Korea and the US-PRC-USSR Triangle

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I. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe, analyze and evaluate changing patterns of the interests of the U.S., P.R.C. and Soviet Union in Northeast Asia, particularly as they relate to the Korean peninsula.

Northeast Asia today contains the greatest concentration of military forces of any comparable region in the world. Within its geographic environs, the interests of two superpowers and one additional nuclear power intersect, as well as those of a economic giant which remains militarily insignificant.

The post World War II military equilibrium between the superpowers is now endangered. The relative decline of U.S. power, at both the strategic and conventional levels, raises doubts about the willingness and capability of the United States to meet its commitments and protect its vital interests in Europe and Asia in the face of growing Soviet power and influence.

The growth of Soviet military power in Asia and declining U.S. power in the Pacific is one of the great fears of Asian allies. During the previous two decades, United States policy in Asia was basically an extension of the containment strategy originally designed for Europe, based on the assumption that Chinese Communism constituted the same kind of expansionist threat to the security of the non-communist world, and ultimately to the United States, as did communism in its Russian variant.

The PRC's perceptions of the security environment in Asia is changing, and there is renewed Chinese interest in the development of a modern military capability adequate to deal with the perceived threat to the security adequate to deal with the perceived threat to security of the PRC. Concern is mounting in Japan over the security situation in Northeast Asia, and there is a growing possibility that in the near future Japan will decide to substantially augment

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her military capabilities and to assume a more autonomous political position in the multipolar politics of the region.

Korea has long had a strategic importance out of proportion to its size. For centuries, China and Japan competed for influence there. After World War II the United States became involved. Korea is one of the few places in the world where hostilities involving one or more of the great powers could conceivably break out at any moment. Great powers intersect in Korea and reflect their respective national self-interests. However, while the changing international environment in this decade has lessened the potential for violence, none of these powers can exercise "control" over the policies of their Korean ally. Too often, Americans think of Korea only in a vacuum, emphasizing only the military balance between North and South Korea. The crucial point, however, is that developments in Korea affect all of East Asia; involve several powers; and are potentially destabilizing to the present international equilibrium.

II. North Korea's Position in the Sino-Soviet Conflict

North Korea has been the beneficiary of competitive support as well as the target of competitive pressure from China the Soviet Union since the middle of this century.

Of the 1,300 kilometers of North Korea's national border, 16.5 kilometers or 1.2% are shared with the USSR. The Yalu and Tuman Rivers form the borderlines that North Korea shares with Mainland China. Geographic neighbors, North Korea and China have a relationship that goes back long before World War II. North Korean leaders before and including Kim II Sung struggled with the Chinese against the Japanese in Northeast China (Manchuria). After World War II, the high point of tension came on June 25, 1950, with the outbreak of the Korean War. The North Korean army invaded South Korea and U.S. military forces intervened in the Korean conflict.

The Soviet Union did not directly intervene in the Korean War, but influenced the participation of Chinese voluntary forces. China suffered more than 500,000 casualties in the war; was condemned along with North Korea as an aggressor in a U.N. resolution; and became a bitter enemy of the U.S.A.

Things are truly different today. A recent diplomatic offensive by China has resulted in a 1978 friendship agreement with Japan and the normalization of ties with the U.S. in January 1979. China has notified Russia of the expiration of the Sino-Soviet Alliance Treaty and has taken up an anti-Soviet hegemony line with the U.S. and Japan.

Kim II Sung has said, "As soon as imperialism came into existence, with it came the crisis of war." Of course, there are armed struggles among socialist countries themselves, such as those between Cambodia and Vietnam, and China and Vietnam.

In the Indochina turmoil, North Korea has taken China's side and criticized the Soviet-supported military involvement of Vietnam in Cambodia. However, North Korea has taken no side in the actual military conflict between Vietnam and China. Pro-Soviet Vietnam has emerged as one of the most serious challengers to China. This is in part why the Sino-Soviet rift has had an extremely disruptive influence.


(2) The Republic of Korea: A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Jan. 9, 1978, p. 7.
on North Korea.

China's new program to modernize its agriculture, industry, military, science and technology by the year 2000 is dependent on continued cooperation with the U.S., Japan and Western Europe. Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, China's current rulers have adopted a relatively pragmatic approach to the immense task of modernizing China, and they continue to base Chinese foreign policy on opposition to the Soviet Union and on limited cooperation with the West and Japan.\(^2\)

The PRC would like to have friendly relations with its border countries, ideally led by neutral regimes, but Vietnam has signed a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union and joined COMECON. The fall of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia was a bitter blow to the PRC's influence in Southeast Asia.

Vietnam maintained good relations with China during the Vietnam War, but took a pro-Soviet line upon the withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in 1975. China believes Soviet hegemony to be partially dedicated to a policy of encirclement of China and regards Russia as a great threat to its security. The newly formed trilateral relationship of the U.S., Japan and China excludes, of course, the Soviet Union, which has apparently entered a phase of trying to block Chinese advancement into Southeast Asia.

China has perhaps a greater interest in the Korea peninsula than any other neighboring nation because of a fear growing that North Korea will fall gradually under Soviet influence as a result of the policy of hegemony that China so denounces.

China-Vietnam antagonism will continue as long as China thinks of the as her main enemy and of Vietnam as the Soviet Union's agent. Therefore China's interest in alliance with the U.S. and Japan is the hope of freezing Russian influence in Asia.

However, well aware of Kim Il Sung's opposition to three-way talks among the Koreas and the U.S., China has not endorsed the idea, despite strong urging from the U.S. to do so. Still, China's policy on the Korean situation favors a gradual change of the bitter status quo between the North and South to a new era of peaceful coexistence.

The Soviet Union liberated the northern half of the peninsula in World War II and indirectly assisted North Korea through China during the Korean War. The Soviet Union also played a major role in the signing of the Korean War armistice agreement. North Korea's physical position is of immediate importance to the present Sino-Soviet conflict. The Soviets have evaluated North Korea to be of prime importance in the encirclement of China, if the latter's greatest fears are correct. It would provide a threat to Manchuria, an important heavy industrial area of China. But China, as well, sees the peninsula as geographically placed to facilitate outflanking Russia.

Therefore, the position of North Korea is all the more critical to the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Soviet Union, moreover, has recently supplied North Korea with a squadron of MIG 23 fighters. According to The London Daily Telegraph on April 27, 1979, North Korea agreed to Soviet use of a navy base at Naju Port in North Korea. Naju Port is ice-free year round and is near Soviet territory, therefore, this port is of great significance to the Soviets.

The Soviet Union no doubt considers North Korea to be of great potential importance given the threat of the combined interests of China,

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(3) The United States, China and Japan: A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations. United States Senate, September 1979, pp.6-7.
Japan and the U.S., Soviet naval power based in North Korea has access to the Yellow Sea, and there is also the possibility of the establishment of a Russia missile base there. These two things could be seen as reinforcing the encirclement of China.

North Korea emphasizes its national military capability, urging the fortification of the entire country with better, more modern weaponry. Kim Young Nam, director of international affairs for the North Korean Workers (Communist) Party, visited Moscow to negotiate with Soviet authorities on getting economic and military aid in May of 1978.

The Soviet Union has had to pay increased attention to the improving relations between China and the U.S. and other Western nations. The Soviet Asian-Pacific strategy for the 1980's can be seen as attaining and maintaining parity with the American Pacific fleet by strengthening the strategic striking power of its own naval forces there. Also the Soviet Union will continue to strengthen its encirclement policy through its alliance with the Vietnam and Indochina federation. Conceivably, influence in Mongolia, Afghanistan, North Korea and even India may serve this objective as well.

III. The Strategic Value of The Korean Peninsula

The Korean peninsula would serve as a bridge in a struggle between the local continental or land power (the USSR or China) and the opposition, the U.S. or Japan, which would be a sea power.

The overall success of either power would necessitate the consolidation of the entire peninsula under its influence. The North-South division of the peninsula would be strategically valuable to either with regard to encirclement. If the USSR wishes to encircle China, the Korean peninsula could be used to threaten the northern Chinese mainland and Mongolia, as well as northeast China (Manchuria) and therefore is conceivably desirable as a portion of the Soviet sphere of influence.

Soviet control of the entire peninsula would mean dominance of the Korean straits and therefore the ability to blockade them. In case of a war with China, the peninsula would be a buffer zone in the defense of Siberia. Its loss would severely damage the Soviet strategy.

To the Chinese, the peninsula would be of equal strategic value; superiority there would be a blow to Russian shipping and would facilitate defense of the above mentioned Chinese area. Chinese control of the Korean peninsula would hinder the Soviet encirclement of China and help maintain the security of northeast China and the East China Sea; the threat to Russian shipping would be a blockade of the Korean straits. The U.S. has supported South Korea for the reason that it recognizes the strategic value of the peninsula.

First, South Korea has an important value as part of anti-Soviet strategy of the U.S. It can provide a certain amount of control over the Korean straits, and if Korea were under Soviet domination, then the Soviet naval force could easily advance into the Pacific Basin and American strategy thus would be more difficult to pursue.

Second, the security of the Korean peninsula is essential to Japanese security. Therefore, the Korean peninsula has important strategic value to the U.S., the Soviet Union, China and Japan; and conflict on the Korean peninsula would bring the intervention of the big powers.\(^{(4)}\)

IV. The Soviet Union, China and U.S. Forces in the Korean Peninsula

The Soviet and Chinese positions on U.S. forces in the Korean Peninsula are strongly affected by the Sino-Soviet conflict. Their positions are also affected by their bilateral relations with the United States and Japan.

The U.S. military presence in South Korea must loom large in the Soviet analysis in view of its confrontation with China. The U.S. forces present both advantages and disadvantages to Soviet interests relating to China.\(^5\)

In the context of Soviet objectives of obtaining hegemonic influence in East Asia, a Korea unified under Soviet style communism after U.S. withdrawal would be an even more important advance now than in 1950. Control of the south half of the peninsula would extend the reach of the Soviet Far Eastern Fleet; bring pressure to bear on Japan; and impel a major policy reassessment in Beijing. In this perspective, the 40,000 U.S. troops in South Korea must be a big obstacle to the Soviet Union in prompting its political and strategic interests. Moscow from time to time calls for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Korea, but shows little zeal in further backing its North Korean ally.\(^6\)

Were Sino-Soviet armed conflict to occur, intentional or accidental, local or on a broad scale, nuclear or conventional, the Korean peninsula would be of strategic significance to both China and the Soviet Union.\(^7\) Consequently, Moscow sees the U.S. force's presence in South Korea as conducive to its interests, but disadvantageous, too. Hence, the Soviet view of the U.S. troop presence is more ambivalent than anything else.

In view of the Sino-Soviet conflict, the Soviet Union will not want another Korean War which would inevitably lead to another confrontation with the Chinese, and create an unpredictable situation which might lessen their influence in Pyongyang. Not only does the Soviet Union have strong reasons for avoiding a new conflict in Korea, it has no comparably strong reasons to favor the unification of Korea under Pyongyang's control. "Such a Korea would be even less readily controllable than the North is now; the possibility that a unified Korea might eventually gravitate toward Beijing would magnify greatly the adverse consequences for the USSR of a Pyongyang-Beijing axis; at the very least, a reunified, communist-dominant Korea would be in an even stronger position than now to play off Moscow against Beijing to its own advantage, since the stakes involved for either in 'losing' Korea must have grown."\(^8\)

In an overall context, the Russians will not press hard for withdrawal since that would increase suspicion and antagonism among Americans which would hinder their efforts to fortify detente and to expand economic relations with the United States. Still, the Soviet Union will largely support whatever efforts North Korea pursues concerning the solution of the Korean


problem.

For many years, Pyongyang’s consistent position has been that U.S. forces should be withdrawn immediately and totally. In the words of Kim I Sung, "The occupation of South Korea by the U.S. imperialists and their policy of aggression are the root cause of all our nation’s misery, the main obstacle to the reunification of our country and a constant source of war in Korea."[9]

The removal of U.S. forces would not only eliminate potential threat to the security of North Korea, but would have other important repercussions, such as weakening the position of the South Korean government. The North Koreans must therefore see the withdrawal of U.S. forces as improving in a variety of ways their prospects for eventually gaining control over the south, whether by overt invasion or by backing an insurrection. In short, as far as the Soviet North Korean alliance is concerned, the Soviets would undoubtedly support North Korea’s consistent strategy of making the United States withdraw its forces from South Korea.[10]

The advantages the Soviet Union can expect from the presence of United States forces in South Korea can be summarized as follows:

1) A status quo on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia is maintained and the current Soviet policy in this part of the world be continued; 2) The Soviet Union could leave open the possibility of opening relations with South Korea for the latter’s geostrategic advantages; 3) North Korea would continue to rely on Soviet military and economic support in arms and economic competition between South and North Korea would be prevented from getting too close to China; 4) Soviet-American detente would not be jeopardized because of the Korean problem; 5) Japanese investment and interest in the development of Siberia would not be restrained because of the Korean problem.

The possible gains the Soviet Union could expect from the withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea seem to be the following:

1) The withdrawal of U.S. troops further Soviet strategy for obtaining hegemonic influence in East Asia; 2) Control of the southern half of the peninsula would extend the reach of the Soviet Far Eastern fleet, allowing the Soviet Union to exercise enormous political and military influence in the Asian-Pacific region; 3) Japan would reorient its policy toward the USSR because of reduced confidence in the political will and capability of the United States as a “shield” for the defense of Japan.[11]

The disadvantages of U.S. troop withdrawal and the inevitable invasion by the north far outweigh the advantages. Nevertheless, the Soviets are apprehensive about the U.S. military presence in South Korea and they want the forces to withdraw from Northeast Asia and the Western Pacific. Although they are not forcing the issue, signals and statements by the Soviet media indicate this. Of course, the Soviet press demands withdrawal of American forces all the time. Moscow sees the U.S. force presence in South Korea as being both conducive and conducive to its interests. Hence, while basically favoring the withdrawal, the Soviet reaction to it one of ambivalence.

The Soviet press especially reacted to Team Spirit ’79, which is an annual U.S.-Korean military exercise in Korea, and to the American emergency actions taken after the death of

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(11) Ib. I., p.57.
President Park in October. Pravda strongly attacked the American military "demonstration" for sending the USS Blue Ridge to Pusan and the USS carrier Kittyhawk to the Korean peninsula. The Soviets were also keenly apprehensive about measures to improve the Korean armed forces by means of military sales and credits, transfer of weapons possessed by the U.S. forces to Korea, and financial and technical assistance for the defense industry of Korea.

The U.S. troops in South Korea are one of the focal points of China’s general security concerns and the Sino-Soviet conflict, China must consider the confrontation of millions of troops along both sides of the Sino-Soviet border to be the most important aspect of its national security. Therefore, the Sino-Soviet conflict must be one of the major factors which influence China's attitudes toward American forces in Korea.12

The Chinese are obviously worried about the strengthening of Soviet military forces in the Western Pacific, and Soviet efforts to encircle China by wooing countries in Asia, including Japan. In that sense, the U.S. military posture in the Western Pacific benefits China by counter-balancing the Soviet Union. The U.S. forces help deter the Soviet Union's nuclear capability in Siberia, which China cannot otherwise match.

China feels that any withdrawal of U.S. forces from East Asia may appear as a prelude to a general U.S. forces withdrawal from the Asian-Pacific area, which would result in increased Soviet influence in the region. China, which is "almost paranoid on the subject of the Soviet threat,"13 must feel that the military presence is a necessary sign to the Soviets of America's determination to defend its interests in Asia. The U.S. forces in Korea further support Chinese interests by helping maintain the status quo among South Korea, North Korea and Japan.

We can suggest other reasons why the Chinese do not desire an early withdrawal of U.S. forces from South Korea. The withdrawal would create uncertainty and risk in the environment of Northeast Asia, which China would prefer to avoid. The Chinese probably recognize that the withdrawal would increase the risk of conflict in Korea and that such conflict would gravely undermine China's efforts to strengthen its position against the Soviet Union by cultivating relations with the United States and Japan and by carrying out the four modernizations program. The Chinese worry that such a conflict would increase Pyongyang's dependence on the Soviet Union for advanced weapons and could result in the Soviet Union's gaining a stronger position in North Korea at China's expense, as happened in Vietnam.

In September 1979, on the anniversary of North Korea's founding, China omitted previously routine calls for a U.S. troop withdrawal from the Korean peninsula. More recently, U.S. Defense Secretary Harold Brown disclosed that the Chinese did not express any objection, privately or officially, to the presence of American troops in South Korea when he had talks with Chinese leaders while he was in Beijing in early January 1980.14

One important thing to be borne in mind is that while the policies of the Soviet Union and China toward the Korean peninsula and their policy objectives can account for a substantial amount of the variation in the situation in Korea, North Korea's decisions and interactions

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between the two Koreas themselves are much more significant to the Korean problem. In spite of the significant role of Soviet and Chinese influence on North Korea, the latter has had a great deal of autonomy in deciding on and enforcing its policies toward South Korea. The Sino-Soviet conflict has greatly strengthened Kim Il Sung's ability to maintain his independence by allowing him to play off the Russians against the Chinese.\(^{(15)}\)

V. South Korea and Moscow, Beijing and Washington

1. South Korea and the USSR

North Korea's refusal to accept the status quo on the Korean peninsula has been the major obstacle to improving relations between South Korea, the USSR and the PRC. But while both the IRC and Soviet Union endorse North Korea's foreign policy, they at least tacitly accept the status quo of "two states in one nation" on the Korean peninsula. As far as South Korea is concerned, not only has the government committed itself to carrying out government-level dialogues with North Korea, but Seoul has also made it an official policy to open some form of official and unofficial communication with communist countries.\(^{(16)}\)

Since 1973, South Korean artists, journalists, athletes, scholars and even high-ranking government officials have been received in the Soviet Union. A together over one hundred South Korean citizens have been allowed to visit the Soviet Union since that time. Of course, Moscow's major concern for Korea has always been to keep North Korea in its orbit, but

Pyongyang has tried to keep an independent stance in the deepening Sino-Soviet rift. Hence, Soviet leaders may have perceived that it is in their interests to open limited contacts with South Koreans in order to exercise some leverage over North Korean leaders, as well as Chinese leaders, insofar as the Korean issue is concerned.

This initial flirtation between Moscow and Seoul faded away due to noisy reactions from China and North Korea and for several years after 1973, things were rather quiet. It is interesting to note that the volume of two-way trade between the ROK and East European countries has continued to grow in the past few years.\(^{(17)}\)

On April 21, 1978, a South Korean commercial airliner with 110 persons aboard strayed over Soviet airspace and the plane made a forced landing near Murmansk. Diplomatic negotiations went smoothly between Moscow and Washington for the return of the crew members and passengers. In an unusual move, the late President Park expressed "profound gratitude" to the Soviet authorities for their cooperation in returning without delay the passengers and crew of the Korean aircraft.\(^{(18)}\)

More significantly, from September 6 through 13, 1978, a high-ranking cabinet member of the ROK government, Minister of Health and Social Affairs, Mr. Shin Hyon-hwak, visited the Soviet Union to attend the International Conference on Primary Health Care, which was held in Alma-Ata, the capital of Soviet Kazakhstan. It was the first ministerial visit to that country since 1948.\(^{(19)}\) It is well known that

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\(^{(17)}\) *The Korea Herald*, September 29, 1979, p. 4.


\(^{(19)}\) The South Korean ambassador to Great Britain, Mr. Han Pyo-wook, also went to the Soviet Union in October 1977, to participate in an U.N. Children's Emergency Fund Meeting.
the South Korean government has made a number of diplomatic overtures to the Soviet Union through third parties.

All these facts stimulated speculation that: 1) Soviet-South Korean relations were improving; 2) The Soviet Union was likely to support the U.S.-South Korea policy of two Koreas; and 3) Moscow would make a diplomatic gesture to Seoul soon. Cognizant of all this, China bitterly denounced Moscow for, “wooing the South Korean Pan-Chung Hee clique.”

After the Afghanistan invasion, the Soviet attitude toward South Korea began to change. The Soviet press escalated its rhetoric supporting Pyongyang’s stand on Korea, in particular calling for the withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from South Korea. In the wake of President Park’s death, the Soviets renewed their criticism of the deposing domestic situation in South Korea. Under the circumstances, South Korea decided not to send a team to the Moscow Olympics, following the example of Japan and other allies.

Until recently, the number of unofficial contacts between South Koreans and Soviets steadily increased, although most of these were initiated by South Koreans and the Soviet side rarely showed reciprocity by permitting its citizens to visit South Korea. (See appendix)

Presumably then, one of the reasons Moscow demonstrated a flexible attitude toward the ROK was to prevent the development of any closer relationship between Seoul and Beijing. South Korean-Soviet relations then cannot improve beyond the current state of unofficial contacts unless some drastic change occurs in Sino-Soviet and North-South Korean relations.

2) Korea and the PRC

China has a firm commitment to the security of North Korea, and it strongly defends North Korea’s “one Korea” solution, although Beijing has shown some degree of flexibility toward the Seoul government. Still, while North Korea has attempted to maintain a balanced policy toward Moscow and Beijing, it has often failed to take an even handed position in the Sino-Soviet conflict.

As in the past, the Sino-Soviet conflict continues to be a major factor in determining China’s foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula. As stated previously, China’s strategic goals in Northeast Asia in the context of the Sino-Soviet conflict may be defined as follows:

first, to prevent the establishment of Soviet hegemony on the Korean peninsula by keeping North Korea leaning toward the PRC; second, to prevent war on the Korea peninsula; and third, to counterbalance Soviet influence and expansion in Asia in cooperation with the U.S. and Japan. China regards the Korea issue as its first foreign policy priority, and North Korea serves as an important link in China’s anti-Soviet united front global strategy. Hence, Beijing is unwilling to exert pressure on Kim Il Sung for fear of Pyongyang’s moving closer to the Soviet Union.

Chinese foreign policy toward the Korean peninsula can be best understood on two levels: the official political statements and the behavior of policy makers. What the Chinese leaders say sometimes differs from how they actually behave. At the official political statement level, China unquestionably supports North Korea’s reunification policy, but sometimes is has shown

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a certain degree of flexibility toward South Korea. Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, on his visit to Pyongyang in September 1978, reiterated Hua's statement of Chinese support for North Korea's unification formula. Deng made it clear that Beijing had an intention of improving political relations with Seoul at that time.

Just prior to Deng's visit to the U.S., the Seoul government reportedly presented a policy memorandum containing the basic South Korean position on the Korean question to President Carter. The basic position in the memorandum which Seoul wished the U.S. to convey to Deng during the Carter-Deng talks included the following important principles:

first, Seoul's desire for a dialogue with Beijing leading to peaceful coexistence with China, and business, cultural and athletic exchanges for the gradual improvement of Seoul-Beijing political relations; second, North-South dialogue and the application of the so-called "German formula" solution to the Korean peninsula until peaceful unification is achieved; and third, Seoul's desire that China play a role in exerting influence on Pyongyang to peacefully coexist with Seoul.

Deng, during his visit to the U.S. in late January 1979, had three rounds of talks with President Carter after which a joint press communiqué was issued stating that the two countries "have different perspectives." It became evident that Carter and Deng had conflicting opinions on the Korean issue.

The Seoul government, seeking diplomatic normalization with China, reportedly asked Japan to convey its basic position on the Korean issue, including its wish for the improvement of relations with Beijing during Deng's visit to Tokyo on his way home from the nine day official trip to the U.S. In discussing the Korean issue at the two hour talks on February 7, 1979, Prime Minister Ohira told Deng that Japan hoped that Pyongyang and Seoul would resume their long-stalled negotiations and asked China to improve its relations with South Korea. Deng reiterated Chinese support for Pyongyang's stand. He said, "As for China, we support North Korea's position. We believe there is no danger of a military clash between North and South Korea."

One should understand that Beijing is not in a position to exert strong pressure on Pyongyang, even if it wished to, for fear that such pressure might push Pyongyang onto the Soviet side of the Sino-Soviet conflict.

We have thus far analyzed Beijing's foreign policy toward the two Koreas in recent years. Our findings are that although China has shown some flexibility in dealing with Seoul and there is a strong possibility of increased non-political interaction between the two countries. China's official position on the Korean question has remained unchanged.
After the death of South Korean President Park Chung Hee, there were reports that Beijing actually urged its influence to discourage possible North Korean aggression against the South. However, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Beijing resumed its role as a diplomatic spokesman or Pyongyang.

As with South Korean-Soviet relations, South Korean-Chinese relations, too, are predicated upon the future of North Korean policy and Sino-Soviet rivalry.

3) KOREAS AND THE UNITED STATES

The Seoul-Washington alliance is expected to be strengthened during the administration of U.S. President Ronald Reagan since his foreign policy claim is the resurgence of American power as its top goal.

During his confirmation hearings before the U.S. Senate on January 10, 1981, Alexander Haig, Reagan's Secretary of State, stressed that U.S. ground, air and naval forces in the Republic of Korea must be maintained at least at the current level. (30)

Given the real and persisting threat of North Korea's armed invasion, the ROK needs the present level of U.S. troops stationed there to maintain a balance with North Korea's military strength. Should that equilibrium be broken, it would endanger not only the security of the Korean peninsula, but that of Northeast Asia as a whole.

Haig also said that strengthening of the U.S. relationship with Korea would be a "key aspect" of policies he would recommend to President Reagan. (31)

President Chun Doo-hwan was right in anticipating that Reagan would play down criticisms of South Korea's human rights record and abandon the idea of removing U.S. ground troops—two serious irritants between Seoul and Washington during the Carter Administration.

In a joint press communiqué issued on February 2, 1981, after talks between the two presidents, it was confirmed that the U.S. will make available for sale to Korea appropriate weapon systems and defense industry technology. President Chun has been assured of U.S. support for the efforts of the Republic of Korea to resume a constructive dialogue with the North.

The two countries will immediately resume government-level security, economic and policy planning talks. The U.S. will seek to assist Korea in obtaining energy supplies in the event of an emergency affecting the mutual security interests of the two countries. (32)

The security of the Republic of Korea remains a vital interest of the United States. This is heightened both by the overall growth of Soviet power in the Asian-Pacific region and specifically, by Moscow's consistent efforts to strengthen relations with North Korea. Under such circumstances, the ROK will face the need to maintain an effective military capability and to preserve strong links with the United States. (33)

Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee in Washington on the allied defense posture in Korea, General John A. Wickham, Jr. called for the elevation of the Korea-U.S. mutual security cooperation formula to that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization pattern. (34)

In conclusion, it must once again be stressed how important the policies and influence of the U.S., USSR and PRC are in relation to the

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(33) Robert L. Pfaltzraff, Jr., The Korea Herald, January 5, 1981.
Korean situation. While attempting to maintain their independence, both South and North Korea are very sensitive to changes in the relationships of these three powers.

The situation is a dynamic one and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future. There are no easy solutions to the division of the Korean peninsula, only recognition of the importance this relatively small country plays in the course of world politics and international affairs.

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South Korean Visits to Communist Countries
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*** ( ) represents the number of visitors to South Korea from communist countries. Figures within parentheses represent the number of visitors from South Korea to communist countries. **

- 37 -