STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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KOREAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY IN NORTH EAST ASIA: SHOULD U.S. SUPPORT REUNIFICATION OF KOREA UNDER SOUTH KOREA'S CONTROL?

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S./ROK Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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Korea's separation partly resulted from U.S. misunderstanding of Korea's strategic value in the region. As long as the confrontation between North Korea and South Korea continues, U.S. interests in the region are at stake. However, U.S. policy on Korean reunification has been unclear whether the U.S. prefers the status quo or reunification.

Reunification under South Korea's control would support U.S. interests in the region. Therefore, the U.S. should support South Korea's efforts to accomplish peaceful reunification under its control. For now, the U.S. must first help South Korea develop a healthy democracy, sound economic free market system, and a balanced and small but strong military. Second, the U.S., through South Korea, should encourage North Korea to open and reform the country.

Finally, the National Security Strategy must express U.S. support for the ROK's peaceful reunification as a primary goal in the region. A clear statement on the Koreas' peaceful reunification could lead countries in the region to understand that U.S. interests are stability, peace, and regional economic development rather than competition, containment, or confrontation.

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I selected this subject for the Korean's long-cherished desire to accomplish an independent, unified, democratic, economically developed and secured country, and save the North Korean population which is suffering under the communist dictator regime.

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KOREAN PERSPECTIVES ON THE U.S. POLICY IN NORTH EAST ASIA: SHOULD U.S. SUPPORT REUNIFICATION OF KOREA UNDER SOUTH KOREA'S CONTROL?

Korea had been an independent nation for more than a thousand years before Japan annexed Korea in 1905. After Japan surrendered to the United States on August 10, 1945, Korea became an independent nation again. However, it was divided into the north and south along the 38th parallel soon after independence.

During the Japanese rule, many Korean leaders escaped from the Korean peninsula and settled in China and Manchuria. They established a government in exile in China and resisted Japan to get independence. As Communism influenced Asian elites, during WWII Korean leaders in China were separated into two groups, Communist and Nationalist/Capitalist. They did not like but supported each other to fight against Japan. As the Japanese power became weaker, hatred between the two Korean groups was expressed more often and the gap between them became wider.

While the western Allied countries were struggling with defeating Germany and Japan, the Soviets were supporting communists in Asia. Korean communist leaders had become stronger by the time Japan surrendered to America. Korea's separation was already inherent in the division between Korean Communist and Nationalist/Capitalist leaders.

However, it was the international powers, specifically the U.S. and the USSR, that divided Korea into two parts, the North and South. In 1945, Josef Stalin and President Franklin Roosevelt made a deal at Yalta; Roosevelt wanted the Soviet Union to enter the war against Japan, and Stalin wanted buffer zones in Asia.[1]

As the Japanese surrendered, the Soviet 25th army drove down through Manchuria and headed for Korea. No one knew where the Soviet troops would stop. The separation of Korea took on sudden urgency. The U.S. ground troops nearest to Korea were on Okinawa, 600 miles south. Dean Rusk, then a young colonel on General George C. Marshall's staff and later secretary of state during the Kennedy-Johnson administrations, worked on this matter and recommended the 38th parallel as a dividing line. At that time, Rusk thought the Soviets would not likely accept the U.S. proposal but, to Rusk's surprise, the Russians agreed to the 38th parallel without hesitation.[2]

Communist North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950 soon after Secretary of State Dean Acheson stressed the importance of defending Japan at the National Press Club on January 12, 1950, and South Korea was left outside the chain of states to be protected. The U.S. intervened in the Korean War and had to sacrifice more than 137,000 young American casualties for three

years to get only partial success.[3] Korea is still divided between North and South, and the division still causes instability in North East Asia and incurs a high cost for managing the instability.

The purpose of this paper is not to blame the U.S. leadership for the division of Korea but to recognize that the division has caused threats, conflicts, high costs and instability in this region. The purpose of this paper is to analyze U.S. policy in the region, and it concludes that a better option would be to support the reunification of Korea under South Korea's control.

The U.S. has three national security goals: enhancing security at home and abroad; promoting prosperity; and promoting democracy and human rights.[4] To accomplish these goals, what have the U.S. policies been in the Korean peninsula? Have those policies been clear, successful, or right?

For instance, maintaining regional stability and security has been one of the U.S. vital interests in East Asia. However, since North Korea invaded South Korea, the region and international society have suffered from the North Korean threats. During the Cold War era, North Korea has posed various threats not only to South Korea but also to the world including the U.S. and Japan.[5] Even after the Soviet Union collapsed, North Korea threatened world security by developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and long-range missiles.[6]

Why have South Korea, the United States, and the world had to suffer from threats posed by North Korea? What advantages have the U.S. and the world had from the division of Korea? Has the U.S. preferred the status quo in the Korean peninsula to reunification, or the reverse, since its division? Several other questions also arise from this matter. If the Korean peninsula is reunified under South Korea's control, what is the future of the United States Forces Korea (USFK)? What is advantageous for the U.S. interests in the region? What are the risks for the U.S. policy in the region? This paper seeks answers to these questions.

U.S. POLICY IN THE REGION BEFORE THE KOREAN WAR

The U.S. had its first contact with Chosun in the late 19th century, as the world was shrinking and Western powers were encroaching upon Asia.[7] In the summer of 1866, an American merchant ship, the *General Sherman,* was destroyed on the Daedong-gang river near Pyongyang, and its captain and crew were killed. In May 1871, American Marines invaded Chosun and fought a short war on Kanghwado island near Inchon (then Chemulpo) and in the area between Seoul and Inchon. The first treaty of friendship and commerce between the United States and Chosun (commonly called the Shufeldt Treaty or the Chemulpo Treaty) was signed on May 22, 1882 at Inchon. After the treaty's conclusion, the Chosun government sent

missions to the United States in 1883 to learn more about America and to promote friendly relations.[8]

Since the first contact, Korea was a forgotten country to America until the American Army arrived in Korea after the Japanese surrender. In the early 20th century, the U.S. did not have interests in the Korean peninsula. America's lack of interest in Korea is easily explained. Whether missionaries, businessmen, concession-hunters or diplomats, interested Americans thought China was potentially significant because of its size and population. However, Korea, about the same size as Florida, remained chiefly of regional importance. With a lack of understanding regarding the strategic value of the Korean peninsula in 1905, the U.S. formalized a secret agreement with Japan giving the U.S. free rein over the Philippines in return for Japanese control of Manchuria and Korea.[9]

Japan annexed Korea successfully and became strong enough to win wars against China and Russia. Then, Japan dared to attack Pearl Harbor, thus initiating the Pacific War. The United States main theater of war was in Europe, and the U.S. had to suffer defeats by the Japanese in the early engagements such as the Philippines. The U.S. military also had to pay sacrifices to defeat the Japanese military and occupy islands across the Pacific. As Japanese defenders on the islands chose to die rather than surrender, the U.S. strategic leaders anticipated it would require severe casualties trying to land on the Japanese homeland. The U.S. wanted the Soviet Union to intervene in the Pacific war from Siberia to fix the Japanese strong army in Manchuria, even though the U.S. leadership recognized that this would put Russia in a strong post-war position in North East Asia.

The U.S. later made an important decision against the plan to invade the Japanese homeland, and instead decided to use a new technology to destroy the Japanese will to fight. On August 6 and 9, 1945, the U.S. Air Force dropped two atomic bombs on two industrial cities in Japan. The use of two atomic bombs gave the United States great advantage and permanently broke Japan's will to fight. The Japanese were hurt and dishonored because they were the first and only target for the atomic bomb, and this emotion would never be erased. Japan realized that the new bomb's destruction capability was too great, and surrendered on the day after the second atomic bombing. Two days after the U.S. first nuclear attack, the Soviet Union entered the Pacific war and sent several divisions of Russian troops rapidly through Manchuria to Korea, defeating the weakened Japanese troops.[10]

The United States did not yet see that the Korean peninsula was important to its own national interests. The U.S. primary national interest in North East Asia was a secure Japan. The Soviet Union, however, already recognized the strategic value of the Korean peninsula.[11]

The Soviet Union let the Red Army and twenty to thirty thousand Koreans who served in it drive into Korea. To the United States the shortage of available troops and the long distance between Korea and the nearest U.S. forces was of great concern. In order to occupy as much of Korea as possible, the U.S. leadership made the proposal that resulted in the division of Korea on the 38th parallel.[12]

Between 1945 and 1948 the political situation in Korea was like a market place where the Rightists and Leftists established their own parties. The number of parties, including minor political parties, numbered in the hundreds. Korea had been an independent country with a long history. The people were proud of their culture, language, and their own country. After suffering from a thirty-six-year Japanese annexation, every political leader was eager to develop Korea as an independent nation in accordance with his own idea. The Americans distrusted the Leftists because of their socialism and susceptibility to outside Communist control. Even though the U.S. government had had unfavorable experience with Korean exiles in China and America, Americans were more comfortable with the Rightists because Americans thought that the Rightists' political and economical ideas were less strange. The American's perspective in 1945 was that Korea had no experience with democracy and its political leaders had little administrative experience.[13]

This perspective gap between Korean political leaders and the Americans made it difficult for the American military government to stabilize Korea as an independent, united, and democratic country. Conversely, the Soviets were supporting Korean communists to establish a government in the north portion of Korea, and were already fortifying the 38th parallel in 1945. Because the Soviets had to cope with human and material destruction at home in 1945/46 they had neither the resources nor the will to create a full satellite state in Korea. However, the Soviets supported Kim Il Sung's formation of a government which had a degree of autonomy in North Korea, greater than that allowed to several eastern European states.[14] Kim Il Sung, with Soviet support, could build a stronger military than could South Korea, as is shown in Table 1 below.

While the Soviet Union was helping Kim Il Sung build a communist country in the north, the United States military government was struggling with Korean Rightists because of different perspectives and misunderstandings between the two sides. Even after the South Koreans established a legitimate government under UN observation, the U.S. and the new Republic of Korea (ROK) government had difficulties trying to improve South Korea's economic, political, social, and military conditions.

It seemed that the Soviets had no settled policy for the unification of Korea as a communist country until the Chinese Communists swept the Chinese Nationalists from northeastern China in 1948-1949. According to a CIA report in 1947, the Soviet policy in Korea was directed toward the establishment of a friendly state which would never serve as a base of attack upon the USSR. In order to attain this objective at a minimum cost to its own scanty resources in the Far East, the USSR had attempted to make North Korea economically self-sufficient, though politically subordinate. The same report also argued that Soviet long-term goals to integrate the entire Korean peninsula in the Soviet defense system were a questionable assertion.[15] As long as the Chinese Nationalists were occupying much of Manchuria, Kim Il Sung also had to defend North Korea from being squeezed by South Korea and the Chinese Nationalists.

Classification	North Korea	South Korea
Personnel	198,380	105,752
Infantry Divisions	10	8
Tank Brigade	1	0
Howitzers	552	91
Mortars	1,728	960
Tanks	242	0
Armored Vehicles	242	27
Anti-Tank Artillery	550	140
Planes	Fighter/Bomber/Others: 211	Training/Liaison: 22
Guarding Ship	30	28

TABLE 1. COMPARISON OF MILITARY POWER BETWEEN SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA IN 1950[16]

The Chinese Communists' victory in China dramatically changed North Korea's situation, and also raised the ante for the Soviets. The North Korean and Soviet strategic objective then became clear: to unify the Korean peninsula under the communist government by force. Meanwhile, the U.S. took several steps to abandon South Korea and remove the Korean peninsula from its national interests.

Since Japan surrendered in 1945, the U.S. policy on Korea had seemed to be to make Korea not only independent and united, but also democratic; however, American leaders had made no single, well-calculated decision about the strategic value of Korea to U.S. interests in the region. A country, to deter any aggression, should threaten to impose greater losses on an opponent than the opponent can hope to gain by attacking. The United States, however, never

made a conclusive decision to defend Korea, nor did it make a credible military threat against North Korea or the Soviets. Instead, the United States began to withdraw its troops from South Korea in the fall of 1947.

The U.S. turned South Korea over to the UN to minimize South Korea's vulnerability and tried to redeem its commitment to South Korea by providing enough military aid (it was not enough, though, as seen in Table 1) to enable South Korea to defend itself, but they would not commit to defend South Korea in the future. A widely publicized speech on Asia policy by U.S. Secretary of State Dean Acheson, in which he drew what he called the American "defense perimeter" in the Pacific, was the last waterdrop to overflow a cup.[17] The speech had the effect of triggering the aggression of Kim Il Sung and his sponsors. North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel at dawn on June 25, 1950. It was a little more than 5 months after the Acheson speech.

U.S. POLICY DURING THE KOREAN WAR

With the 3rd Brigade of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) attacking on the Ongjin Peninsula at 0400, Sunday, 25 June 1950, the DPRK troops, reinforced by T-34 tanks, crashed into the ROK defense lines along the 38th parallel. With no tanks or anti-tank weapons, the ROK was not able to stop the DPRK rush to Seoul at any defense line except for the mountainous area north of Chunchon where the DPRK tanks had to advance one by one on a narrow, curved, up and down road.

As the DPRK offensive took the ROK by surprise, policymakers in the United States were also caught off guard. The DPRK attack occurred at about three o'clock Saturday afternoon, Washington time. President Truman was in his home town of Independence, Missouri, and Secretary Acheson was at his farm in Maryland. The first official report on the fighting in Korea by the United States Ambassador to Korea, John J. Muccio, reached the State Department at 21:26. By midnight all administration officials, except for Paul Nitze and George Kennan, had received the news.[18]

The U.S. policy had been to abandon Korea in the event of a major hostile attack. However, U.S. President Truman changed U.S. policy 180 degrees in the 24 hours after the attack, even quicker than the Soviets and North Koreans expected, by making a decision to defend Korea.

Why did the Americans decide that it was a responsibility of the United States to intervene in the Korean War, first with air and naval power and almost immediately thereafter with ground forces as well? It could not have been because the Korean peninsula was thought to have

special strategic importance; if it had been so regarded, the U.S. forces in Korea would not have withdrawn from Korea, or Secretary Acheson would not have mentioned that Korea was out of the American "defense perimeter" in Asia.

Americans estimated that the DPRK did not attack the ROK purely on their own but as part of the world strategy of international communism. Americans worried about Soviet expansion and feared the Korea action could lead to a domino effect. The key U.S. document, NSC-68, stated in its Enclosure 2 that "the fundamental design of ... the Soviet Union ... is to retain and solidify their absolute power, first in the Soviet Union and second in the areas now under their control. In the minds of the Soviet leaders, however, achievement of this design required the dynamic extension of their authority and the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to their authority."[19]

What were the war aims of the United States in Korea? In general terms they were: (a) to contain Communism, and (b) to oppose or resist aggression occurring anywhere. In specific terms, the issue came to center around the following question: should the United States settle for the restoration of a boundary line at or near the 38th parallel, or should it reunify Korea under a non-Communist regime with its northern boundary with China at the Yalu river?[20]

Initially, American leaders stated that the objective in Korea was merely to restore the *status quo ante bellum*. During a meeting on June 27, 1950, George F. Kennan assured the NATO ambassadors that the United States had no intention of pursuing forcible reunification of Korea. Acheson declared publicly that American efforts aimed at preserving the credibility of the United Nations. He stated categorically that military action "is solely for the purpose of restoring the Republic of Korea to its status prior to the invasion from the north and of reestablishing the peace broken by that aggression."[21]

This war aim changed into reunification of Korea after General MacArthur's brilliant Inchon landing of mid September 1950, which rolled up the entire enemy line and sent the surviving fragments of the DPRK army into a headlong retreat tantamount to flight. However, it took a couple of weeks for the UN Command to decide to let its forces cross the 38th parallel after the successful landing at Inchon. President Rhee of South Korea had a different perspective on crossing the 38th parallel. He thought the US policy makers' discussion about the inviolability of the 38th parallel senseless. He said that regardless of what the UN Command decided the ROK would not allow its forces to stop but would allow them to advance as far as the Manchurian border until not a single enemy soldier was left in the Korean peninsula.

There were also certain individuals in the American administration who began to press for an American commitment to cross the 38th parallel in pursuit of reunification once the United

States had intervened in the Korea War with combat troops. The most vocal member of this group was John M. Allison, the director of the Office of Northeast Asian Affairs. In a statement dated July 1, 1950, he wrote:

> I believe there is ample justification in the last part of the second Resolution of the Security Council for any action which may be deemed appropriate at the time which will contribute to the permanent restoration of peace and stability in that area. I am convinced that there will be no permanent peace and stability in Korea as long as the artificial division at the 38th parallel continues.[22]

While American policy makers were discussing the expansion of the Korean War to the Manchurian border, 3rd Battalion, 23rd Regiment, 3rd ROK Infantry Division crossed the 38th parallel on the east coast at noon of October 1, 1950.[23] The ROK troops advanced to the north very quickly, racing with the American troops. The ROK and US troops secured Pyongyang, the DPRK capital, on October 19, and the ROK 6th Infantry Division reached the Yalu river on October 26. At the moment that it looked like the Korean War was ended and reunification of Korea accomplished, the Chinese Communists intervened in the war and troops under the UN Command had to withdraw to south of the 38th parallel.

Country	Total	KIA	WIA	MIA	POW
Total	776,360	178,569	555,022	28,611	14,158
South Korea	621,479	137,899	450,742	24,495	8,343
U.S.	137,250	36,940	92,134	3,737	4,439
Other Participants for UNC	17,631	3,730	12,146	379	1,376

TABLE 2. CASUALTIES DURING THE KOREAN WAR[24]

The U.S. policy changed into ending the war along a new line that again divided the Korean peninsula into the north and south. From that point, the Korean War lasted for two more years, sacrificing young soldiers until the Korean Armistice Agreement between the Commander-in-Chief, United Nations Command on the one hand, and the Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army and the Commander of the Chinese People's Volunteers on the other hand was concluded on July 27, 1953. The ROK President Rhee opposed the armistice and he did not participate in the signing of the document. Not only because of lingering negotiations on the armistice with the communists but also because of the gap on the armistice policy between the ROK and the U.S., the ROK and the U.S. continued to fight meaningless battles for two more years along the current Demilitarized Zone.

The Korean War casualties are as shown above. Because the U.S. miscalculated the strategic value of the Korean peninsula and the Communists' strategic intention, it had to pay more than 137,000 casualties.

U.S. POLICY AFTER THE KOREAN WAR

During negotiations on the armistice with the Communists in mid-1953, the U.S. objective in Korea after an armistice was under discussion. A State Department position paper of June 16, 1953, approved by Secretary Dulles, estimated that the two feasible alternatives were the division of Korea for an indefinite time, with the ROK tied to the United States as a military ally, and a unified, neutralized Korea, under a substantially unchanged ROK. The paper recommended the latter alternative as the U.S. objective.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) opposed neutralization as a goal in a memorandum for the Secretary of Defense of June 30, and recommended the United States maintain a strong military posture in the Far East, thus enabling timely and effective support to the ROK until the attainment of a unified, independent, and non-Communist Korea was realized. The JCS objections to the neutralization objective were: (1) the Communists would not accept it; (2) the Communists would not abide by a neutralization agreement; (3) U.S. and UN prestige would suffer; (4) it would be to the strategic disadvantage of the U.S.; (5) it would substantially increase U.S. military commitments.[25]

The final policy paper, NSC 157/1 of July 7, 1953, kept the objective of a neutralized Korea. However, the paper lost all current relevance almost as soon as it was approved and soon ceased to direct long-term American policy goals. The ROK President Rhee also opposed the neutralization of Korea.

After the Korean armistice was achieved over the strenuous objection of ROK President Rhee, who had threatened the U.S. with ordering his forces to attack north if a satisfactory political settlement was not reached in 90 days, differences of views between State and Defense appeared in response to two major concerns: what to do if the ROK attacked north, and what to do if the Communists reopened hostilities. Regarding the possibility of the ROK unilateral action, State and Defense agreed to make any effort to deter the ROK from taking such action. However, in the event the Communists reopened hostilities in violation of the armistice agreement, the JCS wanted to destroy Communist military power with all military means, including atomic weapons and to build up a unified and independent Korea, allied with the West. On the other hand, State did not want to bring the Soviets into a war which could eventually lead to world war.

In addition to the differences between State and Defense, the ROK and the US also had different perspectives on the appropriate U.S. policies on the Korean peninsula against North Korea after the Korean War. For instance, the U.S. policy objective was to maintain a position of strength in Korea to prevent the area from coming under Communist domination and to ensure the continuation of a free government in Korea. One of the courses of action to implement the objective was to prevent or counter any resumption of fighting by the ROK. The U.S. administration did not trust President Rhee. The skepticism of U.S. leaders about ROK leaders is not a thing of the past. It has been a pattern since President Rhee, and, recently, the skepticism of President Bush on the ROK was expressed at the summit with South Korean President Kim Dae-jung in March 2001.

Discord between the ROK and the U.S. appeared several times when they were confronted with North Korea's provocations. In January 1968, the *USS Pueblo* was captured by the North Koreans on the East Sea. It was approximately 40 hours later that North Koreans attempted to raid the South Korean Blue House (Presidential residence). The ROK and the U.S. did not cooperate closely, and no military action from either the ROK or the U.S. to punish North Korea was taken at the time, or at any other date.

Classification	South Korea	North Korea
Army	560,000	1,000,000
Navy	67,000	60,000
Air Force	63,000	110,000
Tanks	2,360	3,800
Field Artillery Guns*	5,180	12,500
Surface combatants	160	430
Fighters & Special aircrafts	580	870
Reserve	3,040,000	7,480,000**

* They include rockets, guided weapons and MLRS.

** The Reserve Military Training Unit, Worker/Peasant Red Guards, Red Youth Guards and social security agents are included.

TABLE 3. SOUTH AND NORTH KOREAN MILITARY CAPABILITIES[26]

It has not normally been the pattern of the ROK and the U.S. alliance to respond to North Korea's provocations. A North Korean agent attempted to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee but failed, instead killing the First Lady in 1974. North Korean soldiers murdered two U.S. soldiers with axes at the Panmunjum while Americans were cutting trees in 1976. Three North Korean Special Forces soldiers attempted to assassinate South Korean

President Chun Doo Hwan while he was visiting the former Burma in 1983 by bombing a cemetery where a ceremony took place. Two North Korean agents bombed a Korean Air jetliner in mid-air over the Indian Ocean and killed all 115 passengers in 1987. North Korea disobeyed the safeguards agreement and unloaded fuel from its 5MW nuclear reactor, and submitted a withdrawal agreement to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) threatening the U.S. with initiating war on the Korean peninsula in 1994. However, North Korea was never punished by either the ROK or the United States.

The U.S. supported South Korea's efforts to build a strong army while North Korea built a stronger army with support from the Soviet Union and China. The two Koreas' confrontation reflected the Cold War, and the large militaries of both Koreas (Table 3 above) have created tensions in the Korean peninsula for about 50 years. Meanwhile, with U.S. support and the Koreans' tremendous efforts, Korea accomplished economic miracles and became an economically developed country as seen in Table 4 below.

Classification	South Korea	North Korea	Comparison
GNP ($ billions)	402.1	15.8	25.5:1
GNP per capita ($)	8,581	714	12:1
Total trade volume ($ billions)	263.44	1.48	178:1
Foreign debt ($ billions)	136.45	12.3	11.1:1
Population (millions)	46.86	22.08	2.1:1

TABLE 4. ECONOMIC INDICES OF SOUTH AND NORTH KOREA IN 1999[27]

This economic progress in South Korea and the big size of the military in North Korea limited the ROK and the U.S. North Korean policies during and even after the Cold War era. The costs were in case the ROK and the U.S. pursued military courses of actions were always judged as too high to be risked.

CHARACTERISTICS OF U.S. POLICY IN KOREA

As revealed in the previous paragraphs, especially concerning Korea's unification, from the beginning of official contact between the two countries until now, several characteristics of U.S. policy can be recognized. First, the United States has not appreciated Korea's strategic value. Korea's geopolitical importance has not changed as long as it has been surrounded by continental and maritime powers. Historically, Korea had significant strategic value for China, Japan, and even Russia. For Americans there have been disputes on the value of Korea among policy makers who cared about what the American people cared about, and most Americans did not know even where Korea was located.

Second, U.S. policy goals on Korea's unification have shifted in accordance with the military situation. If conditions were good enough, U.S. policy pursued Korea's unification. However, if the U.S. did not have enough resources or if it estimated risks and costs were high, U.S. policy sought alternatives other than Korea's unification. If a state has a national goal, it tries to shape conditions to accomplish this. Korea's unification could be the U.S. long-range objective on the Korean problem, but it is not an urgent objective. It has not been a vital interest for Americans, while it has been the primary objective for Koreans.

Third, Korea policy was influenced by the perspective gap between the U.S. State and Defense Departments, and the gap between ROK political leaders and U.S. decision makers. Because of these gaps, U.S. policy has not been clear to Koreans on sensitive issues related to North Korea. Because of these gaps, in many cases both countries' policies have gone in different directions, caused unnecessary sacrifices and efforts, and have not been able to cope with North Korea's provocations.

The current U.S. national security policy in North East Asia stated in the latest version of the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), 'A National Security Strategy For A Global Age,' has several problems: it is an unclear policy on an important issue; it has a wrong central concept; and it is not integrated.

The NSS states that U.S. regional policies reflect overall strategy and guiding principles, but must be tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of each region. According to the NSS, the U.S. regional policy in East Asia is to promote democracy and human rights, to advance economic integration and rules-based trade, and to enhance security in this region.[28] These statements are too general and are unclear as to whether the U.S. policy pursues Korea's reunification under South Korea's control or prefers the status quo in order to enhance security in the region.

On page 49, under the "Korean Peninsula" paragraph, the NSS also states that peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict with a democratic, non-nuclear, reunified peninsula will enhance peace and security in the East Asian region and is clearly in the U.S. strategic interest.[29] This statement has a quite clear stance on the Korean issue; however, it looks like a rhetoric statement because under the "Japan" paragraph on the same page, the NSS states that the U.S.-Japan alliance remains the cornerstone for achieving common security objectives and maintaining a peaceful and prosperous environment for the Asia Pacific region.[30] As long as the Japanese policy requires the status quo on the Korean peninsula, these two statements are incompatible.

By stating that the U.S.-Japan security alliance is central to achieve strategic goals in the Asia-Pacific region, the U.S. policy in the region has a wrong central axis. A central axis, like a center of gravity, is critical for finding solutions in a complicated situation where each country has its own interests and those interests conflict with each other. The U.S.-Japan security alliance would be more important for the U.S. policy than many other issues; however, it is not the central axis to ensure stability in the region. Without a realistic stance on the Korea's reunification and an understanding of the correct central axis in the region, the U.S. cannot integrate policies on China, Japan, Korea, and Far East Russia. Rather, the respective policies will be piecemeal and unsynchronized.

The ROK-US alliance should be the central axis for the U.S. policy in North East Asia. There are several reasons for this. First, as we already studied in the previous paragraphs, American policy makers' mistaken abandonment of the Korean peninsula after WWII led to the Korean War and caused America to pay dearly for defending South Korea. Second, historically the Korean peninsula has been in the center of the entire North East Asian security structure, and has ultimately influenced international stability. For instance, Japan annexed Korea in 1905 to dominate East Asia, won wars against Russia and China, and became strong enough to initiate the Pacific War against America. If North Korea had successfully achieved forceful reunification under its control, communism would have expanded wider and the Soviets would have dominated the region and eventually threatened global stability. Third, because the Cold War has ended, the strategic value of Japan is questionable for America. Instead, Korea's strategic value becomes more important because North Korea still poses a military threat to South Korea and the world even after the former Soviet Union collapsed.

As the ROK-US alliance is the central axis for the U.S. policy in the region, which stance on the Korea's reunification is necessary for the U.S.? Since the former Soviet Union collapsed and the Cold War ended in 1991, the U.S. security policy on the Korean peninsula has still been unclear, and this murkiness caused disagreement between the U.S. and the ROK on dealing with North Korea. As a result, when North Korea's leader Kim Il-sung died and North Korea was about to collapse, both the U.S. and the ROK could not take any advantage. On the contrary, North Korea survived, developed WMD capabilities, and caused serious crises and instability in the region. If Korea remains divided, stability is at stake and the costs for managing the instability will remain high. If Korea is unified under South Korea's control, and if it is reinforced by the U.S. military presence in the unified Korea, stability will be accomplished. Therefore, the U.S. policy should support the ROK to accomplish the reunification of the Korean peninsula under its control. It is time to pursue the U.S. long-range objective on the Korean problem

which was stated in NSC 170/1. It was "to bring about the unification of Korea with a self-supporting economy and under a free, independent, and representative government, friendly toward the United States, with its political and territorial integrity assured by international agreement and capable of defending Korean territory short of an attack by a major power."[31]

HOW TO SUPPORT SOUTH KOREA TO ACHIEVE REUNIFICATION

The U.S. support to ROK reunification could consider two different directions: one direction is toward North Korea and the other one is toward South Korea. Since the U.S. interest in the region is stability and security, any military options must be avoided. The ultimate purpose of the ROK policy toward North Korea is to encourage North Korea to reform its economy and open its society to the democratic world. The U.S. supportive direction toward North Korea should also be to encourage North Korea to reform and open. In this case, it would be better for the U.S. to execute its policy through South Korea. Direct contact with North Korea is probably counter-productive. North Korea's WMD and missile problems could be solved through the South Korean government. ROK President Kim Dae-jung proposed that South Korea increase its diplomatic efforts to realize a substantial reduction in mutual threat, including the removal of the threat of North Korea's WMD capabilities.

The ultimate goal of the U.S. support toward South Korea is to build South Korea as a strategic companion. Peaceful unification can only be accomplished by South Korea that is much stronger than North Korea in terms of politics, economy, and military because the unification process is the competition of powers. Because the unification issue is not the unification process itself, but the preparation for the unification, South Korea must develop politically (a mature democracy), economically (sound free market system), and militarily (a "small but strong" and balanced armed forces) in order to accomplish peaceful unification with and integrate North Korea. The political, economical, and military support from the U.S. is critical for South Korea to become an advanced country which has enough strength to accomplish peaceful unification with North Korea.

The other reason that South Korea should have enough national power is related to the U.S. interests regarding a desirable world order in the region, which are regional stability and no regional hegemonic power. A strong unified Korea could contribute to peace and stability by maintaining a balance of power with China and Japan.

The Americans appear to think that they can control Japan effectively through the U.S.-Japan bilateral alliance. However, Americans seem to ignore lessons learned from recent history. Did Americans anticipate that Japan would defeat China and Russia? Did Americans

anticipate that Japan would attack the Pearl Harbor? Almost everyone in the U.S. military looks at China as a potential peer competitor and ignores the possibility of Japanese expansion. Americans probably think that Japan would not provoke war again because Japanese remember that they were the first and last targets of atomic bombs. However, on the contrary, Asians are concerned that Japan might try to become a regional power again and retaliate by challenging America when it gets enough power. Japan has two clear strategic reasons to do so: survival and a sense of national honor.

If either China or Japan is a potential regional hegemonic power, the efficient way to prevent two countries from being a hegemonic power in the region is to build another strong country so that three countries stay in balance and stability. If a caldron has only two legs, it is not able to stand safely and will fall down if influenced by a small variable. However, if it has three legs, it can stand long and safe. As a caldron with three legs is stable, a unified Korea, Japan, and China could accomplish stability and peace even if there were to be small conflicts between the three nations.

The ROK and the U.S. have several pending issues to solve, such as the Operational Control of the ROK Armed Forces, U.S. bases in major cities in Korea, the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), burden sharing, military weapons procurements related to the ROK-US readiness, and other political and economical problems. To support South Korea to develop a healthy democracy, sound free market system, and a balanced and small but strong enough military, it is necessary for the U.S. to give South Korea concessions concerning the issues mentioned above. It is necessary for the U.S. to have the wisdom to know that a small concession guarantees a bigger advantage in the future. Small American concessions will help South Korea to accomplish peaceful unification and achieve a balance of power with its neighboring countries.

North Korea has a dilemma: if it opens and reforms the country, it could lose control of its population, and consequently, losing population control would lead to regime collapse; if it does not open or reform, the economy would collapse, and then the regime may follow. However, if North Korea learns from the Chinese reforms and adjusts them to North Korea, abandons its objective to reunify Korea forcefully under communist control, accepts the South and North coexistence, eliminates its WMD and long-range missile capability, and reduces conventional military capabilities, it could be possible to survive through reform and opening. Whether North Korea is successful through opening and reform, or the regime collapses, the ROK and the U.S. would have more opportunities than challenges, if both countries manage the risks studied in the previous section.

In addition to supporting the two directions, it is necessary for the U.S. to state clearly its support for South Korea's peaceful reunification policy in its National Security Strategy. Clear U.S. policy on the Korean peninsula could lead other countries in the region to understand the U.S. interests in the region are stability, peace, and regional economic development rather than competition, containment, or confrontation.

ADVANTAGES AND RISKS

Stability in North East Asia depends on interrelationships between the countries in the region. The countries have their own interests and those interests are too complicated to achieve complete consensus. The U.S. can obtain its security policy objectives most efficiently in the region by pursuing Korean reunification as the central axis. If the U.S. policy defines its near-term goal as the reunification of Korea, it can make its policies on China and Japan clear, integrated, and successful.

For example, assuming that the primary objective for U.S. security policy in the Asia-Pacific region is maintaining peace and security, it is obvious that the reunified Korea would guarantee almost permanent peace in the region if Korea is reunified by peaceful means. As long as North Korea poses a military threat to the world, regional peace and security are at stake. Even if the U.S. interest in the region is that there be no dominant regional power, it is obvious that a reunified Korea reinforced by a U.S. military presence would be the most efficient means to maintain the balance of power between regional countries, assure that there is no dominant regional power, and guarantee regional peace and stability.

If a reunified Korea would guarantee the peace and stability in the region, the U.S. would not necessarily have to see China as a potential peer competitor but as a political and economic partner. The U.S. would not necessarily have to intervene in the Taiwan Strait. As the U.S. chose to support the Chinese "one state two systems" policy, it is necessary to see the Taiwan issue as a Chinese domestic one. The unification of China is China's concern. However, if China advances to forceful unification and Taiwan wants international support, the U.S. should intervene in the Taiwan problem under a UN resolution.

The Japanese traditional view on the geopolitical importance of the Korean peninsula is often explained by describing Korea as a dagger pointed toward Japan. This view leads the Japanese to prefer the status quo on the Korean issue. However, historically Korea never had an intention to invade Japan. Threats to Japan through Korea came from other outside powers, like China and Mongolia. The two Koreas as well as other East Asian countries are rather skeptical about the Japanese national will and potential to pursue expansion. The U.S. policy

should be to dissuade Japanese expansion of its military capabilities and roles in the region. The Japanese military expenditures, high technology, and capabilities are of great concern to other countries in the region. The Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force concerns the safety of maritime traffic as Japan relies heavily on other countries for the supply of natural resources which are indispensable to national existence, and over ninety percent of its imports are transported through sea routes.[32] It is believed by Koreans that Japan's expressions of concerns about the Malacca Strait reflect Japan's intention to expand its maritime power. As seen in Table 5, Japanese possession of amphibious ships brings skepticism to neighboring countries.

Military Budget	$ 37 billion	Artillery	800
Total Troops	235,600	Submarines	16
Divisions/Brigades	12/3	Amphibious Ships	6
Helicopters	463	Surface Combatants	54
Tanks	1,080	Fighters	363

Source: *The Military Balance 1999-2000* (London: IISS, October 1999)

TABLE 5. JAPANESE SELF DEFENSE FORCES CAPABILITIES

By pursuing a reunification policy, the U.S. could gain several more advantages in addition to security and no hegemonic power in the entire region. First, North Korea's WMD capability would be eliminated by the unified Korean government, since the former ROK President Roh Tae Woo in 1991 declared 5 principles for denuclearization, including that "Korea will not manufacture, possess, store, deploy, or use nuclear weapons." Second, the U.S. could get rid of North Korea's conventional military capabilities and long-range missile development. Third, the U.S. could develop a greater market in China, ensuring the flow of cheap and qualified products from China to America. Fourth, as threats from North Korea disappear, the cost for managing security and the total cost for US forces in the region would be reduced. Fifth, the US could have flexibility for its China policy by having Taiwan, Japan, and unified Korea as its "cards" while China loses the "North Korea card". Sixth, the USFK could solve current challenges such as shortages of training sites, Koreans' reduced support of the US presence, and budget limitations, and could continue to have a significant role for the security of North East Asia. The value of USFK's continued presence could be explained in consideration of the unified Korea's military strength.

A unified Korea could develop three options for the armed forces structure as shown in Table 6 below. The minimum structure is about the same size as the current Japanese Self

Defense Force. This option requires support from allied countries to deter bigger threats. The medium structure could achieve the current ROK military transformation goal of "small but strong armed forces". This option also requires support from allied countries to cope with a major threat. The self-reliant structure could manage any conventional conflicts independently. However, because this option should not have a strategic deterrence capability, it also requires support from allied countries to manage this kind of threat. Therefore, whatever option the unified Korea chooses, Korea must have an alliance with the United States and the USFK.[33]

Force Structure	Minimum Structure	Medium Structure	Self-reliant Structure
Total Troops	240,000	500,000	830,000
Ground Troops*	150,000	400,000	600,000
Tanks	1,000	2,500	4,000
Artillery Guns	1,000	4,000	6,000
Attack Helicopters	100	200	220-340
Air Force	45,000	60,000	150,000
Fighters	330	500	1,000
AWACS	15	4-8	20-30
Navy	45,000	40,000	80,000
Surface Combatants	50	40	80
Attack Submarines	20	30	45

* Includes Marine Corps.

TABLE 6. OPTIONS FOR THE UNIFIED KOREA'S ARMED FORCES[34]

The most serious risks are North Korea's initiating war on the Korean peninsula, or its sudden collapse while the ROK and the U.S. pursue a reunification policy. If the ROK, the U.S., or both back North Korea into a corner, or pursue a military option, North Korea would be likely to initiate war or threaten to attack. Meanwhile neither the ROK nor the U.S. must stimulate North Korea's provocation, but instead should deter North Korea's aggression on the peninsula. Neither country should be afraid of North Korea's bluff.

North Korea's sudden collapse would create disorder and instability for a certain period in the region. It could develop into a civil war in North Korea and require intervention from the world. In any case, getting rid of the Kim Jong-il regime is desirable for the North Korean population, which has suffered because of it. As any risk can be an opportunity if it is carefully managed, this risk is more than likely an opportunity for U.S. policy goals.

Chinese confrontation is another risk while the U.S. is seeking normalization of relations with China. China may want to make a deal with the U.S. related to the Taiwan issue. It is necessary for the U.S. to step back on the Taiwan issue. If China opposes Korea's unification, persuading China would be the greatest challenge for the ROK and the U.S. However, if the U.S. reminds China that a unified Korea gives many more advantages to China than a problematic North Korea, and guarantees that Korea's reunification is not a part of the containment of China, China would lose its justification to oppose.

Japanese obstruction of the reunification policy, and political and economical conflicts between the U.S. and Japan caused from it, are additional serious risks for the U.S. interests in the region. However, the U.S. should not repeat the historical strategic mistake of the Taft-Katsura secret agreement which allowed Japan to get the Korean peninsula and dominate the region.[35] As long as North Korea's WMD capability, long-range missiles and conventional military capabilities are posing threats to Japan, and as long as a reunified Korea constructs strong alliances with the U.S. and Japan, there are no reasons for Japan to prefer the status quo to reunification. Therefore, any strong Japanese opposition to the reunification policy could be indicative of a desire to expand its influence in the region.

CONCLUSION

It has been a little more than fifty years since Korea was separated into the south and north in 1945. The separation partly resulted from the U.S. misunderstanding of Korea's strategic value in the region. This division has posed threats, instability, and high cost to the world even after the former Soviet Union collapsed. As long as the confrontation between North Korea and South Korea, both of which have significant military capabilities, continues, the U.S. interest in the region is at stake. However, the U.S. policy in the region, especially related to the Korea's reunification, has been unclear whether it prefers the status quo to reunification, or the reverse.

If reunification on the Korean peninsula under South Korea's control is accomplished, the U.S. interests in the region would be attained: North Korea's threats with conventional military, WMD, and long-range missiles capabilities would be removed, and a reunified Korea with the USFK reinforcement could maintain the balance of power with neighboring countries. Because there are risks of North Korea's provocation and neighboring countries' confrontation during the process of reunification, any military options must be avoided and the process should be a peaceful one. The U.S. should support South Korea to accomplish peaceful reunification under its control.

How does the U.S. support South Korea's reunification? As long as the reunification process is a power struggle and the reunification issue is not the process itself but the preparation for reunification, the U.S. must first help South Korea develop a healthy democracy, sound economic free market system, and a balanced and small but strong enough military. Second, the U.S. should encourage North Korea to open and reform the country. This commitment should not be a direct intervention but an indirect one through South Korea.

Finally, it is necessary to express U.S. support for the ROK's peaceful reunification in the National Security Strategy. A clear statement on the Koreas' peaceful reunification could lead countries in the region to understand that U.S. interests are stability, peace and regional economic development. Advantages and challenges are like both sides of a coin. If we have the wisdom to use and change a challenge to an advantage, we could accomplish a peaceful, democratic, and economically developed world.

WORD COUNT = 8,321

ENDNOTES

[1] Joseph C. Goulden, Korea: The Untold Story of the War (New York: Times Books, 1982), 16-17. Stalin and Roosevelt decided on the Asian buffer in a private talk. Stalin wanted internationalization of the port of Dairen, use of Port Arthur as a Soviet naval base, and shared control of Chinese railroads in the country. In return, Russia would enter the war against Japan. Roosevelt gave Stalin no promises on the ports or railroads, but accepted the remainder of the deal.

[2] Ibid., 19.

[3] The ROK Ministry of National Defense, Defense White Paper 2000 (Seoul Korea: December 1, 2000), 356. Total casualties of the U.S. are 137,250 including 36,940 Killed in Action and 92,134 Wounded in Action.

[4] The White House, A National Security Strategy For A Global Age (Washington D.C.: December 200), 1-7.

[5] For instance, North Korea kidnapped a U.S. intelligence ship, Pueblo, in the East Sea in 1968; North Korean soldiers murdered American soldiers with axes at the Panmunjum in 1976 while Americans were cutting trees; three North Korean Special Forces soldiers bombed a cemetery where a ceremony took place to assassinate South Korean former President Chun during his visit to the former Burma in 1983; two North Korean agents bombed a Korean Air jetliner in mid-air over the Indian Ocean and all 115 passengers were killed in 1987; North Korea disobeyed the safeguards agreement and unloaded fuel from its 5MW nuclear reactor, and submitted a withdrawal agreement to the IAEA threatening the U.S. with initiating war on the Korean peninsula in 1994.

[6] David Wright. "Taepodong 1 Test Flight." 2 September 1998. Available from <http://www.fas.org/news/dprk/1998/980831-dprk-dcw.htm>. Internet. Accessed 6 November 2001.

[7] Chosun is another name for Korea between the fourteenth and early twentieth centuries. Because the King's family name was Yi, Chosun was also called the Yi Dynasty.

[8] Andrew C. Nahm, A Panorama of 5000 Years: Korean History (New Jersey: Hollym International Corp., 1983), 73-77

[9] Raymond A. Esthus, Theodore Roosevelt and Japan (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1967), 102-107, and 282. On July 27, 1905, U.S. Secretary of War William Howard Taft and Japanese Prime Minister Katsura Taro exchanged notes, later approved by President Theodore Roosevelt, to the effect that Japan would not carry out any aggression against the Philippines and the United States recognized that Japanese control over Korean foreign policy was a logical result of the Russo-Japanese War and contributed directly to permanent peace in the east. In a subsequent agreement of November 30, 1908 between U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root and Japanese Ambassador to the United States Takahira Kogoro, the two countries resolved reciprocally to respect the territorial possessions of each other in the Pacific.

[10] Goulden, 18-19.

[11] William Whitney Stueck, Jr., The Road to Confrontation: American Policy toward China and Korea, 1947-1950 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 9. Russia viewed the Korean peninsula as a convenient east-west stepping-stone of considerable strategic value. But, to the U.S., a nation located thousands of miles eastward across the Pacific, Korea was never of serious concern.

[12] Bruce Cumings ed., Child of Conflict: The Korean-American Relationship, 1943-1953 (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1983), 88-89.

[13] Donald Stone Macdonald, U.S.-Korean Relations from Liberation to Self-Reliance: The Twenty-Year Record (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press Inc., 1992), 143.

[14] Bruce Cumings, The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 384-386.

[15] The CIA report, The Situation in Korea, ORE 5/1, January 3, 1947,is quoted in Ibid., 329.

[16] The ROK Ministry of National Defense, 357.

[17] Bernard Brodie, War and Politics (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1973), 59.

[18] Stueck, 177.

[19] NSC 68, Enclosure 2, "Report to the President Pursuant to the President's Directive of January 31, 1950", April 7, 1950. Reprinted in Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, vol. 1, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy (Washington: GPO, 1977), 238.

[20] Brodie, 70.

[21] James I. Matray, "Truman's Plan for Victory: National Self-Determination and the Thirty-Eighth Parallel Decision in Korea," Journal of American History (September 1979): 314-333. Reprinted in U.S. Army War College, Course 2 Selected Readings Volume III (Carlisle: Carlisle Barracks, 2001), 230.

[22] Ibid., 231.

[23] I commanded the battalion in 1991~1994 and every soldier of the battalion was proud that it had crossed the 38th parallel first among the UN Command troops. The ROK celebrates October 1 as its Armed Forces Day.

[24] The ROK Ministry of National Defense, 356.

[25] Macdonald, 16-17.

[26] The ROK Ministry of National Defense, 272.

[27] Ibid., 271.

[28] The White House, 48-49.

[29] Ibid., 49.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Macdonald, 19.

[32] Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force, "Mission of JMSDF," 2 February 2002; available from <http://www.jda.go.jp/JMSDF/basic/MISSIO_E.HTM>; Internet; accessed 2 February 2002.

[33] Bruce W. Bennett, "The ROK-U.S. Alliance from a U.S. Perspective," Strategic Studies Vol. VII, no. 3 (2001): 94-98.

[34] Ibid. 95

[35] See endnote 9 above.

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