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國際學碩士學位論文

**United States Forces Korea Withdrawals:
A Comparative Study**

주한미군 철수에 관한 비교학적 연구

2013年 8月

서울대학교 國際大學院

國際學科 國際協力 專攻

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Thesis by

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Table on Contents

Abstract	ii
I. Background.....	1
II. USFK Withdrawals by Administration.....	6
2.1 Dwight Eisenhower- Lyndon Johnson Administrations:	
2.1(a) Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961).....	6
2.1(b) John F. Kennedy (1961-1963).....	8
2.1(c) Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969).....	11
2.2 Richard Nixon (1969-1974).....	15
2.3 Gerald Ford (1974-1977).....	26
2.4 James “Jimmy” Carter (1977-1981).....	31
2.5 Ronald Reagan (1981-1989).....	47
2.6 George H.W. Bush (1989-1993).....	56
2.7 William “Bill” Clinton (1993-2001).....	66
2.8 George W. Bush (2001-2009).....	76
2.9 Barack Obama (2009-Present).....	81
III. Analysis.....	89
IV. Conclusion.....	97
Abbreviations.....	99
Bibliography.....	101
Abstract (Korean).....	108
Acknowledgements.....	110

Abstract

United States Forces Korea Withdrawals: A Comparative Study

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The United States (US) has played an essential role in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Following the end of the Korean War in 1953, the newly formed South Korean government heavily depended on the military and security support of the US to deter possible aggression from its northern hostile neighbor, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea or DPRK.

The US ultimately established a fully functioning security structure that worked alongside the continuously forming Republic of Korea (ROK) Army. The United States Forces Korea (USFK) presence along with the ROK Army became a permanent military fixture on the Korean Peninsula. However, since the end of the Korean War, the US has implemented several strategic withdrawals of US forces. Through numerous US and ROK administrations, the USFK drawdowns have proved to be a topic central to US-

ROK bilateral talks. Major drawdowns began immediately following the Korean War under the US Eisenhower Administration and have continued through the former Bush, Jr. Administration. These withdrawals persisted despite outspoken concern from the South Korean government and while North Korea continued to pose a serious nuclear threat to the world.

Research on each administration from Dwight Eisenhower to current US President Barack Obama found that the obvious overarching theme of ‘confidence’ in the South Korean military capabilities and its exponentially strengthening economy littered the rhetoric of each withdrawal announcement. However, confidence has only served as a pillar to a series of administrative-specific philosophies that have contributed to the USFK withdrawals since the end of the Korean War.

Key Words: United States Forces Korea, Troop Withdrawal, Security Alliance

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I. BACKGROUND

The end of the Second World War brought a new sense of peace and stability across the world, while at the same time heightening the global awareness of the tensions between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union. The US feared the spread of communism and introduced policies such as the Truman Doctrine, Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift. The Truman Doctrine is seen by many scholars as the first step in the American process of ‘communist containment’ to halt expansion of the Soviet Union. The Soviet invasion of Korea in August 1945 and the subsequent quick collapse of the Japanese on the peninsula, present since the initiation of their control in 1910, prompted the United States to make a hasty decision concerning the US presence on the peninsula. US troops arrived on the peninsula in September of 1945 and were “ill-prepared as an occupation force in Korea since they were originally slated to participate in the occupation of Japan,” William E. Berry notes in his article “*Alliance Commitments and Strategies: Asia*.”¹

Creating what each side thought was a short-term solution, the US and Soviet Union established a division line at the 38th parallel, known as the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). This line would eventually solidify with the establishment of governments in the North under the control of Kim Il Sung’s regime and the founding of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), and the election in the South of Syngman Rhee’s

¹ William E. Berry. “*Alliance Commitments and Strategies: Asia*.” *American Defense Policy*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. 219.

regime and the establishment of the Republic of Korea (ROK). The election in the South was aided by the established United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea (UNTCOK) in 1948.

According to Gerald Curtis, "...the decision to divide Korea at the 38th parallel, with Soviet occupation of the northern half of the country, was made at a late-night meeting – primarily as a means for resolving conflicting bureaucratic inclinations."² These bureaucratic issues arose from the conflicting US and Soviet control of the peninsula and the direction each nation hoped the peninsula would follow – the US under democratic control and the Soviet under a communist regime. Similarly, Curtis noted "the US decision to occupy Korea was made without even the most rudimentary accompanying plans for its future. Such lack of preparation reflected not only the minimal knowledge of Korea within the US government, but also the limited appreciation of Korea's strategic position in US security concerns. The contrast between actual US involvement and its almost casual and unplanned approach gave US policy, from the beginning, a fundamentally ambivalent character."³

As far as the US was concerned, two differing opinions were present regarding the US presence on the peninsula – one that supported the ground force presence and one that did not. By the end of 1947, the Joint Chiefs of Staff announced their "view that Korea had little strategic value, and the 45,000 US troops stationed there could be

² Gerald L. Curtis, and Sŭng-jŭ Han. *The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Evolving Patterns in Security Relations*. (Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1983. Print) 32.

³ Curtis 32.

deployed elsewhere more effectively.”⁴ In April 1948, The National Security Council is quoted as saying that the US should support its allies in South Korea within “practical and feasible limits” while restricting military presence on the peninsula. Eventually, the United Nations General Assembly would agree with this decision and pass a resolution in December of 1948 requesting all occupational forces to be withdrawn from Korea, essentially as early as possible. By the end of June 1949, the last US combat units were withdrawn from the peninsula. This initial withdrawal came at the behest of the South Korean government which ‘repeatedly pleaded with the US government to provide matching military hardware and training’ in addition to the postponement of US troop withdrawal. Despite the cries for help from South Korea, the US withdrew its troops. According to Sang-woo Rhee, “the Korean War was actually a result of disruption in US-Korean military cooperation.”⁵

As a result of the UN Resolution and US and Soviet Union withdrawals, by 1950, the Korean peninsula was split into two rival governments, the Soviet Union-backed DPRK northern government and the United States-backed ROK southern government, both with little military presence from its advocate nations. The DPRK was increasing its military capabilities at an alarming rate with the help of their Soviet ally. The South Korean government continued to seek United States’ aid and was reeling from the withdrawal of US combat troops. Ultimately, war broke out on the 38th parallel on June 25, 1950, as North Korean troops strategically invaded the South at various points along

⁴ Berry 219.

⁵ Sang-woo Rhee. *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers, June 1982*. (Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983. Print) 303.

the demarcation line. According to Department of Defense records, only 510 military service members were present in South Korea at the time of the invasion.⁶ President Harry S. Truman sent US troops as part of a larger contingent of United Nations (UN) forces to aid in the South, in response to the invasion, which the UN declared a “breach of the peace” on the peninsula.⁷ US General Douglas MacArthur was named Commander of the UN Forces, under consisted of US and ROK forces, as well as fifteen other nations that send forces to aid in the conflict.

The Truman administration was under enormous pressure both at home and abroad to not only contain communism, but to also prove that communist containment was at the forefront of American policy. Additionally, the US commitment to Japan remained of utmost importance and South Korea’s geographic proximity to Japan factored into Truman’s decision to deploy forces back to South Korea. Domestically, probes into suspected internal communist threats within the Truman administration were being investigated, particularly by Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy. Espionage trials were heating up and it was essential for the administration to take a hard line on communism abroad in order to foster security at home. The invasion of Greece and Turkey by the Soviet Union prompted the indoctrination of the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, which provided financial aid to parts of Europe in order to block the expansion of the Soviet Union. Therefore, when 90,000 North Korean communist troops invaded the South on June 25, 1950 – a surprise attack that caught the South

⁶ Kane, Tim. *Global U.S. Troop Deployment, 1950-2003*. Washington D.C: Heritage Foundation, Center for Data Analysis, 2004.

⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 82. United Nations Security Council. June 25, 1950

completely off guard – Truman took the chance to prove at home and abroad that the US was serious about their containment policy.⁸ On June 27, President Truman announced America's military intervention on the Korean peninsula in order to stop hostilities and prevent the spread of communism to the independent democratic nation of South Korea. By the next year and to the end of the Korean War, a recorded 326,863 US military service members were stationed on the peninsula.

Fighting continued through 1953 between the ROK, with the support of the United Nations and United States, and North Korea, aided by the Soviet Union and China – Mao Zedong agreed to send Chinese troops to support North Korea in October 1950 at the request of both Joseph Stalin and Kim Il-Sung. On July 27, 1953 the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed by United States Army Lieutenant General William Harrison, Jr. and North Korean General Nam Il, who represented both the North Korean People's Army and the Chinese People's Volunteer Army. The armistice was created to halt hostilities and "insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved."⁹ Following the Armistice in 1953, 326,823 of US troops remained on the peninsula to deter any additional threats from the North. By 1954 this number dropped to 225,590.¹⁰

⁸ *The United States Enters the Korean Conflict. Teaching with Documents.* National Archives and Records Administration, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/teaching_with_documents.html, 2002.

⁹ *Korean Armistice Agreement.* Korea: United Nations Command, 1953.

¹⁰ Kane.

II. USFK WITHDRAWALS BY ADMINISTRATION

2.1 EISENHOWER-JOHNSON ADMINISTRATIONS

2.1(a) Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961)

Troop Levels: 1953: 326,863-1961: 57,694

When President Dwight Eisenhower took office in 1953, the Korean War was just ending and the American sentiment towards Korea had become increasingly unpopular. The war was expensive and the public opinion was to bring the troops, totaling 326,863 at the onset of Eisenhower's presidency according to a Department of Defense report, back to the United States. However, Eisenhower, inheriting Truman's political and security commitments and connections in Asia, found it hard to withdraw troops in not only Korea but in Asia in general. Eisenhower did not want to disrupt the current peace and he also did not want to look sheepish in the eyes of the US' international commitment scheme. Achieving 'security with solvency' became the main goal of Eisenhower's administration.¹¹ After the Second World War and the Korean War, Eisenhower began to look at the military operations that had taken place and became convinced that the land, sea, and air branches of the military should be combined to act in concert – a security based on military solvency. The genesis of this was that the US economy could no longer bear the burden of duplication actions within the military and a combination of military efforts would reduce the cost and pressure on the economy.

¹¹ Berry 223.

Eisenhower also felt it necessary to continue to expand the United States' alliances in Asia, mainly to counter Soviet expansion and a growing Sino-Soviet relationship. Therefore, President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles signed the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty on October 1, 1953 which forms the basis for the United States-Republic of Korea military cooperation. The Mutual Defense Treaty stated that each nation would come to the aid of the other in times of conflict, under the provisions set forward by the treaty. Most importantly for the presence of US troops on the peninsula, Article IV states: "the Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement."¹² The Eisenhower administration continued its presence on the peninsula and expanded its presence throughout Asia, creating a similar mutual defense treaty with Taiwan, signing the Manila Pact in 1954, and establishing the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). By the end of the Eisenhower administration in 1961, the troop level had leveled off at 57,694. The drastic troop reduction from some 327,000 to 57,694 was the result of the wartime withdrawal of troops following the end of the Korean War in 1953. The troops that remained were there to support the efforts outlined in the Mutual Defense Treaty and serve as a deterrent for future North Korean aggression. The reduction in troops in Asia was not only confined to South Korea. Japan saw a decrease in the amount of troops from 209,168 in 1953; 150,874 in 1957; down to 85,864 by the time

¹² *Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea, Signed at Washington October 1, 1953 ... Proclaimed by the President of the United States of America December 1, 1954, Entered into Force November 17, 1954.* Washington: U.S. Govt. 1955.

Eisenhower left office in 1961.

2.1(b) John F. Kennedy (1961-1963)

Troop Levels: 1961: 57,694-1963: 56,910

The Kennedy administration took over the US presidency in 1961 and sought to increase military forces in almost all aspects. The proposed buildup plan allocated extensive military funding and Kennedy and his administration felt this was a needed response to boost American defense capabilities. According to Berry “the new administration requested a supplemental appropriation of \$1.2 billion to begin modernization of the strategic triad consisting of nuclear submarines, long-range bombers, and intercontinental ballistic missiles.”¹³ Kennedy had built up military manpower by 200,000 before the Vietnam War started in 1965, in addition to increasing Army divisions from 11 to 16. He remained loyal to the Asian security commitments, like the one in South Korea that had been established in the administrations before his own. He did this not only because the American defense buildup at home and abroad was important for his political platform, but he believed that if the US did not honor its security commitments in Asia that internationally the US would lose credibility which could have resulted in the American loss of control in the region to either the Soviet Union or China.

Conflict in Vietnam between the North and South Vietnamese garnered US attention at the onset of the Kennedy administration. The Northern forces fought to establish a communist regime which the South Vietnamese push for anti-communist

¹³ Berry 226.

system. President Kennedy and his advisors opted to enter the war in Vietnam in 1961 by deploying US support troops to play an advisory role, initially, but specifically did not intend to deploy ground combat forces into the area. As can be seen in Table 1, the introduction of troops in Vietnam, at any point, did not greatly affect the overall deployed US troop numbers in South Korea. Nor did the troops withdrawn from the peninsula at these times transfer to Vietnam. US troop levels in Korea remained relatively consistent throughout the Vietnam period and, in fact, were even increased at one point in 1968. Unfortunately, President Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963 before finishing his first presidential term. At the time of his assassination in 1963, 56,910 US troops were stationed in the ROK.

Three conclusions can be drawn from the Kennedy administration's policies toward Asia. Firstly, similarly to Truman and Eisenhower, Kennedy believed that the containment policy toward the Soviet Union and China was a key goal of the US in its Asian policy. As with the administrations before him and the ones following, containment was the top goal of the US' foreign policy and a key pillar of the push for democracy. Second, most of Kennedy's advisors were convinced that an overarching mass retaliation would be counter-productive in battling insurgencies or wars of national liberation. This is why the initial involvement by the United States in Vietnam was a purely advisory role. Third, the focus of Kennedy's administration was primarily focused on Indochina.¹⁴ The importance of securing a stable American presence in the region was characterized by deployments and rhetoric of the Kennedy administration.

¹⁴ Berry 227.

Table 1: US Troops Levels in ROK throughout the Vietnam War¹⁵

<i>Year</i>	<i>Troop Level</i>
1959	49,827
1960	55,864
1961	57,694
1962	60,947
1963	56,910
1964	62,596
1965	58,636
1966	47,076
1967	55,057
1968	62,263
1969	66,531
1970	52,197
1971	40,740
1972	41,600
1973	41,864
1974	40,387
1975	40,204
1976	39,133
1977	40,705
1978	41,565
1979	39,018

Source: The Heritage Foundation, Center for Data Analysis, October 2004,

¹⁵ Tim Kane, Ph.D., Troop Deployment Dataset, 1950-2003, The Heritage Foundation, Center for Data Analysis, October 2004, at www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/troopsdb.cfm.

2.1(c) Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969)

Troop Levels: 1963: 56,910-1969: 66,531

President Johnson assumed the presidency in the aftermath of John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963 and subsequently inherited the problem of growing tensions and US involvement in Vietnam. Johnson's platform on Vietnam was built upon the necessity to defend the Southeast Asian nation in order to prevent the continued spread of communism, as the administrations before his had emphasized. Johnson noted several reasons for his position on the Vietnamese issue. First, Johnson felt that the future of Southeast Asia depended on the US' success in Vietnam and he criticized those who disregarded the domino theory.¹⁶ Second, he, like most in Washington at the time, was worried about the domestic backlash in the event that the US failed in Vietnam. Johnson drew an analogy with China's fall to communism in 1949, except that the fall of Vietnam would prove to be more troublesome due to the US' treaty commitments in Southeast Asia through the Manila Pact¹⁷ and South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).¹⁸ Any debate over 'who lost Vietnam' would divide the country and invite isolationist

¹⁶ "According to the democratic domino theory, increases or decreases in democracy in one country spread and 'infect neighboring countries, increasing to decreasing their democracy in turn. ... In a 1954 press conference, then-US President Dwight Eisenhower famously described what he called the 'falling domino principle' behind American foreign policy: 'You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.' The dominoes Eisenhower described were countries and the contagious element they carried were the political-economic features of communism." A.M. Dean, and P.T. Leeson. "The Democratic Domino Theory: an Empirical Investigation." *American Journal of Political Science*. 53.3 (2009): 533-551.

¹⁷ The Manila Pact, also known as the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, was signed in September 1954 in Manila, Philippines and is the treaty on which the South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) was established.

¹⁸ The South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) was established on 19 February 1955 via the Manila Pact in order to block further expansion of communism in Southeast Asia. SEATO was eventually dissolved on June 30, 1977 due to an overarching lack of interest by member states.

sentiments which would jeopardize American commitments to other countries; (iii) American allies and friends throughout the world would lose confidence in the United States if it failed to protect an ally; (iv) the Soviet Union and China would move to exploit any perceived weakness in US policies.¹⁹ Johnson pushed on the Congressional level helping to publish National Security Action Memorandum 288 which noted that the ‘stakes were high’ in Vietnam, but warned that overt US military action against North Vietnam would possibly be counterproductive. Eventually, in March 1965 the first division of US troops landed in Vietnam to serve a ground combat force role.

The war in Vietnam was not as successful as the Johnson administration would have hoped. The US was joined by a long list of countries involved in the Vietnam War – countries such as the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Spain, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. Johnson himself convinced both the Philippines and the Republic of Korea to send some of their own ground forces to aid the US in Vietnam. ROK president at the time, Park Chung Hee, agreed to send some 15,000 (in 1965)-50,000 (in 1968) troops in support of the US’ mission in Vietnam – a number that remained constant in Vietnam from 1965-1973 and ended up totaling 312,853 soldiers. President Park was motivated by a number of factors to send ROK forces to Vietnam. As Berry notes, “two of the most important factors concerned his own consolidation of power and the continuation of the American security guarantee to Korea.”²⁰ By sending ROK forces to Vietnam, Park not only helped his relationship with the United States but

¹⁹ Berry 228.

²⁰ Berry 229.

he aided in the sustainment of US forces on the peninsula, as the US did not need to withdraw US forces from Korea to support the war in Vietnam. The US recognized this commitment and US Vice President Humphrey promised the continuation of US military presence on the peninsula through the war in Vietnam, a position reaffirmed by Johnson during his visit to Korea in April 1968. Additionally, South Korea was paid handsomely for their ROK military commitment in Vietnam. In 1964, the US gave \$124 million to the ROK in aid; this was increased to \$173 million by 1965 and was eventually increased to an incredible \$556 million in 1971. Despite the unfortunate large loss of ROK forces (approximately 5,000 killed and 11,000 injured) in Vietnam, South Korea received continued US presence on the peninsula for security and deterrence as well as nearly one billion US dollars in aid for their commitment.

The 1964 environment on the Korean Peninsula was characterized by “a tough economic stabilization program alongside reduced US aid; a ROK-Japan settlement; and devaluation.” The threat of strikes and student movements was increasing because of price inflation and increased for high wages for civil servants, government employees, and junior military officers. The new government was getting underway and these pressures highlighted the new administration in Korea, and thus affected the stability of South Korea. A January 21, 1964 telegram from the US Embassy in Korea to the Department of State recommended that the US, under the present circumstances in Korea,

avoid any reduction or announced reduction of US forces.²¹

The US Embassy in South Korea realized that a withdrawal of forces in Korea would be much different than the ones completed in Europe, as there was no collective security presence in the Far East. It was decided that taking this into account, the following were favorable option for the US government: “(i) the strength of ROK military forces and the U.S. armed forces in Korea should continuously be kept at present level. The reduction of the military forces might be considered only after having examined both internal and external situations in the future and; (ii) the military procurement by the U.S. armed forces in Korea should not be reduced from the level of last year, as any reduction in the amount of the U.S. military procurement is bound to have a direct and profound effect upon the stability of Korean economy.”²²

By 1965, any hint at US ground force withdrawals clearly upset ROK President Park and created tension between the US and ROK governments. A March 15, 1965 telegram highlighted the importance of the US to the ROK stability saying that while on a forthcoming visit to Washington President Park will be assured, “that present US force levels will be maintained, President and Foreign Minister have indicated that ROKG relying heavily on this and related assurances of continuing US commitment to Korea to help win public support for Korea-Japan settlement.”²³ Ultimately, without a Korea-

²¹ Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-1968. Vol. XXIX. Department of State, Washington, DC. January 21, 1964.

²² Ibid.

²³ Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-1968. Vol. XXIX. National Archives and Records Administration, RG 59, Central Files 1964-66, DEF 19-2 US-KOR S. Secret; Priority. Repeated to CINCPAC for POLAD and the Department of Defense

Japan settlement, the US intended to stay in the region.

North Korean threats were present throughout the Johnson administration and remained a major part of the sustained, and eventual increased, US ground and air forces. The North Korean threat angered President Park and he spent most of Johnson's time in office in "a highly emotional state." However, while the threat was intensified, the US did not believe that the North Korean regime was prepared to enter a full scale second Korean War, and that the increased US presence would prevent that from happening. From the ROK perspective, the financial contributions were not sufficient, as "North Korea aim[ed] at creating a second Vietnam in South Korea. "President Park considered ROK air power superior and ROK naval strength about equal to North Korea. He feels that since North Korea has tens of thousands trained guerrillas, the ROK army must strengthen defense in rear areas. He feels that ROK army fire power is "far inferior to North Korea's." He would like to strengthen the ROK air force and he needs US assistance for the strengthening of the local reserve corps."²⁴

2.2 RICHARD NIXON ADMINISTRATION (1969-1974)

Troop Levels: 1969: 66,531-1974: 40,387

President Nixon assumed the presidential office in January 1969 and was faced with a number of significant international conflicts. Mainly, the Vietnam War had become overwhelmingly unpopular in the United States and had put pressure on Nixon

²⁴ Foreign Relations of the United States: 1964-1968. Vol. XXIX. *Summary of Conversations between President Johnson and President Park*. Honolulu, April 17, 1968.

and Congress to reevaluate the US' policy toward not only Vietnam, but Asia in general. Congress began demanding a reduction in military spending and thus a massive reallocation of resources from the military sector to the domestic sector occurred under both the Nixon and Ford administrations. As a result, defense spending was reduced by 44 percent when Nixon took office and down 24 percent by the time Ford left office in 1977.²⁵ The Nixon administration decided to reduce military spending because maintenance costs had increased in the previous years as the result of inflation. By decreasing the defense budget, Nixon hoped to reverse the inflation issues that were plaguing the nation.

According to Norman Levin and Richard Sneider in *"The US-South Korean Alliance: Evolving Patterns in Security Relations,"* the decade 1969-1979 "represented a period of growing ambivalence in US security policy toward Korea, sowing the seeds of doubt about the US commitment to South Korea's defense" [from the South Korean perspective.]²⁶ Levin and Sneider noted several changes with the implications for US policy with regard to South Korea. Among these were the ending of the Cold War, the rise of détente, and the emergence of the new global multipolar system.²⁷ This was only bolstered by the changing environment of the US Congress in what Berry calls "the domestic constraint on the president [of] the reassertive role of the Congress in the security policy arena." Despite the will of Nixon, Congress was beginning to use its

²⁵ Berry 230.

²⁶ Norman D. Levin and Richard L. Sneider in *The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Evolving Patterns in Security Relations*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1983. 45.

²⁷ Levin, Sneider 45.

appropriation powers, essentially holding the proverbial purse strings in the US, to limit the actions of the president, particularly in the funding, budget, and actions of the military.

Levin and Sneider referred to two developments specifically related to Asia that affected the US' policy toward Asia in general and the ROK in particular: (i) the harsh impact of the extended war in Vietnam on the US' public willingness to support military involvement in Asia and [...] (ii) the newly evolving ability of the ROK to "shoulder more of the burden of its own defense." Korea's economic growth and increased military capabilities led to the idea that the ROK was more able to take on a greater position for its own defense. The combination of these developments led the US to reassess its policy toward the ROK, and as Levin and Sneider note "the reassessment of the US policy appear[ed] not only desirable but essential."²⁸

In addition to these developments in the US, the most significant and influential factor that affected the policy of the US toward Asia was the Nixon Doctrine. This doctrine laid the foundation for the future of US military policy within the Nixon administration. During a visit to Guam on July 24, 1969 Nixon announced the US' new approach to its international military strategy. This approach included continued presence of US military forces in the allied regions, but rejected the notion that the burden of each nation's own security should be shouldered by America. The Nixon Doctrine clearly asserted that each nation, particularly in Asia, must take on more responsibility for its own defense and security. This doctrine was largely the result of

²⁸ Levin, Sneider 45.

domestic pressures within the United States and Nixon stressed three elements of this new strategy:

1. *The United States will keep its treaty commitments.*
2. *We (the United States) shall provide a shield if a nuclear power threatens the freedom of a nation whose survival we consider vital to our security and the security of the region as a whole.*
3. *In cases involving other types of aggression we shall furnish military and economic assistance when requested and as appropriate. But we shall look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense.*²⁹

As far as the US troop presence in South Korea at this time were concerned, President Nixon planned the first major troop withdrawal program since the end of the Korean War. National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 48 entitled “US Programs in Korea” was released on March 20, 1970 and announced the withdrawal of 20,000 US forces by the end of 1971 fiscal year. NSDM 48 reads as follows:

“Following National Security Council (NSC) review of US policy and programs toward Korea, the President has decided to reduce the US military presence in Korea by 20,000 personnel by the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 71. The President has also directed that the following priority actions be taken to implement his decision.

1. *Consultations with President Park. The President directs that consultation be undertaken with President Park to inform him of the President’s intentions and explore with him the timing and conditions of withdrawal. The President wishes the objective of this consultation to be the creation of a*

²⁹ President Richard Nixon, Press Conference, Guam. July 25, 1969.

situation in which US withdrawals result from President Park's initiative in view of present ROK strength and the agreed need for future improvements in ROK strength and the agreed need for future improvements in ROK forces. The Under Secretaries Committee shall submit a plan, based on the conditions outlined below, for consultations with President Park to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs no later than April 1, 1970.

2. Conditions for Consultation. *The President has decided that consultations with President Park shall be based on the following conditions:*
 - A. *Subject to approval of the Congress, the US will attempt to provide annual average military assistance to Korea over FY 71-75 at a level of \$200 million per year comprised either of grant Military Assistance Program (MAP) of \$200 million per year or its equivalent in grant MAP at a lower level, such as \$160 million per year, supplemented by equipment and other supplies excess to US needs.*
 - B. *The US will increase its economic assistance to Korea by continuing Public Law (PL)-480, Title 1 at or above a level of \$50 million per year, depending on the availability of surplus commodities, in addition to currently-planned aid, provided that the ROK assumes, to the extent feasible, a larger defense burden through a MAP transfer or military sales program.*
 - C. *Further withdrawal of substantial numbers of US personnel beyond the 20,000 personnel decided upon are not now planned, though they may be considered when substantial ROK forces return from Vietnam or compensating improvements in ROK forces are well underway.*

Upon completion of initial consultations with President Park, these conditions will be revised as necessary.

3. Other Preparations for Consultation. *The President has also directed that concurrently with consultations with President Park:*

- A. *The Departments of State and Defense will develop a plan for consultation with the Congress on the feasibility of increasing MAP for Korea to the levels noted above.*
 - B. *The Department of Defense will develop a plan for the withdrawal of military personnel, noted above, and the disposition of remaining forces in such manner as to reduce the US presence in the DMZ to the minimum consistent with our continuing responsibility for the security of the UN area at Panmunjon.*
4. *The Korea Program Memorandum. Following initial consultations with President Park and the Congress, the President has directed the preparations of a five-year Korea Program Memorandum covering US policy and programs for Korea including:*
- A. *ROK Military Forces – The President directs that the US support improvements to the ROK forces to the maximum extent possible within the available resources. The objective of these improvements shall be to develop ROK forces capable of deterring or conducting a defense against a conventional or unconventional attack by North Korea. For this purpose, a five-year force structure and resource plan for the deployment of the ROK armed forces toward this goal shall be prepared by the Department of Defense based on the assistance levels in 2(A).*
 - B. *US Military Forces – The President directs that the Department of Defense develop a five-year force structure, resource and personnel plan for US forces in or clearly related to Korea. In this plan, the feasibility and timing of further reductions in the US military presence in Korea should be thoroughly evaluated.³⁰*

According to Edward Olsen in *US Policy and the Two Koreas* the Nixon Doctrine

³⁰ National Security Decision Memorandum 48: US Programs in Korea. March 20, 1970.

and the Vietnamization process³¹ encouraged Asian allies to be more self-reliant in self-defense caused new frictions in US-ROK relations. Olsen notes that the Nixon administration felt that if South Korea could afford to send ROK troops to war in Vietnam and still feel secure with the North Korean threat, then “logic suggested it could suffice with a smaller number of US forces when its own forces returned.”³² The 20,000-US troop reduction was followed by the removal of troops across the board in Asia. During his first term, Nixon reduced the numbers of US military personnel in several Asian countries. The force level dropped from 500,000 in Vietnam when he assumed office to less than 3,000 by early 1973. Similarly, in South Korea, the troop levels dropped from 60,000 to 40,000. In Japan, a reduction was seen from 39,000 to 27,000 as well as a decrease from 48,000 to 43,000 in troop levels on Okinawa. Finally, most of the 16,000 troops in Thailand were removed.³³ In South Korea, Nixon sent the 7th Infantry Division back to the United States from South Korea in 1971, which resulted in the first large drop in ground force troop levels since the end of the Korean War, showing the seriousness with which the US Administration executed the Nixon Doctrine. The 2nd Infantry division remained on the peninsula to maintain a deterrent presence in accordance with the Mutual Defense Treaty.

In the wake of this massive 7th Infantry Division withdrawal, ROK President Park, in his 1971 New Year’s Day address, explained the importance of Korea’s national

³¹ The “Vietnamization Process” is a policy process outlined by Richard Nixon during the Vietnam War which set to train and equip South Vietnamese forces and expand their combat role in the Vietnam War which would aid in the simultaneous reduction of US combat forces in Vietnam.

³² Edward Olsen, *U.S. Policy and the Two Koreas*. San Francisco, Calif: World Affairs Council of Northern California, 1988. 9.

³³ Berry 231.

security and announced that the ROK would advance its armed forces by: “strengthening homeland reserves; fostering a viable domestic defense industry; restructuring the military; improving the mobilization system; and acquiring modern weapons.”³⁴ Particularly important, President Park highlighted the need for a self-sufficient national defense structure when and if the US troops are reduced or completely withdrawn from the peninsula. In the years before the Nixon administration, the South Korean government focused on the forward movement of their economy; however, following the Nixon Doctrine a balanced focus was given to both the economy and the advancement of the ROK defense structure.

While the ROK was reviewing their internal defense structure, the US was reviewing the importance of ROK forces aiding in Vietnam. US Memorandum 113 entitled “Republic of Korea forces in South Vietnam” was released on June 23, 1971 and cited the President’s evaluation of the ROK forces that provided in support of the US mission in the Vietnam War. The memorandum stated that the US would continue to support the two ROK divisions located in South Vietnam until the end of Calendar Year (CY) 1972 and that the continued negotiations on troop levels would not be linked to “possible US redeployments from Korea with the continued presence of ROK forces in Vietnam. No divisions have been made on US redeployments beyond the 20,000 space reduction to be completed by June 30, 1971.”³⁵ Essentially, any negotiations at the time between the US and the ROK concerned troops on the peninsula would not be due to or

³⁴ ROK-US Alliance and USFK. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2003. 42.

³⁵ National Security Decision Memorandum 113: Republic of Korea Forces in South Vietnam. June 23, 1971.

affected by the war in Vietnam. This decision shows a number of important factors for the US in regard to troops in South Korea: the continued commitment of the ROK forces to aid the US in Vietnam, the continued commitment for the removal of 20,000 forces from the ROK, and no further troop withdrawal beyond those 20,000 troops. Memorandum 113 was followed by NSDM 161³⁶ on April 5, 1972 which stated that the ROK troops would remain in South Vietnam through the end of 1972 and that the US would provide adequate support for those ROK forces. The US support included adequate air support, implementation of alternative logistics support systems, construction material, as well as a joint US-ROK contingency plan for evacuation airlift for ROKFV (ROK Forces Vietnam). The presence of ROK forces in Vietnam greatly aided the US during the Vietnam War. However, Nixon's plan to withdraw 20,000 troops persisted. While this

The Nixon administration understood that the removal of as many as 20,000 US troops could disrupt the modernization of the ROK and thus released a Structure and Modernization Program under NSDM 129 in September 1971. The program committed military assistance and sales to the ROK over a five-year period, citing:

The President has approved in principle the five-year Korea Modernization Program prepared by the Under Secretaries Committee. As recommended by the Under Secretaries Committee, the President authorizes:

³⁶ National Security Decision Memorandum 161: Republic of Korea Forces in South Vietnam. April 5, 1972.

1. *A military assistance and sales program totaling \$1.5 billion in FY 71-75 comprised of a combination of grant military assistance (MAP), excess defense articles, and other US military equipment transferred to the ROK at no cost.*
2. *A maximum of \$1.25 billion in new obligational authority (NOA), this amount to be reduced to the maximum extent possible through foreign military credit and cash sales, provision of excess defense articles, and other “no cost” US equipment transfers.*
3. *The annual review of the plans reflecting program changes, new cost factors, resource availabilities, and the situation as it evolves on the Korean peninsula.*
4. *Program additions or changes shall be considered as offsets to the assistance levels contained within these ceilings unless specifically considered and approved by the President.*

Further, the President directs that as set forth in NSDM 48, a five-year Korean memorandum should be developed covering all US activities and programs related to Korea over the next five years and posing, where appropriate, alternative US presence and assistance options. Among other problems, this memorandum should examine:

- *The North Korean tactical air threat and the alternative ROK and US forces required to cope with it.*
- *The alternative means of financing further improvements in the ROK air force within the existing modernization program outlined above.³⁷*

The Korean Force Modernization Plan was reviewed and re-evaluated through MSDM memorandum 227 entitled ‘Korean Force Modernization Plan,’ on July 27, 1973.

³⁷ National Security Decision Memorandum 129: ROK Force Structure and Modernization Program. September 2, 1971.

The President has reviewed the Under Secretaries' memorandum on Re-examination of the Korean Force Modernization Plan and has decided:

- *Air defense should be emphasized in modernizing ROK forces in order to assist the ROK in moving toward combat self-sufficiency for defense against the North Korean threat.*
- *Modernization of ROK divisions beyond the 16 active and three ready reserve divisions recommended in the military study should receive low priority but the ROK should not be told the US will not support modernization of additional divisions.*
- *NSDM 129 continues in effect but no termination date should be established for grant MAP assistance.*
- *Planning for grant MAP and requests to Congress should not be precipitously reduced nor should assistance be switched rapidly to FMS (Option Two of the Steering Group's Report is approved).*
- *Before high performance aircraft beyond replacement aircraft in the original modernization plan are funded, a complete review of the threat and air defense requirement should be undertaken and recommendations submitted to the President.*³⁸

This program was mainly used in order to compensate for the withdrawal of the 7th Infantry Division. While the US was withdrawing troops from the peninsula, North Korea was increasing their military build-up and some sort of replacement program in the ROK was essential to balance the military scales on the peninsula. The US contribution to this plan, specifically, was “over \$1.25 billion which included such major weapons as F-4 Phantom aircraft, M-48 Patton tanks, armored personnel carriers, heavy artillery, and

³⁸ National Security Decision Memorandum 227: Korean Force Modernization Plan. July 27, 1973.

Honest John surface-to-surface missiles.”³⁹ Although this program was intended to be finished in 1975, it was not completed until 1977 due to a lack of congressional funding.

The Nixon administration made great strides in re-evaluating the US military posture in South Korea and in the greater Asia region. Between the Nixon Doctrine, the resulting withdrawal of USFK’s 7th Division, and the US’s newly endorsed strategy of military assistance shifting from government grants to credit sales, the US-ROK relationship was forever changed. The Watergate scandal erupted in the US in the early 1970’s resulting in President Nixon’s resignation from office on August 9, 1974. He was succeeded by his Vice President, Gerald Ford.

2.3 GERALD FORD ADMINISTRATION (1974-1977)

Troop Levels: 1974: 40,387-1977: 40,705

Gerald Ford became president in August of 1974 and was faced with several obstacles at the beginning of his term. First, by the time he took office the US had withdrawn its forces from Vietnam but was dealing with growing uncertainty from Asia about the US’ commitment to the region. Second, the Watergate scandal had increased tensions between the legislative and executive branches of the US Government.

Ford needed to tackle these issues head on and as a result, his first foreign visit as President was to Asia, and was particularly important. Ford met with President Park and the two released a joint communiqué following their meeting. Instead of pressing

³⁹ Levin, Snider 47-48.

the Nixon Doctrine, Ford “reverted to the language used by President Johnson in 1968 when he pledged ‘prompt and effective assistance to repel armed attack against the Republic of Korea.’”⁴⁰ Ford also promised that no further ground force reductions would take place on the peninsula. By assuring that the US would not further reduce troop levels on the peninsula and establishing a stronger relationship with President Park, the US realigned itself with the ROK and secured a more stable position in Asia than Nixon had left.

In contrast to the Nixon Doctrine, President Ford announced his own strategy for Asia on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor 1975. Ford announced this strategy in Hawaii, which he entitled the “Pacific Doctrine,” while returning from a trip to Asia. The Pacific Doctrine involved six points: (i) the first premise of a new Pacific doctrine is that American strength is basic to any stable balance of power in the Pacific; (ii) partnership with Japan is a pillar of our strategy; (iii) normalization of relations with the People’s Republic of China; (iv) a continuing stake in the stability and security of Southeast Asia; (v) peace in Asia depends upon a resolution of outstanding political conflicts with the US ready to consider constructive ways of easing tensions on the Korean peninsula; (vi) peace in Asia requires a structure of economy cooperation reflecting the aspirations of all the people in the region.”⁴¹ Secretary of State Henry Kissinger reiterated the points cited in Ford’s Pacific Doctrine during an address in Seattle on July 22, 1976, reinforcing commitment to the policy. He “stated emphatically that the US would not unilaterally

⁴⁰ Berry 233.

⁴¹ President Gerald Ford, “Pacific Doctrine,” Honolulu, Hawaii. December, 1975.

withdraw any more of its military forces for fear of contributing to increased tension on the Korean peninsula.”⁴²

In addition to his commitment to keep ground force troops on the peninsula, Ford continued the Korean Force Modernization Program that was introduced under the Nixon administration and released NSDM 282 in January 1975. The memorandum cites:

The President has reviewed the response to NSSM 211, together with the departmental and agency views thereon, and has decided the following:

- *The United States will complete its obligation to the Republic of Korea Force Modernization Plan at an early date, in order to demonstrate the United States commitment to the security of the Republic of Korea.*
- *The shift from grant military assistance to FMS credits should be accelerated to the rate defined in Option 2 in the NSSM response.*
- *No termination date should be set of the grant military assistance to the Republic of Korea. The downward trend in grant military assistance defined in Option 2 should be continued beyond FY 77, but should look toward the maintenance of a modern investment and training program with an annual ceiling of \$10 million.*
- *The F-4D squadron now on bailment to the Republic of Korea should be transferred to the Republic of Korea by sale. The Republic of Korea should be asked to pay the \$3.3 million cost for rehabilitating the two F-5A squadrons being returned to South Korea under the Enhance Plus Agreement, but this should not be a condition for the sale of the F-4D squadron if the Republic of Korea raises serious and persistent objections.*⁴³

Additionally, NSDM 309 allowed for the ROK to purchase an additional 18 F-

⁴² Berry 233.

⁴³ National Security Decision Memorandum 282: ‘Korean Force Modernization Plan.’ January 9, 1975.

4E's and 60 F-5E/F's in addition to opening a discussion on the purchase of eight of the twelve US Hawk batteries in Korea in the FY 79 time frame.⁴⁴ Finally, the US continued its policy of communist and Soviet containment as the previous administrations had done. In one of the last security decisions announced under the Ford administration, the President announced three factors that would 'ensure the credibility and strength of our military deterrent across the full spectrum of potential conflict,' and as such 'our overriding aims must be to maintain:

- *A strategic balance with the Soviet Union that guarantees the United States will never be in an inferior position.*
- *An adequate American contribution to the defense of the NATO area.*
- *A global capability designed to meet those challenges outside the NATO/Warsaw Pact area that threaten vital US interests.*⁴⁵

Despite the continued US presence on the peninsula, the Nixon Doctrine troubled the ROK and created skepticism about the US' commitment to Asia and the Korean peninsula. Therefore, South Korea launched a Force Improvement Plan (FIP) in 1975 that was developed to create an indigenous force structure that was able to deal with the North Korean threat with limited US military assistance. To aid this program's success, the ROK raised the defense budget from 4 percent to almost 7 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) as well as a defense tax to pay for the program.⁴⁶ The US helped, financially, with this goal through providing MAP and FMS credits. The FIP program, in

⁴⁴ National Security Decision Memorandum 309: 'Decisions on ROK Air Defense Requirements.' October 9, 1975.

⁴⁵ National Security Decision Memorandum 348: 'US Defense Policy and Military Posture.' January 20, 1977.

⁴⁶ Levin, Snider 48.

addition to the Korean Modernization program, was of great importance to both countries. The ROK would assume more responsibility for its own defense, as the Nixon Doctrine stressed, and the US would eventually be able to lessen its commitment in South Korea without the profound concern of diminishing the deterrent factor on the peninsula. For the time being, the introduction of Ford's Pacific Doctrine lessened the blow to the ROK in terms of US commitment. The combination of the newly initiated Pacific Doctrine in combination with the ROK's own initiatives helped make the peninsula's security posture stronger.

President Ford was responsible for cleaning up the mess the US involvement in the Vietnam War has caused domestically. The withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam came with great popularity in the US; however, Ford was committed to security commitments in Asia, particularly South Korea. Several factors contributed to the US continued presence on the peninsula, without increasing or decreasing the US ground force level. Firstly, ROK President Park purposely sent ROK forces to Vietnam to aid the US in order to prevent any USFK withdrawal. The agreement between the US and ROK ensured that the levels would be decreased, and Ford stuck to this commitment. However, developments in South Korea were straining the US relationship with its ally. "Chief among these was the imposition of martial law⁴⁷ by President Park in 1972 and

⁴⁷ ROK President Park Chung Hee declared Martial Law (the imposition of military rule by military authorities' instituted on the basis of an emergency situation) on October 17, 1972, effectively dissolving the ROK National Assembly and suspending the constitution.

the promulgation of the Yushin Constitution⁴⁸, the Korea Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) kidnapping in 1973 of former presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung, and other actions in 1974 limiting political dissent and popular opposition.”⁴⁹ The US Congress was seriously considering limiting both economic and financial assistance to the ROK when President Park’s wife was killed in an assassination attempt in August 1974. The ROK government was adamant that they wanted sustained US support on the peninsula. Ultimately, these events and the fall of Vietnam the next year put a halt on decreasing the US role in the ROK.

2.4 JAMES “JIMMY” CARTER ADMINISTRATION (1977-1981)

Troop Levels: 1977: 40,705-1981: 38,254

James Earl “Jimmy” Carter Jr. began his presidency in 1977 after running on a platform promoting human rights and avoiding the US’ involvement in another land war like Vietnam. One of the key issues Carter pledged was the complete withdrawal of US ground combat forces in South Korea. At the time Carter took office in 1977, 40,705 US troops were stationed on the Korean peninsula. Just six days after his inauguration on January 26, 1977, Carter issued Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC 13 on Korea directing the Policy Review Committee to ‘undertake a broad view of our [US] policies in Korea.’ The memorandum cited the review should be completed by March 7 of that year and outlined three objectives:

⁴⁸ Yunshin Constitution, a strongly authoritarian document, was adopted on November 21, 1972. The new Constitution gave ROK President Park control over the parliament and near-permanent presidential status as the new Constitution did not limit the number of terms a president could serve.

⁴⁹ Han. pp 48-49.

1. *Identify US interests and objectives in the Korean Peninsula, including those which derive from our relationship with Japan.*
2. *Analyze current developments and future trends bearing on our involvement in Korea, including the current and prospective North-South military balance and diplomatic competition, the policies of other major powers toward the peninsula, and the state of US-ROK bilateral relations.*
3. *Examine possible courses of action for dealing with the following issues, including any possible interrelationships:*
 - *Reductions in US conventional force levels on the peninsula;*
 - *Southward deployment within Korea of US forces;*
 - *[...]*
 - *Future US military assistance levels for the ROK;*
 - *ROK nuclear intentions and efforts to acquire access to advanced missile technology;*
 - *Diplomatic initiatives to reduce tensions on the peninsula;*
 - *US relations with North Korea;*
 - *The human rights problem in Korea and the Justice Department investigation of the ROKG activities in the US.*⁵⁰

Following a review by Richard Holbrooke, President Carter's Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and his interagency East Asia Informal Group (EAIG) established to conduct the review on Korea, the President issued a May 5, 1977 Presidential Directive/NSC-12 entitled "United States Policy in Korea," the President announced:

"Following the National Security Council's review of US policy options toward

⁵⁰ *Presidential Review Memorandum/NSC -13: Korea. January 26, 1977. Washington, D.C: National Security Council, 1977.*

Korea, I direct that: The US 2nd Division and supporting elements shall be gradually withdrawn from Korea. Withdrawal of one brigade and its supporting elements (but no less than 6,000 ground force personnel) should be completed by the end of CY [Calendar Year] 1978; a second brigade and supporting elements (but no less than 9,000 ground force personnel) should be withdrawn no later than the end of June 1980. I will determine at a later date the timing for the completion of ground force withdrawals. [...] US air units will remain in Korea indefinitely.”

“During the period of ground force withdrawal, the United States will provide to the Republic of Korea military assistance at levels adequate to overcome deficiencies arising from the withdrawal of US ground forces. [...] the Inter-agency Group for East Asia and Pacific should also submit to me by May 16 a plan for additional measures (e.g. military exercises, temporary augmentation of air deployments, Congressional scenario for military assistance to the ROK, command arrangements, diplomatic moves, and public declarations) to sustain deterrence in Korea and avoid misunderstandings of US intentions by South Korea, North Korea, Japan, and other countries.⁵¹”

Soon after the release of Presidential Directive/NSC-12, President Carter addressed a press conference in Washington DC and is quoted giving the first details of his USFK withdrawal plans. Carter stated:

“I think it is accurate to say that the time has come for a very careful, very orderly withdrawal over a period of 4 or 5 years of ground troops, leaving intact an adequate degree of strength in the Republic of Korea to withstand any foreseeable attack and making it clear to the North Korean, the Chinese, the Soviets, that our commitment to South Korea is undeviating and is staunch. [...]

⁵¹ Presidential Directive/NSC -12: *United States Policy in Korea: a Report from the President to the President's Directive of May 5, 1977*. Washington, D.C: National Security Council, 1977.

*South Korea, because of their own incentive and deep dedication to progress, now has one of the most strong economies in the world. Their growth rate last year in real terms was 15 percent. They have massive, very healthy industry – in steel, shipbuilding, electronic, chemical industries – to make it possible for them to grow into a position of defending themselves. We have also a complete confidence in the deep purpose of the South Koreans to defend their own country. Compared to the North Koreans, they have a two-to-one advantage in total population, and they have much greater access to the Western industrialized democracies for advanced equipment and for technology.”*⁵²

At this time, the Carter administration recognized the growth of South Korea, economically, politically, and militarily, and felt the withdrawal of troops was to the benefit of both nations.

More specifically, a letter from President Carter to the Speaker of the House Tip O’Neill, the President of the Senate Walter Mondale, and the Senate Majority Leader Robert Byrd, outlines his administration’s decision to withdraw the ground forces. The letter reads as follows:

My decision to withdraw US ground combat forces from Korea rests on certain basis considerations:

- *Korea’s impressive economic growth over the past decade and the corresponding increase in Korea’s ability to defend itself;*
- *Our continued firm determination to maintain our basic security commitment to Korea and to retain a significant military presence there, composed mainly of*

⁵² *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980.* Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Document 559: *Reply by the President (Carter) to a Question asked at a News Conference, Washington, D.C. May 26, 1977. Plan to Withdraw United States Ground Forces from the Republic of Korea. 1061.*

air and key support units, together with the continuing presence of US naval units in the area; we believe that these forces, as well as the major US forces remaining in the Western Pacific, provide a clear and visible US deterrent to North Korea miscalculation;

- *Our assessment of the broader international context of the Korean question, particularly the pattern of interrelationships between the great powers in the area;*
- *Our readiness, subject to Congressional consultations and approval, to take appropriate actions to assure that the ground force withdrawal does not weaken the Republic of Korea defense capabilities.*

The legislation I am proposing is designed to help make certain that Korean defense capabilities are not weakened by our ground force withdrawal. It provides for the transfer of certain US-owned military equipment (primarily in the custody of US forces in Korea) and related services to the Korean government, without reimbursement. We envisage at the most transfer of equipment of about \$800 million. [...]Even with this no-cost transfer, the withdrawal will require the Korean Government to devote a larger share of its financial resources, both foreign exchange and local currency, to defense.⁵³

The rhetoric of Carter's administration officials supported the notion that the US would remain a power player in Asia and the Pacific despite the troop withdrawals. A statement by the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Philip Habib before the sub-committees of the House International Relations Committee June 10, 1977 cited that the ROK had become economically strong enough, and was both willing and able to bear

⁵³ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980.* Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Document 562: *Letter from the President (carter) to the speaker of the hosue (O'Neill), the presidne of the Senate (Mondale), and the Senate Majority Leader (Byrd), October 21, 1977. Transfer of Defense Articles to the Republic of Korea.* 1066.

the increasing burden of its own national defense. He listed the main elements that formed the basis for the administration's determination as follows:

- *“Our recognition of Korea’s impressive economic growth over the past decade and the consequent growing capability of the Republic of Korea to defend itself;*
- *Our firm intention to maintain our basic security commitment to the Republic of Korea contained in the Mutual Defense Treaty, as well as to keep a significant US force presence in Korea – consisting mainly of air and deep support units – after the ground force withdrawal is completed. Additionally, our naval units will remain in the area. We believe these forces, coupled with the major US forces remaining in the Western Pacific, provide a clear, visible US deterrent to any possible North Korea miscalculation;*
- *Our readiness, subject to congressional consultations and approval, to take appropriate actions to assure that the ground force withdrawal does not weaken Republic of Korea defense capabilities, and;*
- *Our assessment of the broader international context in which we operate, particularly the pattern of interrelationships between the great powers in the area.”*⁵⁴

Habib continued touching on the USFK 2nd Infantry Division, saying:

“With regard to the 2nd Infantry Division, it is our view it could be relocated to the United States and matched against other unfulfilled requirements which will provide greater and much needed flexibility in meeting US worldwide contingency requirements. [...] In our consultation in Seoul, President Park and other senior Korean officials have made clear that our ground force presence remain. At the same time they have accepted the essentials of our projected

⁵⁴ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980. Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Document 560: Statement by the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Habib) before the Sub-Committees of the House International Relations Committee, June 10, 1977. 1062.*

force withdrawal and have indicated their own confidence in meeting the North Korea threat. [...] In Tokyo, the Japanese government conveyed its concern that the ground force withdrawal be carried out in an appropriate manner which would not endanger the security of the Republic of Korea nor threaten the security of northeast Asia."⁵⁵

A Joint Statement issued by the US Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and the Republic of Korea Defense Minister Suh at the Tenth Annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), Seoul on July 26, 1977 conveyed that the US ground force withdrawals resulted in no significant changes to the commitment level of the US toward the ROK and that the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954 remained fully in force. Secretary Brown stated that 6,000 troops would be removed from the peninsula by the end of the 1978 calendar year and that the withdrawal of the remaining ground combat forces would be carefully phased. He also stated that the headquarters and two brigades of the Second Division would remain in Korea until the final phase of the withdrawal, that the United States Air Force remaining in Korea would be augmented, and the United States Naval Forces would continue to be deployed in the area.

Additionally, Secretary Brown expressed the US' desire, pending consultations and approval by the US Congress, to assist the ROK in further improvement of its military capabilities as follows:

- *To transfer at no cost to the Republic of Korea certain equipment now in the inventory of United States Forces in Korea;*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

- *To provide supplementary Foreign Military Sales (FMS) credits to help the Republic of Korea improve its defense force capabilities; and*
- *To continue support for general Korean force improvements.*

Secretary Brown also stated that the United States Government would:

- *Within the context of the United States Government's worldwide arms transfer policy, make available appropriate weapons on a priority basis to insure that the Republic of Korea is capable of deterring North Korea aggression;*
- *Make special efforts to support the Republic of Korea's self-sufficiency projects in the defense industry field, together with related defense technology, within the context of the United States Government's arms transfer policy, and*
- *Continue and expand joint military exercises with the forces of the Republic of Korea to maintain the readiness of combined United States and Republic of Korea forces to resist any renewed aggression against the Republic of Korea.*⁵⁶

Although Carter and his administration were motivated to withdraw troops on the peninsula, not everyone in Washington agreed with the withdrawal plan. Both intelligence officers and Congressional officials were convinced that removing US combat forces from Korea would be detrimental to the peace and stability on the peninsula and in Asia. John Armstrong, a civilian imagery analyst at Fort Meade at the time, was one of the intelligence analysts convinced that North Korea was harboring

⁵⁶ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980.* Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Document 561: *Joint Statement issued by the Secretary of Defense (Brown) and the Republic of Korea Defense Minister (Suh) at the Tenth Annual Republic of Korea-United States Security Consultative Meeting, Seoul, July 26, 1977.* 1064.

more armor and munitions than previously reported. Armstrong and his team led intensive studies beginning in December of 1975 and lasting through the first year of the Carter presidency. As a result of these studies, Armstrong and his team discovered the existence of a whole tank division that was overlooked by earlier intelligence reports. The additional tanks totaled about 270 and 100 armored personnel carriers, showing significantly higher military capabilities than previously reported, located only a short distance from the DMZ.⁵⁷

Members of Congress, too, felt the withdrawal plan from the ROK would be adverse to the security of the peninsula. Public Law 95-384, September 26, 1978 notes specifically the Congressional concern with the withdrawal plan:

*[Sec. 23] (e)(1): It is the sense of the Congress that further withdrawal of ground forces of the United States from the Republic of Korea may seriously risk upsetting the military balance in that region and requires full advance consultation with the Congress.*⁵⁸

Congressman Charles H. Percy in his essay regarding concerns in South Korea noted two main themes of congressional interests in South Korea (i) US concern about the political evolution of South Korea, including the human-rights situation, and (ii) the presence of US ground troops as a tangible expression of the US commitment to the security of the country. Percy explained that some members of Congress felt that the President had made hasty decisions concerning the ROK without “heeding important

⁵⁷ Don Oberdorfer. *The Two Koreas: A Contemporary History*. (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1997.) 101-102.

⁵⁸ *Legislative History of the International Security Assistance Act of 1978: Public Law 95-384 : 92 Stat. 730 : Sec 23: September 26, 1978*. (Washington, D.C: Covington & Burling) 1982..

intelligence data about the military balance between the North and the South and without, in [his] view, adequate information about the deterrent value of the US presence.”⁵⁹ Percy and several other members of Congress felt that the removal of US ground forces would weaken deterrence against North Korea and would increase the threat of war. The commitment of the United States may not diminish noted Percy but “our [US] ability to prevent a war...was being seriously eroded.”⁶⁰

Percy offered an amendment to the International Security Assistance Act of 1978 that expressed Congressional concern for the withdrawals. The amendment began with Percy stating: “it is the sense of the Congress that further withdrawal of ground forces of the United States from the Republic of Korea may seriously risk upsetting the military balance in that region and required full advance consultation with the Congress.”⁶¹ It was accepted by both parties and passed in the Senate with a vote of 81-7 and passed in the House of Representatives as well, eventually adopted by both the Senate and House jointly on August 15, 1978. From there Congress continued to push for the halting of the withdrawal plan, aided by new intelligence from officers such as Armstrong. The culmination of this work led to the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommending the President suspend the USFK withdrawal plans.

Financial factors were also referenced by those who supported the troop withdrawal plan early on, yet budgetary research proved the savings were not as hefty as

⁵⁹ Charles H. Percy. *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers, June 1982*. Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983. 11.

⁶⁰ Percy 11.

⁶¹ Percy 12.

previously thought. A May 1978 Congressional Budget Office report refuted cost-saving arguments linked to the withdrawal plan and estimated that the US would expect either only modest savings or actual additional expenditures if the troops withdrawn were stationed elsewhere as planned. In short, financial concerns were nearly baseless in the withdrawal plan and according to Percy the US withdrawals would produce less deterrence at the same or greater cost.

An essential element of the US-ROK security relationship came out of Carter's withdrawal plan. When the US announced the withdrawal the 2nd infantry division in January 1977, the US and ROK began talks on the changing operational command structure. At the 10th ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting in 1977, the two nations agreed to establish a new type of command structure, which they called the Combined Forces Command (CFC). The next year at the 11th SCM gathering, the structure and function of the CFC was agreed upon. The CFC was formally established on November 7, 1978 at Yongsan based in Seoul based on the agreed "Terms of Reference for the Military Committee and ROK-US Combined Forces Command" and the "Strategic Directive #1." The CFC took over defense on the peninsula from the United Nations Command, and is still operating today.⁶² The CFC was fully supported by both nations and established on the basis of equity, as former CFC Commander General (R) William J. Livsey stated:

"It is worth noting that on 7 November 1978 the United Nations command was replaced by the Combined Forces Command as the major war fighting command and it is truly a combined command headed by a US four star general and a ROK

⁶² ROK-US Alliance and USFK. Seoul: Ministry of National Defense, 2003. 52.

Deputy Four Star. [...] US presence in Korea supports current and foreseeable future US, ROK and Japan national security strategies...’’⁶³

Despite President Carter’s best efforts to push the withdrawal plan to completion, the combination of new intelligence on North Korean military capabilities and Congressional pressure led to his decision to suspend the troop withdrawals in 1978, although the CFC remained intact. On April 21, 1978, President Carter made a statement regarding the adjustment of the scheduled withdrawals. This first statement was vague on the reason for the suspension of the withdrawals, stating: “in view of the crowded legislative calendar, and also because of other matters concerning Korea, there is a possibility that the Congress may not act now on this proposal. In light of this development, I believe it prudent to adjust the scheduled withdrawals.”

Elements of the planned withdrawal still remained, though, such as (i) the redeployment of noncombat elements would remain on schedule: 2,600 such noncombat personnel will be removed by December 31, 1978 – as it turned out this was the first and last withdrawal under the Carter administration to occur; – ⁶⁴ (ii) one combat battalion from the 2nd Division will be withdrawn from Korea in December; however, the other two combat battalions of the brigade slated for withdrawal this year will remain in Korea until 1979; and (iii) the plan to increase the US air forces in Korea will not be changed.⁶⁵

Despite the suspension on troop withdraws, Carter continued to urge Congress to

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980*. Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Print. Document 565: *Statement by the President (Carter), April 21, 1978. I believe it prudent to adjust the scheduled withdrawals. 1069.*

⁶⁵ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1069.*

authorize his proposal for \$275 million in foreign military assistance credits (FMA) for the ROK and to act quickly in enacting the \$800 million equipment transfer legislation. Full military aid and financial assistance from the United States to South Korea from is seen in Table (2). In fact, one of the most vital contributions from the US to the ROK in support of their military cooperation arrangement is weapons sales. Between 1950 and 1980, South Korea received \$8.961 billion in weapons and other logistics supplied. Of this, \$4.88 billion alone was supplied since 1971, which amounts to an average of half a billion dollars in military aid every year from the US.⁶⁶

US congressional pressure and new intelligence on North Korean military capabilities were the major contributing factors to the suspension and eventual abandonment of Carter's USFK withdrawal plan. However, there were major ROK domestic incidents in the latter part of the Carter term that forced his administration to take a closer look at the instability of the ROK. The assassination of ROK President Park Chung Hee on October 26, 1979 showed the total lack of political stability in South Korea. This incident was quickly followed by Major General Chun Doo Hwan's military take over on December 12, 1979, known as the "12/12 Military Insurrection." According to a United States Information Services Press Release from the US Embassy in Seoul, "The US was deeply disturbed by the evidence, gradually accumulating after the 12/12 incident that Korean military leaders did not intend to relinquish de facto control or

⁶⁶ *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers, June 1982*. Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983. 301.

set a timetable for democratization.”⁶⁷ The US continued to push for democratization under Chun Doo Hwan in his early years as leader, but was ultimately unsuccessful in setting up a solid timetable.

This incident was followed by the Kwangju Incident May 18-27, 1980. Student movements and the subsequent massacre that followed only bolstered idea that US withdrawal from the Korean peninsula was a mistake. Much of the Kwangju Incident damage control would be handled in the Reagan administration, but the US has always maintained that it knew nothing about the planned assassination of President Park or the Kwangju Incident.

President Park, throughout the proposed US withdrawal plan, continued to express the need for US ground troops on the peninsula. Joint meetings during the Carter administration were highlighted by the ROK’s extreme concern on the withdrawal plan. By 1979, Carter had changed his tone while President Park continued to outline the importance of the US security by noting the “security situation on the peninsula and the continued threat to peace posed by the North Korean military buildup.”⁶⁸ President Park expressed the need for US security and cooperation as the only way to maintain a high degree of strength and combat readiness, with which Carter would ultimately agree.

⁶⁷ Press Office, United States Information Services (USIS) United States, Embassy, Seoul, Korea. “United States Government Statement on the Events in Kwangju, Republic of Korea, in May 1980.” June 19, 1989.

⁶⁸ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980*. Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Print. Document 569: *Joint Communique Issued by the President (Carter) and the President of the Republic of Korea (Park)*. Seoul, July 1, 1979. pp. 1077-1079.

Tension-reduction plans were expressed as a major concern of the ROK government. President Park felt that only with the security guarantee of the United States could South Korean and North Korean representatives safely and effectively discuss reducing the pent-up tensions on the Korean Peninsula. However, President Park's assassination just months later would create a major obstacle and heightened concern from the Carter administration.

Table 2: US Military Aid to South Korea (Unit X 10⁶ \$, rounded)

Type	1950- '70	'71	'72	'73	'74	'75	'76	'77	'78	'79	'80	1950- '80
MAP	3,452	412	481	265	92	134	176	15	19	18	40	5,103
IMET	135	5	5	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	157
EDA	480	51	25	37	35	35	7	7	2	1	0	663
FMS (credit)	0	15	19	24	57	59	260	152	275	225	129	1,213
FMS (cash)	4	*	*	2	13	71	160	177	414	404	300	1,546
C.S.	0	*	1	*	1	4	20	77	75	61	41	280
Total	4,071	483	529	330	199	285	625	431	785	710	512	8,961

Source: Foreign Military Sales and Military Assistance Facts. *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers*, June 1982. Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983. p. 302.

Table Legend:

MAP: Military Assistance Program

IMET: International Military Education and Training

EDA: Excess Defense Articles

FMS: Foreign Military Sales

*: Nominal

On July 20, 1979, the President made an additional statement on the progress of the suspension of ground forces withdrawals, stating:

Last February it was announced that withdrawal of US ground combat forces from Korea would be held in abeyance pending the completion of a reassessment of North Korea's military strength and the implication of recent political developments in the region. That reassessment has been completed, and these policy issues have been discussed with our key allies in Asia, with principal defense and foreign policy advisers, and leaders of the Congress. Circumstances require these further adjustments in the troop withdrawal plan:

- *Withdrawal of combat elements of the 2nd Division will remain in abeyance. The structure and function of the Combined Forces Command will continue as established last year.*
- *Between now and the end of 1980 some reductions of personnel in US support units will continue. This will include one I-Hawk air defense battalion whose transfer to the ROK has been planned since 1976.*
- *The timing and pace of the withdrawal beyond these will be re-examined in 1981. In that review the United States will pay special attention to the restoration of a satisfactory North-South military balance, and evidence of tangible progress toward a reduction of tension on the peninsula.*

These decisions by Carter were shaped by a number of considerations. First, the recent intelligence studies at the time showed that the size of the DPRK's ground forces, armor, firepower, and mobility were much larger than previously reported. Second, Carters visit to Seoul just before this announcement produced a joint statement by Carter and President Park affirming plans to explore further tension-reducing activities on the peninsula with the help of the US on the diplomatic front. Third, the US' normalization of relations with China, the deepened defense cooperation with Japan, the recent stabilization of a US base agreement with the Philippines, initiation of defense planning discussions with Japan, and increased support for the security of ASEAN

countries, all serve wider US strategic security interests.⁶⁹

The suspension of the withdrawals in 1979 was never fully recovered by the Carter administration. The removal of 2,600 personnel was the only USFK withdrawal that occurred under this administration. President Carter ran in the 1980 presidential election as the Democratic Party's nominee against Ronald Reagan, the candidate nominated by the Republican Party. Carter's loss in this election led to a re-evaluation of US foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula by newly elected President Reagan and shed new light on the American policies toward Carter's ground combat forces withdrawal plan.

2.5 RONALD REAGAN ADMINISTRATION (1981-1989)

Troop Levels: 1981: 38,254-1989: 44,461

When Reagan took office, the US was met head on with a number of issues. Firstly, throughout the 1970's the United States was in a period of stale economic growth coupled with high interest and inflation rates and an impending energy crisis. Reagan's presidential campaign focus was less on the military spending and more on the recovery of the flailing economy. When he won the presidential election and took office in 1981, the primary global concern under the Reagan administration was the expansion of the Soviet Union and thus the US' major security goal was one of containment. Competition between the two powers was high and much of the US foreign policy was

⁶⁹ *American Foreign Policy Basic Documents, 1977-1980*. Washington: Dept. of State, 1983. Document 570: *Statement by the President (Carter), Washington DC, July 20, 1979. Withdrawal of United States ground forces from the republic of Korea to remain in abeyance*. 1080.

focused on the Soviet Union during Reagan's administration. Coupled with this strategy, Reagan's fundamental policy toward Asia was to "check Soviet expansionism in the region and restore American leadership."⁷⁰ In order to meet this threat, Reagan created a three-pronged strategy: (i) retaining US forward-deployment military forces in allied countries in Asia; (ii) strengthening bilateral and multilateral security relations; and (iii) providing security assistance programs to friends and allies so that they can contribute more effectively to security and stability in the region."⁷¹

After taking office, Reagan received a visit from ROK President Chun Doo-Hwan on February 2, 1981. This visit would result in a closer relationship between the two governments as Reagan took a much different stance on the USFK strategy than Carter had. According to Sung-joo Han, Reagan managed to accomplish what Carter could not – he gave the South Koreans assurance of support and "thus a greater degree of self-confidence and sense of autonomy."⁷² At this same meeting, President Reagan announced that "the United States had no plans to withdraw US ground forces from the Korean peninsula," by officially nullifying Carter's withdrawal programs and stating it was the intention of the administration to rebuild the American commitment to the defense of South Korea.⁷³ Additionally, Reagan confirmed that the United States would "make available for sale to Korea appropriate weapons systems and defense industry

⁷⁰ Han 223.

⁷¹ Berry 237.

⁷² Sung-Joo Han in Curtis, Gerald L. *The U.S.-South Korean Alliance: Evolving Patterns in Security Relations*. Lexington, Mass: Lexington Books, 1983. 223.

⁷³ Rhee 303.

technology necessary for enhancing Korea's capability to deter aggression.”⁷⁴ The Reagan administration followed through on these arms sales and by May 1981 the US Congress approved the sale of thirty-six F-16 fighters to Korea to be delivered over a three year period beginning in 1983, as well as F-5 jet fighter parts for aircraft manufacturing in Korea and the transfer of a 4,500-ton destroyer.⁷⁵ The main rationale in supplying South Korea with these military enhancements was to deter North Korea, to send the Soviet Union the message that the US was committed to the ROK, and to demonstrate to US allies in the region what was necessary to provide for regional defense.

The new intelligence previously gathered on North Korea under the Carter administration was a definite factor in the stayed commitment of the US to the ROK. Rhee Sang-woo notes in *'Calculated Cooperation: A Reflection on Military Relations'* what additional factors led to the US' changed strategy toward the Korean peninsula. Two factors are of utmost importance, “namely, South Korea's strategically important location and the great size of her mobilized armed forces. The geographical location of South Korea provides the United States a base of operations for balancing the three giant powers in the region, the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and Japan. [...] If the United States wants to remain a Pacific power, keeping Japan and China as allies and holding the Soviets at their present border, then it is far better for the United States to

⁷⁴ Joint Communique Following Discussions between President Reagan and ROK President Chun Doo Hwan. Washington. February 2, 1981

⁷⁵ Han 225.

keep South Korea under its control.”⁷⁶

Table 3: Military Capabilities: North and South Korea (1981-82)

Table 3: Military Capabilities: North and South Korea			
		SOUTH	NORTH
BASIC INDICATORS	Population	33,800,000	19,940,000
	GNP (X 106\$)	74,191	15,023
	Defense expenditure (X 106\$)	4,451	3,280
	Total Armed Forces	619,000	782,000
	-Army	520,000	700,000
	-Navy	67,000	31,000
	-Air Force	32,000	51,000
	Reserves	5,100,000	2,660,000
GROUND FORCES	Infantry Div.	24	35
	Tank Div.	--	2
	Motorized rifle Div.		3
	Mechanized Div.	1	
	Armored Brg.	2	5
	Ind. Tank. Reg.	2	2
	Special Combat Brg.	7	26
	Ind. Inf. Brg.	2	18
	SSM Btl.	2	4
	Artillery Btl.	36	100

⁷⁶ *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers, June 1982*, pp. 296-97.

	Reserved inf. Div.	8	23
	Tanks	1,000	2,800
	APC/BMP	600	1,100
	Gun/HWZ	2,700	6,300
	SSM	12	39
NAVY	Total combat ships	124	600
	Submarines	--	20
	Destroyers	17	2
	Missile boats	11	21
	Marine Div.	1	--
	Marine Brg.	2	--
AIR FORCE	Total Combat airplanes	400	716
	Bombers	--	90
	Fighter-Bombers	350	610
	Transporters	40	230

Source: Military Balance 1981-82, *Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations Conference Papers*, June 1982. Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983.293.

By the time of Reagan's second year in office began, the USFK command structure was functioning well. The command structure had changed over the past years since the establishment of the US-Korean Combined Forces Command (CFC) on November 7, 1978. In order for the two forces to combine effectively and efficiently in the event of conflict, the CFC was necessary to create this uniform command structure. South Korean troops remained under the operational control of the regional commander of the USFK, which numbered about one-tenth of the ROK forces. According to Rhee,

“the United States has programmed its military aid in such a way that the South Korean armed forces are structurally dependent on US forces. It has concentrated its support on the growth of South Korean ground forces, and, as a result, South Korea has disproportionally small air and sea forces. Thus, South Korea cannot independently carry out any significant military operation without American air and naval support.”⁷⁷ In order to balance this reality, the US continued its USFK role in South Korea as well as committing to arms sales, and providing naval and air support.

Table 4: Composition of US/Korean Combined Forces (1981)

Table: Composition of US/Korean Combined Forces(1981)				
	<u>South Korea</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>% of Total</u>	
			<u>Korea</u>	<u>US</u>
Ground force (incl. Marines)	554,000	28,000	95	5
	About 28 DEFs	About 1.5 DEFs	95	5
Air force (incl. naval planes)	Combat Planes: 350	Combat Planes: 550	39	61
	No. of squadrons: 19	No. of squadrons: 31	38	62
Naval force	82,000 tons	650,000 tons	11	89

Source: Defense of Japan, 1981. Reflections on a Century of United States Korean Relations: Conference Papers, June 1982. Lanham u.a: Univ. Pr. of America, 1983. 300.

During the 1980's the US kept its promise to sell and transfer a number of arms

⁷⁷ Rhee 300.

to the ROK. These arms sales greatly aided in South Korea's Force Improvement Plan (FIP) that began after the Vietnam War. Additionally, in 1986 the US decided to deploy a new set of weapons systems including medium-range "Lance" missiles that would replace "Honest John" and "Sergeant" missiles in Korea. "Lance" had potential nuclear capability and was controversial as it upped the proverbial ante in the arms race on the peninsula. While the US was contributing greatly to the defense and deterrent factor in South Korea, it pressed the ROK to contribute a more equitable share to military costs, thus the Combined Defense Improvement Plan (CDIP) was established. The CDIP pushed the ROK to keep a schedule of contributions to the USFK upkeep in South Korea. According to Olsen, the arms sales, the FIP and CDIP programs strengthened the US-ROK cooperation, as did the force command structure.⁷⁸

The South Korean economy was a virtual success story in the eyes of the international community. When President Park took office the annual per capita income was about \$80 (US). This amount grew to \$150 in the mid-1960s and over \$2,300 in 1987. Moreover, the South Korean Gross National Product (GNP) leveled at 12.5% in 1986 and 12.2% in 1987 in addition to growth of \$34 billion in exports in 1986 and \$46 billion in 1987. To top this off, the ROK economy grew around 8.5% in real terms by 1988.⁷⁹ By 1986 South Korea took over as the seventh ranking trade partner with the US, bumping France.⁸⁰ These changes in the South Korean economy allowed the US to

⁷⁸ Olsen 16.

⁷⁹ Olsen pp. 19-20.

⁸⁰ Harold C. Hinton. *The U.S.-Korean Security Relationship: Prospects and Challenges for the 1990s*. Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988. 3.

begin to see the ROK as less of a military burden and more of an economic partner.

Harold Hinton notes in his article "*The US-Korean Relationship: an American Perspective*" that there is a need on both the US and ROK side to work out an arrangement "for mutual economic relations and sharing the common defense burden."⁸¹ While the US' foreign policy toward Korea was shifting away from solely a military aspect toward more of an economic one, the US could not muster any persuasive argument to withdrawal additional troops on the peninsula. The mutual defense treaty still stood and it was the obligation of the US to remain on the peninsula as a deterrent presence.

Robert Pfalzgraff references the changes in the ROK domestic structure as well as the changing US strategy toward the peninsula through a number of forces, particularly: "the emergence of a postwar generation, a more open and participatory political process, greater diversification of opinion on foreign and defense policy debates, increasing trade friction with the United States."⁸² The merging of these factors pushed the Reagan administration and the ones to follow to be aware that the US-ROK relationship was changing at the political, economic, and military levels. The bilateral ties between the two nations could no longer be seen as a unilateral dependence by the ROK on the US. The 1970's US foreign policy toward Korea was dominated by security and military issues. With a growing trade relationship; the 1980's showed the strengthening of the

⁸¹ Hinton 4.

⁸² Robert L. Pfalzgraff, Jr. "The US-Korean Alliance into the 1990's: Political Options for the United States." in "*The US-Korean relationship: an American Perspective.*" In *The U.S.-Korean Security Relationship: Prospects and Challenges for the 1990s*. Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1988. 85.

US-ROK bilateral trade relationship; and the 1990's, as Pfalzgraff predicted, bilateral trade was the main focus of US foreign policy toward Korea.⁸³ By the time Reagan left office in 1989, the USFK troop level had increased by 6,207 from 38,254 in 1981 to 44,461 in 1989.

Reagan came to office just months after a number of disturbing events on the diplomatic and military fronts in South Korea. The assassination of President Park Chung Hee in October, 1979 was an alarming insight into the instability of the diplomatic structure of the ROK. The United States had no prior knowledge of this assassination attempt as well as no knowledge of the "12/12 Military Insurrection" that occurred on December 12, 1979, in which a group of ROK army officers led by Major General Chun Doo Hwan seized control of the ROK military.

The Kwangju Incident of May 18-27, 1980 was a red flag for the US on the continued instability in the ROK. Particularly distressing was the initial lack of knowledge by the US to the full extent of the violence in Kwangju and the subsequent false reports released following the massacre. According to the US Embassy, "official radio reports in Kwangju falsely asserted that the US had approved the dispatch of Special Warfare Command (SWC) troops into the city. Neither troops of the SWC nor elements of the 20th Division, employed by the Martial Law Command in Kwangju, were under CFC OPCON, either at the time they were deployed to the city or while operating there. None of the Korean forces deployed at Kwangju were, during that time, under the

⁸³ Pfalzgraff 88.

control of any American authorities.”⁸⁴ The US played no part in the events and needed to do damage control not only for democratization progress on the peninsula, but for trust-building with the Korean people. North Korea was less of a threat at this time to the US or South Korea, but the US Embassy in reflection on the incidents in the early 1980s noted that “the United States was concerned that the North might miscalculate the situation in the South and warned Pyongyang against trying to exploit it. Also, as a precaution, the United States deployed air and naval units to the area to demonstrate to North Korea that the United States’ resolve to stand by its security commitment to the ROK.”

The assassination of Park Chung Hee and the subsequent control take-over by Chun Doo Hwan, the Kwangju Massacre, and precautionary measures on North Korean all created an environment on the Korean Peninsula in which the Reagan administration, alongside the requests of the ROK government, felt it necessary to not only continue USFK presence, but to increase that presence for security and stability purposes.

2.6 GEORGE H.W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION (1989-1993)

Troop Levels: 1989: 44,461-1993: 34,830

In the landslide election of 1988, President Ronald Reagan’s Vice President George H.W. Bush won the presidency by posting unprecedented poll results in both the popular and electoral votes. Bush benefited from his popularity as Vice President during

⁸⁴ Press Office, United States Information Services (USIS) United States, Embassy, Seoul, Korea. “United States Government Statement on the Events in Kwangju, Republic of Korea, in May 1980.” June 19, 1989.

the Reagan administration as well as the stability of the US economy and the international system. In fact, international relations played a major role in the Bush presidency – military operations were conducted in both Panama and the Persian Gulf, the European environment was changing with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the dissolution of the Soviet Union by 1991.

Right from the beginning, President Bush took a strict line on the US military presence in South Korea. In an address before the ROK National Assembly on February 27, 1989 Bush is quoted as saying, “As president, I am committed to maintaining American forces in Korea, and I'm committed to support our Mutual Defense Treaty. There are no plans to reduce US forces in Korea. Our soldiers and airmen are there at the request of the Republic of Korea to deter aggression from the North, and their presence contributed to the peace and stability of northeast Asia. And they will remain in the Republic of Korea as long as they are needed and as long as we believe it is in the interest of peace to keep them there.”⁸⁵ Bush noted that the two countries needed to work together on equal footing in order to deal with the security challenges that may arise on the peninsula, by being prepared militarily while also attempting to establish a dialogue with North Korea.

Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney continued this rhetoric during the 21st Annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) in Washington on July 19, 1989.

⁸⁵ "Forces of Peace, Prosperity, Independence, and Democracy." *Address by President Bush before the Republic of Korea National Assembly, Seoul, February 27, 1989. American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1989.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, 1990. 552.

Cheney cited the continued presence of US troops on the peninsula. ROK Minister Lee and Secretary Cheney shared the view that ROK-US defense cooperation should continue and that South Korea should assume increased responsibility for its own national defense. Secretary Cheney noted at this meeting the US satisfaction with Korea in their contribution of \$40 million after the 20th SCM for Combined Defense Improvements Projects (CDIP). The CDIP program would be contributed to in the coming years – as the ROK planned to spend \$40 million in 1991 and expand to \$50 million by 1992. The ROK also announced their plan to expend an additional 30 million dollars in 1990 in such areas as war reserve storage, depot maintenance of US aircraft at industrial facilities, and improvements in command, control, and communications.⁸⁶

Congress noted the importance of the US presence on the Korean peninsula, and in a statement released after an assessment of the US military presence in South Korea, Congress found that “the United States, as executive agent for the United Nations Command, plays a key role in preserving the armistice which has maintained peace on the Korean peninsula for 36 years.”⁸⁷ Additionally, Congress outlined a series of proposals concerning the USFK presence in Korea, namely:

Sec. 9110 (b) It is the sense of Congress that -

- Until North Korea abandons its desire to reunite the Korean peninsula by

⁸⁶ US-Republic of Korea Security Relationship. *Joint Communique issued by the 21st Annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting (SCM), Washington, July 19, 1989. American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1989.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, 1990. 556-557.

⁸⁷ *Sec. 9110 (a) Assessment of the Need for US Troops in Korea, Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1990, November 21, 1989. American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1989.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, 1990. 561.

- force and ceases to seek modern weapon systems from foreign powers, the threat to the Republic of Korea will remain clear and present and the United States military presence in the Republic of Korea will continue to be vital to the deterrence of North Korean aggression toward the Republic of Korea;*
- *Although a United States military presence is essential until the Republic of Korea has achieved a balance of military power with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the United States should reassess the force structure required for the security of the Republic of Korea and the protection of the United States interests in northeast Asia;*
 - *The United States should not remove any armed forces from the Korean peninsula until a thorough study has been made of the present and projected roles, missions and force levels of the United States forces in the Republic of Korea...*⁸⁸

In a statement in February 1990, Secretary of State Baker reiterated the US commitment to the ROK and preserving stability on the Korean peninsula. Minister Lee and Secretary Cheney met again on February 16, 1990, and discussed the spectacular record of the ROK's high economic growth rate, coupled with the country's increased military capabilities having been equipped with sophisticated equipment and thoroughly trained forces. It was during this meeting that Cheney announced a stronger statement on Korea's ability to provide more for their own security, as a result of the previous year's impressive developments. Cheney is quoted during this meeting as saying, "...we clearly are discussing the possibility of adjusting US Force levels in Korea. That specifically

⁸⁸ Assessment of the Need for US Troops in Korea, *Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 1990, November 21, 1989. American Foreign Policy Current Documents 1989*. Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of State, 1990. 561.

means we are considering the possibility of reducing force levels in Korea, but a specific number is a matter to be discussed on a consultative basis between US and Korean officials and it's important to emphasize that the kind of adjustment we're talking about would in fact, preserve and protect our capacity to maintain our commitment to the Republic of Korea.”⁸⁹ At the time of this statement in 1990, the Cheney continued by explaining that “the US is now in the process of negotiating with Congress a budget that would reduce the size of our Armed Forces beginning in 1991 and looking out to the future. Korea has by no means been singled out in this process.”⁹⁰

On April 18, 1990, the Department of Defense (DoD) submitted to Congress a plan for restructuring USFK forces. The US Congress adopted the Nunn-Warner Amendment to the 1989 Defense Appropriation Bill, which mandated a reduction in U.S. troop strength in Korea from around 43,000 to 36,000 by the end of CY 1991. The amendment contained provisions for three phases of troop reductions, with no specific end-target strength written into the legislation.

The report cited a number of country-specific objectives for Korea, namely, “(i) to deter North Korean aggression or defeat it if deterrence fails; (ii) to reduce political and military tensions on the peninsula by encouraging North-South talks and the institution of a confidence-building measures (CBM) regime and; (iii) to transition US forces on the peninsula from a leading to a supporting role, including some force reduction.”⁹¹ The

⁸⁹ *Press Conference by Secretary of Defense Cheney and Defense Minister Lee, Seoul, February 16, 1990.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Plans for Restructuring US Forces Korea. Report prepared by the Department of Defense, Submitted to the*

report outlined a “near-term” approach, first, to focus on identifying the military roles and missions performed by USFK forces and, second, to transfer some US units to ROK divisions as the ROK military strengthens and broadens. Ultimately, the report is quoted as saying that “during the 1990's, we will seek to restructure our forces to a level that will support US interests over the long term.” A three phase strategy outlined the future of the USFK future on the peninsula:

- **Phase I: 1-3 years:** *The status quo on the peninsula that has existed for 37 years is under the terms of an armistice signed by the United Nations Command (UNC), on one hand, and the North Korean Armed Forces and Chinese People's Volunteers on the other. The UNC must therefore be retained, essentially in its current form. During this phase we will begin stream-lining our force presence by reducing administrative overhead and phasing out units whose mission can be assumed by the ROK Armed Forces. US ground force modernization will permit some stream-lining of the 2nd Infantry Division while preserving its combat capabilities intact. Overall, by the end of this phase, we envision a force reduction of about 7,000 personnel including 2,000 Air Force personnel and approximately 5,000 ground force personnel. These reductions are possible because of steady improvements in ROK defense capabilities.*
- **Phase II: 3-5 years:** *Toward the end of Phase I, we will reexamine the North Korean threat, evaluate the progress and effects of the changes outlined above, and consider new objectives to be established for Phase II. Restructuring of the 2nd Division will be considered at that point. Changes affecting the combat capability of the division will continue to be considered in terms of the state of North-South relations and improvements in ROK*

military capabilities.

- **Phase III: 5-10 years:** *Assuming successful completion of the earlier phases, the Koreans should be ready to take the lead role in their own defense. As that happens, fewer US Forces would be required to maintain deterrence.*⁹²

In addition to this three phase strategy, a cost-sharing phase was included. Specifically, this phase outlined the need for greater ROK contribution to mutual defense, reaching an agreement on and beginning ROK-funded relocation of US forces outside Seoul, and expanding Korea's share of maintaining the USFK presence in South Korea. The DoD proposed a won-based program to help support US forces including two elements: the ROK government's "assumption of indigenous labor costs and an increase in military construction funding. We have also sought greater flexibility in administering the various cost sharing programs already in place."⁹³ This report, combined with Secretary Cheney's visit to Seoul in February 1990, marked the initiation of an ongoing restructuring process of the US-ROK military and security relationship, which would ultimately end in a transition of US forces from a leading to a supporting role and a higher level of financial contributions from the ROK.

The drawdown process began after a joint statement was made on the US-ROK security relationship during the 22nd Annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting on November 15, 1990. Secretary Cheney announced US plans to reduce the military

⁹² Plans for Restructuring US Forces Korea. *Report prepared by the Department of Defense, Submitted to the Congress, April 18, 1990. American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1990.* Washington: Dept. of State, 1991. 717.

⁹³ *Report prepared by the Department of Defense, Submitted to the Congress, April 18, 1990. 717*

presence on the peninsula by 5,000 ground forces and 2,000 Air Force personnel. The US reiterated its commitment to the security of South Korea and that any future plans of withdrawal would be made gradually in order to maintain the security of the peninsula. Additionally, both the US and the ROK agreed that the DPRK remained a serious threat and that a surprise attack from the North without warning was definitively possible.⁹⁴ The announced USFK troop drawdown would be complete during Bush's time in office.

By late 1991, the US was engaged in a retrenchment from the outside world. As Robert E. Hunter notes in his article "Starting at Zero: US Foreign Policy for the 1990s" the US was in the midst of a "significant psychological withdrawal from the outside world of unclear dimensions and duration."⁹⁵ The US was involved in a number of conflicts abroad, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Yugoslavia, and the American people were calling for a withdrawal from these conflicts. The US success in the Cold War and in the Persian Gulf left the American people feeling satisfied with the international state and the nation's security. More importantly though, the US public was realizing a need for change within its own borders in a number of areas, namely: health and education, infrastructure and investment, drugs and crime, the inner cities and the environment. Ultimately, the domestic issues ranked higher on the US agenda than international issues.

Hunter points out that, at this time in the early 1990s, there was no major or

⁹⁴ US-Republic of Korea Security Relationship. *Joint Communique of the 22nd Annual ROK-US Security Consultative Meeting*, November 15, 1990. *American Foreign Policy Current Documents, 1990*. Washington: Dept. of State, 1991. Print. 719-720.

⁹⁵ Robert E. Hunter. "Starting at Zero: US Foreign Policy for the 1990's" in *U.S. Foreign Policy After the Cold War*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1992. 3.

immediate threat to the United States and that would remain the case with the “absence of three possible developments: the renewed over-arming of potential adversaries, which remains possible, even likely, in the Middle East with its risk of radical changes in regimes; a last-gasp aggression by a dying North Korean regime; or military actions by either the Soviet Union (Russia) or China, even though such actions would be at direct variance with these countries' compelling interests in gaining access to the global economy and Western support for economic transformation.”⁹⁶ Therefore, there was no need for the US to maintain the same level of military resources to defend other nations. And in fact, other nation's requests for US military assistance should be held to a higher and more rigorous degree than in the past. Hunter also noted that the US began in the 1990s to develop a wider range of geostrategic choices than in the past decades. Therefore, the US would, of course, maintain forces in regions that serve US interests and have the liberty to decide where to be involved abroad and where not to be involved.

Two developments during the Bush Sr. administration changed the way the US interacted with the outside world. First, the shift away from the use military instrument of power as the key tool in shaping foreign policy; and, second the rise in the importance of the economic sector.⁹⁷ Concerning the first development for example, President Bush initiated a bilateral treaty with the Soviet Union known as Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), signed July 31, 1991 and entered into force on December 5, 1994.

⁹⁶ Hunter 7.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

START called for “each party to reduce and limit its strategic offensive arms.”⁹⁸ Additionally, “each Party shall reduce and limit its ICBMs⁹⁹ and ICBM launchers, SLBMs¹⁰⁰ and SLBM launchers, heavy bombers, ICBM warheads, SLBM warheads, and heavy bomber armaments.”

Prior to the Bush administration the US’s main export for allied defense were in providing military equipment to foreign countries and providing security with forward stationed, and/or forward deployed US forces. However, the shift from military to economic power was becoming increasingly important in the international system and the US needed to catch up. The large trade deficits in the US at this time resulted in America moving from “the world's largest creditor nation to being its largest debtor.”¹⁰¹ Essentially, the Bush Sr. administration understood the importance of the economic factor in keeping the US a top power and therefore, reevaluated its military presence abroad. One result of this was the drawdown of USFK troops in the Korean peninsula. In order to be effective in the international system, the US needed to not only remain a strong military presence but also an economic one. Therefore, the reductions to US force levels in Korea during the Bush administration were more the result of economic realities than military necessities.

Additionally, the adoption of the Nunn-Warner Amendment resulted in the US dropping some 7,000 troops began a series of phases that would lead into a general trend

⁹⁸ Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, Article I. Signed July 31, 1991, entered into force December 5, 1994

⁹⁹ Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles

¹⁰⁰ Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles

¹⁰¹ Hunter, 9.

of reduction on the peninsula up until today. The troop level at the time Bush assumed the presidency in 1989 was 44,461. That level dropped to 41,344 by 1990; to 40,062 in 1991, 35,743 in 1992 and would eventually decrease to 34,830 by 1993 – a record low since before the Korean War.

2.7 WILLIAM “BILL” CLINTON ADMINISTRATION (1993-2001)

Troop Levels: 1993: 34,830-2001: 37,605

The 1992 presidential election was dominated by domestic issues as opposed to international concerns. However, some references were made by the candidates to the growing concern of security issues on the Korean peninsula and these concerns led presidential candidate William “Bill” Clinton to express a need to preserve the US military forces in Korea. Ultimately, Clinton won the election and assumed the presidency in 1993. During his first trip to South Korea in July 1993, Clinton announced his strong support for retaining the USFK forces in Korea by saying, “we must always remember that security comes first. Above all, the United States intends to remain actively engaged in this region.”¹⁰²

During this address to the South Korean National Assembly, Clinton outlined his administration’s call for a “Pacific Community.” Four main priorities dominated this Pacific Community: “first, a continued American military commitment to this region; second, stronger efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; third, new regional dialogues on the full range of US common security challenges; and last,

¹⁰² New York Times, July 11, 1993, p. 6.

support for democracy and more open societies throughout this region.”¹⁰³ Clinton continued by noting that the foundation for the US’ security role in the Asia-Pacific region was the sustained strong military role in the region – particularly with the bilateral security agreements that the US shared with Korea, Japan, Australian, the Philippines, and Thailand. Without these security agreements, the US would not have been able to maintain a substantial and beneficial presence. The US military, Clinton explained at this same address, helped to keep peace in the region as it “has enabled Asia to focus less energy on an arms race and more energy on the peaceful race toward economic development and opportunity for the peoples of this region.”

The cost-burden programs introduced by the previous administrations proved to be vital for Clinton’s Pacific community. South Korean financial contributions to stationing US troops on the peninsula reflects, first, the equal and necessary commitment from the US and ROK. Second, the reduced financial burden on the US allowed for its continued presence. While Clinton expressed the US hope for the peaceful reunification of the two Korea’s, he admitted that that time had not come and, therefore, Clinton emphasized the US commitment to South Korea, saying:

“Commitment to Korea’s security remains undiminished. The Korean peninsula remains a vital American interest. Our troops will stay here as long as the Korean people want and need us here... We have obtained increased access for our forces throughout Southeast Asia, to facilitate our presence and, if necessary, to project our forces beyond the region. Here in Korea we have frozen American troop

¹⁰³ Ibid.

withdrawals and are modernizing Korean and American forces on the peninsula.”¹⁰⁴

While the US stayed committed to remaining on the peninsula with the support of South Korea, a growing confidence in the ROK military proved evident in the 1990’s. Norman Levin notes in his article *Do the Ties Still Bind? The US-ROK Security Relationship After 9/11*, “ROK planning and operation responsibilities were...enhanced in the early 1990s by a US initiative to transition from a ‘leading to a supporting’ role on the peninsula. As part of this initiative, operational control over South Korean forces was transferred to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) during every day, ‘peacetime’ operations.”¹⁰⁵ The official peacetime operational control was transferred from the CFC back into ROK hands on December 1, 1994. This peacetime control, also known as “armistice control,” allowed the ROK JCS to be responsible for organizing, training, equipping, and operating ROK forces, and controlling daily missions in defense of ROK the ROK on land, sea and in the air.”¹⁰⁶

Wartime operational control transfer was discussed; however the growing North Korean nuclear threat would prevent bilateral discussions on this transfer until the following Bush administration. According to Kate Ousley’s article “*Wartime Operational Control*,” the US supported the transfer of peacetime operations “not only for reasons of military strategy but also to avoid unintended involvement in domestic

¹⁰⁴ New York Times, July 11, 1993, p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Norman D. Levin. *Do the Ties Still Bind?: The U.S.-ROK Security Relationship After 9/11*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corp, 2004. 8.

¹⁰⁶ *The New Korea: Strategic Alliance 2015*. United States Forces Korea: Strategic Digest. October, 2010. 24.

South Korean political controversy.” The 1980 Gwangju incident¹⁰⁷ had raised concerns on the US involvement by not using their peacetime control to stop ROK forces against South Korea civilians. The transfer of peacetime operational control would allow the US to remove itself from any issues similar to this in the future.

Following the transfer of peacetime control, Clinton was visited by ROK President Kim Young Sam in July 1995 and reiterated his commitment to the Pacific community and to the continued USFK presence on the peninsula. It was during this meeting that Clinton stated that the US-ROK alliance was “stronger than ever”¹⁰⁸ and that US troops would remain in South Korea. The North Korean nuclear issue overshadowed the US military presence during Clinton’s time in office,¹⁰⁹ as William E. Berry notes in his article “*The Political and Military Roles of US Forces in Korea.*” A number of nuclear-related issues and failed agreements between the US, ROK and DPRK led the US Congress to focus more on the nuclear weapons issues than the USFK presence.¹¹⁰ However, certain government strategy policies of the Clinton administration did focus solely on the military presence issue in Asia.

The first policy was outlined in the *East Asia Strategy Report*, also known as the *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*, in 1995, which was

¹⁰⁷ The Gwangju Incident, often referred to as the Gwangju Massacre, refers to the May 18-27, 1980 uprising of South Korean citizens took control of the city of Gwangju against the dictatorship of Chun Doo-hwan. Some 2,000 people reportedly died in the conflict between the ROK Army and armed civilians.

¹⁰⁸ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*. East Asia Daily Report, July 28, 1995, p. 38.

¹⁰⁹ William E. Berry, “*The Political and Military Roles of US Forces in Korea,*” in *The U.S.-ROK Alliance in Transition*. Seoul, Korea: Kyungnam University Press, 1996. 212.

¹¹⁰ More detailed information on the Clinton administration’s policy toward the North Korean nuclear threat can be found in William E. Berry, Jr.’s *North Korea’s Nuclear Program: The Clinton Administration’s Response*, Institute for National Security Studies Occasional Paper 3, USAK Academy, Colorado, March, 1995.

preceded by two Department of Defense strategy reports in 1990 and 1992. The *East Asia Strategy Report* reaffirmed the US commitment to “maintain a stable forward presence in the region, at the existing level of about 100,000 troops, for the foreseeable future.”¹¹¹ Certain objectives were set forth, including:

- *Strengthening U.S. bilateral alliances while pursuing new opportunities presented by multilateral security dialogues;*
- *Maintaining forward deployment of U.S. forces and access and basing rights for U.S. and allied forces;*
- *Ensuring that security policies have the support of the American people and Congress;*
- *Promoting military-to-military contacts and security assistance;*
- *Halting the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and;*
- *Sharing the responsibility for maintaining regional and global security.”*¹¹²

As far as the ROK was concerned, the 1995 report explained the importance of the security relationship between the two nations:

“Our security relationship with the Republic of Korea continues to be central to the stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia, as it has been for over forty years. The Republic of Korea-United States combined defense structure rests on three strong pillars: the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, Combined Forces, and the annual Security Consultative process. The United States also continues to support South-North talks on tension reduction efforts. Until North and South Korea find a peaceful solution to their differences, we remain committed to the terms of the forty-five year old Armistice Agreement. The Armistice Agreement

¹¹¹ *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*. Washington, DC: Dept. of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs. February 27, 1995.

¹¹² Ibid.

and its mechanisms must remain until an appropriate agreement supersedes them. [...]

The relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea is more than a treaty commitment; it is a vital component in our national objective of supporting and promoting democracy. Even after the North Korean threat passes, the United States intends to maintain its strong defense alliance with the Republic of Korea, in the interest of regional security.[...]

To support our commitments in East Asia, we will maintain a force structure that requires approximately 100,000 personnel. In Korea, this includes an Army division (consisting of two brigades as well as headquarters and support elements) and a United States Air force combat wing. We are also prepositioning military equipment in South Korea to increase our ability to respond to crises. In light of the continuing conventional capability of North Korea, we have permanently halted a previously planned modest drawdown of our troops from South Korea, and are modernizing the American forces there as well as assisting the Republic of Korea in modernizing its forces. We will continue to provide sufficient forces and support assets to constitute a reliable defense capability in Korea that can deter or halt and defeat a North Korean invasion even if our forces are engaged in a major regional contingency elsewhere in the world.”¹¹³

The 1995 report was followed by a 1998 report released on November 25 of similar content, also entitled *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*. The 1995 report confirmed the maintained 100,000-troop presence in Asia and cited efforts to share the security responsibilities with allies. The 1998 report showed that a number of strategic steps had taken place over the three-year gap between reports to

¹¹³ Ibid.

lessen areas of ambiguity and to strengthen the region's progress toward economic prosperity and political cooperation:

- *Through the Quadrennial Defense Review, we have confirmed our ability and intention to maintain a robust overseas military presence of approximately 100,000 in the region, while harnessing new technology to retain our lead in capabilities; [...]*
- *We are working with South Korea and China to engage North Korea through the Four Party Talks on a formula for reducing tensions and making the transition from armistice to lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula;*
- *We have focused attention on the threat from weapons of mass destruction, addressing potential proliferation through the Agreed Framework and missile nonproliferation talks with North Korea, and improving our capabilities for counter-proliferation through various means, including research and development of theater missile defense.*¹¹⁴

The 1998 United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region report also discussed the security partnership and goals of the US and ROK:

“The long-run U.S. objective remains a peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict with a non-nuclear, democratic, reconciled, and ultimately reunified Peninsula. Toward this end, the security alliance between the United States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) serves as the foundation on which all U.S. diplomatic, defense, and economic efforts on the Korean Peninsula rest. Our treaty commitment and the presence of U.S. troops in South Korea help deter any North Korean aggression by making it unmistakably clear that the U.S. would immediately be fully engaged in any such conflict. The U.S. and ROK

¹¹⁴ *The United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region*. Washington, DC: Dept. of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, November 25, 1998.

continue to maintain and strengthen the three major elements of our security alliance: the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty, bilateral consultations and combined military forces.

The strong U.S.-ROK deterrent posture has created the potential for improved security conditions and political relations on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, a firm stance by the United States and ROK laid the groundwork for the 1994 Agreed Framework, which froze North Korea's nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and Taechon under IAEA inspection, defused a critical source of tension and deflected what could have been a military confrontation with North Korea."¹¹⁵

The US and ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC) structure established under the Carter administration continued to strengthen their capabilities. The CFC maintained its rigorous training exercises, field training, computer simulations, and reinforcement plans. Additionally, while the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis caused economic strains on the peninsula the US promised in this report to aid in the recovery of the ROK, which was proving to be a bigger challenge to the ROK at that time than North Korea. The ROK had to reduce its defense budget as a result of the financial crisis but assured the US that it would "maintain combined operation readiness and deterrent capabilities."¹¹⁶

Consistent rhetoric of the continued US presence on the peninsula remained throughout the Clinton administration. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is quoted,

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

on more than one occasion, with reassuring the US commitment to the US-ROK security relationship. On March 13, 2000, Secretary Albright and ROK Foreign Minister Lee Jounge-Bin met in Washington D.C. at the Department of State's Ceremony for Social Security Agreement and Administrative Arrangement. Here Albright is quoted as saying, "This afternoon, Foreign Minister Lee and I reviewed the situation on the Korean Peninsula, and I reaffirmed America's commitment to South Korea's defense. The United States strongly supports President Kim Dae Jung's policy of engagement with North Korea, and we recognize the centrality of the North-South dialogue to the establishment of peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula."¹¹⁷ Secretary Albright, in a press conference meeting in Seoul at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on June 23, 2000, discussed the impracticality of removing American forces from South Korea stating, "...It is very clear that American forces on the peninsula have been and continue to be important for two reasons. One is the reason of deterrence because it is obvious that, while the summit is hopeful as I have said, not all issues have been resolved. And the other is basically for stability in the region. With the American forces that are also in Okinawa, there are forces here in the region that help provide stability; and neither of those reasons has changed. Therefore, any discussions of lowering numbers or withdrawal are not appropriate and are premature."¹¹⁸

When Bill Clinton took office in 1993, the USFK force level was at 34,830 and

¹¹⁷ US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and ROK Foreign Minister Lee Jounge-Bin, Press remarks at Signing Ceremony for Social Security Agreement and Administrative Arrangement, Treaty Room, Department of State, Washington, D.C., March 13, 2000.

¹¹⁸ US Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright and ROK Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Jounge Bin Lee, Press conference, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Seoul, Korea, June 23, 2000.

by the end of his first term in 1997 rose slightly to 35,663. Clinton was re-elected and by the end of his second term in office in 2001 the USFK level reached 37,605 – a nearly 3,000-troop increase over his two terms in office. The publication of the two *US Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region* reports in 1995 and 1998, the rhetoric of President Clinton, Secretary of State Albright, and members of his administration, and the increased troop level on the peninsula, proved the US commitment to the US-ROK lasting security partnership.

The USFK troop level increase under the Clinton administration was highlighted by a focus on the North Korea nuclear threat and Clinton's Pacific community. From the onset, the Clinton administration made the North Korean nuclear threat-management a high priority. The Agreed Framework of 1994 was discussed and signed in October and showed the forward progress of relations with the DPRK. Much of the focus of the Clinton administration was outlined by the North Korean nuclear threat and although the Agreed Framework, at first, appeared promising the reality was that there was no foundation for trust between the two nations. The relationship was “was not based on trust” but the US hoped that trust would be built through the framework.¹¹⁹ The high volatility of the region led Clinton to not only keep troops on the Korean Peninsula, but to increase the level to hedge any hostile actions from the DPRK following their withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the development of their nuclear capabilities.

¹¹⁹ US Department of State, Office of the Spokesman; Robert L. Gallucci. Excerpts from the October 25, 1994 Daily Press Briefing. October 25, 1994.

The freezing of the Agreed Framework the next year showed the Clinton administration that progress in relations with the DPRK and, more importantly, security on the Korean Peninsula were not guaranteed. The slow progress of the agreement frustrated the North Korean regime and they released several warnings to the US to follow through on their commitment of light water reactors (LWR) and to “reduce the various economic, financial, and communications restrictions that [had] been placed on North Korea.”¹²⁰ Several obstacles led the framework to ultimately collapse, but throughout this process the US steadfastly kept its commitment to the agreement saying that it was not broke and that the DPRK had continued to maintain its freeze on its nuclear program. According to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Hubbard, the “situation could, to be frank, veer toward crisis...if the DRPK refuel[ed] its 5 megawatt reactor.” Under the auspices of continued threat and danger, the US kept its troops on the Korean peninsula and when warnings occurred amid slowed relations with the DPRK built on unstable, trustless foundations the US increased its troop levels – a necessary step to keep its original and main security commitment to the region, the Mutual Defense Treaty with the Republic of Korea.

2.8 GEORGE W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION (2001-2009)

Troop Levels: 2001: 37,605-2009: 26,305

President Clinton was left office in 2001 after serving the maximum two terms under United States law and his Vice President Al Gore ran against Texas Governor

¹²⁰ US Department of State, Office of the Spokesman; Thomas Hubbard. Excerpts from the Press Briefing of December 9, 1994.

George W. Bush, son of former president George H.W. Bush, in the 2000 election. Bush won the election narrowly and assumed the presidency in 2001. Bush's 2000 election campaign emphasized limiting US presence abroad, saying in a *60-Minutes* interview "if we don't stop extending our troops all around the world in nation-building missions, then we're going to have a serious problem coming down the road. And I'm going to prevent that." Clearly, the new administration's foreign policy, initially, was in contrast to that of the Clinton administration.

However, a terrorist attack on the United States on September 11, 2001 during Bush's first year in office led to drastic changes in US foreign policy. The *Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR)*, released September 30, 2001, spelled out the goals for the US security policies under President Bush, post-9/11. The QDR outlined the purposes of the US military and its operations following the attacks stating:

*"The purpose of the U.S. Armed Forces is to protect and advance U.S. national interests and, if deterrence fails, to decisively defeat threats to those interests. The United States has interests, responsibilities, and commitments that span the world."*¹²¹

The review cited the following national interests: (i) ensuring U.S. security and freedom of action; (ii) honoring international commitments, including: security and well-being of allies and friends, precluding hostile domination of critical areas, particularly Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Middle East and Southwest Asia;

¹²¹ US Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, Washington, D.C., 2.

(iii) contributing to economic well-being.”¹²² In order to facilitate these national interests abroad and to protect the US at home, the QDR set forth its defense policy goals, first assuring allies and friends; second, dissuading future military competition; third, deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and fourth, if deterrence fails, decisively defeating any adversary. These defense goals set the stage for the remainder of the Bush administration.

Following the release of the QDR was the 2002 National Security Strategy (NSS) which focused on “American’s internationalism” and the national security goals cited were, “political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states, and respect for human dignity.”¹²³ The NSS went on to note the importance of creating and maintaining a balance of power that promotes democracy and freedom, as well as the importance of strengthening alliances to defeat global terrorism. The importance of security partnerships between the US and other nations, such as the ROK, were a recurring theme throughout the 2002 NSS. In his 2002 State of the Union address on January 29, President Bush announced his “Axis of Evil,” countries run by governments who aided terrorists or endorsed terrorism, and seeking weapons of mass destruction. These governments were Iran, Iraq and North Korea.

By the time the QDR and NSS were released the US had already begun operations in Afghanistan, and by the next year, the US began its official war against

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of American*, Washington D.C., September 2002. 1.

terrorism by invading Iraq on March 20, 2003. It was not long before the first planned deployment of US troops from South Korea to Iraq was announced. In May of 2004 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced the deployment of a 3,600-troop combat brigade deployment from the 2nd Infantry Division to Iraq. Rumsfeld ultimately requested a troop level decrease from the some 37,000 US forces in South Korea to 25,000 by 2008; however, his successor as secretary of Defense, Robert Gates, would ultimately halt the drawdown at 28,500 troops. South Korea also sent some of its own forces to aid the US in the War in Iraq, assuming a non-combative role. The Jaitun Division (자이툰 부대), part of the ROK Army, operated from September 2004 to December 2008 in northern Iraq. The deployment level peaked in November 2004 at 3,600.

Some progress in the US-ROK security alliance came on October 20-21, 2006 during the 38th Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). At this meeting, the US and ROK defense ministers discussed and agreed to the eventual transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON) of South Korean military forces from the US back to the ROK. Discussions on wartime operational transfer actually dated back to former ROK President Park Chung-hee's time in office when he called for a "self-reliant" army. However, most of the modern push had come during Roh Moo-hyun's administration, which called for the return of wartime operations during his presidential campaign in 2002. Roh would eventually be elected and assume the ROK presidency in 2003, and his push for wartime OPCON transfer led to the OPCON discussions at the SCM. The timeline for

this transfer was flexible, as the dates ranged from October 15, 2009 to March 15, 2012. According to Kate Ousley's article "*Wartime Operational Control*," the US was seeking "a 2009 transfer while the ROK preferred 2012."¹²⁴ Despite the US' push for an earlier transfer, opponents in South Korea said that the ROK military was not yet capable to assume the wartime control, suggesting a lack of intelligence, surveillance and airpower capabilities.¹²⁵ In order to properly attain these capabilities, it would take years and extraordinary costs – both of which a 2009 wartime OPCON transfer would not allow. The issue would eventually be left to Bush's successor, Barack Obama.

Despite progress abroad on alliances such as the US-ROK OPCON transfer, the bulk of US foreign policy following 9/11 was focused on the War on Terror. As the US shifted its foreign policy, so too did it shift some of its deployed troops. The troop level decreases on the peninsula from 2004-2005 were the result of the deployed brigade to Iraq and the reshuffling of US troops (2004 troop levels were estimated at 37,997 and decreased to 32,422 by 2005). However, once US troop levels were capped for Iraq, the USFK troops withdrawals progressed at a significantly slower rate: 2006: 29,477; 2007: 28,356; 2008: 27,968 (other reports 28,500);¹²⁶ and by the time Bush left office in 2009 the levels were at 26,305 (other reports say 28,500), the lowest levels to date on the peninsula since the Korean War.

¹²⁴ Kate Ousley. *Wartime Operational Control*. SAIS US-ROK Yearbook. 2006 US-Korea Institute, SAIS. 31.

¹²⁵ Ousley 34.

¹²⁶ The Department of Defense has refrained from publishing an estimate in its quarterly 309A reports of how many military personnel are in South Korea due to "sensitive and political reasons." However, these figures are taken from a DoD 2005-2012 Base Structure Report cited in the Korean *The Hankyoreh* Newspaper, March 21, 2013.

While the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan raged on and consumed much of the US focus abroad, the Korean peninsula remained an area of importance for the US security strategy following Bush's "Axis of Evil" inclusion of North Korea. As such, the Bush administration announced in 2008 its plan to maintain USFK levels at a steady 28,500. Both President Bush and ROK President Lee Myung-bak agreed on this level. In a June, 2008 meeting in Seoul ROK Defense Minister Lee Sang-hee and Secretary Gates stated: "The defense ministers shared their view that maintaining the number of U.S. troops at the current level contributes to the joint combat readiness, and agreed to abide by the summit agreement between the two sides." Succeeding President Barack Obama would assume responsibility for not only the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also the wartime OPCON issues in South Korea, and the growing North Korean threat.

2.9 BARACK OBAMA ADMINISTRATION (2009-PRESENT)

Troop Levels: 2009: 26,305-28,500¹²⁷ – 2013: 28,500

In the 2008 Presidential campaign, Republican candidate Senator John McCain and Democratic candidate Senator Barack Obama ran on two differing platforms. Ultimately, Barack Obama won the presidential seat on a platform dominated by health care, decreasing energy dependence, and, more importantly, a full withdrawal from Iraq. Domestically, the new administration undertook high unemployment, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan along with the American public's growing protest to these wars, and a flailing economy. In East Asia and the Korean peninsula, the Obama administration was

¹²⁷ Differing reports, see Footnote 114.

met with challenges of a rising China, the North Korean nuclear threat, and changes in the US-ROK operational structure.

The initial foreign policy focus under the Obama administration was the withdrawal of troops from Iraq, which would begin during Obama's first year in office, and eventually be completed by 2010. After the total withdrawal of troops in Iraq was completed in December 2010, the US refocused its attention to East Asia and the ROK in particular. Due to US economic constraints following the 2008 financial crisis and a push from US policymakers to take a more powerful stance on responding to threats in Asia, the new administration expressed the need for more contributions from regional allies concerning security. According to Abraham Denmark and Zachary Hosford in "*Securing South Korea: A Strategic Alliance for the 21st Century*", the ROK "must invest more in building an adaptive military force structure that can respond effectively to a wide range of threats posed by North Korea while the United States continues to play a significant supporting role."¹²⁸ Additionally, the US-ROK alliance, as unit, must work together to manage the rise of China, while "also remaining poised to deter and defend against potential Chinese coercion and aggression."

President Obama and ROK President Lee Myung-bak met in Washington on June 16, 2009 and announced their "joint alliance vision" for the cooperation and security partnership between the two nations. The two leaders reiterated the strong and stable partnership between the US and ROK saying, "our open societies, our commitment to

¹²⁸ Abraham Denmark and Zachary M. Hosford. *Securing South Korea: A Strategic Alliance for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2010. 5.

free democracy and a market economy, and our sustained partnership provide a foundation for the enduring friendship, shared values, and mutual respect that tightly bind the American and Korean peoples.”¹²⁹ The two Presidents continued, noting the changes in the alliance in the 21st century and that continued bilateral discussions were taking place on restructuring the alliance, as the ROK “will take the lead role in the combined defense of Korea, supported by an enduring and capable US military force presence on the Korean peninsula, in the region, and beyond.” This restructuring was a direct reference to the OPCON transfer, which began negotiations under the previous administration.

The Obama administration released its first National Security Strategy (NSS) that same year in May 2010 and highlighted American leadership by building strength domestically and meeting challenges abroad. The NSS reaffirmed its commitment to strategic alliances across the globe. It noted that as far as the US Asian partners were concerned the US will continue to “deepen and update these alliances to reflect the dynamism of the region and strategic trends of the 21st century.”¹³⁰ The NSS also recognized Asia’s dramatic economic growth that “has increased its connection to America’s future prosperity, and its emerging centers of influence make it increasingly important.” Thus, the US took progressive steps to create more of an economic partnership in the region. Most importantly in the arena is the Korea-United States Free Trade Agreement (KORUS FTA).

¹²⁹ Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea. Washington, DC. June 16, 2006.

¹³⁰ *National Security Strategy of the United States*. Washington, DC: White House, 2010.

The KORUS FTA was initially signed under the Bush administration on June 30, 2007. Through a series of negotiations from 2007-2010, the FTA was approved by Congress on October 12, 2011 and Korea's National Assembly on November 22, 2011 and was eventually entered into force on March 15, 2012. The US International Trade Commission reported that an estimated \$10 billion to \$12 billion reduction of Korean tariffs and quotas on goods alone would add to the US Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and some \$10 billion to annual merchandise exports to South Korea. Agricultural, service and financial sectors would all benefit from the increase transparency and, as the Office of the United States Trade Representative stated, "The agreement is the United States' most commercially significant free trade agreement in almost two decades."¹³¹

Most importantly to the US-ROK security relations was the OPCON transfer. The 2009 transfer proposed under the Bush administration was strongly opposed by some South Korean officials, stating a lack of readiness in ROK military capabilities. An OPCON date was set at the end of the Bush administration for April 17, 2012 at which time the plan was to disband the CFC forces and transfer control to the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff. The transfer would allow the ROK army to lead command during wartime, leaving the US and South Korean armies to be linked by liaison officers and coordination centers.¹³² However, at the G-20 economic summit on June 27, 2010, President Obama and ROK President Lee announced their decision to delay the April 2012 OPCON transfer to December 2015. This decision was the result of the North Korea's continued

¹³¹ *US-Korea Free Trade Agreement: New Opportunities for US Exporters Under the US-Korea Trade Agreement*. Office of the United States Trade Representative. Internet resource.

¹³² *Ibid.*

belligerence and persistent threat to the South. ROK President was quoted by Yonhap News Agency as saying the OPCON delay “reflects the current security condition on the Korean peninsula and will strengthen the alliance of the two nations.”

In order to prepare for challenges such as the North Korean threat and the OPCON plan, the “*Strategic Alliance 2015*” was released in July 2010 by the US and ROK Foreign and Defense Ministers. The Strategic Alliance 2015 plan synchronized several US and South Korean efforts that were designed to build a deterrent force on the peninsula. Four central factors were critical to the Strategic Alliance 2015 report: “(i) realistic plans and exercises based on the full range of possible North Korean actions including provocations, instability and direct attack; (ii) changes to the ROK-US organizational structures by 2015 and the transition from United States Forces Korea to United States Korea Command, or US KORCOM; (iii) the development of additional ROK capabilities that allow them to lead the war fight and; (iv) realizing greater efficiency by consolidation of US forces into two enduring hubs around Pyeongtaek and Daegu.”¹³³

The Strategic Alliance 2015 comes as the result of a series of ROK strengthened capabilities such as, its economy, industrial and technological centers, democratic government, and military capabilities. It replaced the 2012 OPCON plan which was viewed as too aggressive since it did not allow enough time to prepare the ROK forces. As Maj. Tara O noted in her article “*US-ROK Strategic Alliance 2015*,” when the US and

¹³³ *The New Korea: Strategic Alliance 2015*. United States Forces Korea: Strategic Digest. October, 2010.

ROK decided on the OPCON transfer in 2007, “the Roh Moo-hyun government viewed the transfer as a sovereignty issue, against the backdrop of latent anti-Americanism in South Korea. Then U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld saw the OPCON agreement in terms of global posture requirements of the U.S. military. Neither side seriously considered military readiness or required preparation time as factors that would drive this fundamental shift in responsibilities and influence the capability and commitment essential for deterrence.”¹³⁴ The lack of readiness led to the suspension of the transfer and thus the strategic alliance and OPCON plan for 2015. That plan is currently still underway and both the US and ROK governments support the 2015 transfer. Additionally, in preparation for this transfer no troops have been withdrawn from the peninsula since the beginning of the Obama administration, as the level has remained at ~28,500. This is despite North Korean provocations such as the 2010 sinking of the ROK naval ship Cheonan that resulted in the death of 46 ROK Navy soldiers, the shelling of Yeongpyong Island that killed two ROK Marines and two South Korean civilians in November 2010, the North Korean nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, and 2012 as well as missile tests, and the most recent heightened tensions on the peninsula as North Korea voided the Armistice.

In a statement before the House Armed Services Committee on March 28, 2012, current USFK Command General James D. Thurman outlined the priorities of the USFK and US-ROK Alliance in promoting stability on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia:

¹³⁴ Major Tara O. : “*US-ROK Strategic Alliance 2015*.” World Security Network Foundation. September 13, 2010.

“If deterrence fails, we will decisively defeat external aggression and restore stability on terms favorable to the Alliance. The Command vision is to maintain trained and ready US joint Alliance combined forces, strengthen the US-ROK Alliance, and provide an operational focus in order to maintain the Armistice in Korea and support the transition to a ROK-led combined defense on the Korean peninsula in accordance with the Strategic Alliance 2015 plan.”¹³⁵

General Thurman also noted the burden sharing contributions from the ROK to the USFK, which is outlined by a five-year (2009-2013) Special Measure Agreement (SMA) currently in effect. Thurman noted, “During the calendar year 2012 the ROK will provide USFK with 836 billion won (\$765 million) of support under the SMA. This support will be distributed between three categories: labor (\$307 million; pay salaries and benefits of USFK’s Korean national employees); logistics (\$119 million; covers supplies and services); and ROK Funded Construction (\$339 million; used for USFK’s military building design and requirements).”¹³⁶ These contributions helped to maintain the USFK presence and ultimately the deterrent factor on the peninsula against North Korean aggression. Also, with the financial help of the ROK the US could maintain a long-term US military force on the peninsula in a support-role.

While troops are not being withdrawn under the Obama administration, there are two major repositioning plans underway: the Land Partnership Plan (LPP) and the Yongsan Relocation Plan (YRP). The LPP will consolidate most US forces located

¹³⁵ *Statement of General James D. Thurman, Commander, United Nations Command, Commander, United States-Republic of Korea Combined Forces Command, and Commander, United States Forces Korea Before the House Armed Services Committee.* Washington, DC. March 28, 2012. 8.

¹³⁶ Thurman 12.

north of Seoul to areas South of the city, by expanding Osan Air base and Camp Mujuk on the East coast. Army forces will move to US Army Garrison (USAG) Humphreys and bases in Daegu. The costs for moving will be shared between the US and ROK. The YRP will move the forces and families currently at Yongsan Base in Seoul to USAG Humphreys south of the city. However, one command element will remain in Seoul in order to maintain constant communication with the US Embassy and ROK government. The YRP was initiated by the ROK and therefore the majority of the costs will be paid by the ROK.¹³⁷

Most recently, President Obama was re-elected in 2012 and began his second term in office in 2013 just as the ROK elected its new president, first female leader Park Geun-hye. Obama's second term in office is focusing its foreign policy toward a "pivot toward Asia,"¹³⁸ after a November 2011 speech citing the Asia-Pacific region as a "top-priority" and further explained that "as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future...the United States is a Pacific power, and we are here to stay."¹³⁹ Following the 2012 election of President Park, the US-ROK relationship remained strong and President Park decided her first international visit as president would be to the United States in May 2013. During their joint statement on May 7th, Obama cited the continuation of trade agreements, clean energy partnerships for energy security, extending the civilian nuclear agreement,

¹³⁷ Thurman 14.

¹³⁸ "Asia-Pivot" or "Pivot toward Asia" term was coined by President Obama in a November 2011 speech before the Australian Parliament.

¹³⁹ President Barack Obama speech before the Australian Parliament. November 2011.

modernizing security alliance through their joint vision, and most important, that the two nations are on track for ROK to assume wartime operational control in 2015. President Park shared the same view on the OPCON transfer saying, “the transition of wartime operational control should proceed in a way strengthens our combined defense capabilities.” As of today, the US will relinquish OPCON in December 2015 as planned, but there is no plan to withdraw any of the current 28,500 US forces from the Korean peninsula.

III. ANALYSIS

The reduction of USFK forces on the Korean peninsula since the end of the Korean War has been a direct result and reflection of America’s foreign policy toward Asia and, more specifically, the Korean peninsula. Each administration from Nixon to current President Obama has had its individually crafted foreign policy goals and strategies, however, almost every administration contributed to the withdrawal of USFK troops. By reviewing the American foreign policy and domestic issues during each presidency, overarching themes reoccur in addition to administrative-specific philosophies that shed light on the reasons for these withdrawals.

President Nixon, drowning in the unpopularity of the Vietnam War, proposed his Nixon Doctrine pushing for nations across the globe to take more responsibility for their security. The Republic of Korea was not exempt from this doctrine. The US called on

the ROK to shoulder more of the burden for its own national defense and thus the Nixon administration withdrew a record 20,000 troops by the end of 1971. Dissatisfaction in the US, the rebounding of Korea's economy after the Korean War, and its increased military capabilities, with the aid of the US, led to the Nixon administration's confidence in both the ROK security system and the envisioned success of the Nixon Doctrine.

President Ford, in contrast, proposed no further ground force reductions. His Pacific Doctrine pushed for American strength in the Pacific and, therefore, slightly increased the level of US military troops on the peninsula from 40,387 when he took office in 1974 to 40,705 when he left office in 1977. Political factors on the Korean Peninsula, mainly President Park Chung Hee's institution of martial law and several assassination attempts, one of which claimed the life of his wife, led the Ford administration to halt any discussion on withdrawals. However, his Korean Force Modernization Plan would contribute greatly to the later success of South Korean forces, and this would aid in the US' future confidence in the ROK Army; this confidence would ultimately result in withdrawals by future administrations.

In the 1977 election of Jimmy Carter, the first full ground force withdrawal plan was proposed, although never completed. Carter noted several factors that contributed to his decision to withdraw all of the US ground combat forces from Korea. These factors included: Korea's impressive economic growth and the corresponding increase in Korea's ability to defend itself; the US confidence that the military presence of limited air and naval support units would be enough to deter aggression from the North; and the

belief that the withdrawal of ground forces would not weaken the ROK's defense capabilities. Confidence in the South Korean military and economy was one of the strongest pillars of Carter's decision to withdraw American forces, bolstered by the strength of the US air and naval units that would remain. Two other factors contributed to Carter's decision to withdraw troops; first, the US was adamant about avoiding American involvement in another situation similar to the Vietnam War and; second, Carter's human rights campaign focused on violations by the militaristic Park administration. Carter's plan, of course, was re-evaluated and ultimately halted once new intelligence reports were released on the extensive military capabilities of North Korea.

The Reagan administration's three pronged approach: "(i) retaining US forward-deployed military forces in allied countries in Asia; (ii) strengthening bilateral and multilateral security relations; and (iii) providing security assistance programs to friends and allies so that they can contribute more effectively to security and stability in the region"¹⁴⁰ proved to be the basis for the retention of USFK troops. An actual increase in USFK troops was recorded during this administration from 38,254 when Reagan took office in 1981 to 44,461 stationed in Korea by the time he left office in 1989. First, Reagan's foreign policy focused on deterring Soviet expansionism and this was one factor that led the US to this increase of troops on the optimally-located Korean peninsula. Second, political unrest on the Korean Peninsula, namely, the assassination of President Park, the 12/12 Military Insurrection, and the Kwangju Massacre, proved to Reagan that

¹⁴⁰ Berry 237.

South Korea was not prepared for a withdrawal and this was strongly echoed by the South Korean government.

Bush Sr. took a strong stance at the onset of his presidency on maintaining USFK forces in Korea. However, by his second year in office his Secretary of Defense, Richard Cheney and ROK Defense Minister Lee were having discussions on restructuring the American forces in Korea. Secretary Cheney noted the spectacular record of the ROK's high economic growth rate, coupled with the country's increased military capabilities, the result of sophisticated equipment and thoroughly trained forces. The US Department of Defense and Congress designed a plan for the restructuring of USFK forces which reduced the number of troops from some 43,000 to 36,000 by the end of Calendar Year 1991. Three phases (Phase I: 1-3 years; Phase II: 3-5 years; and Phase III: 5-10 years) included a number of features contributing to the draw-downs, showing the US long-term commitment to withdrawing troops on the peninsula. In addition, the ROK's own cost-sharing contributions, under the Combined Defense Improvement Projects,¹⁴¹ led to these drawdown decisions. Again, the Korean economic growth and increased military capabilities led to further US confidence in the ROK military capabilities and the eventual drawdown schemes.

President Clinton's Pacific Community emphasized the importance of American military presence in the region, its place in combating weapons of mass destruction, and in meeting the security challenges posed by Asia. In order for the US to promote this

¹⁴¹ Korean contribution of \$40 million in 1991 and expand to \$50 million by 1992 for Combined Defense Improvements Projects (CDIP).

Pacific Community, a strong, sustained military presence in the region was essential. Therefore, it came as no surprise that troop levels marginally increased during the Clinton administration from 34,830 in 1993 to 37,605 by 2001. Clinton stressed the importance of security on the peninsula as critical to American interests stating that “troops will stay here as long as the Korean people want and need us here... in Korea we have frozen American troop withdrawals and are modernizing Korean and American forces on the peninsula.”¹⁴² Additionally, the Clinton administration worked to better relations with North Korea through the establishment of the Agreed Framework. However, the Framework was frozen by the DPRK, proving the extreme difficulty in coming to a security guarantee in the region. The instability of North Korea also greatly contributed to the sustained presence of US forces. Despite the slight increase in troops, the Clinton administration did make one critical restructuring move in the US-ROK security alliance – the transfer of peacetime operational control in 1994. This control transfer was the direct result of US recognition of the ROK Army’s ability to handle day-to-day operations in the air, on land and sea. The peacetime operational control transfer is the platform upon which the current wartime operational control transfer is being built.

President Bush Jr. began his first term in office addressing his concern for extending US troops across the globe in worrisome “nation-building missions.” His initial plan for the military was interrupted with the September 11, 2001 attacks. The Bush administration refocused its attention on the War on Terror and as a result, the troop levels in South Korea were affected. As of May 2004, the announcement of a 3,600-

¹⁴² New York Times, July 11, 1993, p. 6.

troop combat brigade deployment from the US forces in the ROK was slated to head to Iraq. It was at this same time that the US announced its plan to reduce troops from 37,000 or 25,000 by 2008 (ultimately the troop numbers would level off at 28,500). This decision resulted from the combination of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which demanded constant restructuring and increased troop levels, and South Korea's increasing ability to bear more of the burden for its own defense. By the end of the Bush administration, the USFK levels were at an all-time low.

Finally, the Obama administration has continuously emphasized the strong bond between the US and ROK, beginning with his close relationship with former ROK President Lee Myung-bak and continuing with a similar relationship with newly elected President Park Geun-hye. The Obama administration followed and expanded upon the policies set forth in the Bush administration – namely, the OPCON transfer slated for 2015 and the KORUS FTA, which entered into force in early 2012. President Obama has continuously outlined Korea's impressive economic growth and the continuously strengthening ROK military, both reiterated as recently as Joint Statement in Washington DC by President Park and President Obama in May 2013. Specifically, according to the *Strategic Alliance 2015*, “as an advanced nation with a strong economy, strong industrial and technological base, a very stable democratic government, and a very capable military, the ROK has proven itself ready to take the lead of war-fighting efforts on the Korean peninsula.”¹⁴³ There is no current plan to withdraw USFK troops from the peninsula, however the OPCON transfer is still slated and approved for 2015.

¹⁴³ *The New Korea: Strategic Alliance 2015*. United States Forces Korea: Strategic Digest. October, 2010. 24.

The clear and obvious overarching thread throughout these administrative decisions is the growing confidence in the ROK military and economy to safely provide a deterrent against North Korean aggression and domestic security. In fact, the only recurring theme between each US administration was the continued support and confidence in South Korea, in their ability, even a mere 20 years after the Korean War, to adequately provide some level of deterrent factor to protect their nation. While major withdrawal plans may have been suspended, or altogether halted in some cases, the US policy was the same – confidence. However, each administration has used this confidence as a pillar for more administrative-specific factors, unique to each President. The genesis of these factors, which led to USFK withdrawals, can be seen through: Presidential philosophy, human rights issues, fear of Soviet expansion, ROK political uncertainty and domestic upheavals, the North Korean nuclear threat, and external wars. One factor that clearly did not affect the withdrawals was the political party of the President, proving that as far as the USFK force presence is concerned, Republican or Democrat party affiliation is a moot indicator of drawdown policy.

But where does this confidence stem from? What is the origin of the US willingness to remove troops on the peninsula despite a persistent threat from the North and today's rising China? The confidence is from the extensive and long-term US assistance programs from the end of the Korean War in 1953 until today. The US is confident in the ROK's ability to handle withdrawals, peacetime transfers, and the eventual transfer of OPCON because the US military has had a hand in the ROK's military progress every step of the way since 1953. Between 1950 and 1988 the US

provided South Korea with over \$5.5 billion in free military assistance, and \$9 billion in aid to the military from military sales, commercial sales, and military loans. Constant training from USFK forces and combined exercises greatly aided in the ROK military capabilities as well as constant access to Western technologies, equipment and advanced weapons systems.¹⁴⁴

In addition to the military contributions of the US to the ROK, extensive economic assistance was provided. The US directly aided in the enormous success of the South Korean economy as a total of \$3.8 billion in assistance was provided between 1945 (Korea's liberation from Japanese rule) and the beginning of the 1970's. Levin notes that "strong and sustained political support, such US assistance helped foster the gradual growth of a middle class that both propelled Korean democratization and underpins stability today. The gradual development of a common set of values emphasizing democratic norms and institutions and free, open markets are one by-product."¹⁴⁵ The US has continuously emphasized its confidence in South Korea because the US itself has played such an integral role in the Republic of Korea's enormous success since the end of the Korean War.

While crediting the US with mentoring the ROK through this process, the ROK contributions and desire to take control of their national defense cannot be overlooked. The ROK took advantage of the opportunities provided and through their own initiatives

¹⁴⁴ Levin pp. 8-9.

¹⁴⁵ Levin 9.

built an economy and defense apparatus that places them amongst the world leaders. The ROK's economy will continue to grow as will their military capabilities, with the help of the US playing a purely supportive role.

IV. CONCLUSION

The United States has been a consistent military presence on the Korean peninsula since the end of the Korean War. Yet, there has also been steady strategic drawdown of US forces following the War. Through several US administrations, the USFK withdrawals have proved to be a topic of political discussion and action despite the continued threat of North Korean aggression and provocation. The single, and most obvious, overarching theme at the epicenter of the withdrawals is the constant confidence in South Korea as a self-sufficient and eager nation, consistently advancing its military capabilities, improving its economy, and fostering a stable and democratic government. This confidence is coupled with an array of administration-specific contributors (i.e. Presidential philosophy, human rights violations, Soviet expansionism, ROK political instability and domestic uprisings, North Korea's growing nuclear threat, and external wars), ultimately leading to a steady drawdown of USFK forces since the end of the Korean War.

The United States and South Korea have agreed to the OPCON transfer in 2015 which will allow the ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff to take the lead now in both peacetime

and wartime operations on the peninsula. The Combined Forces Command will disappear and the US Korea Command (KORCOM) will support the ROK forces. The OPCON transfer must provide the same sense of unity that the CFC has provided in the past. While the US is relinquishing control of the wartime operations, there is no plan to remove US forces from the peninsula; therefore, the new command structure must ensure stability and a seamless transfer so that the US-ROK joint operations and capabilities continue their effectiveness.

The military alliance will remain a crucial component to the US-ROK relationship and the two nations will continue to re-evaluate the operational structure as both confidence and threats arise. Further withdrawals will only come as the result of the success of the planned 2015 OPCON structure. Most importantly, the Republic of Korea and the United States have more than an alliance – the two nations have developed an essential partnership and friendship over the past 60 years and that friendship will remain strong in the decades to come.

Abbreviations

CFC: Combined Forces Command

CDIP: Combined Defense Improvement Plan

CY: Calendar Year

DMZ: Demilitarized Zone

DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea

EAIG: East Asia Informal Group

FIP: Force Improvement Plan

FMA: Foreign Military Assistance

FMS: Foreign Military Sales

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GNP: Gross National Product

JCS: Joint Chiefs of Staff

KCIA: Korea Central Intelligence Agency

KORCOM: US Korea Command

LPP: Land Partnership Plan

NSS: National Security Strategy

ROK: Republic of Korea

SCM: Security Consultative Meeting

SMA: Special Measure Agreement

START: Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

SWC: Special Warfare Command

UN: United Nations

UNTCOK: United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea

US: United States of America

USAG: United States Army Garrison

USFK: United States Forces Korea

YRP: Yongsan Relocation Plan

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Abstract

(국문초록)

주한미군 철수에 관한 비교학적 연구

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미합중국(이하 미국)은 한반도의 평화와 안정을 유지하는데 핵심적인 역할을 맡아왔다. 1953년 한국전쟁 이후, 새로이 형성된 남한 정부는 북쪽의 인접한 적대국가인 북한으로부터 발생할 수 있는 도발행위를 저지하는데 군사-안보적으로 큰 부분을 미국에 의존해왔다.

이에 미국은 지속적으로 그 틀을 형성하고 있는 남한군대와 더불어 온전히 본 기능을 다 하는 보안 체제를 궁극적으로 설립하기에 이른다. 이에 따라 남한 군대와 함께 주한미군은 한반도에서의 영구적인 군사체제가 되었다. 하지만, 한국전쟁이 끝난 이후부터, 미국은 몇 단계에 걸친 주한 미군 철수에 돌입하기 시작하였다. 미국과 한국 두 나라의 수

많은 정부를 거치면서, 주한미군 철수는 한미 양자대화에 있어서 핵심적인 주제 사안이라는 것이 증명되었다. 중대한 철수는 한국 전쟁 직후 미국 아이젠하워 정부부터 시작되었고 아들 부시 행정부에까지 지속되었다. 남한 정부로부터 공식적으로 우려의 목소리가 나오고 전세계에 대한 북한의 핵무기 위협이 지속되는 가운데 이와 같은 철수 움직임은 지속되었다.

드와이트 아이젠하워 정부부터 현재의 버락 오바마 미 대통령에 이르는 각 정부에 대한 연구를 통해서 남한 군사 능력에의 ‘신뢰’라는 확실히 포괄적인 주제와 남한의 기하급수적 성장세를 보이는 경제는 각각의 철수 발표의 설득력을 퇴화시켰다. 하지만, 이런 신뢰는 한국전쟁의 종료 이후부터 주한미군 철수를 이끌어왔던 특정 정부에 해당하는 관념의 총체를 구성하고 있는 하나의 기둥의 역할만 하였을 뿐이다.

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주요어: 주한미군, 미군 철수, 안보 협력

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