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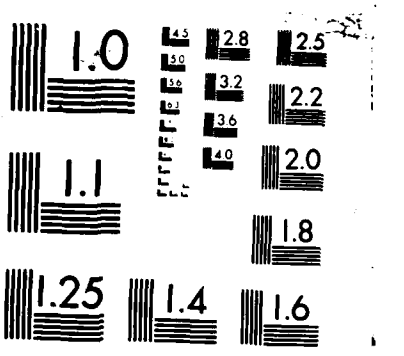

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AIR WAR COLLEGE

RESEARCH REPORT

No. AU-AWC-86-117

AD-A177 783

ARMS CONTROL IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

By COLONEL HYON KIM, KOREAN AIR FORCE

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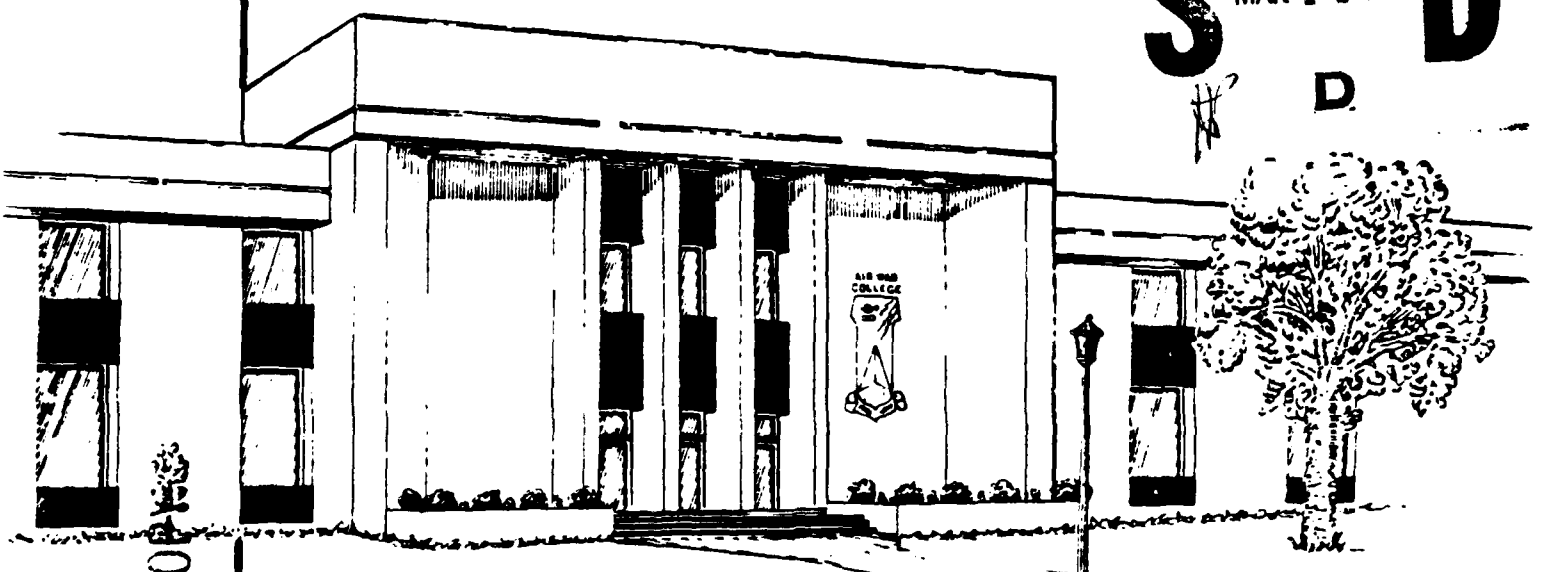

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ARMS CONTROL IN THE KOREAN PENINSULA

by

Hyon Kim

Colonel, Korean Air Force

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

IN

FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH

REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Colonel John K. Arnold

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

May 1986

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AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

TITLE: Arms Control in the Korean Peninsula

AUTHOR: Kim, Hyon, Colonel, Republic of Korea Air Force

Since the end of the Korean War, both North and South Korea have been building up their military power. This arms race has increased the risk of a military conflict between the North and South which could result in major power involvement. In recent years, various measures have been attempted to enhance stability in Korea to no avail. When the situation becomes more favorable for negotiations, the most difficult problem will be arms control. This paper discusses the interests of the two countries and of the four major powers involved and suggests a suitable format for arms control agreements.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Kim, Hyon(BS, Korean Air Force Academy) entered F-86F flying training upon graduation from the Korean Air Force Academy in 1966. He has flown F-86 and F-5 fighters and has been assigned to operation staff positions at all levels of command. He attended the Royal Air Force Staff College in the United Kingdom, then he was posted to the commander of an F-5 fighter squadron. His most recent assignment before leaving Korea was Director of War Studies in the Air Force Headquarters. He is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1986.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

It has been over 32 years since the Armistice Agreement was signed between United Nations Command, on the one hand, and the Supreme Command of the North Korea and the Command of the Chinese Peoples Volunteers, on the other. Today, South Korea's basic goal is to reduce tension, prevent the recurrence of hostilities, and establish a durable peace while the basic goal of North Korea is to communize the entire peninsula. The two Koreas, as a result of three decades of division and confrontation, now share few attributes.

The international situation surrounding the Korean peninsula is both complex and changing. South Korea is closely associated with the United States and Japan, and the North with the USSR and China. More than one million heavily armed troops of both sides who are antagonistic and suspicious toward each other are concentrated on this small peninsula. As important interests of China, the Soviet Union, Japan and the United States all converge in the peninsula, there is no other part of the region where the attainment of long-term stability is both so difficult and so vital as it is in Korea.

Dialogue and exchanges between South and North Korea at this juncture would bring them closer to a situation in which neither could use military force to reunify the country. In a political climate of reduced tension in Korea, the two Koreas could reach a basic peace treaty. This agreement could provide a basis on which to build arms control measures

in the penisula and international arrangements endorsed by the four major powers. This paper examines the interests of the two Koreas and of the four major powers involved and suggests a suitable format for arms control agreements.

CHAPTER II

MILITARY SITUATION IN KOREA

We can find the typical case for arms control on the Korean peninsula contained in the Armistice Agreement which put an end to hostilities of the Korean War on 27th July, 1953. The Armistice Agreement was signed when the North Communists lost almost all their capability to wage further war. They realized that they could not pursue the war without Red China's military support. Consequently, they came to the negotiating table and made a political gesture through arms control to buy time for their military restoration.

The Armistice Agreement essentially contains the character and contents of arms control. A military demarcation line was fixed by the Agreement and both sides withdrew two kilometers from this line so as to establish a demilitarized zone(DMZ) between the opposing forces.[1] Establishing such a DMZ provided arms control geographically; however, the article which specified demilitarization in the DMZ and the cessation of the introduction into Korea of reinforcing military personnel and armament, has become null because of violations by both sides.[2] In addition, the composition and the function of the four Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission became ineffective.[3]

Both sides have steadily built up their forces since the signing of the Armistice Agreement. Not only are these forces confronting each other in an unstable situation, but the peninsula is a focal point of converging interests of the neighboring powers. Given this geopolitical

and military situation, it is little wonder that widely divergent estimates of each side's military capabilities prevail at this time. The Military Balance, published by the International Institue for Strategic Studies(IISS), reflects the most accurate estimates available and the population, armed forces and defense expenditures of both sides are assessed as follows:[4]

The South Korean population outnumbers North Korea two to one. This presents difficulties for North Korea's military manpower administration. They resolve this problem by forcing extended military service upon the populace and by augmenting their regular forces with paramilitary organizations such as training units, the Farmers and Workers Red Guard and Red Youth Guard.

The South Korean Army is superior in manpower to that of North Korea but not necessarily in the number of combat divisions. North Korea emphasizes firepower and, in fact, is superior to South Korea in this respect.

The South Korean Navy has fewer naval craft but they are heavier and more seaworthy than their North Korean counterparts.

The Air Force of South Korea in particular is vastly outnumbered by that of the North. The strength ratio of combat aircraft between North and South is two to one.

North Korea spends 10 to 16 percent of its Gross National Product (GNP) on national defense. South Korea, on the other hand, has been spending an average of 4 to 7 percent of its GNP on defense.[5] The year 1975 was the turning point at which South Korea's defense expenditure exceeded that of North Korea in aggregate.[6]

Since the Armistice Agreement, there has been no major conflict. However, the North Koreans have violated the terms of the Agreement on more than 75,000 occasions.[7] In addition, both Koreas have violated DMZ demilitarization and reinforcement provisions of the Agreement and have continuously been supplied with equipment by the major powers. As a result of an arms race spanning three decades, more than one million heavily armed troops are poised on both sides of the 155 mile truce line. Any armed conflict between them would result in major power involvement. These major powers could impose a strict limit to the arms race which would, in effect, put the two Koreas under external arms control. Arms control negotiations would reduce the risk of war in Korea. Furthermore, the four major powers could improve the chances for successful negotiations by accepting a tacit understanding that a conflict in Korea would benefit none of them.

CHAPTER III

PROPOSED INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

Tacit Arms control has been an important issue for the peace of the Korean peninsula, thus some explicit measures have been suggested for reducing the risk of war in Korea. However, serious arms control proposals have not been raised for the peninsula. The suggested arms control measures contain three basic elements: the limitation of arms transfers, the renunciation of force and the establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone.

North and South Korean military affairs have, in the past, relied upon their neighboring countries or the major powers. This is likely to continue in the future. These military reliances have affected military techniques, employment of weapon systems and strategy for both North and South Korea. North Korea has built up their armed forces under USSR military grant-in-aid and the US has played a principal role in the maintenance of South Korea's defense capability. Generally speaking, the United States and the USSR have adopted conservative policies on the strengthening of the two Korea's armed forces respectively so as not to stimulate the arms race between the North and the South. This de facto limitation of arms transfers would lead to a international agreement among the US, the USSR and China.

The second element in this set of agreements would be the renunciation of force.[1] The two Korean governments would renounce the use of military force against each other. This would be the basic

agreement to which all others would be linked. They both have declared their willingness in principle to renounce the use of force against each other; however, they disagree sharply on the necessary conditions for entering into formal undertakings to this end. In a separate agreement, the four major powers would endorse the renunciation of force by the two Koreas and would themselves agree to refrain from the use of force in Korea.

The third element in this set of agreements would be a declaration by the two Koreas that their territories would constitute a nuclear weapons free zone.[2] The two Koreas would agree not to produce or possess nuclear weapons, or allow them into their territory. The four major powers would endorse this declaration, and agree not to transfer them to either Korea or use them against Korean territory. This could be the first step towards an expanded nuclear weapons free zone that would include Japan.

CHAPTER IV

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

The United States has sought ways of ensuring the long-term stability of Korea. Although not much has been said or written on the arms control issue relative to Korea, the proposed agreements have been discussed as a format for reducing the danger of armed conflict in Korea. General responses to the proposals are twofold: despite the inevitable difficulties and complexities, the proposed agreements are worth pursuing; and without improvements in the political climate, it seems impractical for the six parties to reach an agreement. Because of this ambiguity, recent study suggests a shift in approach for arms control. The new approach does not place emphasis on negotiating agreements about arms control but on implicit understandings and on indirect measures aimed at creating incentives for the two Korean leaders to enhance the prospects for maintaining peace.[1]

The Soviets have been the principal supplier of arms to North Korea and have been very cautious in providing weapons to the North. Since the Soviets do not appear to regard the unification of Korea under communism as an important national interest, they want Korea stabilized and might favor international arrangements for arms control. Therefore, they might propose bilateral negotiations with the US on the limitation of arms sales and the establishment of nuclear weapons free zone. However, because of the strategic disadvantages in the Pacific, the Russians might be more inclined to reach agreements on a regional

arrangement than on the specific Korean issue, and might have more interest in confidence building measures(CBM) than direct arms control measures. This viewpoint also can be found in a Leonid Brezhnev's speech to the 26th CPSU Congress on February 23, 1981.

> There is a region where we need to devise and apply confidence building measures..... This is the Far East, where such powers as the Soviet Union, China and Japan are neighbors..... The Soviet Union would be ready to hold specific talks with all interested countries on confidence building measures in the Far East.[2]

Although the Chinese have in the past consistently demanded the withdrawal of US forces from Korea, they are not at present pressing this case, for fear of Soviet expansionism and the military threat it poses to China. Present Chinese leaders appear to feel that the presence of US forces serves as a useful counter to the Soviet Union. Furthermore, since opening relations with Beijing, the US could check provocative actions by North Korea in time of tension through the Chinese channel. The Chinese do not want any inter-Korean conflict which could affect their cooperative relationship with the US and Japan. For these reasons, the Chinese would not oppose the acceptance of an international agreement on Korea.

Japan is the only neighboring country which does not have direct military involvement on the Korean Peninsula. However, Japan provides US bases through the US-Japan Security Treaty. These forces are committed to deploy to the peninsula in time of tension. The security of South Korea would be essential to Japan's own security and Japan has proposed such informal arms control arrangements as the nuclear-free zone and peace zone. There has been Japanese diplomatic

apprehension that the nationalistic tendencies of a unified Korea or a Korea dominated by one part, would result in antagonism towards Japan. In addition, Japan has a large and rapidly growing economic stake in South Korea. For these reasons, the majority of Japanese would welcome international arrangements to reduce the risk of war in Korea.

North Korea's fundamental policy aim has been to force US forces to withdraw from South Korea. Kim Il-Song, North Korea's Premier since 1946, has consistently rejected a role for the United Nations and any other form of restrictive international supervision in Korea. He calls for resolution of the Korean problem by the Koreans themselves without outside interference. North Korea's military proposals have been based on troop reductions or arms limitations, but their demands have not dealt with many related problems. In short, the North has excluded realistic and practical proposals. For instance, they demanded the reduction of troop levels to 100,000 or less, but there was no mention of any supervisory or control mechanism.[3] Even though Kim opposed provisions of a Mutual Non-Aggression Agreement proposed by former President Park in January 1974, he probably would not be opposed in principle to international negotiations which would enhance the international status of Pyongyang.

South Korea wants arrangements to reduce tension, prevent the recurrence of hostilities, and establish a durable peace on the peninsula. In short, South Korea has adopted a gradual step-by-step approach and has tried to solve the easier socio-economic problems

first rather than political and military ones. South Koreans have learned from recent history that its military force must be backed up by the United States. Hence, there would be deep suspicion in South Korea that international arrangements would serve only to weaken its power to resist invasion and to erode the willingness and support of the United States. However, President Park stated that 'if a non-aggression treaty is concluded between South and North Korea, I would not oppose the withdrawal of the US troops stationed in Korea'.[4] Thus, South Koreans would not necessarily oppose a peace treaty between the two and international arrangements in principle as long as mutual trust, based on sincere dialogue, is restored. As a result, not much has been said or written on the arms control problem. The non-aggression treaty is the only official proposal which the South has made.

The agreements may seem to be unrealistic in light of the complications posed by the hostility between North and South Korea and the serious differences between China and the USSR. Since all four major powers have a common interest in avoiding conflict over Korea, it is not impossible that they could work out arrangements either through formal agreements or through private understandings. However, a big obstacle to any agreement would be North Korean demands, supported by the USSR and China, for the total withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. There are no foreign troops in North Korea which does not need to have foreign forces on its soil because it borders

on the USSR and China; in contrast South Korea is separated from its defense treaty ally by approximately 5,600 miles. However, in the process of negotiations, if the tension were genuinely to decrease to the point where US military presence in South Korea was no longer required, South Korea would not oppose the withdrawal.

CHAPTER V

A MODEL FOR ARMS CONTROL

One of the major difficulties in ensuring the long-term stability of Korea lies in the complexity of any arrangement involving six parties. The best way to solve the complexity would be for the two Koreas to devise an effective method for arms control.

First of all, the two Koreas must establish the proper climate for negotiations. This could prevent military conflict, restore mutual trust and bring their different viewpoints together. For peace to be rooted in Korea, a mutual non-aggression pact should be concluded between the North and South. To this end, confidence building neasures should follow the pact and from these foundations the two sides could reach further arms control measures. A suitable format for an approach to arms control would be the formation of the North-South military consultative organization, the conclusion of a Mutual Non-Aggression Agreement, and arrangements of confidence building measures.

In accordance with the 1953 Armistice Agreement, the United Nations Command has represented South Korea on military problems between the North and South. In other words, there has been no direct North-South exchange on military problems. Therefore, as the first stage, a North-South Military Consultative Organization(MCO) should be established in order to open the way for North-South cooperation in military problems. The organization would be composed of higher

defense representatives from both sides. It is considered that the cause of failure in the North-South dialogue hitherto has been the arms race between the North and South resulting from the military power imbalance and deep suspicion towards each other. So, in the first stage, the MCO should study the structure and balance of weapon systems needed for military equilibrium. Therefore, the first stage would be devoted to military equilibrium through the MCO.

The second stage, the establishment of a Mutual Non-Aggression Agreement, would be an essential step for peaceful coexistence and the alleviation of antagonism. If the North is genuinely concerned about security and not about launching an aggressive war against the South, then there is no reason to oppose the agreement. For the North, the agreement would mean abandonment of the use of violent revolutionary strategy as a means of unification. For the South, the agreement would suggest the withdrawal of US forces. For both, the agreement would mean abandonment of the arms race and a pledge to the long-term aim of peaceful unification. What is most significant at this time, is that the agreement could provide the basis for other arms control steps. In addition to the declaration of mutual non-aggression, the agreement should include the following items:

@ A North-South Military Management Organization(MMO) should be established to carry out the directions of the MCO.

@ All military forces, supplies, and equipment should be withdrawn from the DMZ. This would be the first indication of substantial arms control intentions.

@ The agreement should provide an open-door policy for the exchange of information on military forces in being.

Although stage two would require both Koreas to agree to reduce mutual antagonism, it is important that mutual confidence is encouraged between the two Koreas. The international supervision of the DMZ and the exercise limitations would be envisaged as confidence building measures.

North Korea would strongly oppose effective international control of the DMZ, for its basic strategy has been to end United Nations involvement in Korea and compel the withdrawal of US forces. On the other hand, South Korea also would not accept international arrangements involving the withdrawal of US forces, for her experience with the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission has resulted in a loss of faith in this body. Furthermore, direct participation by the forces of the major powers seems to be impractical.

There are three possible methods of limiting exercises: limitation by overall size, limitation by duration and limitation by area.[1] The first is a very promising approach but it would be difficult to agree an upper limit, because South Korea needs to exercise with US forces. Limitation by duration has only one slight advantage. It prevents either side from maintaining a threat for a long period. In the peninsula a period of one week could probably be negotiated without great difficulty, but it would not appear to be very significant. Proposals involving limitation by area could be much more promising.

Certainly, the removal of major exercises from sensitive areas would do much to reduce fears of surprise attack from troops deployed under the guise of an exercise. However, national means of verification would be essential to ensure that the agreed measures are complied with. An ideal structure of CBM for the Korean peninsula would include:

@ The notification of exercises and movements above a defined level.

@ No exercises close to the DMZ and the restriction of exercises and movements to a low tactical level further back.

@ Exercises to be of limited duration.

@ Prohibition of live ammunition on exercises.

@ A national means of verification and exchange of personnel and liaison.

CHAPTER VI

ADDITIONAL ARMS CONTROL MEASURES

The experience gained by the implementation of the CBM could lead to developing and enlarging measures aimed at strengthening confidence and mutual arms reduction. At first, we can consider the limitation of forces and equipment by type and number in areas near the DMZ. If all heavy armour, most armed personnel and tactical strike aircraft were positioned at a distance from borders, they would be able to react defensively and contribute to the alleviation of tension. Assuming the withdrawal of US forces in Korea, the North would not oppose the move of main armed forces to the rear areas. However, it would be essential to arrange international supervision supported by the major powers whose interest would be served by keeping the risk of war low in Korea. The supervisory organ should have rights, powers and functions adequate to guarantee the effective supervision of the agreed measures.

These improvements in arms control and the political climate would increase the chance of agreement on arms reduction and make possible the withdrawal of US forces from Korea. As the two Korean governments gained confidence in the reliability of the arms control measures, they would perceive less need for the very large and heavily armed forces which both now maintain. It might then become possible to negotiate mutual and balanced force reductions, in manpower and in major weapon systems including the withdrawal of US forces. The major powers might undertake among themselves to limit the types and

amounts of major weapons they would supply. In this set of agreements, the two Koreas could agree not to manufacture or possess nuclear weapons, or allow them into their territories. The four major powers would endorse this declaration, agree to respect the status of Korea as a nuclear-free zone, and agree not to use nuclear weapons against Korean territory.

These additional arms control measures could provide the transition from the arms control stage to the arms reduction stage. To sum up, the best structure of the additional arms control measures would include:

@ The move of manpower and major weapon systems to the rear areas.

@ Arrangements for an arms reduction conference.

@ The step-by-step withdrawal of US forces from Korea.

@ International agreements on the limitation of weapon supplies to the peninsula.

@ An international supervisory organization composed of the major powers involved.

@ International agreements on a nuclear-free zone.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Armistice Agreement, signed in 1953, has been the only measure to avoid hostilities between the North and the South. It remains doubtful that the agreement will ensure a lasting cessation of hostilities. The North has two or three times as many artillery weapons and multiple rocket launchers and twice as many aircraft as the South. However, the North and the South have relied upon their neighboring countries or major power allies for support in military affairs. Such a reliance could put them under external arms control.

The US, the USSR, Japan and China have been greatly concerned about arms control in the peninsula. The US wants the two Koreas to reach a basic agreement for maintaining peace. The USSR might favor international arrangements to stabilize Korea. The Chinese and Japanese would not oppose the acceptance of international arrangements. However, the biggest obstacle to arms control is the vastly differing viewpoints of the two Koreas. North Korea's fundamental policy aim has been to get US forces withdrawn from South Korea. They call for resolution of the Korean problem by the Koreans themselves without outside interference. On the other hand, South Korea calls for their abandonment of aggression.

Arms control measures will work only if both sides want them to work and believe that the measures will enhance their own security. As a result, the best way to solve the problem is for the two Koreas to agree to work out solutions to end tension or hostilities. Therefore,

as the first stage, a North-South Military Consultative Organization should be established to open the way for North-South cooperation on military problems. In the next stage, if the 1953 Armistice Agreement can be replaced by a Mutual Non-Aggression Agreement, the road to an arms control agreement will be paved. After the Mutual Non-Aggression Agreement, mutual confidence should be encouraged between the two Koreas. Limitations to exercises would be the best way to build this confidence.

The experience gained by the implementation of the confidence building measures could lead to additional arms control measures which could include the withdrawal of US forces, international agreements on the limitation of weapon supplies, the formation of an international supervisory organization and international agreement on a nuclear weapons free zone. If North and South Korea ever come to cooperate with each other, it will not only be beneficial to arms control but will also help restore the sense of unity among the Korean people and foster a climate for peaceful unification. No dramatic results are likely soon. However, South Korea will continue to exert every effort with sincerity and patience to accomplish this task. Success could be the key-stone for peace in the Far-East.

NOTES

CHAPTER II(Pages 3-5)

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2. Ibid.,Article 2.

3. The Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission composed of representatives from Sweden, Switzerland, Poland and Czechoslovakia, was established to supervise provisions of the Agreement.

4. IISS, The Military Balance 1984-1985, P.102-103

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