

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE EAGLE HEADS HOME: RETHINKING NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY FOR
THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

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ABSTRACT

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Despite the attention the Middle East has received with the emerging new Iraq and Afghanistan, other significant threats are causing instability in the Asia-Pacific Region. The conflict between North Korea and South Korea, in particular, continues to increase due to North Korea's recent declaration to seek/develop nuclear weapons and add them to its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) arsenal. Increased pressure and demands to allow North Korea's development of nuclear weapons have been futile. Along with these developments are increased pressures for the U.S. to reduce its troop presence in South Korea. This paper will analyze the possibilities of regional fallout should the United States withdraw all military troops from South Korea. Withdrawing all military troops from South Korea will create a tremendous imbalance of power in the Asia-Pacific Theater. Countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea (Korean Peninsula), will need to rethink their own National Strategies in order to bring balance of power to the region. The United States would greatly benefit (economically and strategically) if stability in the region were maintained without heavy U.S. involvement. This paper will make recommendations that the U.S. use its withdrawal in the region as leverage to promote stability in the region.

THE EAGLE HEADS HOME: RETHINKING NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY FOR THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

We are fighting a War on Terrorism of long duration while helping to foster fledgling democracies in Iraq and Afghanistan. At the same time, we are engaging nations around the world to build relationships, enhance regional stability, and strengthen deterrence—all while fundamentally transforming our military forces to defeat dangerous threats that may emerge in the decades ahead.¹

Despite the attention the Middle East has received with the emerging new Iraq and Afghanistan, other significant threats are causing instability in the Asia-Pacific Region. The conflict between North Korea and South Korea, in particular, continues to increase due to North Korea's recent declaration to seek/develop nuclear weapons and add them to its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) arsenal. Increased pressure and demands to allow North Korea's development of nuclear weapons have been futile. Along with these developments are increased pressures for the U.S. to reduce its troop presence in South Korea. This paper will analyze the possibilities of regional fallout should the United States decide to withdraw all military troops from South Korea.

Withdrawing all military troops from South Korea will create a tremendous imbalance of power in the Asia-Pacific Theater. Countries such as China, Japan, and South Korea (Korean Peninsula), will need to rethink their own National Strategies in order to bring balance of power to the region. Although it is imperative the United States maintain an Asia-Pacific presence, the imbalance of power in the region may perhaps make for greater stability in the region. The United States would greatly benefit (both economically and strategically) if stability in the region were maintained without heavy U.S. involvement. This paper will make recommendations that the U.S. use its withdrawal in the region as leverage to promote stability in the region.

In his 2002 speech, President George W. Bush clearly identified three of the eight goals of the National Security Strategy. In his speech, President Bush stated the United States must: ²

- Strengthen alliances to defeat Global Terrorism, prevent attacks,
- Work with others to defuse regional conflicts, and to
- Prevent WMD use against the U.S, allies, and friends.

Additionally, the United States would use everything in its power to promote the will of the Nation and to promote peace and stability not only on the domestic front but the international front as well.

The Armed Forces of the United States have been involved with the Asia-Pacific region since the USS ESSEX sailed to the Western Pacific in the 1800s.³ Despite a large military drawdown of forces at the end of World War II, the United States' involvement in the Asia-Pacific region has grown stronger.⁴ This increase in military presence was due to the outbreak of the Cold War and the fall of China to Mao Zedong's Communist party.⁵

So why, is this East Asia region so important to the United States? East Asia holds some of the foremost economic giants and powerful countries worldwide. In this region, more interestingly, the United States trades with three of its top ten partners. These countries are China (which is 3rd), Japan (which is 4th), and South Korea (which is 7th).⁶ Corporate giants such as Wal-mart and K-mart sell goods which are produced and manufactured from the East-Asia Pacific region. Products such as automobiles, produce, lamps, and coffee-makers are made in the Asia-Pacific region. These products have greatly benefited the United States and their consumers due to their low cost. In fact, over 1/3 of total U.S. trade is conducted with Asian nations and benefits from low-cost imports.⁷ With this, the Asia-Pacific region has become and remains an extremely important area both economically and financially. More so, the United States has viewed the Asia region as an area where there is a vast potential market (financial and economic) as well as an important source of raw materials.⁸ Despite a recent testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Acting Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs stated, "The region is experiencing a period of growth marked by several trends favorable to our interests. Democracy is on the rise, more and more people are benefiting from economic prosperity, and the region is generally at peace."⁹ Although this may be true in some areas of Asia, there is one specific area where there is a cause for concern. One of the world's biggest security problems is North Korea. With its military force and weapons capability, North Korea poses an enormous conventional threat to the region. North Korea remains the focal point by maintaining stability in the Korean Peninsula as well as the Asia Pacific region is dependent on North Korea.

Along with the conventional threat, there are indications that North Korea is trying to add to their already great arsenal and become an enormous nuclear threat.¹⁰ As Tellis states:

Japan, China, and India have acquired large conventional military capabilities and, in the latter two cases, weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as well. In addition, several other Asian countries such as North Korea possess different kinds of WMD or are proceeding to acquire them.¹¹

Furthermore, according to Kwan, even though North Korea has been regarded as a security problem, it is also an economic, humanitarian, and international political problem as well.¹² This security problem has created fear that North Korea is trying to become the

hegemonic state and by obtaining and producing WMD, will force the U.S. to treat North Korea as a state actor. Additionally, the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review, states "North Korea has pursued nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and has developed and sold weapons, including long-range missiles, to other states of concern."¹³ This certainly has created many fears in the people of the Asia-pacific region but also is causing an imbalance of power. Simply put, the conflict between North Korea and South Korea causes instability in the East-Asia region.

U.S. Policy

One of the long standing objectives of the National Security Strategy of East-Asia Pacific is to seek a peaceful resolution of the Korean conflict with a non-nuclear, democratic, reconciled, and ultimately unified Korean Peninsula.¹⁴ Although the National Security Strategy was updated in 2002, the U.S. Security Strategy for the East-Asia Region has been in effect since 1998. The strategy states the U.S. will "work with South Korea to maintain vigilance towards the North while preparing our alliance to make contributions to the broader stability of the region over the longer term."¹⁵

The United States commitment of maintaining troop presence in South Korea was made possible through the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty. This treaty essentially keeps U.S. troops forward deployed and permanently stationed in South Korea to help maintain stability in the region. In short, keeping U.S. troops in South Korea is used to deter any possibility of North Korean aggression as well as maintain peace and stability in the region. Currently there are over 37,000 U.S. troops permanently deployed in South Korea.

The first and foremost objective is to prevent North Korea from producing and acquiring nuclear weapons. Ruling out any military action, Six Party Talks have been established as the best means for resolving the nuclear issue.¹⁶ The Six Party members are the United States, China, Japan, Russia, North and South Korea. The talks were formed in hopes to use diplomacy as well as soft power to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons. With North Korea aggressively trying to obtain and produce nuclear weapons, coupled with President Bush's labeling North Korea as one of the Axis of Evil, has essentially made the strategy to prevent North Korea from acquiring nuclear weapons a top priority. One of the contributing factors of instability in the region is North Korea trying to obtain nuclear weapons.

North Korea has developed a high lethal weapons delivery system, called the No-Dong missile and the Taepo-Dong 1 and 2 missiles. The Taepo-Dong missile system is capable of delivering WMD to almost anywhere in the region. The United States and South Korea formed

a Nonproliferation Task Force to ensure North Korea maintains their WMD profile. This task force was established to ensure a viable monitoring system was in place to support the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework of October 21, 1994. Since 1996, the U.S. has encouraged North Korea to freeze their missile technology and in turn, the U.S. has agreed to ease some economic sanctions. At present, this Framework does not appear to be working. North Korea continues to seek nuclear weapons to add their already capable arsenal. These actions by North Korea affect the peace, stability and security in the region.

The second objective of the U.S Security Strategy of the East Pacific Region is to maintain peace, security, and stability in the Korean Peninsula. The presence of U.S. troops will help support South Korea in case of an attack by North Korea. Additionally, this gives the U.S. a reason maintain presence in the overall region. Even though this helps in the security and stability in the region, there are military and diplomatic risks involved while executing this strategy.

The current administration has suggested a troop reduction as well as a troop reassignment in the region. In this day and age of new technology, why subject U.S. troops in the Demilitarization Zone (DMZ) when there are U.S. troops present in Japan as well as Okinawa that can respond to any Korean crisis? The military strategy whether to reduce the number of troops or re-assign their location (in Korea) has been an issue amongst the strategists and theorists. In fact, there is only a marginal difference if troops were present in South Korea or in other areas such as Japan (if North Korea attacked)...the U.S. would still prevail.¹⁷ To date, the National Security Strategy still calls for troop presence overseas to promote, deter, and defend allies

Lastly, the third objective is to unify the Koreas. Although this maybe difficult, it is still an attainable objective. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, many believe that marked the end of the cold war, however, as Haselden has stated that "the Korean Peninsula remains one of the last bastions of the Cold War."¹⁸ Additionally, when the Koreas unite, many believe this will signify the true end of the Cold War. There are advantages to a unified Korea. A unified Korea will make Korea a major Asian and world economic power.¹⁹ South Korea has one of the largest GDP's in the world coupled with the resources from North Korea (iron ore, lead, zinc, and tungsten) will certainly make a unified Korea a regional power.²⁰ Given our strong influence, a unified Korea would resemble South Korea. This will make a unified Korea will give a shared responsibility of power in the region along with Japan and China. Both Koreas have adopted a Sunshine Policy which paves the way for South Korea to negotiate with North Korea to maintain peace, security, and stability between the two countries.

U.S. Troop Position

If the policy should remain the same, there are several risks involved. The first risk is U.S. troop position in the region. Due to the location of U.S. troops in South Korea and the close proximity of North Korea, the U.S. is literally “sleeping with the enemy”. The current policy did not make sense therefore a change in troop location was necessary. In fact, according to the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, “Thirty-seven thousand Americans are not going to repel a million-man North Korean army. Their purpose is to die in the first hours of a North Korean invasion—setting off a tripwire that forces the United States to enter the war.”²¹

If the policy remains the same (keeping troops in South Korea) there are associated economical and financial risks. The rising cost in support of the Global War on Terror is placing a burden on the U.S. economy. According to the CRS Report for Congress, the estimated cost of U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan (assuming gradual withdrawal) between FY2006 and FY2010 could total approximately \$570 billion by the end of 2010.²² There are two options to help ease the financial cost. One option would be to “do nothing” and continue to support the GWOT without any fiscal worries. Another option would be to rethink other strategies that would help ease the current burden. Simply put, it is not feasible to sustain a permanent U.S. force in South Korea while supporting the current war on terror. Additionally, keeping troops in the region could result in personnel backlash. There are a number of Asians which view the presence of troops as “foreigners with weapons on home turf”. In fact, there is evidence that there is already a growing dissention of American presence in South Korea. According to Moon, “It is the growth of civil society that has opened the floodgates of dissatisfaction with the American presence in Korea”²³ Simply put, the longer the U.S. remains in South Korea, could lead to dissention among the Koreans that would eventually lead to future backlash towards current National Security Policy.

Finally, with the U.S. presence in South Korea is possibly affecting the outcomes of the Sunshine Policy among the Koreans. The Sunshine policy was an agreement between North and South Korea to establish dialogue between the two nations in hopes to resolve conflict, avoid war and perhaps unify the Koreans. There are some risks involved with a unified Korea. Many would argue a unified Korea will align with China, given that China has a strong influence over North Korea. If this happens, a potential arms race would evolve between Japan, China and a unified Korea to maintain stability (power balance) in the region.²⁴ Additionally, given the distrust among the Koreans and Japanese, the likelihood of a stable, reliable equalizer of the region remains to be seen. Many South Koreans also object to a unified Korea. Some of the obstacles facing a unified Korea are economic and political. Many South Koreans do not want

to shoulder the burden of a failing North Korean economy as well as trusting the current regime of President Kim Jong-il.²⁵

Alternatives

By the middle of the 1990s it became clear that U.S. officials preferred a strategy of deep engagement in Asia. But, in the absence of the cold war and a readily identifiable security threat, a gradual disentanglement from Asian commitments remains a viable options for the United States as well.²⁶

Even though we are already reducing the number of U.S. troops in the region, one alternative to the current policy is to accelerate the withdrawal of all U.S. troops in the region. resident Bush announced a major restructuring of U.S. military forces overseas since the end of the Korean War.²⁷ This restructuring essentially decreases the U.S. military footprint on foreign soil to allow better flexibility for the military of the challenges of the 21st century. A plan to withdraw as well as to reduce troops over the next 10 years will give “our service members more time on the home front and fewer moves over a career.”²⁸ A more aggressive alternative to the current policy would be to completely withdraw all U.S. troops in the region.

There are certain risks involved if U.S. troops completely withdraw in the Korean Peninsula. One risk of complete withdrawal would result in an immediate power struggle in the region. Nations such as China, Japan, and even South Korea will certainly have to rethink their own National Security policy therefore contributing to regional fallout. Any rapidly changing relationship between North and South Korea will more than likely lead to a regional power struggle among the United States, China, Japan, and even Russia.²⁹ This strategy seems feasible because the U.S. will “improve our ability to deter, dissuade, and defeat challenges in Asia through strengthened long-range strike capabilities, streamlined and consolidated headquarters, and a network of access arrangements.”³⁰

Another risk is diplomatic. Diplomatic risk will affect the United States on the international front. The North Koreans will view any troop withdrawal (or even troop reduction) as a sign of victory over the U.S. By declaring victory, the U.S. and South Korea could lose the leverage to bring peace and stability in the region. Additionally, the North Korea government can use this tactic to further legitimize their power base, therefore making it difficult to negotiate any peace agreement without strong North Korean demands. Finally, any troop withdrawal or reduction may cause the South Koreans to feel abandoned, which violates the current 1953 Mutual Defense agreement to defend South Korea against North Korea.

Another alternative to the grand strategy is using a combined strategy of isolationism and off-shore balancing. Isolationism primary objective is to keep the United States out of most

wars.³¹ This strategy dates back as far as 1789 and more prevalent in 1796 when President George Washington advocated isolationism.³² Isolationism is using as little of the military as possible to shape the international environment. Many believe that whatever happens outside the borders of the United States, do not pose any threat to the country, that waging war is costly and the risk outweigh the benefits.³³ Many who believe in off-shore balancing as a strategy assume the U.S. would have sufficient time to organize, attack, and destroy any threat. Additionally, another key assumption is that a military withdrawal from overseas would not endanger America's security.³⁴ Simply put, by withdrawing all U.S. troops in South Korea and perhaps re-positioning them (i.e. other countries, using sea base) would be beneficial to the U.S. because it would reduce U.S. presence on foreign soil and take away the stereotype that the U.S. is heavily involved in every aspect of the international community.

Certainly, a complete withdrawal of U.S. troops in the region would certainly bring regional fallout, causing other nations in the region to rethink their national security strategy. Along with the parties directly involved in the peninsula, China and Japan will also need to rethink their own grand strategies in the region to maintain a balance of power and to maintain stability in the Korean Peninsula.

Regional Fallout

China

According to their national strategy, "China will mainly rely on its own strength for development, and therefore poses no obstacle or threat to any one. China needs a peaceful international environment for its own development, which in turn will enhance peace and development in the world. Holding high the banner of peace, development and cooperation, China adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace and a national defense policy of the defensive nature. China will never go for expansion, nor will it ever seek hegemony."³⁵ Additionally, "the foundation for the Six-Party Talks is not solid enough as uncertain factors linger in the settlement of the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. The threat posed by terrorism, separatism and extremism is still grave."³⁶ Finally, China's national security policy is to "pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and adhere to the new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination with a view to securing a long-term and favorable international and surrounding environment."³⁷

China will most likely pursue stronger strategic relationships with Russia as well as Japan in the event the U.S. completely withdraws from South Korea. Since there is no clear hegemon in the Asia-Pacific region, a multi-polar balance of power would probably be beneficial for the

region. Due to their sheer size and presence in the region, each nation could work together to help maintain stability not only to the Korean Peninsula, but to the overall Asia-Pacific region.

In order to maintain balance of power in the region, China will most likely pressure North Korea to unify the Koreas. However, if the Koreas unite under South Korea's influence, they (the Chinese) would view this as a strategic advantage of the U.S. due to the close proximity to Korea and China; therefore the most favorable condition would be to have North Korea unify the Koreas under North Korean conditions.

One of the challenges the current Administration faces according to Park, is the "lack of strong policy coordination with China, in jointly leading the multinational diplomatic effort"³⁸ The U.S. might use their withdrawal from South Korea as leverage for China to pursue a more strategic role in the Asia Pacific theater. According to the 2006 QDR, the U.S. is in a favor of China playing a more strategic role in the Asia-Pacific Theater. For China, "The United States remains focused on encouraging China to play a constructive, peaceful role in the Asia-Pacific region and to serve as partner in addressing common security challenges, including terrorism, proliferation, narcotics and piracy."³⁹

Japan

There is no doubt that Japanese-U.S. alliance plays a major role in U.S. security strategy in Asia.⁴⁰ Should the U.S. withdraw from South Korea, they will most likely do the following:

- Seek to become a normal nation with full military capabilities
- Seek to become a stronger player in the Asia-Pacific region
- Seek to have stronger U.S. presence (troops in Japan)

The first objective of Japan's security policy is to prevent any threat from reaching Japan and, in the event that it does, repel it and minimize any damage. The second objective is to improve the international security environment so as to reduce the chances that any threat will reach Japan in the first place. Japan will achieve these objectives by both its own efforts as well as cooperative efforts with the United States, Japan's alliance partner, and with the international community.⁴¹ To this end, Japan will support United Nations activities for international peace and security; make diplomatic efforts to promote cooperative relationships with other countries; further develop its close cooperative relationship with the United States, based on the Japan-U.S. Security Arrangements; establish a basis for national security by preserving domestic political stability; and, develop efficient defense forces.

Although it is not written in their National Defense Program, Japan must seriously consider seeking a normal military to bring stability in the region. As with China, since there is

no clear hegemon in the Asia-Pacific region, bringing a normal military to Japan will balance out the powers in the region should the U.S. completely withdraws troops from South Korea. Since the end of the Cold War, Japan has been restructuring its force to take a stronger role in the world arena.⁴² Perhaps, in order for Japan to seek normalcy in their military as well as their nations it must first admit to their war atrocities from the past. This admission, albeit a huge step to re-defining their military, will finally tell the world that today's Japan is not the same Japan from the past.

Japan would use their new military to become a stronger player in the region. For example, Japan's self-defense force would re-designated their navy with different missions and tasks. This new navy could provide forward presence to key areas in the region. Their navy could participate in joint exercises to include but not limited to South Korea, China and Australia. Again, the assumption is the new military's focus and objectives are not like the past.

Another strategy Japan could use to further the balance of powers to the region is to pursue a stronger U.S. presence in Japan. Since the strategy of U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea, where will the U.S. place these troops? Japan could allow more U.S. troop presence on Japanese soil to maintain a power balance in the region. Although this may not be favorable to the Japanese, a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea could be used as leverage to allow more troops to be based and or repositioned in Japan.

South Korea

Should the U.S. withdraw completely from South Korea, South Korea will most likely do the following:

- Aggressively pursue resolution in the Sunshine Policy to improve relationships with North Korea.
- Seek to build up their military and arsenal
- Seek support from China and Russia to unify a nuclear free Korea

According to their Participatory Defense Policy of 2003, South Korea, presented a vision of peace and prosperity in the region.⁴³ South Korea continues to recognize that the threat from North Korea is real and even more real since North Korea's attempt to obtain and produce nuclear weapons.⁴⁴ Additionally, South Korea recognizes that "stability on the Korean Peninsula is crucial to its own economic well-being." China and Russia are key players to the success of stability on the Korean Peninsula.⁴⁵

South Korea should continue to engage dialogue with North Korea using the Sunshine Policy. With this dialogue, other nations could assist and monitor the situation. Should the

Sunshine Policy be successful, it would bring a sense of pride and accomplishment of unifying the Korea without any outside intervention by the U.S., China or even Russia. While pursuing the Sunshine Policy, South Korea should seek to increase their military forces, build up their weapons arsenal, and give a sense of “defense” for their country. This buildup could potentially harm the Sunshine Policy however; it will give them the sense of security. As Park stated:

After his inauguration in February 2003, South Korean President Roh initiated a more proactive South Korean role in inter-Korean relationship-this is in direct contrast to Washington’s policy and its refusal to negotiate with Pyongyang.⁴⁶

Could this mean the U.S. current policy of containment is interfering with the unification (of Korea) and stability of the Korean Peninsula? Perhaps by withdrawing troops could further South Korea relationship with North Korea and therefore bring stability to the region.

In order to bring a balance of power in the region, South Korea would aggressively seek to build their military and perhaps produce a more capable arsenal to defeat any North Korean aggression. This build up of conventional weapons and arms would benefit South Korea tremendously. However, this arms race certainly has second and third order effects. One effect would lead to an arms race in the region among the Koreas, causing further instability. Should South Korea seek to acquire nuclear weapons to counter North Korea, would most definitely bring instability to the region.

South Korea would not have to “go it alone”. The U.S. does not necessarily have to be heavily involved with the unification of the Koreas. South Korea could leverage other nations in the region such as China and Japan to assist either a unified Korea or merely to bring stability in the region. Finally, according to Bellows, South Korea should pursue an omni-directional comprehensive security agreement with Japan, Russia, and even China.⁴⁷ South Korea’s location is essential to China and Japan. If there is an agreement made between Japan, Russia and China, this would contribute to the sense of power balance in the region.

North Korea

Should the U.S. withdraw completely from South Korea, North Korea will most likely do the following:

- Protect the current regime
- Continue to pursue Chinese support both economically and financially.
- Seek to unify the Koreas under North Korean terms (nuclear capable)

The national objective of North Korea is to communize South Korea in order to establish a communist society on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁸ This is clear that North Korea wants to unify the Koreas under communist control. The unification agrees with the United States but contrary to

“under who’s control” should a unified Korea be under. According to Scobell, the strategic intention of North Korea is to seek regime survival, seek a strong and autonomous North Korea, and finally seek to unify the Koreas under North Korean control.⁴⁹ However, their buildup of their military arsenal has affected their financial economy. In order to bring stabilization in the region, North Korea must continue to protect the current regime of Kim Jung-il as well as continue to seek economic support from nations such as China, Japan, and South Korea.

North Korea should continue to pursue Chinese support both economically and financial. This can be done by enticing Chinese investors to support North Korea by investing in infrastructure and their markets. Not only it is a goal to unify the Korea’s under North Korea’s control but to support North Korea’s objective of a “military first” concept.⁵⁰ Although North Korea would aggressively seek China’s support, China “views the threat from North Korea more as a failed state and humanitarian disaster than a rogue state or intentional threat to international security.”⁵¹ China is more concerned with the potential of U.S. forces near its border as well as a flood of North Korean refugees.⁵²

Stability Versus Instability in The Korean Peninsula

Like a number of other important and frequently used ideas in international relations-such as “security” and the “balance of power” – the concept of “stability” seems to allow for a variety of understandings in a range of settings.⁵³

One must be able to understand what is the true meaning of stability among countries and or among regions? Stability is defined as “the state or quality of being stable, especially: resistance to change, deterioration, or displacement.” In terms of systems thinking, a system is stable when an equilibrium position, sense of balance, and or “at rest phase” is achieved.⁵⁴ However, this application is difficult to measure because there are many variables involved when regions or countries are involved. Simply put, the term “stability” takes on different meanings when cultures, people and countries are involved.⁵⁵ The U.S. view of stability in the region may not necessarily mean the same to China, Japan and even the Koreas. Contributing factors to stability in an area or region depends on who are the major players (countries) involved? More specifically, the overall stability in the Asia-Pacific region depends on the balance of powers.⁵⁶

According to Ayson, to understand stability in the Asia-Pacific region, one must address the avoidance of major war- which in this case is the ability to avoid armed conflict particularly between the Koreas, China and Japan;⁵⁷ a stable distribution of power- meaning the major players in the region (China, Japan, and the Koreas);⁵⁸ the stability of norms and institutions- meaning what type of relationships do these powers have in the region?⁵⁹ Finally, another

means to define stability in the region is to address the domestic political⁶⁰, financial and economic stability of the countries involved.⁶¹

Can the U.S. live with the risk of an unstable Korean Peninsula? The obvious answer is “no.” It is clear that a stable Korean peninsula is more beneficial to the United States. Clearly North Korea is a major player to determining whether the Korean Peninsula remains stable. One would argue as long as the current regime of Kim Jung Il remains in power and continue to pursue WMD (i.e. Nuclear weapons) there will be a permanent unstable scenario in the region.⁶² On the other hand, as long as the United States remains in the region and continues to be forward deployed in South Korea, that the U.S. is contributing to such instability in the region.

According to Revere, if there is an unstable region (Korean Peninsula), the U.S. goals become harder to achieve.⁶³ Should an unstable Korean Peninsula exist, this could possibly lead to conflicts in the region, most obvious between the Koreas; promote unhealthy economic competition in the region, whereas more developed nations (Japan, China) do not provide any form of economic assistance to the Koreas; and more dangerously a weapons/arms race (maybe to include more nuclear weapons in the region) to maintain a power balance. In order to strengthen regional stability, the U.S. would need to succeed in countering terrorism, enhancing economic prosperity, eliminating weapons of mass destruction, promoting democracy, and addressing transnational issues.⁶⁴ At what cost and risks is the U.S. willing to accept in order to achieve stability in the region?

Conclusion

The United States cannot live with the risks involved in an unstable region. The Korean Peninsula and the East-Asia Pacific region are home to many of the economic giants worldwide. Additionally, with the rising cost of economic commitments in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. must rethink alternatives to bring stability in the East-Asia Pacific region more specifically, the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. must continue to pursue peace and stability using all elements of national power certainly using less emphasis on a military solution. Additionally, the U.S. must selectively engage the Koreas to bring stability to the Korean Peninsula by pursuing a combined strategy of isolationism and off-shore balancing. Diplomatic, Informational, and Economic solutions take time. Perhaps by using other countries particularly in the region would be beneficial to the United States but also to the other countries as well. Strategic positioning of U.S. troops not only around the Korean Peninsula but throughout the world is the key to pursuing the National Objectives.

By pursuing a stable Korean Peninsula without heavy U.S. involvement is beneficial both internationally and economically. Accelerating the withdrawal of U.S. troops, could lead to a multi-polar balance of power in the region.⁶⁵ Obviously, this would require a significant change in foreign policy and power position in the region; it would certainly cause other nations to reconsider their national security strategy.

All in all, in a speech given by James A. Kelley, stated that “Regional stability remains our overarching strategic goal and provides the underpinnings for achievement of other key goals and objectives.”⁶⁶ Finally, as stated in the 2006 QDR, “Victory can only be achieved through the patient accumulation of quiet successes and the orchestration of all elements of national and international power.”⁶⁷ Perhaps by completely withdrawing all U.S. troops from South Korea could potentially lead to one of these successes and bring stabilization to the region without heavy U.S. involvement. It is possible by taking the “let them work it out” (the Koreans) approach would certainly be advantageous to the U.S. The time is now for the Eagle to head home.

Endnotes

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