security measures for the five islands could be kept by the existence of the UNC. The UNC supports the three-mile waters along the NK coast in the Yellow Sea, and classified all the other waters as international waters. In spite of the fact that there could be NK military attempts to leverage ambiguity of territorial waters, it is clear that NK incursions across the NLL indicate that NK knows that the UNC plays a key role of validity of the NLL and security on the Peninsula. An overarching strength is that DMZ and maritime confrontations could again be resolved through negotiations rather than confrontations.

Conversely, the primary weakness is that, with the wartime OPCON transfer, the CFC loses its supporting role in upholding the Armistice Agreement. As a result, the close relationship and planning with one commander responsible for Armistice mechanisms and combat forces no longer exists. This loss of unity of command changes the nature of dealing with Armistice incidents on critical areas as the five islands and rapid responses to Armistice incidents. Another weakness to the Armistice Agreement is that recently General Officer Talks (GOT) have taken the place of the MAC as a forum for negotiation between the UNC and NK. However, neither the MAC nor GOT have helped resolve boundary issues of repeated NK invasions of the NLL.

The dominant opportunity for the UNC after OPCON transfer concerns flexibility to deal with any NK provocation. The UNC has direct links to the US JCS and ROK JCS. Any Armistice Agreement incident still moves through the same command channels as

before OPCON transfer. The opportunity is to enhance ROK participation in any international talks as well as ROK-U.S. ties could be strengthened. An outgrowth is to enhance the ROK-U.S. mutual security treaty.

Conversely, the dominant threat is that the UNC collapses from within. Even with the existence of the UNC, the ROK government must define and develop new Armistice maintenance lines of communication. This includes a ROK government challenge of persuading coming generations to accept the goodness for the existence of UNC on the Korean Peninsula. Failing to do so lessens the UNC's deterrence factor in dealing with NK in smaller scale security issues. The development of an internal independence movement could have a negative impact on maintaining the Armistice Agreement. The Armistice was originally to be temporary, with a political conference to be held between two sides in order to replace the Armistice Agreement by a Peace Agreement or Reconciliation Agreement. These permanent agreements are not in sight. To date, there has been little bureaucratic or political appetite on either side to revisit the Armistice or the structure of the UNC in any substantial way. The threat is that absent ROK government and popular strength, the UNC Armistice role can be undermined and made no longer relevant. The Armistice could collapse from within.¹³

When the UNC does not exist

Wargame

Whether the dismantlement of UNC was made by either inter-ROK political pressures or international diplomacy, the ROK assumes the lead role to manage Armistice related incidents after the wartime OPCON transfer in 2015. This requires the ROK to confront the fact that there are no legal grounds or actual guarantee of acceptance

to maintain and supervise the Armistice Agreement on the Korean Peninsula. Recently, the DPRK unilaterally discarded its Armistice Agreement roles without any negotiations among signatory members, not even with Chinese government. Such unilateral military tensions imply that NK also discarded any hope to discuss maritime control measures. As a result, space for unconventional warfare expands as NK works to expand influence to the five islands. This also increases the likelihood that the ROK and DPRK interfere with each other in the Yellow Sea, as NK has stated intentions to take enforcement action in the process of securing the right to control waters.

As far as Armistice incidents around the areas of the DMZ, with non-existence of the UNC, the authority to maintain the Armistice goes to the ROK JCS. The ROK JCS assumes responsibility to investigate and deal with all Armistice matters of future incidents. Historically, the investigation of any Armistice DMZ incident has been mostly invalid because NK never participated in the investigations and never accepted UNC results. In this regard, it is not difficult for the ROK military to understand how NK will react to the non-existence of the UNC and how NK will leverage the advantages of non-existence of the UNC without U.S. involvement.

SWOT Analysis

The primary strength of disbanding the UNC is that Armistice matters move to a South and North political framework. Since we have no power to predict the future, it is still possible that NK opens communication channels internally and externally with non-existence of the UNC. Since NK joined the United Nations system, the NK has consistently insisted that the existence of the UNC is the only obstacle between the two Koreas to solve Cold-War ideology problems. In this peaceful scenario, it is possible for

both Koreas to establish a new military system to maintain the Armistice Agreement and to develop a future peaceful status for the Korean Peninsula. In the case of any future NLL-related incidents, this new military system will be activated by the agreement in order to solve security problems.

Conversely, the primary weakness is that people in South Korea doubt all NK statements and have a deep distrust of NK support for the Armistice Agreement. For example, in case of future incidents involving the five islands, it is highly possible for the NK to suggest a new definition for territorial waters around the five islands. As history shows, previous agreements were broken mainly by NK's unilateral declarations. Furthermore, a NK attack on SK targets, especially if civilian casualties occur, could lead to an escalating series of NK and ROK actions and reactions with potential to lead to major border conflicts.

The dominant threat emerges from Clause 19 in Article V of the Armistice Agreement. According to the Armistice Agreement, the UNC is the one signatory with the North Koreans and Chinese. Without the presence of the UNC on the Korean Peninsula, it is necessary for the ROK to establish a counter-measure to deal with any incidents related to the Armistice Agreement. The opportunity is for the ROK government to engage NK to establish either a new legitimate supervising organization within the control of ROK JCS or new mutually agreed measures to control the land and water borders along with the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). Such an agreement could enhance the ability of both Koreas to deal with further unification-related matters and with further peaceful enforcement of Armistice-related issues for the five islands in Yellow Sea.

In summary, alternative approaches when the UNC is absent present opportunities surrounded by threats. Peaceful approaches could bring out the most critical threats or great opportunities. The ROK could show impartiality in dealing with security incidents. There is a threat of either side showing bias that hinders security talks. On one hand, the ROK gains in reputation, while a minor incident could escalate to major problems. If NK refuses to negotiate with the ROK to establish a new security framework, then regional security may become less stable. The decision to disband the UNC opens the way to the threat of a worsening situation. Absent the UNC, there are no clear lines between opportunities and threats.

Evaluation Criteria Analysis for Armistice Agreement Incident Event

In the case of unconventional warfare or Armistice Agreement incidents on the Korean Peninsula, there are advantages both to having and not having the UNC. When the UNC does exist, the validity of the NLL can be defended by the existence of the current UNC. The NLL is a UNC control measure, which ensures the proper authority to enforce the Armistice based measure on Yellow Sea.

Conversely, when the UNC does not exist, the ROK MND could increase its capabilities to control these areas by increasing military capabilities and international support agreements. In case of Armistice Agreement incidents, UNC cases have unique opportunities and threats to the ROK. CFC and a strong ROK military have overtaken the UNC Armistice enforcement functions. Alternatively, a continued UNC presence brings uninterrupted international support to the ROK in case a minor incident escalates to a major problem. Overall, in regard to irregular warfare or Armistice violations, the overall

assessment is less than desirable due to the risk of an unintended escalation into a major conflict.

Findings

The second secondary research question concerns UNC roles in case of unconventional warfare involving Armistice violations and the five islands. What is the role of the UNC relating to the issue of five islands with the Northern Limit Line (NLL)?

The finding is that the NLL is a UNC control measure that supports peace and security for the five islands. In a way, current combat forces to maintain the Armistice status on the border between two Koreas are mainly the ROK military armed forces along the DMZ. Along the DMZ, ROK forces are fully capable to maintain the status quo.

However, due to the five islands being a maritime matter, north of the 38th parallel, and near the NK border, the situation is less clear. Since NK claims territorial waters that surround the islands, the UNC imposed the NLL is an Armistice based control measure. While not perfect, the NLL is a well-known measure to separate forces. Without UNC credibility in Armistice enforcement, there is a risk that NK will seize the opportunity to impose its own control measure. Without the UNC, the ROK must guarantee the peaceful status on this five islands area. This could involve a political agreement to find alternative ways to solve the problems related to these islands.

In response to the question, the UNC represents the foundation for Armistice based measures to ensure peace and security for the five islands.

Case Three: Natural Disaster Event

When the UNC does Exist

Wargame

The UNC has the legal and systematic framework to build international support in case of a natural disaster. Following the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, UNC (Rear) HQ in Japan supported disaster relief operations. During Operation Tomodachi, UNC (Rear) coordinated the transit of aircraft, vessels, equipment, and forces from 12 March to 4 May 2011. This operation involved 24,000 U.S. service members, 189 aircraft, 24 naval ships, and cost \$90 million.¹⁴ This same access to activate C2 systems in the UNC and UNC (Rear) HQ, in case of serious natural disaster in Korea is currently available to the ROK government. The UNC in Korea and UNC (Rear) HQ in Japan provide ready access to international support for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

For the ROK, the UNC brings the additional benefit of close and habitual military-to-military ties through the sixteen member nations. In the event of a natural disaster on the Peninsula, the UNC can provide a tailor-made source for international support as well as lines of communication to other key actors in northeast Asia.

SWOT Analysis

The overarching strength is for the ROK to take advantage of the existing multinational command systems. These systems provide accessibility to international relief efforts and coordinate efforts to the targeted areas in case of a natural disaster.

Conversely, the primary weakness concerns the small UNC staff organization. An over worked and over extended staff could cause problems that include

miscommunications with the international community, and poorly coordinated efforts to untargeted relief areas.

The big opportunity is to draw NK into multinational support efforts in ways that enhance communication channels. The outgrowth could lead to an improvised security management environment. The pressing threat is ROK super dependence on the UNC in natural disaster situations, which increase ROK reliance on external sources for humanitarian assistance in future natural disaster cases.

When the UNC does not Exist

Wargame

According to the ROK MND 'White Paper2010,' the UNC complements ROK capabilities. The ROK government has flexible response options to each type and each stage of a disaster situation. In the ROK, military personnel are trained systematically through various types of programs. Moreover, the National Disaster Management Information System was established for units at the battalion level and below. The entire military participate in regular disaster response Command Post Exercises (CPX). ROK military units also maintain proficiency in the ability to respond to various situations by participating in the national level Safe Korea Exercise (SKX).¹⁵

The ROK MND published a 'Manual for Military Transport Aircraft Duties Related to the Government's Overseas Disaster Emergency Rescue.' The manual outlines procedures for emergency rescue teams to use military transport aircraft for a rapid rescue operation when joining disaster recovery initiatives in other countries. In May 2010, a government simulation exercise was conducted according to this manual so that government-wide comprehensive performance abilities could be reviewed.¹⁶

Although the ROK government and ROK MND exert great efforts in preparation for natural disaster on and off the Korean Peninsula, without the UNC the ROK will face significant challenges to achieve the same level of full operational capability and full accessibility to seven UNC bases in Japan. If all UNC forces withdraw from Korea or if the UNC is dismantled, then the UNC-Japan SOFA ends and the seven bases will no longer be available. As a result, the non-U.S. (Australian, Canada, France, New Zealand, Philippine, Thailand, and United Kingdom) forces can no longer be based in or transit freely through Japan.

SWOT Analysis

Without the presence of UNC, the primary strength is that the ROK government enhances its capability to train and employ military personnel in managing natural disaster recovery operations. Absent the UNC, ROK agencies control existing and reserve military units at the battalion level and below.

Conversely, the primary weakness is that the ROK JCS has to deal with all matters related to disaster relief operations supported by the future KORCOM structure. This highlights a risk that the scope, pace, and volume of disaster relief operations on ROK systems could give the wrong message to the NK. In this event, the ROK must deal simultaneously with two complicated problems. The first is to deter or defeat any NK aggressive actions. The second is to manage and coordinate operations with the international community.

The dominant opportunity is that the ROK could enhance its political relationship with Japan in order to guarantee the same level of accessibility to UNC bases in Japan.

As stated before, there are still many challenges for the ROK to achieve the same capabilities as the UNC currently provides.

Conversely, the dominant threat is an unpredictable NK reaction in the case of a natural disaster on the Korean Peninsula to create regional instability. Ostensibly, this would require that the U.S. reach a new negotiated agreement with Japan in order to maintain the bases, which only further complicates the already highly sensitive political issues of relocating several bases in Okinawa.¹⁷ NK's reactions are always unpredictable. In this regard, it is still possible for the NK to be trying to take initiatives while the ROK deals with a severe natural disaster. For example, NK could attempt to take the five islands in order to make the ROK and U.S. sit at the negotiation table and nullify the NLL permanently.

Evaluation Criteria Analysis for Natural Disaster Event

In the case of a natural disaster, UNC presence has a positive contribution to ROK legitimacy. In taking advantage of the chaos in a natural disaster, NK can make things worse when the ROK suffers from any natural disaster. The ready access to international support and the flow of aid through Japan are compelling. The U.S. presence associated with the UNC serves as a deterrent to NK provocations. In the event of a natural disaster in NK, the UNC presence ensures quick international assistance to deal with refugees, technical support, and border security. Overall, continued UNC presence is a benefit to ROK legitimacy.

Findings

The third secondary research question refers to a potential role of the UNC in the case of a natural disaster. The question asked: What is the UNC role concerning humanitarian assistance?

The first finding is that although humanitarian assistance is not an Armistice matter, the UNC does bring unique capabilities to deal with humanitarian assistance on either side of the DMZ. It is hard to identify clear a UNC role in the natural disaster case in the Armistice Agreement. One thing is clear for the ROK government; the capabilities the UNC brings to a conventional war also could apply to humanitarian assistance in any natural disaster. The UNC has the systems and agreements to coordinate and enable internal support both on the Peninsula and through bases in Japan. The UNC also brings a robust command and control (C2) system that exists at UNC HQ and in UNC (Rear) HQ in Japan.

The second finding is that the UNC brings military and international support to deter NK from attempting to take advantage of a humanitarian crisis. The UNC is an important component for ROK contingency plans for response to any major conflict or NK provocation while conducting disaster relief operations.

In response to the question, the UNC role during humanitarian assistance execution is much the same as for Armistice enforcement since the two conditions involve ensuring peace and stability on the Peninsula.

Summary

This chapter applied the research methodology described at the chapter 3 in order to develop responses to questions concerning UNC roles in major conflict, an Armistice Agreement incident, or any natural disaster on the Peninsula.

This chapter included a matrix wargame of three cases of critical security events dealing both with when the UNC does exist and when not. The data generated from the matrix wargame enabled identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for the ROK JCS and government. The follow-on analysis, the evaluation criterion analysis, supports the condition that when the UNC does exist has advantage over when the UNC does not exist (see table 4.

Table 4. The Result of Evaluation Criteria Analysis

	Criteria	Legitimacy				Assessment
	Condition	1	2	3	4	
Major Conflicts	UNC	O	O	O	O	Advantage
	No UNC	D	L	L	L	
AA Incidents	UNC	D	D	O	D	Advantage
	No UNC	D	L	L	L	
Natural Disaster	UNC	D	O	D	O	Advantage
	No UNC	D	L	D	L	

(Legend: 1-Secure border, 2-Continuity of U.S. military presence in the ROK, 3-Safe and Secure Environment on the five islands, 4-Effective multinational operation, L-Less desirable, D-Desirable, O-Optimal)

Source: Created by author.

The findings framed UNC key roles to facilitate effective multinational operations by utilizing the UNC (Rear) HQ and seven bases in Japan, a fundamental foundation for the validity of the Northern Limit Line and maritime stability. The UNC serves as an effective hub for the ROK to acquire humanitarian assistance from the international community by leveraging existing C2 systems and Japan bases. Together, the findings identified some limitations and obstacles for the UNC to become effectively involved in its key roles in the future.

Chapter 5 provides the response to the primary research question, conclusions developed from this study, recommendations, and future research topic areas.

¹In aim to support this Military First Strategy, the NK developed the concept of ‘Four-Point Military Lines.’ Four-Point Military Lines are as follows: Instilling cadre potential in every soldier, Modernizing the entire military, Arming the entire population, and turning the whole nation into a fortress.

²Grace Lee, “The Political Philosophy of Juche,” *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 3 (Spring 2003): 105.

³Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 28.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012), 1.

⁶Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, Annex.

⁷Mark E. Manyin and Mary Beth Nikitin, CRS 7-5700, *Foreign Assistance to North Korea* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 1-5.

⁸Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰History and Headlines, “Joint Policy Declaration,” <http://www.historyandtheheadlines.abc-clio.com/contentpages/ContentPage.aspx?entryId=1498186¤tSection=1498040&productid=33> (accessed 8 April 2013).

¹¹Eurasia Review, “South Korea’s Defence Reform Plan: A Case of Bad Timing?–Analysis,” 18 October 2012, <http://www.eurasiareview.com/18102012-south-koreas-defence-reform-plan-a-case-of-bad-timing-analysis/> (assessed 1 May 2013).

¹²Jung, “The Future of UNC in ROK,” 5.

¹³Balbina Y. Hwang, “Reviving the Korean Armistice: Building Future Peace on Historical Precedents,” *KEI (Korea Economic Institute) Academic Paper Series* 6-6 (June 2001): 5.

¹⁴Eric Johnston, “Operation Tomodachi a Huge Success, but was it a one-off?” *The Japan Times*, March 2012.

¹⁵Ministry of National Defense, *2010 Defense White Paper*, 69-70.

¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁷William L. Brooks, “The Politics of the Futenma Base Issue In Okinawa: Relocation Negotiation in 1995-1997, 2005-2006,” *Asia-Pacific Policy Papers Series* (2010): 1-105.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this research was to determine if there is a future role for the UNC after wartime OPCON transition in 2015. Chapter 1 provided background to the topic and described historical context. Chapter 2 dealt with the historical roles and missions of the UNC in an “ends-ways-means” framework, OPCON shifts from the Korean War to the present, and background of controversy concerning the five islands. Chapter 4 applied the research methodology defined in chapter 3 in order to develop findings to support responses to the research questions.

The primary research question asked whether or not the UNC has a role after wartime OPCON transfer from the U.S. to the ROK in 2015 as planned by ‘Strategic Alliance 2015.’ The answer to the primary research question is yes, there are roles for the UNC to support and increase the ROK’s capabilities and enhance regional stability.

The findings presented in chapter 4 suggested that the case of the existence of the UNC is relatively more desirable to the ROK JCS and the ROK government than the case of non-existence of the UNC. The UNC brings C2 capabilities, robust RSOI capabilities, sustainment capabilities through existing UNC (Rear) HQ and seven bases in Japan. Furthermore, the UNC provides validity for control measures to prevent conflict in the Yellow Sea. In summary, this research supports the case for a UNC continued role following OPCON transition in 2015.

The aim of this chapter is to summarize findings, develop conclusions, provide the ROK government recommendations, and suggest future research. The responses to

the primary and secondary research questions support conclusions discussed in the following section.

Conclusions

In each of three cases of critical security events, a continued UNC is more desirable than when the UNC does not exist under condition when OPCON shifts in 2015. The UNC enhances the concept of ROK national defense and legitimacy. My findings support four conclusions.

The first conclusion is that the UNC has a historical role to guarantee the Armistice Agreement, ensure a ready flow of international reinforcements, and mitigate animosity between the ROK and other countries, including Japan.

The second conclusion is that the UNC represents the foundation for Armistice based measures to ensure peace and security for the five islands. Therefore, the UNC brings the validity of maritime control measures and provides the legitimate background supporting a secure maritime border around the five islands.

The third conclusion is that the UNC does bring unique capabilities to deal with humanitarian assistance on either side of the DMZ by leveraging the existing robust systems including C2, UNC (Rear) HQ, etc. These capabilities proved critical across the three cases for critical security events. This may be the single most difficult matter facing the ROK JCS if the UNC is taken out of existence.

The final conclusion is that this research found limitations and obstacles for future roles of the UNC. The first limitation is that the UNC still has some challenges in performing effectively its functions after the dismantlement of CFC in 2015. Moreover, a lack of staffing across the organization and negative political activities calling for

complete independence from the U.S. influence can also exert negative impact on the ROK government. The second limitation is that the UNC has been weakened and may be losing its initial ability to influence NK along with NK's unilateral disbandment of its Armistice framework. The third limitation is an unclear future command structure and chain of command between the ROK JCS and future KORCOM, and the ROK JCS and forces from international community can cause an operational pause even with UNC forces based in the ROK. Based on the conclusions, the following section provides recommendations.

Recommendations

The review of findings and conclusions noted several aspects of the UNC's roles in terms of deterring conventional and unconventional war, as well as humanitarian assistance in and outside the KTO. This research also identified some limitations to the UNC in gaining effective operational advantages over the DPRK.

Based on the findings and conclusions, there are three overarching recommendations and then specific recommendations related to three cases of critical security events.

The first overarching recommendation is to maintain the co-existence of the UNC with the CFC. This could support and even amplify such UNC roles after 2015. In spite of the fact that current plans call for the CFC to be dismantled with the transfer of the wartime OPCON according to the 'Strategic Alliance 2015,' certain benefits have been established since 1978. Importantly, having the coexistence of the UNC with the CFC could give the ROK strategic benefits including ready access to the established combined C2 systems, decision-making structures, and forces unique to the UNC.

The second overarching recommendation is that the UNC needs a more robust staff. Increasing personnel helps the UNC to interconnect with the ROK JCS and to communicate with other countries including member states of the Joint Policy Declaration, as well as other UN member states both in peacetime and wartime. More importantly, the ROK JCS needs to become more familiar with how the UNC works in multinational operations and provide personnel support to fill combined positions with the ROK officers, NCOs, and soldiers.

The third overarching recommendation is that the ROK needs more effective Strategic Communication (SC) strategy concerning the UNC. This effort should aim to influence internal and external actors. Internal, the effort is toward young generations to help them appreciate the UNC. External, the ROK needs to influence China to convince NK to rejoin the MAC or GOT negotiations. China, as a signatory member of the KWAA, could influence and persuade the NK to dialogue on the same table in the framework of the MAC or GOT so as to share military perspectives.

The following sections deal with more specific recommendations related to the three cases of critical security events.

Case One: Major Conflict Event Recommendations

Whether the UNC exists or is disestablished, security matters require unbiased analysis to keep the ROK secure from NK's armed forces. First of all, for either condition, the ROK MND and JCS need to implement a new multinational organization to support waging war in terms of activating the Joint Policy Declaration. Second, the new command and support relationship both between the ROK JCS and future KORCOM and between future KORCOM and member states of a Joint Policy Declaration need to be

defined clearly with support from ROK national political will. Third, the time is right for the ROK to develop a new strategic relationship with Japan to ensure the availability of seven UNC (Rear) bases in any crisis situation. Lastly, the ROK government and MND should develop a strategic communication strategy to help people understand UNC contributions without ROK independence being the deciding issue.

Case Two: Armistice Agreement Incident Event Recommendations

Along with a positive strategic communication (SC) strategy dealing with the further existence of the UNC, the ROK government needs to focus its SC strategy on influencing perceptions of young generations about continued existence of the UNC. A comprehensive strategic communication effort can help ROK and NK deal with the problem left over from history, the five islands. In this regard, the ROK government should establish a new channel to negotiate with NK to establish either a new legitimate supervising organization within the control of ROK JCS or new mutually agreed measures to control land and water borders along with the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). The goal is to enhance the ability of both Koreas to deal with further unification-related matters and with peaceful enforcement of Armistice-related issues about the five islands in Yellow Sea. Since the establishment of the Armistice Agreement in 1953, there have been no agreed changes in terms and conditions. To date, none of the parties concerned have shown interest to change its conditions and terms for next generations. Since there are still many political and historical obstacles to resolving Armistice issues, new negotiated measures are a way to address this dilemma. Ideally, the United Nations

Command will play a critical role in modifying the Armistice Agreement, especially related with the NLL issues on the KTO.

Case Three: Natural Disaster Event Recommendations

Recent development of the ROK MND and JCS disaster relief system needs to be synchronized with the international systems of the UNC. Increasing effectiveness of these lines of communication ensures the ROK presents a readiness posture to deter NK from attempting to benefit from a crisis situation. In order to synchronize these systems, the ROK MND and JCS need to integrate habitually aligned ROK liaison officers and NCOs into the UNC organization. Their role is to develop the strategic alliance with the Japan Self-Defense military authorities within the two nations' strategic guidance, as well as with other international systems. This research highlighted needs for future research described in the following section.

Future Research

This study began with a problem statement that there is little research concerning a role for the UNC after the transition of OPCON in 2015. This research is only a first step in bridging that gap. Continued research is necessary to determine the benefits and burdens of the continuing existence of the UNC after the OPCON transfer and dismantlement of the CFC in 2015. Moreover, the ROK JCS needs further research into how to overcome these identified limitations and obstacles. These limitations and obstacles include the appropriate and efficient command relationship and C2 structure both between the ROK JCS and KORCOM and between the ROK JCS and the 16 multinational member nations of the Joint Policy Declaration.

In addition, the ROK government and JCS need research into potential UNC roles relating to the deterrent factors against NK's nuclear threat. NK's recent nuclear tests are acting as a regional destabilizer. In this regard, the UNC could enhance its roles and functions to deter NK's nuclear ambition. Finally, future research needs to focus on additional benefits that the UNC could bring to the ROK in terms of nuclear non-proliferation.

Summary

The UNC, even after the wartime OPCON transfer in 2015, provides substantial benefits and support to the ROK JCS and government. While there are still some limitations and obstacles to be solved or be mitigated, a continued UNC appears in the best interests of all parties having interests in Peninsula security and regional stability. In addition, this study provided a wide range of recommendations for the ROK JCS and government to assume greater roles, even with the UNC present. Since NK has the longstanding goal to nullify the legitimacy of the UNC, it is another side of a matter that highlights the fact that the UNC may also be important to the NK. Based on this research, UNC roles for Armistice maintenance on the Korean Peninsula should enter a new era in 2015.

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