

**Northeast Asia Regional Security
and the United States Military:
Context, Presence, and Roles**

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***CHINA'S RISE AND THE US ARMY:
LEANING FORWARD***

Russell D. Howard and Albert S. Wilner

INTRODUCTION

The United States led war on terrorism has already had a major impact on developing state relationships in Asia. The coalition of convenience that emerged in the aftermath of the September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon has engendered a change in strategic thinking, perceptions, and influence. A significant shift in any of these three areas could have dramatic implications. For the United States, what is required is not only a reassessment of the new realities but also a strategy to take advantage of new opportunities and cope with potential threats. Perhaps nowhere is this need more apparent, or possible responses more fraught with risk, than in determining the impact of such strategic shifts on the US-China relationship, particularly in the security realm.

To date, much of the thinking about the US-China military relationship has focused on averting a Taiwan or South China Sea clash. Prior to the September 11 attacks, these two areas and the Korean peninsula were seen as the most critical flashpoints affecting China. But the war on terror may alter the belief that the threat of US-China military confrontation resides primarily on the Chinese mainland's eastern periphery.

The changing security environment has generated more questions than answers. What impact will America's new relationships with Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have as the war on terror evolves and in the postwar

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environment? Will China's burgeoning military and economic relationship with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (composed of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan) be placed at risk? Will a potentially long-term US military presence and improved military relations with countries on China's western and southwestern border be perceived by Beijing as calming or as exacerbating separatist sentiment in Xinjiang and Tibet as well as Taiwan? Does the emerging situation provide new opportunities for the United States to engage the Chinese on a number of fronts to include the bilateral military relationship?

As China looks to alternative sources of fossil fuel, minerals, and raw material to feed its economic expansion, will it pursue options that are antithetical to United States interests? Will China emerge from this war a more responsible player committed to greater engagement or more of a threat to US concerns in the region? What type of security relationship will evolve and can the United States take actions now to shape that evolution rather than merely respond to its result?

Recent Chinese assessments of US goals may offer insight into China's current threat perceptions. Some Chinese security specialists see a US strategy emerging that seeks to limit China's rising influence, in part by seeking military bases and new NATO allies in Central Asia, and in part by aiding separatist movements in Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang.¹

Other Chinese analysts assert that the battle for resources is more likely to generate a war and that China, which has already committed major investments to oil exploration and drilling in Kazakhstan and to the extraction of mineral, oil and gas resources

from Xinjiang, will assiduously guard against any internal or external forces that may disrupt these efforts.² Investment in its border regions is viewed as essential to meeting China's resource needs and preventing secessionist threats. Combining economic and military initiatives is considered essential to ensuring that gains continue unimpeded. Necessary improvements include expanding transportation and communication capabilities, material stockpiles and quick reaction and control capabilities in the border areas. These actions and sensitivities, coupled with the ever-present possibility that Beijing may miscalculate or misperceive US intentions, could create a situation that leads both parties down the road to hostilities.³

One noted China watcher argues that "China's move to conflict depends on politics, perceptions, and coercive diplomacy involving specific capabilities in specific geographic and political contexts."⁴ If we factor in a possible downward spiraling of China's economy, overwhelming social disorder, and rising nationalist sentiment, then Beijing's ability to maintain social peace may erode. Should the United States be seen as the source of such trouble, increased tensions or even conflict may result.⁵ While much of the focus of potential conflict has been on the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, the changing international environment emerging from the war on terror may portend significant future challenges for the United States in other areas surrounding China's periphery.

While we cannot predict what environment will emerge and how strategists and policymakers will act or react, the authors of this study believe that it is incumbent upon the US Army to conduct military diplomacy efforts in a manner that will reduce

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the potential for miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also believe, however, that America's ground forces must increasingly be prepared, and in new ways, to meet the emergence of a Chinese military threat.

This study will first address US assessments of China including possible conflicts. Next, it will consider Chinese views about meeting the US threat and China's current and emerging capabilities. This will prepare the ground for the main topic of this paper: How should the US Army prepare now to meet China's rise? If China is viewed as a competitive rising power but not a threat, what can be done to improve military relations and to contribute to reducing the chance that it will evolve as a threat? If China emerges at some point as a threat, what should the U.S. Army be doing to ensure that we help deter—and if that fails, to defeat—the Chinese?

We contend that the US Army should take a dual-track approach that seeks to improve relations through increased military exchanges with Chinese counterparts while at the same time training and educating US ground forces to meet any potential threat. We disagree with those who believe that in preparing to meet a possible threat we inadvertently help bring that very threat into being. The US military must be ready for any eventuality in its emerging relationship with China for the sake of our own national security interests and those of others who depend on the United States. Shaping and preparing for China's rise will surely be near the top of our national security priorities for many years to come.

UNITED STATES ASSESSMENT

China watchers in the United States differ in their views about China's rising power. Does Beijing pose a threat or will it become a responsible power focused on continued peaceful relations? One side perceives that "China's military buildup [is] directly aimed at fighting a future war with the United States."⁶ Those who subscribe to this view believe that China's military forces will become the leading threat to the West in this century.⁷ Supporters of this view including many US policy makers, analysts and academics,⁸ believe that China's intent to challenge the United States is rooted in a rising tide of nationalism, its historical humiliations, and its drive to become an international power of consequence.⁹ Some within this group advocate containment to meet this new threat and believe that the United States needs to prepare now for the inevitable. Among the actions they advocate in containing China are reenergizing US alliances and expanding military deployments in Asia.¹⁰

A recent study by the US Defense Department's Office of Net Assessment, which looked at potential threats in Asia, bolsters this view. "China will be a persistent competitor of the United States. . . . A stable and powerful China will be constantly challenging the status quo in East Asia. An unstable and relative[ly] weak China could be dangerous because its leaders might try to bolster their power with foreign military adventurism."¹¹ In this view, China's military buildup and ambitions suggest that Beijing is on a collision course with the United States.¹²

Proponents of this view offer suggestions that range from simply increasing awareness to active and focused program of

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countermeasures. A strong US forward presence in Asia is seen as critical, especially in order to reaffirm defense commitments to Japan, Korea, Taiwan and others. Military diplomacy should also play a role but should remain mostly limited to high-level contacts and avoid the transfer of war-fighting skills or technology.¹³

Others vehemently disagree, believing that, "If China is treated as an enemy it will become one."¹⁴ Those who take this position feel that China's military capabilities are not a threat and will not become one for a long time. Because heightened tensions and conflict are not foregone conclusions, proponents of this view believe that the United States must fully engage China in a host of different venues.¹⁵ Acknowledging that China's interests are not necessarily antithetical to ours, the United States must aggressively expand its economic, political and cultural relationship with China building a more positive environment.¹⁶ Advocates of a closer relationship believe a rising China is not aggressive or imperialistic and, as long as no threat appears on its periphery, will continue to focus mainly on resolving internal problems.¹⁷

Some United States and other Western academics and think tank analysts do not believe that China will have the ability to close the military gap and achieve anything even approaching peer competitor status. Because China cannot project power significantly beyond its frontiers, because it does not pose a threat to US interests, and because it is interested in maintaining the status quo, engagement is not only appropriate but imperative if the United States is to shape positive relations with China.¹⁸

CHINESE CONCERNS

Shaping positive relations is critical, since China has already been expressing concerns about increasing United States influence in the region as a result of the war in Afghanistan. Chinese strategic analysts have noted that US deployments have successfully driven a strategic wedge in Central Asia¹⁹ and could “impact on security systems in Western China, and weaken the influence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.”²⁰

Beijing recognizes that the war in Afghanistan has reduced its relative influence, particularly on its western periphery, and has tried to counter that loss by increasing and reinforcing diplomatic and military efforts in the region. China and its SCO partners have given qualified support for US anti-terror efforts. At the same time, however, the SCO has also called for a neutral Afghanistan and a limit on US expansion of the war on terror. Furthermore, China has pursued senior-level visits to India and continues its arms shipments to Pakistan.²¹ As China tries to find ways to deal with this growing US influence in Central Asia along with greater internal discord, potential security problems in its relationship with the United States loom large.

In other areas, Chinese efforts in the war on terror have been supportive of US initiatives, both in the United Nations and in helping to improve Washington's relationship with Islamabad. Beijing has also supported the war effort by increasing intelligence collection and sharing aimed at Afghanistan, reinforcing troop positions along its western border to keep Al Qaeda and Taliban forces from escaping and contributing to the search for bank accounts related to terrorist groups.²² These contributions however have not led to talks in such contentious

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areas as, for example, the proliferation of missile technology or issues related to Taiwan.²³

Much of the current strategic and operational war-fighting discussion in China is focused on thinking “outside the box,” not only about potential opponents but also about how best to apply China’s resources to meeting its national security interests. Some Beijing conservatives believe that China, while naturally expecting conflicts of interest, needs to guard against a loss of its relative power over time. In order to prevent this, China must examine not only how to defend itself against current or emerging traditional threats but also to address “new frontiers of interstate competition.”²⁴ The latter area embraces both military and non military threats.

Current Chinese strategic writings are full of references to developing a strategy that recognizes the country’s relative weaknesses and the need to focus on “approaches in which inferior can defeat superior.”²⁵ These commentaries focus on studying the way the United States has fought before, how it might be expected to fight in the future, and the need to select the best means with which to meet that threat. Chinese strategic thinkers devote much attention to analyzing US conflicts and determining lessons to be learned during the last decade.

The three attacks and the five defenses (*sanda wufang*) have received much attention in recent Chinese military writings. The former recognizes the need to develop a strong capability by improving helicopter, tank, and airborne unit capabilities in an attack. The latter advocates attention to developing the ability to defend against nuclear, biological, chemical, electronic and precision-guided weapon systems. In addition, commentaries are

advocating a push to increase the practice of deploying soldiers on operations and broadening the use of live-fire ammunition in training.²⁶

Chinese war-fighting discussions also highlight the importance of employing strategic reconnaissance and warning; of preventing the introduction of large numbers of enemy troops through anti-access strategies; of destroying command, control and communications nodes; and of disrupting the logistics of deploying US military forces.²⁷ Some in China argue that much more attention needs to be given to countering a high tech enemy, one that makes use not only of traditional war-fighting capabilities but is also now using precision, information and special operations in new ways.²⁸ Such thoughts could only have been reinforced in the minds of those who have watched the American military's performance in the Gulf War, the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, the Balkans, and now in Afghanistan.

Chinese military specialists have coined several terms that illustrate this new way of thinking. "Acupuncture warfare," for example, means interrupting the enemy's information capability by focusing on and "hitting critical joints."²⁹ "Flexible border" means generating earlier warning through improved reconnaissance techniques and more aggressive surveillance.³⁰ "Bee swarm" tactics envisions using waves of unmanned aerial vehicles as a low cost, low tech, high impact tool; "[the effect] could be as ants devouring a person or killer bees attacking a large scale animal that would be terrifying in its result."³¹

Such thinking complements PLA modernization during the last two decades. For the military, these efforts have focused on the acquisition of select weapons and equipment, the development

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of Rapid Reaction Forces (RRFs), increased training for specialized units, and a move, albeit slow, towards improving interservice coordination.³²

While most analysts believe that these efforts have benefited only a small portion of the military, improvements to RRFs and implementation of Resolving Emerging Mobile Combat Forces (REMCF) deserve special mention. During the past decade, China has placed increased emphasis on RRF training including an expanded capability to attack mountain regions with combined forces as well as a continued emphasis on the ability to conduct amphibious landings.³³ The development of the RRFs has been linked to ensuring the ability to respond to internal and external threats in Tibet, Xinjiang, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea.³⁴ The REMCF, believed to consist of an infantry division in each of China's seven military regions controlled by authorities in Beijing, is designed to meet a host of potential problems. These include border defense, internal flare-ups, and certain disaster relief requirements, all aimed at reestablishing central government control quickly and effectively.³⁵ How effective the Chinese have been in actual implementation of the REMCF concept continues to be a source of debate.

The degree of effectiveness aside, it is apparent that significant improvements are underway. Ground forces are being streamlined, and increased attention has been paid to improving ground mobility, special operations, and attack helicopter support.³⁶ Giving ground troops the ability to make use of short-range ballistic missiles could significantly enhance the Chinese army's capability. Efforts to develop a responsible non-commissioned officer corps and retain key soldiers demonstrate a

growing commitment towards an increasingly professionalized military. Attention is also being paid to the rudimentary digitizing of command nodes, to greater interoperability between units, and to improving joint operations³⁷ though at a much slower and less advanced level than that of the United States military. As will be discussed later in this paper, the PLA is changing the way it trains to fight as well.

Bureaucratic resistance, interservice rivalries, an entrenched command system, antiquated equipment, and limited resources will in many cases inhibit full implementation these plans. However, programmed improvements will change how China fights in the future. Potential opponents should not assume that China is unprepared to fight because it is still modernizing. The authors of this paper at least, believe otherwise.

Even if one assumes that the United States has a limited chance of engaging China in conflict, the United States may well come into contact with forces being counseled by Chinese advisors, supported by Chinese logisticians, or trained by Chinese tacticians. By studying emerging Chinese war-fighting doctrine and activity, the US Army hedges its bets with other potential foes in the region as well.

Should China have to fight in the near- to mid-term future, it would do so with a military that combines the growing strengths of selected elite units with improved capabilities and those of an older organization raised on earlier war-fighting concepts such as People's War and Local War doctrine. During the next two to three decades, any potential opponent will face a complex amalgam of old and new capabilities, involving traditional and more recent strategies. Some Western analysts dismiss China's

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military as ill-prepared, untrained, and unready to meet war-fighting requirements in the 21st century. But limited contact with the Chinese has no doubt affected these (and all other) assessments. It is quite possible, we suggest, that such analysts seriously underestimate the degree to which the Chinese military can and will adapt their patchwork capabilities to meet a threat. The various competencies of these units, combined with unique Chinese cultural, geographic, and domestic imperatives, all indicate the need for serious study not only of its current war-fighting status but also of its likely evolution. We believe the United States military, and in particular the US Army, should conduct an ongoing analysis of the Chinese capabilities and, if possible, exchanges, education, and training.

The lack of recent combat experience by Chinese forces has had an impact on the development of the military. Since China's 1979 Vietnam incursion, much of its own ground force war-fighting assessments have come from studying US actions. Chinese analysts have studied US operations in the Gulf War, Taiwan Strait, Somalia, and Kosovo³⁸ and are sure to study recent actions in Afghanistan. An often quoted, widely available theoretical essay, *Unrestricted Warfare*, argues that Chinese strategic planning needs to take both military and non-military means, such as network hacking, attacking financial institutions, and using the media to counter US strengths.³⁹ There is debate about whether this work by two Chinese colonels reflects broader PLA views and institutional commitment to change,⁴⁰ but it clearly is significant.

It is still unclear whether China will be able to generate the bureaucratic will or resources to implement recommended

changes. Even if it does, how China intends to use these forces would need to be considered.⁴¹ One of the difficulties in determining China's intent is that interactions between Beijing's emerging military leaders and the United States and its allies have been extremely limited.⁴² While much has been written based on discussions with China's think tank experts and on comprehensive studies of internally and externally circulated PLA documents, contact between war fighters at every level on both sides has been negligible. This has fueled mistrust and prevented transparency. Increased military exchanges between both countries' ground forces could begin to reverse these trends.

Even limited contact can have far-reaching impacts. A US military attaché in Beijing noted recently that a fellow US military officer discounted the likelihood the Chinese would take a particular operational stance with its modernized equipment "because that is not what we would do."⁴³ Cultural misunderstandings between the United States and China can have significant consequences. As Richard Betts and Thomas Christensen have noted, "China does not need to match American standards to reshape the strategic environment."⁴⁴ This holds equally true at the operational and tactical levels.

Whether China is seen as having a weak or burgeoning military capability, as a benign or growing military threat, as a state with converging or conflicting interests, what is clear is that the US Army must do all it can both to meet a potential challenge and to reduce misunderstanding between the two countries. We believe it is incumbent on the US Army to pursue a two track approach: seek military-to-military opportunities that would build respect, trust, and reciprocity and prepare to meet a future Chinese

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threat. Exposure by US Army soldiers and units to the Chinese military in a reciprocal arrangement would allow greater opportunities to pursue common interests as well as enable us to understand a potential threat.

MILITARY EXCHANGES

Military exchanges and increased China-oriented training and education in US Army schools will open up a host of opportunities. Army Colonel Neal Anderson has offered some reasons for pursuing such contacts.⁴⁵ First, contacts that lead to improved relationships will help shape China's rise as a responsible power. The Chinese military will play a major role in the emerging global security environment. Discussions and exchanges between the US Army and the PLA can expose both organizations to each other's perspectives. Mutual ignorance is in no one's interest.⁴⁶

United States allies in the region stand to benefit as well. Increased contacts with the PLA, when accomplished in coordination with allies in the region, can help reduce mistrust and miscalculation and, may even play a role in alleviating outbreaks of tension over volatile issues. Of course, the United States, allies and friends, especially in Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Thailand, must not only be informed of such contacts but also actively consulted, since the outcome may have large implications for their future security.⁴⁷ And military exchange efforts should complement ongoing political, economic, and social bilateral and multilateral initiatives as well.

As we've noted, bilateral military exchanges can enhance transparency and mutual understanding and reduce distrust and miscalculation.⁴⁸ Such exchanges also help both sides gain a

better appreciation of the potential risks and costs of heightened tensions or an outbreak of hostilities. Likewise, such a relationship, some have argued may help “disabuse Chinese elites of any belief that they might have of the unwillingness” of the United States to fight.⁴⁹

One of the major difficulties with previous US military exchanges has been in defining what reciprocity means to both sides. On the U.S. side this has raised concerns that the Chinese have much more to gain from such contacts than Washington. The term “rough reciprocity,” sort of fudged this objection by giving the Chinese credit for showing movement and opening some doors to their military without providing true reciprocal visits. Detailed briefings and tours set up to support visits by Chinese military leaders to US Army Training and Doctrine sites as well as to infantry and armor units were reciprocated in China by scripted and limited orientations for US Army and joint delegations. In terms of showing United States strength there is much to be gained by such a program, but it does little to gain the United States insight into China’s own military environment.

The idea that almost any exchange was a positive one seriously undermined the credibility of the program, especially as the Chinese began to request yet more detailed visits to view Army operations and training in places such as Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and the National Training Center in California, and even made requests directly to the posts they hoped to visit. All of this without the US Army getting truly reciprocal exchanges in China.

The suspension of military engagement programs by the Bush administration in early 2001 and the introduction of a case-by-case review of each exchange was due in part to Secretary of Defense

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Donald Rumsfeld's position that "the overriding objective in [the United States] military exchange program [needed] to ensure that these exchanges benefit the United States [and that] is the principle by which future such exchanges must be evaluated."⁵⁰

This was clearly a rebuke of the previous administration's engagement program. Indeed, any future program of military exchanges with the Chinese will doubtless have to meet much more specific objectives. Those participating will have to be better versed on those objectives and actually use such contacts to attain them. This will require officers in each service sensitive to such requirements and a mechanism for conveying those means and ends to participants of future exchanges.

For the US Army, what is crucial to any future military exchange program will be protecting war-fighter capabilities while ensuring that such contacts do not build up Beijing's own combat and power projection potential. While building transparency and reciprocity, future exchanges must also ensure that critical information remains secure. This will require coordinated and focused preparatory briefings for all participants in such a program, as well as after-action assessments funneled back into Department of the Army G-3. As the focal point, the Army G-3 could operate as a clearinghouse for future endeavors, especially useful to those lacking regular contact with the Chinese. G-3 would also be responsible for ensuring that exchanges carry out stated objectives in support of the Chief of Staff, Army, Commander-in-Chief, US Pacific Command, the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the Secretary of Defense. This will make it possible to judge the success of such exchanges and to arrange

future engagement opportunities and cost-benefit analytical efforts.

One of the most difficult issues continues to be Chinese resistance to more open discussions with military leaders at different levels as well as visits to sites in China that might allow greater transparency. China's 1998 Defense White Paper emphasized the importance of military diplomacy as a way to engender greater mutual respect and benefits, especially with the United States.⁵¹ But, especially among the senior Chinese military leadership, there remains tremendous resistance within the PLA to allowing US military personnel to view specific Chinese defense locations, personnel and equipment. This is due in part to the embarrassment of the Chinese leadership over the backwardness of its military force, and in part to the secretive nature of the military in general.⁵²

However, it is perhaps also a deep suspicion of US motives and intent along a number of fronts, especially among these senior military officers and defense officials, which limits greater cooperation and significant improvement on issues related to transparency.⁵³ In recent years the conflict in Kosovo, the accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade,⁵⁴ the EP-3 incident in the South China Sea off of Hainan Island, as well as a host of political and military actions by the United States which are viewed as antithetical to Chinese interests, have only served to exacerbate such views.⁵⁵

Fortunately, there are indications that within the Chinese defense establishment, a generational divide may exist over Sino-American military exchanges. Rising mid-grade officers are often more open to expanding discussions with the US military. In

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general, these officers have benefited from greater education and training opportunities and have spent more time outside the mainland.⁵⁶ These same individuals often have a much broader understanding of and a more critical perspective on foreign militaries. Future US Army military exchanges should seek to broaden contacts with these rising leaders. Increased attention should also be paid to expanding upon the success of contacts between US Army Foreign Area Officers (China) and their Chinese counterparts, which would promote contacts with those who are most likely to rise to the top of their respective countries' military profession. Expanding such contacts could contribute significantly to the development of more positive security relations between China and the United States in the future as well.

On the United States side, there also exist many challenges. During the mid-1990s, military contacts with China received a push from then Secretary of Defense, William Perry, with reciprocal support from his counterpart, Chi Haotian.⁵⁷ The established engagement structure promoted high- and mid-level exchanges as well as confidence-building measures. In 2000 alone there were thirty-four exchanges between Chinese and US defense representatives.⁵⁸ On the United States side, the majority of these exchanges involved senior Defense Department and Joint Staff leaders, Pacific Command representatives, National Defense University students, Navy and Maritime representatives. There were also functional exchanges in such areas as medicine and logistics. US Army personnel participated in each of these, and the United States Military Academy Superintendent visited China.⁵⁹

As noted, Secretary Rumsfeld is conducting a review of military exchanges with China, approving them on a case-by-case basis and only after determining that the proposed contact will benefit the United States.⁶⁰ The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) is reviewing United States defense objectives vis-à-vis China in order to improve the exchange program.⁶¹ While OSD recognizes that military exchanges create useful channels of discussion there is also a sense that the way ahead must include greater reciprocity.⁶²

United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) continues to rely on its Theater Engagement Plan (TEP) to guide its military engagement program with China. Chief among the TEP's objectives are increased access, influence, and goodwill as well as improved bilateral relationships.⁶³ However, measuring the degree of improvement by executing the TEP is difficult. Additionally, a senior officer at USPACOM notes that when it comes to China, US deterrence and defense activities in the region must hedge against potential threats but at the same time be careful to not take actions which could cause a threat to develop.⁶⁴ An officer working China issues in OSD, echoes this sentiment stating that care must be taken not to overstate the China threat making it a self-fulfilling prophecy. There is a need for vigilance but the threat should not be exaggerated.⁶⁵ Additionally, there is a sense at USPACOM that the way ahead in military exchanges is to focus more effectively on mid-grade officers, since they are perceived to be more supportive of military-to-military contacts.⁶⁶

United States Army efforts to engage the PLA in recent years have focused on military law, history, training, and professional development exchanges.⁶⁷ But limited reciprocal access by US

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Army representatives has lessened support for future exchanges and hampered the ability of both countries to move towards greater transparency and measures which build confidence.

MILITARY EXCHANGES: THE WAY AHEAD

So what should be the way ahead? Subject to OSD guidance and in concert with joint engagement plans, the US Army should design an aggressive program of exchanges which meets definite objectives designed to enhance understanding while protecting key US war-fighter components. In addition, each approved mission should not only complement ongoing exchanges by its sister services and the joint community but should also ensure that it is linked to allied concerns in the region. Specifically, the US Army should:

- Design a program that defines areas of interest for each military exchange and relay it in the form of guidance and topical points to US Army representatives meeting with Chinese. The goal here is to improve understanding of Chinese issues and to highlight continuing areas of interest in a way that builds transparency and respect for both sides. Standards should be devised that will allow a realistic assessment of each exchange and a comprehensive analysis as the overall program moves forward.
- Encourage greater numbers of informed and prepared mid-grade level (Major to Brigadier General) Army exchanges designed to promote relationships with Chinese counterparts. These contacts should be made up of operations (combat arms and combat support) and operations support (Foreign Area Officer) delegations. Such a mix would not only enhance understanding during these bilateral visits but also improve intraservice knowledge of China-related and current US Army issues as well.
- Broaden military academic exchanges between the US Military Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, Command and General Staff College, and US Army War

College and the equivalent schools in China. Again, these exchanges should have specific objectives and should integrate students with regional experts to ensure maximum benefit not only to the Army but the defense community as a whole.

- Increase humanitarian assistance/disaster relief contacts using US Army personnel and equipment. Shared experiences in this arena could have tremendous benefits for both countries, not only by improving capabilities to respond to these activities but also by offering a relatively benign way to pursue reciprocal visits and enhance transparency. These contacts could lead eventually to joint and combined humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations.
- Broaden US Army participation in ongoing anti-terrorist efforts. While necessarily behind the scenes, there are natural links available with the war on terror that should be exploited to further meet national goals. In concert with those efforts ongoing with other countries in the region, expanding ties in this area could provide much insight into Chinese concerns and capabilities regarding internal and external terrorist threats.
- Encourage United States and Chinese Army participation in multilateral non-war-fighting and logistics related venues. Examples include the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies courses and the Pacific Armies Management Seminar, which could make possible mutually beneficial discussions in a non-threatening environment. These contacts, while not necessarily combat-oriented, should involve both US Army operations and operations support representatives with assigned tasks and cultural preparation.
- Build on the success of the current Foreign Area Officer (China, Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia) program by ensuring that each officer involved fully understands China-related OSD, Joint Staff, Army Staff, and USPACOM objectives and can convey them to their US Army counterparts in order to integrate them into future military exchanges. These FAOs should also be provided opportunities to “re-green” or return to war-fighter-oriented positions at the Division, Corps, or Joint Task

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Force levels so that they can remain current on the complex changes taking place in the US Army. This is critical to building better support for future operations and ensuring that FAOs remain sensitive to war fighter requirements.

- Link US Army exchanges with China to ongoing initiatives with allies and friends in the region in order to mitigate any concerns they may have and promote further cooperation. This will require a coordinated system of information transfer among FAOs and other regional experts in Japan, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Taiwan, which could then be further transferred to host nations.
- Invest resources in military exchanges to improve understanding and reciprocity. Budgetary oversight and support by the Department of the Army tied to specific objectives and desired outcomes would allow subordinate commanders to expand initiatives for exposure to the Chinese and, should tensions arise, create a greater base of understanding throughout the Army about a potential adversary.

Keys to the success of this military exchange program include not only resources but also a clear focus on the end state – one that does not compromise US Army war-fighting capability or contribute to China's own combat readiness or deployment capability. Central coordination by the Army G-3 and consultation with war fighters in US Army Pacific, US Army, Japan, and US Forces, Korea and other Army and joint commands in the region is essential. So is incorporating the advice and analysis of the United States Defense Attaché Office, Beijing, into any proposed Army effort. Equally important are ties to Army G-2 (Intelligence) and G-4 (Logistics), Joint Staff (J-5 Policy), and OSD (China Desk) to ensure awareness and integration of ongoing programs and concerns that can affect any initiatives.

A strong program of military exchanges tied to set objectives and a reciprocal framework would improve understanding, help reduce tensions, and increase transparency. Such an initiative must be matched by a willingness on the part of the Chinese to meet the United States effort. The desire to improve relations must necessarily incorporate a military diplomatic effort of which an exchange program would be a central part. However, it is understood that, at any time, the relationship could turn increasingly negative. Should it do so, such an exchange effort must be matched by a complementary effort to prepare US Army units for a more lethal scenario. The next part of this essay addresses how we can best train and educate our forces to meet such a challenge.

HEDGING OUR BETS

The benefits of a more robust Army mil-to-mil program with the PLA are clear. The transparencies and confidence building measures resulting from the previous suggestions would reduce the opportunity for miscalculations on both sides when future crises occur—as they will. The Belgrade bombing and EP3-Orion downing are examples of incidents that will naturally occur as two major powers assert themselves in Greater Asia. Also, the Taiwan issue is always volatile and will not go away anytime soon.

The likelihood of future crises underscores the need for better mil-to-mil relationships to reduce the opportunity for conflict. It also underscores the need for the United States Army to better understand how the PLA fights and if necessary, how to fight the PLA. While it is unlikely that the United States and China will engage in ground combat in the near future, it would be best to take some measures to prepare for such an eventuality.

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Unfortunately, research conducted for this paper indicates that the PLA spends much more time and energy learning how to fight us than vice versa.

Since the Gulf War the PLA has changed the way it trains to fight. For China, the Gulf War was a wake-up call. Prior to Desert Storm, the PLA high command predicted that US forces would become bogged down in the Gulf, as the Soviets did in Afghanistan. They were very surprised. The Chinese leadership's reaction to the US victory was deep and lasting.⁶⁸ They were impressed with the precision of US attacks and the lack of collateral damage. They were "stunned," and "every element of the allied strategy left the PLA aghast and hammered home as never before the backwardness of the PLA."⁶⁹ The Gulf War forced the PLA to study the ways and means of implementing rapid reaction force concepts, theories, and operations that could conceivably impede US capabilities. Chinese strategists continue to study the transformation of the US military in the wake of the campaign against Iraq and other more recent military endeavors.⁷⁰

Certainly, the PLA has become more serious and realistic about training. Currently, PLA ground force units train at three levels: individual, small unit, and combined arms regiments and divisions.⁷¹ As noted earlier, RRUs have priority in training.⁷² Since 1990, the PLA has increased the number of their large-scale joint and combined arms exercises, which incorporate night operations, opposition force scenarios (discussed in detail later), and live fire exercises.⁷³

Since 1995 the PLA has increased the complexity of its exercises by adding long-range and intra-regional rapid deployments into exercise scenarios. For example, rapid reaction

forces (RRF) units in different military regions (MRs) have conducted long-range and mobile combined exercises in challenging topographical locations such as the Gobi Desert, the Tibetan and Xinjiang highlands, and China's southwestern tropical forests.⁷⁴

More important, there has been some effort to increase the realism of field training, mainly through opposed-force exercise formats where a Blue (enemy) Force contingent offers resistance as the Red Force drives to its objective. In fact, some in the Chinese press report that Chinese troops are being trained for war with the United States, using methods freely handed over to them by the US Army. According to *Beijing Junshi Wenzha*, an official Chinese military publication, People's Liberation Army (PLA) visitors to US Army exercises went home "loaded with valuable information about how the U.S. would engage the PLA in the event of war."⁷⁵ The digest reported that Chinese military officials visited the U.S. Owensburg National Training Center ("Owensburg" may be Ft. Irwin) several years ago and observed "the sharp exchanges between US troops and a simulated opposition "Blue Force."

After the Chinese group of representatives returned home to China, they made a special report to the Central Military Commission," the digest added. "In March of the next year, based on authorization from the CMC, the Nanjing Military Region [in southern China, responsible for the Taiwan Strait] formally organized a combined tactics training center. At this point, China then had its first 'Blue Army' base."⁷⁶

At a supposedly secret base in China's eastern Anhui province, "training is held strictly in accordance with the commands and orders used in foreign armies and their training formats, with even the mess hall using knives and forks [similar to

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those in the United States].”⁷⁷ The digest reports: “In today’s Chinese Army, there is a ‘Blue Army’ base specializing in simulating the war tactics of foreign militaries in order to compel our army in counter operations to ‘Know the Enemy’ and therefore ‘defeat the enemy.’” The publication leaves no doubt that the “enemy” is the United States, which generously taught China how to train its troops to fight us in a future war.⁷⁸

Many might speculate that this report is bogus. After all, it has been mainly referenced in the right-of center media and there is no Owensburg National Training Center. Still, other reports in the Chinese press lend it some credibility. Between July 1997 and January 2001, Chinese sources reported the establishment of combined arms tactical training centers and special aggressor units, designed to improve operational efficiency of the PLA in a combat environment. The 1997 *Chinese Military Encyclopedia* (Zhongguo Junshi Baike Quanshu) refers to “components of combined arms tactical training centers consisting of a command system, a ‘blue’ or aggressor unit (moni budui), an opposition force (OPFOR) training site, a computer simulation room, a control center, and logistic service facilities.”⁷⁹ The secret Anhui training center is referred to in a May 2000 article in the *World Military Affairs Journal* (Shijie Junshi) as the first combined arms tactical training center in China. The center is capable of supporting realistic combined arms tactical training and uses a secret OPFOR aggressor unit with some interesting characteristics. Troops assigned to this unit wear green berets, camouflage uniforms, and special badges. In communications with armored cars, tanks and armed helicopters, animal names are used instead of the local call signs which the PLA normally uses.

During OPFOR exercises, weapons are fitted with laser-beam attachments for a realistic battlefield effect.⁸⁰

All seven of China's military regions (MRs) have combined arms training centers that use OPFOR units. Based on several reports however, it appears that the more robust OPFOR capabilities are at the Anhui Training Center, which is in the Nanjing Military Region, and the Beijing Military Region's training center.⁸¹ Under the old system, the PLA always managed to "trounce the aggressor unit," but in 1997 that changed "to ensure a fair evaluation of tactical actions and to enhance the exercise effect."⁸² OPFOR units in the Beijing and Nanjing MRs speak foreign languages, wear special uniforms and use tactics, equipment, organization and training which are exactly like those of a hypothetical enemy.⁸³ Many, including the authors of this paper, believe that the "hypothetical enemy" is the United States.

Fortunately, while the PLA's "blue force" OPFOR is probably based on a United States model, it does not have—at least in the near term—US capabilities. Indeed, as with most articles concerning PLA in the Chinese press, one has to discern how much is wishful thinking and how much is reality. Dennis Blasko, perhaps the best-informed PLA watcher, speculates that "theoretically, the Chinese will seek to emulate U.S. or Western tactics, but the reality would be much harder to accomplish since the PLA has so little of the gear necessary to carry out U.S. tactical battle (Airland Battle) operations."⁸⁴ For example, "the entire PLA ground forces of some 2 million has a total of 250 or so helicopters of all types including transport, reconnaissance, attack, and medevac."⁸⁵ Compare this with the American 101st Airborne (Air Mobile) Division which has about the same number

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of helicopters with greater capabilities in just one division.⁸⁶ The PLA's lack of helicopters, modern tanks, armored personnel carriers, and night fighting capabilities, would make it difficult to replicate what US forces can do on the battlefield. According to Blasko, "the PLA may be able to simulate U.S. forces, but they really could not be used to the same degree our forces could."⁸⁷ True, the PLA has a great way to go to achieve more realism in combined operations training, but they seem to be following the US model.

The U.S. Army's approach to this problem was to create several training centers where units face a highly-trained opposing force (OPFOR) in a free-play exercise environment. Laser simulators, video and audio recording, impartial umpires, and elaborate instrumentation create a realistic combat environment and provide extensive feedback to the exercising unit. Central to the National Training Center experiences is the freedom to fail, in fact the freedom to be thoroughly trounced by the OPFOR if the commander, staff, and unit are not well prepared. . . . The training centers, simulators, and training programs took the U.S. Army over a decade to develop and implement. It will take the PLA at least as long, and that only after they embrace the concept of realism in training and the freedom to fail that entails.⁸⁸

Notwithstanding their current limitations, the trend in the PLA's training center philosophy seems to follow the United States example. There has been an effort to increase field training realism, through OPFOR exercise formats using enemy (Blue Force) contingents that counter PLA (Red Force) operations. Red Forces do not always win as they did in the past, which might indicate there is freedom to fail. Also, as mentioned previously, Chinese sources indicate the PLA are incorporating "miles-type"

equipment, computer assisted simulations, and video assisted after-action reviews (AARs).

Because the PLA has followed the United States example in setting up its training centers and fights against a Blue Force OPFOR with what seem to be “American characteristics,” one might assume that the US Army would in at least some scenarios, employ an OPFOR (referred to as the Red Force) that fights with Chinese Characteristics. Not true. The Red Force OPFOR at all US Army Combat Training Centers—the National Training Center at Ft. Irwin, California, Joint Readiness Training Center at Ft. Polk, Louisiana, and the Combat Maneuver Training Center at Hohenfels, Germany—are called Krasnovians and use modified Soviet tactics and equipment. The mission of the training centers is to provide tough, realistic combined arms and combat service support training for light and heavy battalion task forces in low-to-mid-to-high intensity threat environments and to provide units with quality, standardized feedback on their performance. An integral part of accomplishing this mission is the OPFOR. The OPFOR replicates a motorized rifle regiment (MRR) and smaller operational units based on the forces of the former Soviet model, employing their organizations, doctrine, and tactics, as well as equipment that has been modified for today’s battlefield environment.⁸⁹

Interestingly, there is very little taught about the People’s Liberation Army in US Army schools. The Infantry School at Ft. Benning, Georgia does not teach anything about the People’s Liberation Army doctrine, operations, or tactics in either the Basic or Advanced Courses,⁹⁰ nor do any of the Army branch qualification schools.⁹¹ The Army’s Command and General Staff

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College at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas has a China survey course that deals with security issues, but not at all with how the PLA fights.

The lack of PLA studies in the US Army training and education establishment is unfortunate. We believe that the US Army needs to devote more resources to understanding how the Chinese military approaches strategic issues and how they fight. The Chinese way of analyzing security problems and conducting warfare is often radically different from the West's. In our opinion, a greater understanding of the thinking and outlook of China's military planners, doctrine writers, and commanders is necessary if the United States and China are to avoid dangerous miscalculation in the future.⁹²

TRAINING TO FIGHT: THE WAY AHEAD

If understanding how the PLA fights is important, how should the US Army go about it? These are our suggestions:

- Insist that all military academies, mid-level and senior service schools teach the Naval Post-Graduate School's "Seminar on the Chinese People's Liberation Army" or the Army's Command and General Staff College's course titled "China: Military Art, Wars and Revolutions, and the People's Liberation Army." Shorter variants of either course should be taught at selected Branch School career courses.
- Organize, train, and equip a PLA OPFOR unit. Consider using the US Army National Guard for this unit and employing the unit in an Mobile Training Team configuration at Combat Training Centers (CTCs), BCTP Warfighter exercises, and TRADOC branch schools. Develop a core group of China strategic and operational experts to devise realistic OPFOR plans and to advise US Army units on ways to operate against such a potential threat.

- Consider using the 141st Military Intelligence Battalion (Linguist) from the Utah National Guard as a major resource from which to build a credible PLA OPFOR unit.

CONCLUSION

As noted at the outset of this paper, the emerging security environment in Asia poses significant challenges and opportunities for the United States. China's strategic and operational perspective and plans are continuously being modified in reaction to domestic and international influences. It is critical that the United States do likewise to ensure that we not only help shape the future but remain ready to act and react should an environment develop counter to United States interests. The US Army, as always, plays a key role in that effort.

Anticipating change is always difficult. What is beyond question is that China's strategic and operational intent will continue to develop and the United States cannot be sure of what impact that development will have on US interests and goals in the region. It remains important for the United States to continuously review emerging capabilities and intentions of potential friends or foes to anticipate how best to retain the initiative, apply resources and address various alternatives. Likewise, we believe that it is important that any such a review provide specific proposals as to the way ahead so that we can best be postured to deter and defend in the future. It is hoped that this paper has contributed to that effort.

Increased military exchanges with greater education and training best positions the US Army to deal with any eventuality in dealing with China. The skills needed to do both require a detailed and continuous planning, coordination and execution.

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The potential benefits for the US Army, the joint community and the nation can prove great if exchanges and training are done in a way that builds understanding by increasing communication yet hedges our bets but ensuring that we are trained to fight against this unique adversary should the occasion arise. China's rise will continue. Leaning forward in the foxhole ensures that America's ground forces will be ready for every eventuality.

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***BEYOND THE SUNSHINE POLICY: AN
ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF CONTINUED US
MILITARY PRESENCE IN NORTHEAST ASIA***

Susan F. Bryant

INTRODUCTION

It has become commonly accepted wisdom to call the Korean Peninsula “The last vestige of the Cold War.” The forces of democracy and capitalism remain arrayed against those of a Stalinist, totalitarian regime bent on uniting the peninsula under a communist system. Soldiers from both sides literally face off on the world’s most heavily fortified border. The fact the United States military remains deployed in South Korea to protect it from once again being overrun from the North is equally accepted wisdom. Although a true statement, it is hardly complete. The reality is far more complex.

Clearly the United States’ military presence in Korea serves to guarantee peace on the Korean peninsula, but that is only one facet of America’s military role in Northeast Asia. The region is a potential flashpoint among four of the world’s great powers; The United States, China, Russia and Japan. Possible rapprochement on the Korean peninsula could rekindle old animosities. In the words of Dr. Henry Kissenger,

if American troops were to leave the rim of Asia, an entirely new and, above all, political situation would arise all over the continent. Were this to happen, even a positive evolution on the Korean peninsula could lead to a quest for autonomous defense policies in Seoul and Tokyo and to a growth of nationalism in Japan, China and Korea.¹

Beyond the Sunshine Policy

Therefore, the question of the future of American military presence in Northeast Asia is one of the most critical questions facing American foreign policy makers today.

At the time, the Inter-Korean summit in June 2000 was hailed as a major breakthrough in inter-Korean relations, although its significance seems less clear as time passes. Nonetheless, the status quo is not stable, and planning for change should continue. The purpose of this paper is to draw a strategic picture of the political situation in Northeast Asia in light of the reconciliation efforts made between the two Koreas and to examine the rationale for the continued presence of US forces in the region. This paper will argue that, in a future environment of reconciliation or even reunification of the two Koreas, the nations in the region will have security concerns and interests that can only be met in a stable environment predicated on a sizable United States military presence in the region.

SOUTH KOREA: AN OVERVIEW

During the past fifty years, South Korea has matured as a democracy. Its current president Kim Dae Jung, elected in 1998, is a former political dissident, who was imprisoned by the South Korean government for protesting for democratic reform in the ROK. Today, there is no doubt that South Korea is a full-fledged democratic state.

From an economic standpoint, South Korea has also been a remarkable success. Touted as one of the “Asian Tigers,” the South Korean economy enjoyed tremendous growth in the 1970’s and 80’s. Currently, South Korea enjoys a GDP growth rate of ten percent and a per capita GDP of over \$13,000.² South Korea’s per capita GDP is thirteen times the size of the GDP of North

Korea and seven times that of India.³ For a country only slightly larger than the state of Indiana, South Korea has the 13th largest GDP in the world.⁴

Despite this tremendous economic record, South Korea, like most of Asia was severely affected by the financial crisis of the mid 1990s. The “Asian Contagion” exposed significant weaknesses in the South Korean economic growth model. These limitations included extremely high debt to equity ratios and massive foreign borrowing.⁵ Because of the IMF bailout, the ROK is in no danger of economic collapse, however, the ROK has not yet fully dealt with the structural problems that caused the economic crisis. Signs of economic weakness remain.⁶ The recent downturn in US spending on information technology has led to the sharpest decline in Asian exports in twenty years.⁷ The government’s failure to deal with economic reform will continue to retard Korean economic growth. The major Korean conglomerates (*chaebol*) still carry excessive debt, which could precipitate further economic problems in the near future.⁸

Nonetheless, the ROK’s economic growth over the past fifty years has been remarkable. South Korea has achieved this tremendous economic and political progress while maintaining its side of one of the world’s most heavily armed borders, the DMZ. Residents of Seoul have never been allowed to forget they live within range of North Korean artillery. The North Korean government has never foresworn reunification of the peninsula through violence. As a result, the ROK army remains ever vigilant in deterring potential North Korean aggression. Because of this clearly defined enemy, the South Korean military has never

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been viewed as a regional force. It is postured specifically to combat the North Korean military.

NORTH KOREA: AN OVERVIEW

North Korea, a notorious member of the “Axis of Evil,” is arguably the most closed and isolated state on the planet today. Its official ideology, “Juche,” means “self-reliance.” In the decade since the collapse of the Soviet Union, North Korea has proven that it is anything but self-reliant. North Korea’s economy has worsened considerably since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Except for 1999, the country has experienced negative economic growth every year since the fall of the USSR.⁹ It has also experienced recurring famine. It is estimated that anywhere between one and three million North Koreans have starved to death in the last five years.¹⁰ The DPRK runs an annual food deficit of two million tons.¹¹ At the end of the Cold War, North Korea lost its primary ally, and source of support, the Soviet Union. It has also lost the unconditional support of its other long-term ally, China. As a result, the DPRK is isolated in the international community.

Another serious crisis for North Korea after the Cold War was the death of its “Great Leader,” Kim Il Sung, in July 1994. Supreme power has transitioned from Kim Il Sung to his son, Kim Jong Il who is commonly referred to as “Dear Leader.” This transition has given North Korea the dubious honor of being the world’s only dynastic communist state. Although there were significant questions concerning Kim Jong Il’s ability to consolidate power in the wake of his father’s death, he seems to have done so. “Kim Jong Il appears to be well protected against a major coup. He has installed the brothers of his sister’s husband,

Chang Song Taek, in three of the most sensitive positions in the power structure.”¹² However, there are those who still question his true level of authority, believing he has not yet risen to his father’s god-like status.¹³

North Korea is an economic basket case. It cannot feed its own people even at the bare subsistence level. It needs international aid to prevent widespread famine.¹⁴ Despite these horrifying economic conditions, the North Korean government has shown that it is willing to allow its population to starve in order to ensure regime survival. Despite continued widespread famine, North Korea recently purchased \$425 million worth of weapons from Russia.¹⁵ In spite of famine and economic strangulation, the North Korean regime does not appear to be on the brink of collapse. At any rate, it has shown that it can teeter on the brink indefinitely.

Although not technologically sophisticated, the North Korean military is one of the largest in the world. North Korean rhetoric has softened over the years; however, Pyongyang has never formally renounced its intention to reunify the peninsula under communism. According to a South Korean Defense Department White Paper,

Despite the ROK government’s consistent engagement policy toward the North, North Korea, based on its “One Chosun” logic, continues to refuse inter-Korean peaceful coexistence and pursues the strategy of communizing the South. After forming a united front against the South and stepping up war preparations at home, the North seeks to communize the peninsula by means of a “violent revolution,” or “war by using force” when the crucial moment comes. A crucial moment is when a politically and militarily favorable atmosphere is created by social disorder in South Korea, the withdrawal of USFK, etc.¹⁶

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Although such threats may seem like nothing more than empty posturing, when coupled with the military capabilities of the DPRK they do give prudent observers pause. North Korea boasts the world's fifth-largest army, maintains a constant war footing along the demilitarized zone, and has been responsible for numerous attempts at aggression and infiltration since the armistice was signed.

In addition to its conventional capabilities, North Korea also has an arsenal of both biological and chemical weapons. There is also the strong possibility North Korea is a nuclear capable state. These capabilities have altered the North Korean threat. It is no longer possible for North Korea to successfully invade the South, but their missile technology and nuclear capabilities give them leverage nonetheless.

Over the past decade North Korea has become adept at exploiting this leverage in the international community. In exchange for "good" behavior after some calculatedly moderate "bad" act, North Korea has been repeatedly successful at extracting concessions such as food aid and removal of sanctions from the west. An example of this behavior is the 1998 Taepodong missile launch across the Sea of Japan. Professor Victor Cha, a noted Korean scholar, has explained the dangers of such a cycle.

From Pyongyang's perspective, the objective of such misbehavior is not to win some military advantage, but precisely to initiate a coercive bargaining process that eventuates in an outcome more favorable to the North. This is a dangerous and destabilizing strategy, but it is the sort of high stakes game that Pyongyang plays adeptly. What is more, it is rational, since the anticipated benefits of changing the status quo outweigh the risks and costs.¹⁷

The threat of North Korean aggression cannot be taken lightly. While the DPRK could not unify the peninsula by force, it certainly could set Northeast Asia's market economies back decades, whether as a result of a miscalculation that leads to a conventional conflict or through the use of WMD. In either case, the result would be the destruction of a large part of the economic capability of the region's economic infrastructure and the diversion of resources to prosecute the conflict and the following reconstruction.

THE BACKGROUND OF RECONCILIATION

The June 2000 Summit is now the touchstone for discussion about the future of the peninsula. Indeed, the summit may have represented a true breakthrough in inter-Korean relations. What is less familiar to most is the long history of international negotiations culminating in the June 2000 summit in Pyongyang.

President Kim Dae Jung's now familiar "Sunshine Policy" is by no means the first overture made by the South to North Korea. In fact, there is a long history of inter-Korean dialogue. Since the 1970's the two Koreas have held secret meetings that have led to public breakthroughs.¹⁸ The first of these secret meetings occurred when the United States and China began discussions to normalize their relations. Both Koreas worried about the implications for their security and began meeting in secret. This led to a joint statement agreeing to peaceful reunification in principle and public inter-Korean talks utilizing Red Cross representatives in 1972.¹⁹ Since the early 1970s the two Koreas have used the Red Cross as an unofficial means of inter-Korean communication.

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In the past, many of these meetings have been frustrating endeavors for the South Korean government. Some have described the process of inter-Korean negotiations as nothing more than another form of competition between the two governments that can be best understood as a zero sum game.²⁰ Nonetheless, several additional agreements have been made between the two Koreas. The most notable of these is the 1992 “Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchanges, and Cooperation,” more commonly known as “The Basic Agreement.” This agreement affirmed the desire for peaceful reconciliation and unification of the peninsula. It also determined to “avoid armed aggression and hostilities, reduce tension, and ensure peace.”²¹ It was hoped that the implementation of the Basic Agreement would lead to measurable progress in inter-Korean relations, including visitation for separated families. However, the euphoria was short lived. By 1994 relations between the two Koreas were as strained as they had been since the signing of the armistice.

In 1994 the United States and South Korea became aware that the North Korean government was removing spent fuel rods from its nuclear reactor in Yongbyon. This caused significantly heightened tension, which some have said brought the peninsula to the brink of war. The standoff ended in October 1994, when North Korea signed the “Agreed Framework” and pledged to give up its quest for nuclear weaponry in exchange for fuel oil, the replacement of its nuclear reactors, and the gradual normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States.²²

In addition to allowing North Korea to reaffirm its commitment to the NPT, the Agreed Framework created the organization known as KEDO (The Korean Peninsula Energy

Development Organization). KEDO's mission was to negotiate the construction of the light water reactors and fuel oil that had been decided upon in the Agreed Framework. Groundbreaking for the reactors occurred in 1997, and despite some hostile posturing on the part of the DPRK, KEDO provided a solid vehicle for inter-Korean dialogue.²³ Despite a frustrating record of reversals in inter-Korean negotiation, some tentative signs of willingness to negotiate on the part of the North Koreans were becoming visible by 1997, when the North Koreans agreed to participate in "Four Power Talks." The goal was to replace the currently existing state of war on the peninsula with a formal peace treaty. The participants in these talks included the United States, the two Koreas, and China. Despite some forward progress, there is no formal peace treaty.²⁴

The June 2000 Summit was credited largely to the success of South Korean President Kim Dae Jung's "Sunshine Policy." This policy, articulated at President Kim's inauguration in 1998, represented a significant departure from previous administrations. It consists of three core principles. First, the ROK will not seek reunification through absorption of the North. Second, South Korea will not tolerate any provocation from the North, and finally, reconciliation will be pursued through expanded inter-Korean contacts and dialogue.²⁵

The culmination of this policy was the June 2000 meeting in Pyongyang. Although some dismiss it as largely a ploy by both leaders to bolster their political power, many argue that it was a tremendous first step towards normalization of relations on the peninsula. Key among the points agreed upon at the summit was the promise by both sides to maintain dialogue. Kim Jong Il

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promised to meet in Seoul for a second summit by the end of this year. Other evidence indicating a real thaw in relations include the three sets of family reunions that have already occurred, plans to connect a rail line across the DMZ, and the acceleration in the pace of North-South Cultural exchanges.²⁶

There is also a history of economic cooperation between the two Koreas that predates the June summit. In several instances the South has already succeeded in helping the North expand its economy. During the 1990s South Korea's trade with the North doubled to more than \$330 million, which has already had a positive impact on the North Korean economy. The South Korean government has also pledged to help the DPRK rebuild its now-defunct infrastructure.²⁷

A project that must be mentioned in the context of inter-Korean economic cooperation is the Mount Kumgang tourism project. Undertaken by the Hyundai Corporation, it guaranteed North Korea \$942 million dollars in revenue through March 2005 in exchange for tourist cruises from South Korea to Mt. Kumgang in the North.²⁸ Although this was initially received with great optimism as a model for inter-Korean economic cooperation, the project has fallen on hard times. Currently Hyundai is in default to North Korea for over \$10 million in fees. Given that the South Korean government has refused to bail Hyundai out, it is likely the tours will be suspended.²⁹ "The ministry of unification, while acknowledging the importance of the tours, says the government will take a hands-off approach to Hyundai's financial woes."³⁰ Nonetheless, Korean conglomerates still look to North Korea for potential economic opportunity. Currently more than 200 South Korean companies have contracts with North Korean

manufacturers to produce such things as clothing and small electronics components and appliances.³¹

Despite tangible indications of a thaw in inter-Korean relations, there is still substantial reason to question the DPRK's motives. Recent events notwithstanding, the North Korean government remains an isolated totalitarian state whose leader enjoys a cult of personality that rises to the level of a secular religion. Despite some very optimistic signs, North Korea has so far shown little interest in any substantive political or economic reform.

The recent thaw in inter-Korean relations notwithstanding, the history between the two Koreas has produced considerable reason for the ROK to be suspicious of the North's intentions. From the North Korean attack on the Blue House in 1968, through the bombing of KAL 858, to the clandestine build up of nuclear weapons technology in the 1990's, there has been considerable evidence in favor of caution. When looking forward, the past must not be ignored.

CURRENT STATUS OF RECONCILIATION EFFORTS

The current dialogue between the two Koreas points to a sense of cautious optimism. Progress has been made that hopefully will lead to a peaceful reconciliation and reunification of the two Koreas. However, peaceful negotiation represents only one possible reunification scenario. North Korea is isolated and its economic situation remains desperate. Despite historic firsts, the possibility remains something could go wrong, either through deliberate action by one side or through miscalculation.

Because of the desperate economic situation in the DPRK, the North Korean regime has come to fear the possibility of

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absorption by the South. If absorbed, North Korea would simply cease to exist as a state, a scenario not unlike the reunification of East and West Germany. As part of his “Sunshine Policy,” South Korean President, Kim Dae Jung, has stated that, primarily for economic reasons, South Korea will not seek reunification through the absorption of the DPRK. However, the continuing economic woes and reluctance to reform make it impossible to ignore the North’s fear of reunification through collapse and absorption as impossible.

Another possible outcome is reunification through violence, i.e. a second Korean War. This is the scenario most familiar to the American public. It assumes that as a result of desperation or miscalculation, the North Korean government will attempt to reunify the peninsula by force. Although the likelihood of war on the peninsula is low, it remains a possibility. The DMZ is the world’s most heavily armed border, where over a million and half soldiers remained deployed, and heavily armed.

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

The divided Korean Peninsula is a remnant of the Cold War. When discussing reunification, the argument centers on the timeline and the circumstances. It is an issue of when and how, not whether. Agreement that Korea should be reunified does not make the actual process any simpler however. Considering the history of violence between the two states, reconciliation would be difficult in a vacuum, never mind at the intersection of four of the world’s great powers. The reunification of Korea will have far-reaching economic and political repercussions, not just for Korea itself, but also for all of Northeast Asia. Understanding all of the implications of normalization of relations and, ultimately,

reunification, cannot be done without analyzing the perspectives of China, Japan, Russia, and the United States, the major powers in the region. In order to develop a full appreciation for the complexity of the situation, we must consider not only the interests of these states, but also what hurdles must be negotiated in order for each of them to accede to normalization of relations between the two Koreas.

China

In 2001 China announced its decision to increase defense spending by 17.7%. This was the largest increase in more than twenty years. China explained that it was responding to significant changes in the world's political situation, specifically "that the United States is now China's main threat and a roadblock on the path to regional supremacy."³² This spending increase will bring China's defense budget very close to the level of Japan and higher than that of South Korea.³³

China is modernizing its military by acquiring new weapons systems, restructuring forces, and improving training. Much of China's new military equipment has been purchased from Russia at bargain prices because of Russia's lack of hard currency. China's modernization is driven by several factors, including lessons learned from the Gulf War, the need to protect its vital economic interests and territory, the need to maintain internal stability, and a desire to be the leading power in Asia.³⁴

Regionally, China has territorial disputes with many countries. "The most prominent examples are China's claim to the South China Sea and its resolve to use force if Taiwan declares independence from the mainland."³⁵ Several US and Asian policymakers and scholars believe that China's military capability

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increases, so does regional anxiety about its intentions. At present, many Asians believe that China's threat is limited, but they are concerned that China will eventually have military capability to challenge them in contested areas.³⁶ "Tempering the potential for aggression is China's economic development, which relies heavily on foreign investment and trade."³⁷ Furthermore, many of China's neighbors, like South Korea and Japan are also modernizing their militaries, and at a faster pace than China.

China is a nuclear power. Its nuclear force is small, relatively primitive, and vulnerable—far smaller than those of the U.S. or Russia and much less sophisticated.³⁸ But China is expanding and modernizing its nuclear arsenal, possibly with Russian assistance, and it is not constrained in its nuclear modernization efforts by any arms control agreements such as those (SALT, START, etc.) governing Russia and the United States.³⁹ Beijing's assessment of its nuclear force requirements may be driven by such factors as the India-Pakistan dispute, problems with Taiwan, or stability on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁰

Beijing's assessment is also being driven by United States plans to deploy a missile defense system, which they regard as a threat to their security. "Many Chinese insist that the NMD is aimed at China, despite US statements saying that it is directed at rogue states, such as North Korea and Iraq."⁴¹ Of course, China's modernization efforts may well stimulate a nuclear modernization race among neighboring countries, including Russia, India, Japan and a unified Korea.

China and Korean Reunification

Most American policymakers believe that the reunification process will be lengthy and gradual, and that reunification on

Seoul's terms is the desirable final objective. Beijing's objectives are slightly different. Publicly, it welcomes reunification, provided that the resulting Korean state is not anti-Chinese. But Beijing does not want Pyongyang to undergo a full-scale conversion to capitalism, and it may not be happy to see the peninsula reunified under Seoul's leadership, especially if US forces thereby have access to China's southern border.⁴² China accepts a US-South Korean alliance in a divided Korea, but a unified Korea with a continued Korean-American military alliance would be undesirable.⁴³

In order for China to support Korean normalization of relations (NOR), the United States and the two Koreas need to include China in the process. Kim Jong Il has made recent trips to Shanghai, possibly to study China's economic processes.⁴⁴ If North Korea were to begin the process of economic reform, allowing China an active role in that reform, it might serve to assuage China's unease. Another way to include China in the process of reconciliation is to resume four-party peace talks to among the United States, the two Koreas and China to officially end the state of war on the peninsula. This will give China another opportunity for a voice in the process of reconciliation.

The desperate economic situation in North Korea is already beginning to impact China. The famine in North Korea has created a growing refugee problem in China. According to recent reports, there are over 300,000 North Koreans currently hiding out in China. This number represents over one percent of the DPRK's population.⁴⁵ These refugees left North Korea in search of food and now cannot return for the certainty they will face criminal charges if they do.⁴⁶

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Beyond the appalling humanitarian crisis, the refugee issue also has broader implications for regional stability. The area of China experiencing the refugee influx has a Korean minority population of over 2 million. It also has an unemployment rate of over 40%.⁴⁷ The continued influx of refugees into Northeast China is potentially destabilizing to the Chinese government.

China's interests coincide with those of the United States and South Korea insofar as all concerned prefer a stable status quo to the uncertain outcome of eventual reunification.⁴⁸ Both the US and the ROK want Korea to be reunified as democratic, free market economy. If this occurs, China will no longer have North Korea to act as a buffer. In order to accede to NOR and reunification under these conditions, China must have confidence that a reunified Korea will not be an enemy of China. Although this will be problematic, the best alternative is to ensure that China is included in the reunification process through four-party talks, humanitarian assistance missions, and economic investment into North Korea and eventually, the new Korean state.

Japan

Currently, the Japanese navy projects the most power in the region. Japanese military policy is restricted by the nation's American dictated constitution. Under Article Nine of that constitution, the Japanese people forever renounce war or the threat of force.⁴⁹ But Japanese constitutional restraint is fading as the United States encourages Japan to take on more of the security burden in the region. Potential new conflicts with China, and North Korea, and others have led many Japanese to call for a reinterpretation of the Constitution or an amendment giving Japanese armed forces greater freedom.⁵⁰

For all of its constitutional restrictions and historical sentiments, Japan has built its self-defense forces into one of the most powerful Armies in Asia. Its annual military budget, of \$45 billion is the second largest in the world after that of the United States. The size of the forces and the sophistication of its weaponry are roughly equivalent to those of Great Britain, which has an annual defense budget of about \$33 billion. Japan has about 236,000 military personnel compared to Britain's 220,000.⁵¹

Japan and Korean Reunification

Improved political and military relations between Japan and South Korea—now arguably the best they have been since normalization of relations in 1965—have mostly been based on the continued viability and hostility of the North Korean regime. Absent a hostile North Korea, the question arises: “Will inter-Korean détente necessarily mean a rise in anti-Japanese sentiment potentially destructive to the painstaking efforts to put these colonial ghosts to bed?”⁵²

Memories are long in both North and South Korea. Japanese troops occupied South Korea from 1910 to 1945, setting up a brutal occupation government. During the last phase of colonization, from 1938-1945, all Koreans were forced to take Japanese names, the Korean flag was banned, and the schoolchildren were taught exclusively in Japanese. It is common today for Koreans in their sixties and seventies to know Japanese but refuse to speak it out of distaste for their former colonial rulers.⁵³ South of Seoul is a museum dedicated to memorializing the hardships of Japanese rule. In the port of Chinhae, South Korean naval cadets study in the shadow of a museum devoted to the Korean Admiral Yi, who in the late 1500's fought off repeated attempts by the Japanese warlord Hideyoshi Toyotomi.⁵⁴

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Recently friendly relations between the two countries have been threatened over the issue of Japanese junior high school history texts. Many Koreans believe these texts “white wash Japanese atrocities during its colonial rule of the Korean peninsula from 1910-1945.”⁵⁵ Specifically, Koreans are upset that these texts omit references to comfort women and cite the Japanese colonization of Korea as “a favor to Korean development because Japanese built infrastructure such as railways.”⁵⁶ The South Korean government requested that 35 passages in the texts be amended. Japan has refused to comply stating that the texts were reviewed by an unbiased committee.⁵⁷ South Korea responded by canceling a joint ROK-Japanese military exercise in a gesture of protest.⁵⁸ The full impact of the flap over these texts remains to be seen, but it could lead to significant backtracking in ROK-Japanese relations.

The future course of Japanese-Korean bilateral relations is uncertain. There are those who argue Korean NOR will reignite Korean nationalism directed against Japan. Others contend mutual concerns over Chinese intentions will lead to rapprochement and a weakening of anti-Japanese sentiments in Korea.⁵⁹

Regardless, a reunified Korea could have serious financial implications for Japan. The resolution of North Korea’s post-colonial claims against Japan could be the single largest source of funding to rebuild the North Korean economy.⁶⁰ Japan paid South Korea \$800 million in compensation for colonial and wartime activities upon normalization of relations in 1965.⁶¹ North Korea will expect similar compensation. Adjusting the South Korean payment for differences in population, accrued interest, inflation,

and appreciation of the yen since 1965 gives a figure of \$20 billion. The claims of “comfort women” who were pressed into sexual slavery in during World War II may add another \$5-8 billion.⁶²

Japan is hardly in a position to pay claims this large, given its current economic situation. “Japan’s stumbling economy is teetering on the brink of a deeper crisis as falling prices eat into corporate profits and with Japan’s jobless rate standing at a postwar record.”⁶³ The Japanese stock market has fallen to a 15 year low, prompting the Japanese Finance Minister to state “The nation’s finances are near collapse.”⁶⁴

Korean NOR makes Japan nervous on several levels. First, Japan needs to be assured that a reunified Korea will not be hostile to Japan. In order to build confidence on this point, the United States, South Korea, and Japan need to continue using the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) to maintain dialogue. Japan should be reassured that its present cordial relations with South Korea will not deteriorate as a consequence of Korean NOR.

Second, Japan needs reassurance from the United States. The United States regards the US-Japan alliance as the “anchor” for US presence in Northeast Asia.⁶⁵ The United States must ensure Japan understands America’s commitment to the US-Japan security alliance is not in question.

Third, Japan will need time to repay its debt to North Korea upon normalization of relations. If Japan can structure its repayment over time, in conjunction with aid to North Korea from the IMF and the World Bank, then Japan could meet this financial burden without crippling its own economy.

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Normalization of relations with North Korea will inevitably affect Japan's relations with China as well.

Japan's relations with China will also be affected by reunification. An antagonistic North Korea has enabled Japan to justify a number of security initiatives, such as enhanced military relations with the United States and the exploratory development of a missile-defense System. Even absent a hostile North Korea, Japan will wish to continue these security initiatives, which will then be seen as what they really are: means to protect Japan from China's military modernization program.⁶⁶

Russia

"Russia's basic policy toward Northeast Asia is to create an environment in which it can exercise its influence over the region."⁶⁷ This means helping establish lasting peace and stability on the peninsula and supporting direct talks between the two Koreas. "In line with such policies, Russia supports the peaceful coexistence of the two Koreas, exchanges and cooperation between the two, and denuclearization and arms reduction throughout the entire peninsula."⁶⁸

Although Russia would like to be a player in Northeast Asia, the Putin regime has little to offer. Russia's economy is in trouble and its military power is in decline. Russia inherited 60 percent of the Soviet Union's GDP, which has since declined by more than 40 percent.⁶⁹ In the wake of the 1998 financial crisis, predictions of slight economic growth since 1999 have given way to forecasts of further contraction, perhaps negative 2 to 4 percent.⁷⁰ Inadequate economic infrastructure, declining production, and crime are among the most troubling problems.⁷¹ The downturn in the Russian economy during the 1990s struck the Russian Far East particularly hard. Output in this region was lower than for the

country as a whole⁷²: its share of the country's economic output fell from 5 percent in 1991 to 3.8 percent in 1995.⁷³

Russia's military is also in trouble. "The Kursk submarine tragedy, followed by Russia's inability to launch a rescue mission at sea, is but one example of a defense establishment in steep decline. Ground and air units lack regular training, basic maintenance, housing, and social support for their personnel."⁷⁴

Russia's military technical abilities have become increasingly outdated, and are repaired only in a most provisional way. Whole swaths of equipment, which exist only paper, have already either been shut down for a long time or sold off by corrupt officers for their personal enrichment. Thus it proved impossible to find divers in the entire Russian fleet, or the whole country, who could have dived down to the Kursk. When the army leadership steals and is corrupt, the majority of ordinary soldiers and sailors see no sense in their service and are completely demoralized.⁷⁵

Military problems are even more severe in the Russian Far East. Just weeks after a major military exercise in the European Theater, Russian nuclear forces in the east had their power supply terminated because they had not paid their utility bill.⁷⁶ The military industrial complex in the region is also in serious trouble. "The end of the Soviet Union meant a decline in military production enterprises, and the cities in Siberia and the Far East that relied upon them."⁷⁷

Moscow understands that the Russian Far East will be economically weak and militarily deficient for some time and worries that this resource-rich region could come under the sway of an increasingly powerful China.⁷⁸ "The issue is often discussed in purely demographic terms, with a declining population of seven million Russians in the area contrasted with one hundred million or more Chinese just across the border."⁷⁹ Moscow recognizes

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that Russia's economic and military weaknesses limit its opportunity to influence decisions in Northeast Asia. Thus Russia faces the long-term challenge of managing relations with China, Japan, and the two Koreas from a position of relative isolation.

Russia and Korean Reunification

Russia publicly supports Korean reunification, though not without some private concerns. Compared with China, however, which many Russians believe it to be desirous of keeping Korea divided because a unified Korea might lead to a stronger American presence in the region, or with Japan, which is concerned about traditional anti-Japanese sentiment among Koreans, Moscow does not have much to lose. Russia sees the following positive aspects of Korean unification:

1) The disappearance of a potential threat near the Russian border; 2) a reduction in the size of the two large Korean armies and the possible withdrawal of American troops from a strategically important Far East region; 3) the end of Moscow's diplomatic maneuvering between Pyongyang and Seoul, which has not brought many benefits to Russia; 4) the creation of more opportunities to solve regional security problems in cooperation with a unified Korea, including nuclear security, ecological security, terrorism, and illegal migration; and 5) the opportunity to develop economic cooperation with a large Korean economy.⁸⁰

According to a senior Russian Korea expert, "Russia can accept any scenarios and formulas for Korean unification, provided they rule out foreign intervention and any forms of violence or the use of force, satisfy the people of the North and South, and are based on a democratic, evolutionary, negotiating process that is respectful of national and universal human values."⁸¹ Although Moscow agrees that the truce agreement signed in 1953 after the Korean War has become obsolete, it

insists that efforts to replace it with another treaty should not be rushed. At present, according to Russian analysts, the 1953 agreement is the only internationally recognized document that insures peace on the Korean peninsula. Russia prefers South Korea's approach, whereby a Korean peace treaty would be based on a bilateral agreement between the South and the North, to North Korea's suggestion that it be signed by North Korea and the US. Moscow wants to prevent any growth of US influence on the peninsula.⁸²

Simply put, Russia wants to exert influence over the process of Korean unification that it does not have. Nonetheless, it is attempting to exert as much influence over the process as it can. Last July, President Putin became the first Russian leader to visit Pyongyang in more than a decade.⁸³ Russia has been using military sales to both North and South Korea as a method to insert itself into the normalization process. Seoul is considering the purchase of over \$500 million in Russian weapons,⁸⁴ while Pyongyang concluded a purchase of \$425 million in Aug 2001.⁸⁵

North Korea

North Korea is concerned with regime survival above all else. Given its non-functioning economy, it has had no choice but turn outward in search of economic support. Despite its "Juche" ideology, North Korea is not at all self-sufficient. In 2001 there were more than 150 foreign food aid administrators living in Pyongyang, monitoring food distribution in 163 of the country's 210 counties.⁸⁶ Through economic necessity, North Korea has been opening itself more and more to the international community.

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The North Korean government has made clear that it wishes to join and benefit from several international financial institutions, including the World Bank, the IMF and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).⁸⁷ The heads of the IMF and the World Bank have agreed to make a survey of North Korea's broken economy.⁸⁸ Although supported by South Korea, Pyongyang's bid to join the ADB has been strongly opposed by both the United States and Japan, the bank's two largest investors, who object on the basis that North Korea sponsors terrorism.⁸⁹

There have been other signs North Korea has been trying to shed its pariah status and join the international community. Pyongyang has normalized relations with 12 out of 15 of the European Union Nations in the past year, with the likelihood of two of the remaining three to normalize relations in the near future.⁹⁰

North Korea's stance on the future of American soldiers on the peninsula is uncertain. Kim Jong Il purportedly agreed to continued American military presence on the peninsula during the reconciliation process. In the wake of the July 2000 summit, Kim Jong Il stated he would "welcome" the continued presence of American soldiers on the peninsula in order to ensure stability.⁹¹ Kim Jong Il is reported to have made this statement privately to Kim Dae Jung during the June summit. However, Kim Jong Il has never confirmed these sentiments in public.

In fact this statement has since been directly contradicted. In the Joint Declaration issued by Pyongyang and Moscow at the conclusion of Kim Jong Il's visit in Aug 2001, Kim Jong Il stated "the withdrawal of American troops from Korea will endure no

delay.”⁹² South Korean officials responded by asserting this statement was primarily for “domestic consumption.”⁹³

Despite these positive steps there is still reason to ponder the true meaning behind them. According to intelligence sources, North Korea has actually strengthened its military posture on the DMZ during the same time frame. “Over the past year, U.S. and South Korean military officials say they have observed a substantial build up in North Korea’s offensive firepower near the 38th parallel.”⁹⁴ Whether this has occurred for offensive or defensive reasons has remained open to interpretation. General Schwartz, the Commander of USFK, recently testified before Congress, “When I look North, I can see an enemy that’s bigger, better, closer and deadlier, and I can prove it.”⁹⁵

Whatever the interpretation of DPRK motives, the primary requirement for the Pyongyang government is the assurance of its survival. Kim Jong Il has shown a willingness to push to the brink of war, as during the nuclear crisis of 1994. He has accepted the starvation of millions of his own citizens. North Korea will not engage in any dialogue that jeopardizes the regime’s existence.

South Korea

South Korea has effectively taken the lead on reunification with its “Sunshine Policy.” Through the initiatives of President Kim Dae Jung, real forward progress has been made. Despite this, the South Korean government has not given into euphoria and remains cautious regarding the nature and intentions of the regime to the North.

Regarding reunification, South Korea has adopted a go-slow strategy, estimating reunification is still decades away. This strategy is based in large part on economic calculations regarding

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the cost of reunification.⁹⁶ In 1990 the estimated cost of reunification was \$319 billion. By 1995 the figure had risen to \$754 billion and is currently estimated at more than \$1.7 trillion.⁹⁷ South Korea studied the process of German reunification quite closely and came to the conclusion that for Korea, sudden economic integration would be a disaster.

As economically painful as the process of reunification was for Germany, it would be even more so for Korea. There are key differences between Germany and Korea. South Korea does not have West Germany's economic strength. The ratio of East Germans to West Germans was one to three, while the ratio of North Koreans to South Koreans is one to two. The per capita income ratio between East German and West Germany at reunification was one to four; the ratio between North Korea and South Korea is now one to seven⁹⁸ and in one study was expected to reach one to twelve by the end of 2001.⁹⁹ Although economic calculations of the cost of reunification differ, they tend to agree on two things: first, it will be quite expensive, and second, the costs rise over time. Thus, it is easy to understand the ROK's preference for a calculated, decades-long process of reunification. Hopefully, it would allow the South the opportunity to revitalize the North's economy and mitigate the economic repercussions that reunification would inevitably have on South Korea.

Military concerns remain paramount for the South Korean government. Not all South Koreans agree with the President Kim Dae Jung's engagement policy. Critics charge that inter-Korean cooperation is a one-sided process and that South Korea is doing all of the giving and getting nothing in return.¹⁰⁰ The ROK remains particularly worried about KPA conventional war-

fighting capabilities and non-nuclear deterrents, namely the long-range artillery, tactical missiles and chemical warfare capabilities.¹⁰¹

The *2000 Defense White Paper*, published by the ROK ministry of Defense explains South Korea's national defense policy as follows:

the ROK government will maintain a firm security posture. . . . It is prepared to respond strongly to the North's armed provocation. . . . Further, the ROK must establish a firm security posture, which will deter the North's armed invasion and stimulate reconciliation and cooperation between the two countries.¹⁰²

The above passage shows that although South Korea remains hopeful that reunification will occur peacefully, it remains vigilant and prepares for other alternatives.

South Korea recognizes the process of reunification, even if achieved under its own preferred conditions, will be a long process fraught with both economic and military dangers. In order to ensure the ROK continues to pursue normalization of relations, these vulnerabilities need to be mitigated.

First, the ROK must not feel as though its defensive capabilities are being in any way degraded as a result of the normalization process. The United States needs to ensure that its military commitment to defend South Korea remains unambiguous. The second major challenge faced by South Korea is economic. As previously discussed, the cost of reunification will be astronomical. South Korea will be overwhelmed if it has to bear this burden alone. The United States and Korea need to take a multilateral approach to aid and infrastructure reconstruction that allows all of the regional players the opportunity for involvement. Liberal use should be made of

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international financial institutions such as the IMF and the ADB. Current estimates are that successful reunification will ultimately result in a Korea that is one of the ten strongest economies in the world.¹⁰³

Current US Perspectives

The United States military presence in Northeast Asia has long made important practical and symbolic contributions to regional security. US forces stationed in Japan and Korea, as well as those rotated throughout the region, promote security and stability, deter conflict, give substance to American security commitments, and ensure the continued access of other US forces to the region.¹⁰⁴

The United States' National Security Strategy described American involvement in Northeast Asia as follows:

The US-Japan security alliance anchors the U.S. presence in the Asia Pacific region. Our continuing security role is further reinforced by our bilateral treaty alliances with the Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines.¹⁰⁵

The strategy further characterized its commitment to South Korea and Japan as a “vital interest,” meaning that American alliances in Northeast Asia are of “overriding importance to the survival, safety, and vitality of our nation.”¹⁰⁶ The protection of these interests could include the use of unilateral and decisive military force if necessary.¹⁰⁷

The accompanying United States National Military Strategy articulated a similar policy. It considered North Korea a “regional danger.” It described the DPRK as a state whose intentions are hostile to those of the United States and its allies and whose capabilities make it a threat to our allies and American citizens alike.¹⁰⁸ Despite the movement towards normalization of relations

between the two Koreas, American policy has not changed. The United States remains committed to the defense of South Korea, as it has since it signed the Republic of Korea-United States Mutual Security Agreement of 1954. By signing this agreement, both the United States and South Korea agreed to defend the other if attacked. The DMZ is administered by the United States as directed by the 1953 UN Armistice agreement, Article 1.

Although the Clinton administration never officially adopted the “Sunshine Policy” as its own, it did support President Kim Dae Jung’s initiatives. The 1994 “Agreed Framework” put a freeze on North Korea’s nuclear program. The Clinton administration also attempted to negotiate a freeze on North Korea’s ballistic missile program, “but the agreement wasn’t completed because the United States couldn’t work out detailed procedures to verify North Korean compliance.”¹⁰⁹

The Bush administration formed its policy towards North Korea slowly with both Koreas looking on, anxious over the outcome. It was generally perceived by all involved that the Republican administration would take a harder line towards North Korea than its Democratic predecessor had.

During the first several months of the administration this was very true. The new government focused more on “reciprocity” than the Clinton administration, looking for concrete changes in the North Korean regime before continuing a policy of engagement.

After a lengthy policy review, the Bush administration revalidated the status quo, continuing to support the “Sunshine Policy,” the Agreed Framework, and the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group.¹¹⁰

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The main difference in approach [from the Clinton administration] was the U.S. desire for a more comprehensive dialogue. This is quite understandable, given that one of the primary complaints logged against the Clinton administration in its dealings with Pyongyang (by many South Koreans and Americans regardless of political affiliation) was that it seemed to approach the Peninsula as a non-proliferation problem rather than as a regional security problem with an important proliferation dimension.¹¹¹

Another important difference in the Bush administrations' approach to the peninsula is that it is intertwined with the administration's position on theater missile defense. South Korea is lukewarm on the idea, primarily because TMD does nothing to shield South Korea from Northern artillery, which constitutes the main threat to Seoul. In a poll conducted in South Korea, 55% of Koreans believed that deployment of missile defense would "have an adverse effect on the peninsula."¹¹² The administration's pursuit of missile defense has also complicated diplomatic relations with Russia and China. The full impact of these changes, for better or worse, remains to be seen.

POSSIBLE ROLES FOR THE US MILITARY IN PROMOTING NOR

Although normalization of relations between the two Koreas will be a lengthy process with reunification still decades away, the United States should begin planning for the changes that will occur on the peninsula. Even under the best conditions, the process will be difficult and destabilizing. Both regimes are going to have to determine together what path the process of North Korean reconstruction should take and who should be involved. There are three options for reconstruction. First, the two Koreas could decide to manage the process alone forgoing any outside assistance. Alternatively, they could use the US-ROK alliance as

a basis, or finally, they could invite in a multinational commission to assist.¹¹³

It is doubtful the Seoul and Pyongyang would choose to manage the process of reunification alone. The economic costs and manpower requirements would simply be overwhelming. This leaves either the option of a US led task force based on the ROK–US alliance or a multinational one. Regardless which one of these options the Korean governments ultimately choose, the United States would most likely take a leading role. American military presence already on the ground in conjunction with the ROK-US Alliance makes the use of US personnel a foregone conclusion. USFK provides an existing framework for command and control of the process. The American military is uniquely positioned to provide security and assistance to both Koreas as they undergo the normalization and reunification process.

Although the United States has been primarily concerned with North Korea's WMD program, conventional demilitarization must be dealt with as well. The two Koreas have been locked in an arms race for more than fifty years. Currently 70% of the Korean People's Army remains forward deployed.¹¹⁴ In order for reunification to take place, the DMZ will have to be drawn down. This will require a level of trust not yet seen between the two Koreas. US forces, probably in conjunction with multinational observers, can play a key role in fostering that trust by providing independent oversight and verification of the demilitarization process.

The issue of trust extends beyond the substantial military capabilities of both states. Unlike Germany, Korea did fight a fratricidal war that remains in living memory. As a result, the

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North may fear retribution from the South for the Korean War. Using US forces as neutral observers during the early phases of normalization could go far to allay this fear.

The cost of reconciliation is also a significant concern to both states. The legacy of fifty years of bad economic decision making in North Korea is going to impact the peninsula for at least a generation after reunification has occurred.¹¹⁵ To begin, neither Korea will be able to maintain its current level of military expenditures during the process of reunification. Demobilization on both sides of the DMZ is necessary not only to build trust and confidence, but also to divert resources into the reconstruction of the shattered North Korean economy. The cost of maintaining a constant war footing on the peninsula is staggering. The North Korean government currently spends between 25% and 33% of its GNP on defense.¹¹⁶ This translates into five to seven billion dollars each year. Although South Korea's military spending is a much smaller percentage of GNP (around 5%), it still approaches ten billion dollars annually and accounts for nearly 30% of the government's annual budget.¹¹⁷ A substantial draw down will provide the initial capital necessary to begin the reconstruction process, although international aid will certainly also be required.

During the normalization process, Korea will be required to manage internal and external threats to its security. The US military can help with both. The United States can play the role as the international balancer in the region to prevent any neighboring powers from becoming too adventurous. American forces can also provide humanitarian assistance and reconstruction support to North Korea during the first phases of NOR. Combat forces can be used to deter any outside power from taking

advantage of Korea's weakened position, while logistics, medical and engineer troops can support the reunification process itself.¹¹⁸

During the initial stages of reconciliation, the DPRK is going to resemble a country hit by a natural disaster. The North Korean people are going to be in need of food, temporary shelter, medical attention, communications capabilities and engineer support. The American military has tremendous experience with humanitarian relief operations. USFK could provide initial command and control for these missions.

The United States military is in a position to establish the framework for long-term reconstruction of the North. The DPRK does not have a civil society that will understand the requirements for reform. US armed forces can provide civil affairs units to assist with the task of nation building in North Korea.

These units are comprised of soldiers with unique skills and experience in all areas of government. They provide a capability for emergency coordination and administration where civilian political economic structures have been incapacitated. They can also assist commanders at all levels of civilian military planning. . . . In short, civil affairs units would be indispensable in the reconstruction of Korea.¹¹⁹

Although the United States military can be effectively used to begin the process of reconstructing North Korea, it should not keep this mission for long. After the border between the Koreas has been opened and the United States has laid the groundwork for reconstruction, civilian contractors should take over the process of reconstruction. The long-term focus of the American military should be guarding against outside challenges to Korean security.

The United States can also provide forces to train the new Korean military. The job of incorporating the North and South Korean militaries will not be a simple one. Using American

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Special Forces to help train and integrate the Korean military will strengthen the US-Korean alliance post reunification. If the United States military takes an active role to help increase transparency and build confidence between the two Koreas, it is much more likely that American forces will be invited to remain on the peninsula in the long term. Continuing the ROK-US Alliance beyond NOR and into reunification could provide substantial benefits to both states. The extension of American security guarantees for Korea will allow the emerging state to focus on its internal development free from unwanted outside influence.

Additionally, US military presence in a reunifying Korea could remove the temptation of nuclear proliferation on the peninsula. China is a nuclear power, and Japan is looked upon by the Koreans as a “quasi-nuclear” one.¹²⁰ A reunified Korea will have genuine security concerns, and its historical experience may induce it to take the nuclear option unless other security guarantees convince Koreans otherwise. China and Russia once exercised dominant influence on the Korean peninsula. Japan colonized Korea for thirty-five years in this century. The United States has provided security guarantees for South Korea for the past half-century. Without a strong US presence and continued willingness to underwrite a unified Korea's security, there is a definite possibility—or so many Koreans believe—that China, Russia, and Japan would again become assertive on the peninsula.¹²¹ To protect itself, a unified Korea might well combine the nuclear and missile assets and the conventional forces of North and South, thereafter gradually seeking force reductions

while providing for military personnel stability and force-structure efficiencies.¹²²

By now, most are familiar with North Korean efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. South Korea's story is much less commonly known. During the 1960's South Korea decided to develop its own nuclear deterrent based on eroding confidence in US security guarantees. For several years, this program went completely unnoticed by the United States. When the US learned of these efforts in 1974, it threatened suspension of all trade, as well as immediate troop withdrawal from the peninsula.¹²³ These threats effectively ended the ROK's quest for an independent nuclear deterrent.

The attempt to develop nuclear weapons was based wholly on a sense of insecurity and flagging confidence in American promises. If a reunited Korea were to once again feel insecure, it is not inconceivable it would turn to nuclear weapons.

To forestall such action, the United States can use its influence to "leverage" a unified Korea away from the nuclear option and toward the continuation of a robust US-Korea bilateral security pact, which would entail continued stationing of some American forces on the peninsula. The United States would also need to encourage a unified Korea to sign bilateral security agreements with the other regional powers.¹²⁴

Another option would be to add to such bilateral arrangements a regional collective security regime that could provide a security guarantee similar to that which a reunified Germany enjoys in NATO. Of course, a Northeast Asian equivalent of NATO does not exist and could not be created overnight. However, "there already exist several forums for multilateral cooperation, such as

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the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD), and the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP)."¹²⁵ These organizations arrive at non-binding consensus about matters of common interests and objectives like cooperative security.

A combination of bilateral commitments with other regional actors, a multilateral confidence-building forum for security matters, and continued US interest could alleviate the concerns that might otherwise push a unified Korea to consider the nuclear option.

Nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia is not the only potential consequence if the United States does not maintain a strong presence in a reunified Korea. Another potential problem is the resurgence of nationalism. Animosities in East Asia, unlike those in Western Europe, did not wither away during the Cold War. When the former Soviet Union was the enemy, most East Asian states, eventually including China, clustered around America for protection. "East Asia's two natural rivals, China and Japan, managed to curb their hostility, but never resolved it."¹²⁶ The new potential for a reunified Korea has rekindled concerns about historical animosities in the region. If the United States does not remain engaged in the region and provide encouragement for dialogue between Korea and Japan, the possibility for resurgent anti-Japanese nationalism is great. In this case, the Korean government may decide that it is better to lean towards China and away from the United States and Japan.¹²⁷ Unambiguous American commitment to the security of Korea is necessary to eliminate this potential.

The actual process of Korean reunification is murky at best. Although scholars and strategic planners blithely state, “Assuming Korean Reunification, we will do the following,” a tremendous number of unknowns remain. The United States military presence during this process will reduce the risks of miscalculation and help to ease the transition process regardless of what form it actually takes.

Nonviolent reunification is not the only possible alternative. Although not the most likely scenario, the possibility of a second Korean War remains either occurring as a result of miscalculation or desperation on the part of North Korea. The continued US military presence on the peninsula will provide a clear signal to the DPRK that there is no benefit to open conflict and no viable alternative to engagement.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS OF NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS

Nothing is clear about the actual process by which the two Koreas will reunify. Most of the literature surrounding the issue suggests three scenarios, reunification through violence, reunification through the collapse of North Korea and reunification through negotiated settlement.¹²⁸ The best strategy is to prepare for the first two scenarios while working to encourage peaceful settlement.

Despite great hope for reunification through negotiation, major obstacles remain. By all indicators North Korea is a failed state whose days are numbered. The economic conditions in the DPRK and the mass starvation lead to the inescapable conclusion that a fundamental system change is required. This leaves the North Korean regime in a catch twenty-two. The DPRK has no option but to reform, but fears that reform will tear the regime

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apart.¹²⁹ The issue then is how to proceed with the reconciliation process in as slow and non-threatening a manner as possible. Economic carrots will go further to precipitate change than sticks. Encouraging Kim Jong Il to change is definitely no small task, but there is no alternative. Kim Jong-Il must see that the best way to ensure his own survival is through reconciliation with the South.

Therefore, in order for a reconciliation to occur in the near term, it must happen without the fundamental transformation of either state, at least initially. Although this seems impossible, an option does exist. A possible resolution to the dilemma could be a loosely federated but unified Korea that resembles the Chinese “One State, Two Systems” model currently in effect for Hong Kong and China. This would allow both governments to maintain their respective systems while still being recognized internationally as a single state.

During the initial phases of reconciliation, the border between the two Koreas would remain closed. This would forestall a potential refugee crisis and allow both governments the opportunity to strengthen economic ties without weakening either political system. The logic of this approach is simply to create economic interdependence. As North Korea becomes more interdependent with the South Korean economy, outside influence and ideas will inevitably enter the North. Any substantive economic development in the North will require more openness. This openness could eventually lead to the rise of an opposition and then to the demise of the Kim regime.

This is no doubt a long-term plan. However, it is one that is beneficial to the ROK as well. Allowing economic development to occur over time in North Korea will decrease the financial

burden on the South that would no doubt be incurred if were to inherit a defunct economy and a starving populace.

During the summit meeting of June 15, 2000, leaders of both North and South Korea agreed they needed to reach an independent resolution on reunification. In the view of some Korea-watchers, there has been a distinct “Koreanization” of the issue,¹³⁰ i.e., the two governments are increasingly interested in achieving reunification without the interference of foreign powers. This Koreanization may facilitate the formation of a loose federation.¹³¹

Federation is not a revolutionary idea. Both North and South Korea have proposed it as an interim step to reunification. The DPRK has promoted this idea in the form of the Democratic Confederative Republic of Koryo. Under this plan, both Koreas maintain their respective governments while creating a unified national government.

As it is known, the DPRK has advanced the idea of the creation of the North-South Confederation in the form of the Democratic Confederative Republic Koryo. The idea allows preservation of the two existing social political systems. At the same time a unified national government will be formed with equal participation of the DPRK and ROK representatives. Under the leadership of the unified national government the North and South will practice self-government.¹³²

South Korea has also proposed confederation. In 1989, the ROK proposed the “Korean Commonwealth” which would operate through a common Council of Ministers from the two Koreas. The goal of this confederation was to work out the issues of divided families and to draft a constitution for a reunified Korean state.¹³³ Although these two proposals differ in their

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intent and scope, there may be room to compromise on a confederation agreeable to both sides.

Several circumstances could lead both governments to look favorably on federation. The North Korean economy is non-functional.¹³⁴ The South Korean government shrinks from reunification in the near term because of the expense of rebuilding the North after reunification. Unfortunately, the cost of reunification increases the longer it is delayed. In 1990 the estimated cost of reunification was \$319 billion. By 1995 the figure had risen to \$754 billion and is currently estimated at more than \$1.7 trillion.¹³⁵ Given North Korea's desperate economic situation and South Korea's reluctance to take on overwhelming debt, a loose federation that provides potential economic benefits for the two governments without bankrupting the South may offer a satisfactory compromise.

In several instances the South has already succeeded in helping the North expand its economy. During the 1990s South Korea's trade with the North doubled to more than \$330 million. The South Korean government has pledged to help the DPRK rebuild its now-defunct infrastructure.¹³⁶ Although these projects do not indicate a desire for wholesale economic reform on the part of the North Korean government, they could provide revenue in amounts that would encourage the DPRK to seek other opportunities.

Despite this positive news, North Korea remains dependent upon foreign assistance. By entering a federation, it could increase the amount of aid received from South Korea and continue slowly to expand its economy. Some form of federation might also reduce North Korea's current reputation as a pariah in the international community, making the DPRK eligible for a variety of international economic packages, including war

reparations from Japan. When South Korea normalized relations with Japan in 1965, it received an immediate reparations and assistance package of \$800 million.¹³⁷

If a federated Korea and Japan were to normalize relations, it could mean a windfall of several billion dollars for the North. In short, North Korea has substantial incentives to engage Japan and the rest of the international community, and it will be easier to do so, while maintaining internal political control, if it is federated with the South.

Redirecting funding from defense spending to economic restructuring could benefit South Korea substantially. A recent economic study concluded a reduction in defense spending would boost South Korean exports, as well as spur investment thus strengthening the ROK economy. In other words, South Korea could experience a “Peace Dividend.”¹³⁸ Federation would increase South Korea’s security by ending the state of war that has persisted on the peninsula for the past fifty years, while forestalling the economic disaster that would almost certainly accompany reunification through North Korea’s collapse and absorption.

This, then, is the logic of a negotiated settlement resulting in a loose federation. South Korea could provide enough aid to prevent North Korea’s collapse and enhance the latter’s image in the international community. Federation could also reduce the costs of security for both sides, enabling the North to concentrate on basic development and the South to reclaim its economic prowess.

During this process, the United States should provide assistance to Korea on its internal security issues. The United States presence would also serve to discourage unwanted

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overtures from other states in the region, while helping to coordinate welcome aid from other Northeast Asian states.

A second alternative scenario to be considered is the collapse of North Korea and its absorption by the South. Although no one involved in the process wants this outcome, it must nonetheless be considered. Kim Jong Il could simply refuse to engage or continue the process of reconciliation. It is also possible that the North Korean economy is just too far-gone to recover at this point. As intractable as Kim Jong Il is there is no alternative to dealing with him. There is no one in the North Korean government capable of taking charge.¹³⁹ If Kim Jong Il were to suddenly lose power, the result would be chaos. Given the desperate economic situation and the lack of alternatives to the current government, the collapse of North Korea must be considered as a potential scenario despite the fact it is not anyone's desired result.

The role of the United States military under these conditions would be enormous. The collapse of the North Korean regime could come with associated violence, or it the regime could simply dissolve, leaving the state in a vacuum. Under either scenario, the US military would be required to stabilize the situation in North Korea and to begin the process of economic transformation of the DPRK.

The third scenario to consider is that of reunification through violence. Although one could argue that no rational North Korean leader would start a war he knows he could not win, the possibility of miscalculation remains. If Korea were reunified under this scenario, the effects on the peninsula and Northeast Asia as a whole would be devastating. The US-ROK alliance would win, but it would no doubt be an enormously expensive

victory. If another Korean war were to start, North Korea has enough artillery to “sustain a barrage of 500,000 rounds per hour for several hours.”¹⁴⁰ Beyond the conventional threat, North Korea is estimated to have 5,000 metric tons of nerve agent stored along the DMZ, in addition to its stockpiles of blood, blister and choking agents.¹⁴¹ With these capabilities at their disposal, a second Korean War would devastate the peninsula for decades.

Under this scenario, the United States military would perform the mission it has trained for in Korea since the armistice was signed. After assisting the ROK Army in winning the war, it is likely that United States military would then begin the process of helping rebuild both sides of the war-torn DMZ. Given the horrific nature of this scenario, it is in everyone’s best interest to maintain an open dialogue with the DPRK to reduce the possibility of miscalculation and needless violence.

A final alternative to consider is Korea becoming two reconciled states. It is possible that North and South Korea could simply “agree to disagree” on ideology and regime type and coexist peacefully. There would be normalization of relations between the two Koreas but with no movement towards reunification. If this scenario were to occur, a likely outcome would be a Formal Peace Treaty officially ending the Korean War.

The normalization of relations between two Koreas and the end of the Korean War could weaken the logic of stationing American combat forces on the DMZ and would require a restructuring of the American military presence in South Korea. It is likely that American troops remaining on the peninsula would be reconfigured as a regional force. With the signing of the formal peace treaty, the rationale for the United Nations’

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Command comes into question. North Korea has actively sought to dismantle the UNC for years; there is little reason to believe that their rationale would change.¹⁴² Given this, a reconciliation of two independent Koreas would require a redefinition of the ROK–US Alliance and the role of the American military within it.

From a regional perspective, this scenario, if it were to occur, would be seen as a positive development by the Chinese government. One of China's major concerns is the potential loss of a buffer state between Chinese and US forces. Two reconciled Koreas would negate this concern.

Although this scenario is possible, it is unlikely. Discussions of Korean reunification invariably center on when and how, never on if. Both Koreas believe that reunification of the peninsula should and will occur. It is the form that reunification will take that they disagree on. For these reasons, this scenario will not be discussed in further detail.

POTENTIAL ROLES AND MISSIONS FOR US FORCES IN A REUNIFIED KOREA

Although there are still myriad variables surrounding the timeline and process of Korean reunification, it is not premature to begin considering what shape the American military presence should take in a confederated or reunified Korea. There are fundamental questions to address: Should the United States military remain in Korea after normalization of relations? After reunification? If so, how should the military command for the region be structured? It is time to begin considering these questions so that when changes occur on the Korean peninsula, the issues are understood and alternatives have been explored.

Even without the North Korean menace there are many reasons for American forces to remain in Northeast Asia,

chief among them to help foster better ROK-Japan relations, maintain strong mil to mil ties with important allies, keep an eye on China and Russia, and to ensure that American officers gain first hand experience in Asia.¹⁴³

The United States military will no doubt have to reduce its footprint in a reunified Korea. Land is at a premium, and there are already issues in South Korea concerning US land requirements for basing and training areas. Without a clear North Korean threat it is extremely unlikely that Korean public opinion will allow the American military to have the amount of acreage it currently enjoys.

However, negotiations should center more on strategy rather than simple acreage. A reduced footprint does not mean that American soldiers will have to leave the peninsula, rather that they should be reoriented to handle a broader range of strategic regional missions. These could potentially include such things as humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping and peacemaking operations, as well as mil-to-mil contacts and counter-terrorism operations.¹⁴⁴ American military forces will need to shift their efforts from the defense of South Korea to power projection in Asia. Given this, it makes sense that in the absence of a North Korean threat to consider moving American soldiers away from the DMZ and closer to major airfields, such as the one at Osan Air Force base.

Although a reunified Korea could initially have reservations about allowing a United States regional response force to be based on the peninsula, it is not an impossible idea. “In a recent opinion poll, 82.1% of South Korean respondents agreed that one of the objectives of the US-ROK alliance was to maintain security in North East Asia.¹⁴⁵

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Korea's positive consideration of this idea could also be tied to its continued concerns about its place in Northeast Asia. In the words of a retired Korean four-star General, "Korea was the bridge connecting Russia, China and Japan. The Korean peninsula has been a historic avenue of approach. It will remain necessary to keep the bridge safe from both sides. Maintaining an alliance with the United States is the best solution for that problem."¹⁴⁶ There is logic then for a unified Korea to support continued American military presence in a regional response role.

There is even precedent for Korean participation in this regional force. Although it may appear odd at first, the involvement of Korean soldiers in off-peninsula missions is not unheard of.

Korean forces could be used for extra peninsular missions as well, if Korea so decided, in the way that South Korean forces were sent to Vietnam to fight alongside US Forces in the Vietnam War. Although it may not be desirable that Korean forces engage in combat missions overseas, it would certainly be possible to join in non-combat missions.¹⁴⁷

Additionally, Korean participation in a regional response force could enhance Korea's place in Asia. Allowing Korean forces to participate in off-peninsula contingencies would allow Korea to move from a position of dependence on the United States to one of a more equal partnership.¹⁴⁸

Changing the structure of the US-Korean alliance in the wake of reunification will be necessary in any case. Reorienting it to focus on regional stability could also have a positive impact on the future of the US-Japan alliance. If the American military is required to leave Korea in the wake of reunification, it will call into question the rationale for American Forces in Japan (USFJ).

Restructuring USFK to become a regional response force could allow for a simultaneous reorientation of USFJ to focus on regional stability as well. Maintaining a presence in Asia after Korean reunification should be the result of a three-way agreement between Korea, Japan and the United States.¹⁴⁹

The future of American military forces in Northeast Asia is part of a larger question. After his election, President Bush ordered his Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, to conduct an array of studies on the US Armed Forces to “create a new vision of the American military; looking at everything from missile defense and global strategy to the flaws of a Truman vintage personnel system.”¹⁵⁰

The Quadrennial Defense Review Report (QDR), published in September 2001, provides some insight into the Department of Defense’s current thinking on Northeast Asia. The QDR states, “DOD’s new planning construct calls for maintaining *regionally tailored forces* forward and deployed in Europe, Northeast Asia, ... to assure allies and friends.”¹⁵¹ Clearly the United States intends to maintain a forward presence in Asia.

However, it is doubtful that presence will maintain its current configuration over the long term, regardless of the future course of inter-Korean relations. The QDR also states that “the new US global military posture will be reoriented to: Develop a basing system that provides greater flexibility ... placing emphasis on additional bases and stations beyond Western Europe and Northeast Asia.”¹⁵² This vision points towards a smaller footprint on the Korean peninsula, capable of being rapidly reinforced as necessary. The timeline for this change is has not been laid out;

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however, it is probable this change will occur within the next decade.

Presently, bi-lateral security arrangements characterize the Northeast Asian security landscape. In the wake of Korean reunification, a multilateral approach to security will be required. Although this represents a new approach to security issues in the region, multilateralism is not completely unprecedented. Organizations such as ASEAN and the Asian Regional Forum, which just admitted North Korea into its ranks, illustrate some potential for cooperative problem solving in Northeast Asia.

The reunification of Korea will usher in a new order in the region, which will have not only military but also far-reaching political and economic implications. All the regional players will be affected. A best-case scenario would envision greater trade, economic integration, and open and stable diplomatic relations. This can only occur if China, Japan, and Korea avoid renewed military competition, including a nuclear arms race. For the past fifty years, the United States has been the guarantor of stability for the peninsula and for the region. Korean reunification necessitates that the US reaffirm rather than abandon this role.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing German reunification took the world by surprise. In the Korean case, there is time to consider the implications of reunification and plan for its arrival. But such study and planning must begin now.

CONCLUSION

In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks upon the United States, it easy to put all else aside and concentrate on what has obviously become America's number one priority, the War on

Terrorism. No one should argue this should not be our current priority.

However, we must guard against ignoring all else. The United States has made a tremendous investment in Northeast Asia, both in monetary terms and in human ones. The United States should continue to engage on several fronts to see its investment materialize fully. First, the US must maintain the presence of American forces in Northeast Asia. Second, it must support South Korea and its Sunshine Policy. Finally, America must continue to promote dialogue and free trade among the major powers in the region.

People say the world changed on September 11, 2001. This seems incontrovertible. The events were so universally appalling that all states, with the exception of Iraq, came forward to express condolences and condemn the horrific loss of life. As President George W. Bush said, “Through my tears, I see opportunity.”¹⁵³ Perhaps this new unity of opinion can provide a starting point for greater cooperation in the region.

Unsurprisingly, South Korea and Japan have stepped up as staunch allies in the coalition against terrorism. China also condemned the attacks and voted with the United Nations Security Council “to take the necessary steps to prevent the commission of terrorist acts,”¹⁵⁴ and to cooperate more fully in intelligence sharing to prevent further attacks from occurring.¹⁵⁵ Perhaps this common ground is an opportunity to open doors to greater cooperation among the powers in Northeast Asia.

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***JAPAN'S CHANGING ROLE AND THE FUTURE OF
US FORWARD PRESENCE IN NORTHEAST ASIA:
CONTEXT, OPTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES***

Jay M. Parker

INTRODUCTION¹

On 10 November 2001, almost 60 years to the day after the Imperial Japanese Navy sortied from the homeland to attack Pearl Harbor, ships from the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force sailed for the Indian Ocean to join the US Navy and other allied forces in the war against terrorism. This deployment of forces was a major step for Japan, following intense debate in the Japanese Diet.² Like many other nations, Japan shared the sense of threat from a global terrorist movement. Unlike other nations, Japan had constitutionally constrained its ability to combat such threats.

More than half a century of formal rejection of security policy options considered normal and essential by other states produced a deeply ingrained national sense of pacifism. Despite the dramatic shock of the September 11th attacks, some in Japan still clung to the most restrictive traditional post-war views of self-defense. Even a recent series of armed clashes between Japanese ships and vessels suspected to be from North Korea set off a fierce public debate over Japan's right to defend itself in its own territorial waters. Mindful of public opinion, some of Japan's leaders worked to hedge their commitment to the war against terrorism.³

This deployment of Japanese forces marks another in a series of recent shifts in Japan's defense posture. After the embarrassment of Japan's ambiguous efforts to join the international coalition protecting its clear economic interests in the

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Gulf War, the Japanese made a series of small, halting steps towards greater participation in international peacekeeping. They reaffirmed, restructured, and revitalized the Defense Guidelines linking them to the United States. But while many in Japan—and many of Japan's neighbors—oppose a robust Japanese security posture, for some in Japan and the United States these steps are still not enough. Japan, it is argued, must accept the normal national security responsibilities expected of any nation.

Does this recent commitment of Japan's Self Defense Force represent a bold and irreversible step toward greater military self reliance, or is this another in a long series of incremental, ambiguous, and reversible actions aimed at balancing domestic demands and external pressures?⁴ And, if this does represent a lasting change in Japan's defense posture, what does that mean for America's forward military presence in East Asia?

The near-term prospects⁵ for America's continuing role in the security and stability of Northeast Asia can only be effectively analyzed in light of Japan's likely security posture and the context of related regional issues and events. Even before September 11th, almost daily events in and between virtually every nation in the region highlighted the continuing United States presence. In the past decade the domestic politics of Japanese national security, the dramatic if erratic momentum toward Korean rapprochement, the re-emergence of China as a regional hegemon, and America's continuing reassessment of its global role have all combined to heighten attention to the future of American policy in East Asia.

This study reviews several specific security scenarios for Northeast Asia, examines the possible roles for all nations in the region, and concludes that in the near term Japan's domestic

political and economic weaknesses combine with regional political dynamics to provide a significant, continuing US diplomatic and military presence.

There are several fundamental assumptions made in this study. The first is that any premise of a unilateral American role in the region is inherently flawed. America's future in Northeast Asia can only be explained, described, predicted, and prescribed in the complex context of domestic politics within and interaction between the other nations of the region. Therefore, this paper will deliberately reverse the practice of discussing America's role at length while discussing broader regional dynamics at the margins.

The next assumption is that the presence of conventional military forces forward deployed in theater can and should be considered distinct from considerations of strategic or theater-based missile defenses. Clearly missiles (both strategic and theater) and conventional forces are integrated parts of a military force continuum. However, each possesses deterrent and responsive capabilities uniquely suited for specific types of threats, and each needs to be assessed separately.⁶ This paper will focus primarily on conventional military forces. Furthermore, this paper focuses more specifically on forces deployed to contribute to the defense and security of the region as opposed to those forward based for use in out of sector missions.

Related to this assumption is the argument that discussing military presence without noting political, social, and economic factors is, at best, a partial solution. The factors most likely to either trigger war or foster peace in Northeast Asia are not rooted in comparative military capabilities or troop placement. Instead,

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military capabilities and troop placement are inseparable from political, social, and economic factors.⁷

Despite the hyperbole of the late 1980's, this paper assumes that Japan is a nation severely weakened by its continuing inability to restore economic order and stability. Most of those who used to facetiously state that "The Cold War is over and Japan won" now recognize the reality of Japan's precarious economic position. This combined with a slow response to needed domestic political reforms has greatly diminished Japan's hopes for sustained regional (let alone global) hegemony.⁸ Furthermore, any proposals for assuming a more substantive security role must overcome the unique Japanese brand of national pacifism that blocks the required Constitutional revisions.⁹

Next, while full, peaceful Korean reunification will certainly not occur in the short term, there will be continuing engagement between the two Koreas resulting eventually in some form of permanent, stable reunification. Movement toward that eventual reconciliation proceeds at a far slower pace than had been previously expected. The optimism evident at the height of Kim Dae-Jung's "Sunshine Policy" is clearly gone. The recent North Korean response to selection as part of the "axis of evil" was a setback to US relations with both Koreas. Nevertheless, progress, however glacial, continues.¹⁰

Meanwhile the nearly complete unraveling of the North Korean economy has not brought the anticipated collapse of the regime nor does such a collapse appear likely in the near term. Given all this, the reasons for stationing forces on the Korean Peninsula have not been fundamentally altered. However, growing domestic pressure in South Korea has undermined the

consensus for maintaining a United States presence and a number of actions have taken place over the past decade to reduce the visibility of the American footprint.

This study also assumes that tensions between Taiwan and the mainland will continue. The decades-long brinkmanship between Beijing and Taipei remains a reflection of domestic politics in each capital as much if not more than it has in years past. Furthermore, some of the current tensions are also fueled by domestic politics in the United States. Despite these tensions the immediate likelihood of armed conflict is not high. This is significant to the US-Japan relationship because Japan has struggled to avoid being caught in the Beijing-Taipei conflict for reasons rooted as much in Japan's recent colonial past as in Japan's general strategic isolation.¹¹

A further assumption is that the recent reemergence of China in its traditional role as regional hegemon is the result of the uncertain dynamics of China's internal economic and political modernization. It is not the result of a deliberate, aggressive policy of territorial or political expansion. Furthermore, the most significant bases for current political tensions with the United States are rooted in China's domestic policy, not its foreign or defense policies.¹² While an understandable rebuttal to this assumption would be to point out the conflicts with Taiwan and Tibet, it is important to remember that despite the perceptions of other nations, the PRC considers Taiwan and Tibet to be internal domestic issues.

This paper also assumes that the continued presence of American forces in Northeast Asia is not a unilateral decision made at the discretion of the US military. Civilian political

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leaders, not the Pentagon, make American troop basing policies. Such decisions have significant political and economic implications beyond the scope and authority of military leaders whose power is limited to recommending and implementing such policies.¹³

Next, while the United States could unilaterally choose to withdraw forces from anywhere in the region, it would not likely do so without giving consideration to the severe diplomatic consequences. Such a dramatic action would seriously reflect on other American commitments around the world. Needless to say, any attempts to station troops overseas without host nation consent would be, at the most extreme, tantamount to an act of war. While the United States does not have unconstrained, unilateral power to station or withdraw forces from overseas bases, host nations do have the power to evict. When they do—as was the case in France in the 1960's, Thailand in the 1970's, and the Philippines in the 1980's—the United States must and will comply.

BACKGROUND

Ever since the Spanish-American War and the subsequent capture and colonization of the Philippines, there has been a constant American military presence in East Asia. For more than a century, the US forces forward based on Asian soil have carried out a variety of roles ranging from deterrent presence to the prosecution of total war. Like the briefer but far more visible US military role in Europe, American military presence in Asia has been an extension of America's broader foreign policy aimed at securing and advancing US national economic and political interests.¹⁴

However, unlike the American presence in Europe, the United States military in Asia has not consistently been part of broader multilateral efforts based on formal security alliances such as NATO. Instead, the United States has carried out its Asian security policies bilaterally or at times unilaterally. During times of war in Asia the US has placed its efforts under the umbrella of multilateral alliances. Between the wars those alliances ceased to play a primary role in the development and execution of US policy. Indeed, one could argue that even while part of formal alliance structures for the purposes of waging war, America's role was clearly assumed to be "first among equals."

The distinction between the traditional United States military role in Europe and the traditional American military role in Asia is important as one assesses the likely future. The prospects for a reunified Korea or the less immediate but certainly no less important peaceful resolution of the Taiwan-PRC relationship would alter the security landscape of Asia at least as much as the fall of the Berlin Wall altered Europe. However, while US forces remain in Europe after the dramatic events of the past decade, it is dangerous and naïve to assume a prolonged status quo for American forces in Asia.¹⁵

A number of important, closely linked factors affect the future presence of the United States military in Asia. First is the traditional pattern of hegemony and power in East Asia, in sharp contrast to the European model. Simply stated, classic European balance-of-power politics do not fully apply to Northeast Asia. Consequently, assessments of East Asian international relations rooted in mainstream Realist International Relations literature are often flawed. Furthermore, most policy analysis and decision

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making is often unconsciously a product of this same Eurocentric view of diplomacy and security.¹⁶

For example, European diplomacy (and much of the scholarly literature that draws on European cases) is premised on multiple competing nations with roughly comparable but constantly shifting relative capabilities. These states either balance or bandwagon based on capabilities and their perceptions of threats. The result is constantly shifting patterns of conflict and alliance over the course of many centuries.¹⁷

Many of the states in Europe emerged as coherent political entities after centuries of internal struggle. State identities were sometimes geo-politically blurred by patterns of cross-border alliances and cultural affinities. We think of this as ancient history. However, it is worth noting that Italy and Germany were not unified modern states until late in the last century, Britain was not always the United Kingdom and still must contend with internal separatist movements, and many Central European states were manufactured, destroyed, then resurrected many times over. Complicating this were patterns of alliances built or reinforced by intermarriages among royal leaders. While this was meant to bring peace, more often it brought new conflicts, some more deeply personal than political or diplomatic. World War I was, among other things, a war between cousins.¹⁸

Northeast Asia's patterns of international politics emerged far differently. Rather than several competing potential hegemon, China has been the one consistent hegemon dominating the region culturally as well as politically for thousands of years. Furthermore, this hegemony was not exercised through military conquest and occupation but through the unique system of tribute

and cultural integration. There is no comparable example from European history.

While the patterns of foreign policy in Europe reflected constant interaction and expansion, the patterns in Northeast Asia reflected isolation. The greatest threats and conflicts were internal. This had also been true in parts of Europe during the feudal era; however, there was no comparable Asian example of the kinds of religious and ideological battles that spanned national and ethnic boundaries. Asian states did not engage in the kinds of formal balancing and alliance behavior that dominated Europe well into the modern era and continues to dominate today. Asian internal conflicts also stayed largely internal. Europe's prevalent patterns of diplomacy and intermarriage to gain domestic political advantage were not mirrored in Asia.¹⁹

The most serious threat to these traditional patterns emerged in the 19th Century as European imperial intervention coincided with the domestic weakness and vulnerability of China. Seizing on the opportunity provided by Perry's visits and mindful of China's example, Japan emerged from its isolation. The traditional Asian order collapsed. The Japanese quickly filled the vacuum left by the demise of China's hegemony. The adaptation of Western patterns of imperial behavior quickly brought Japan into the select group of the world's most powerful nations. Within less than a century, this form of European imperial order had the same disastrous consequences for Asia that it ultimately had for Europe.

In the post-World War II era, the traditional power patterns in Asia re-emerged and remain in the contemporary structure of existing regional relationships. Specifically, relationships

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between states are bilateral rather than multilateral. Now, however, the hegemon is America. Acting in the role of an offshore balancer, the United States assumes China's traditional role as the hegemon dominating bilateral relationships.

Meanwhile relationships between states in Asia reflect more than a century of bitter conflicts that have not been fully resolved.

Unlike the European post-war experience, there is no NATO or EU style framework to provide for future resolution of conflicts. During the Cold War, the United States was able to either ignore or capitalize on Asian bilateral conflicts as a means of advancing its short-term regional interests and its larger, long-term global Cold War interests. In so doing, the United States often ignored the specific regional context. The preferred American lens for viewing international politics has been European rather than Asian.

With the end of the Cold War, American policy required reassessment. That is not to say that the Cold War has, in fact, ended. This widespread belief is a continuation of traditional American Eurocentricity. While the European chapter of the Cold War appears to have drawn to a close (or, in the minds of some more cautious observers, taken a brief sabbatical), a Cold War still continues in East Asia. In fact, significant elements of the Cold War differ from Europe to Asia. Despite the fact that the United States viewed its Cold War actions in Asia as an extension of its actions in Europe, these were two very different wars.²⁰

As the new century begins, the nations in East Asia and the United States reassess their security roles in the region. In that reassessment, there are a number of potential misperceptions. Some are already evident in public discussions. The primary

misperceptions relate to Chinese capabilities and intentions. Speculation about PRC offensive military power and likely courses of action does not always match actual military strength. The greatest danger is an overestimation of PRC military strength and intent, followed by a buildup by other nations in response to a threat that is little more than speculation. In addition to endangering regional stability, this fuels internal domestic conflicts in China.²¹

An equally dangerous misreading is the assumption that Japan can be viewed as a balancing power rather than a threat. This is primarily an issue for American policy makers urging revision of the Japanese “peace” Constitution and modernization of the Japanese Self Defense Force. The perceived rearming of Japan stirs fears in Korea and China and reinforces hard-liners, particularly those in China suspicious of economic and political modernization at the expense of defense spending.²²

A clearly related issue is the continuing inability of Japan to officially come to terms with recent history. As recently as summer 2001, Japan failed to effectively deal with regional furor caused by the perennial conflict over the treatment of Japan’s aggressive past in government-approved history texts. Added to this was the outcry over debate in Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s cabinet about conducting official visits to Yasukuni Shrine, official resting place of the spirits of Japan’s war dead to include several executed war criminals. Attempts to sidestep the controversy by wordsmithing and “spinning” the nature of the visits only fueled regional anger and domestic cynicism.²³

The recurring failure to deal with the recent past has two consequences. One is the continuing mistrust by those who

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experienced Japanese aggression. Much of this mistrust is genuine while some is cynically generated for domestic political purpose. Regardless of its foundation, this mistrust greatly complicates the likelihood for regional security cooperation. The second consequence is domestic. Without a realistic view of their own history, the Japanese are hard pressed to build an effective domestic consensus on security issues. The quasi-official toleration of outspoken nationalists and historical revisionists only serves to highlight the problem and delay resolution.²⁴

A seldom-mentioned issue is the likelihood that a reunified Korea could be seen as a threat by other nations, particularly Japan. Under any circumstance, the emergence of a new state with a strong sense of nationalism and a large, well-armed, well-trained military would serve to threaten its neighbors. This is even more significant given the recent tragic relationship between Japan and Korea and the failure of Japan to effectively confront its colonial and wartime past.²⁵

THREE SCENARIOS FOR SECURITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA

Unilateral Independence

Given these assumptions, this background, and current concerns, there are three options currently under debate for structuring security in the region. Each overlap at points, but at their core they are distinct choices with different options and implications for the United States. These options are (1) independent capabilities and non-alignment, (2) multilateral alliance with shared defensive responsibilities and (3) continuation of the status quo with the United States as a balancer and honest

broker, providing the security umbrella through a series of bilateral relationships.

The first option—*independent capabilities*—requires each nation to develop its own, independent military capabilities without consideration of possible alliances or bilateral arrangements. Under this option military forces are structured in accordance with assessments of specific threats and the limits of national resources. This option can prove deceptive. No nation has truly unlimited resources. One key resource is a nation's limited ability to build and sustain a domestic political consensus for unlimited military spending short of an all out war for national survival. Each of the nations involved in the security of this region has specific limitations on its ability to be a truly independent, unilateral power. Two of these nations—China and the United States—can enjoy relative independence with specific but minor limitations.

However, Japan's security independence is severely constrained. The most obvious constraints are the legal limits imposed by the Japanese Constitution and the related limitations implied by the collective defense arrangement with the United States.²⁶ In the unlikely event that both of these primary constraints could be lifted, other serious barriers to security independence exist. The first and most formidable is the culture of pacifism that has developed since World War II. Domestic opposition to Constitutional revision and enhanced military capabilities remains high. Even during periods when potential threats might have served to motivate a change in attitudes, political leaders have been unable to move public opinion in the

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direction of military modernization, let alone genuine security independence.²⁷

In addition to a lack of popular support for revising the status quo, Japan lacks the financial resources to carry out a substantial military buildup. In a little over ten years Japan has gone from the economic envy of the world to a nation trapped in a major recession. Unemployment is on the rise, officials have begun to acknowledge a problem with homelessness, growth has averaged one percent, and financial institutions are burdened with almost unmanageable debts. Despite the initial popularity of Prime Minister Koizumi and his promise of economic reforms (as well as revisions to the security policy) domestic political institutions have proven incapable of responding to this crisis.²⁸

One could accept the premises that domestic public opinion has limited effect on Japanese political leaders, that military parity can be achieved with asymmetric high-tech solutions rather than expensive industrial-based weapons systems, and that a military buildup would cause a short-term economic bounce. Under such a scenario Japan could move toward some degree of effective rearmament; however, such a movement is not likely to succeed. Catching up implies that others wait for you. To do so one must presume ignorance and/or paralysis on the part of Japan's neighbors. Inevitably, China would remain one or more steps ahead of Japanese capabilities and the legitimacy of hard liners in China would be further enhanced. Korea—whether divided or reunified—would not sit by idly. South Korean military capabilities already far outstrip those of Japan. Rearmament of Japan would be easily exploited as a popular rationale for sustaining Korean military capabilities even after reunification.

Even if it takes the almost unthinkable step of secretly developing and then announcing nuclear capability, Japan could not successfully establish security independence. It is simply not possible for Japan to get there from here.

For China, the most significant limitation is domestic political consensus. The current regime—even given some periodic conservative retrenchment—is struggling to pursue economic and political modernization. This has meant balancing while maintaining domestic stability (most significantly, elite consensus) with dramatic and often disruptive economic change. This ambitious, high-risk undertaking also requires greater integration into the international community. With increased integration comes increased scrutiny and, inevitably, increased international criticism for a state with a strong sense of cultural superiority combined with a unique history of isolation and regional hegemony.

Closely related to this challenge is the historic Chinese imperative for internal order, stability, and cohesion reflected in what most other nations choose to interpret as international rather than domestic political conflicts. Until September 11th, foremost among these in the minds of most western observers was the conflict over the status of Taiwan. Since then, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in western China has received significant attention. Regardless of the specific threat, the widely shared domestic demand to maintain national territorial cohesion is reinforced by the remembered costs of failure to do so under the European onslaught in the 19th Century. The legitimacy of the nation's leadership is directly tied to its ability to defend and maintain the nation's geopolitical integrity. While serious

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divisions may exist on other domestic political issues, the perceived importance of Taiwan, the western autonomous regions, and Tibet is a view that crosses other political lines.

Short of dramatic provocation (foremost of these being a formal Taiwanese declaration of independence from the mainland), China will not attack. However, China will continue to risk an arms race and international disapproval to ensure that it has the military capability needed to deter national dismemberment. To build and sustain that military capability, China must divert resources from pressing domestic economic needs while raising the concerns and suspicions of other nations. These other nations include those in the region, each of which has at least one unresolved territorial dispute with China.²⁹

In a relative sense, China may be the most independent of the nations in the region. This independence is not without serious constraining pressures. These pressures become even more pronounced in a scenario where every other nation in the region seeks an independent security course. The result would easily be the kind of spiraling security dilemma that destabilizes the economy and domestic political order of the entire region. Given the significant share of the global economy tied to this region, such a disruption would be quickly felt around the world.

Regional Collective Security

It has been suggested that the best alternative for East Asian security is the building of a regional alliance to provide for collective security. Proponents of this concept look to post-World War II Europe for examples. Under such a proposal, Northeast Asian nations would form a multilateral security arrangement as a means of conflict prevention and resolution.³⁰

Such a proposal is hampered for a number of reasons. First, it is inconsistent with the practices and traditions of the region. As noted above, international relations in Northeast Asia have been bilateral rather than multilateral. While Europe has multilateral diplomatic practices and institutions dating back to the Treaty of Westphalia, Northeast Asia has no existing framework. Building such an arrangement from scratch—while certainly a worthy goal—is not likely to achieve immediate results.

Such an arrangement also requires a motivation for action, normally in the form of a threat. What are the possible threats motivating such an alliance in Northeast Asia? Is terrorism by non-state actors a threat? Recent events certainly warrant closer cooperation. However, despite September 11th, there is little in the way of a substantial threat (beyond small, localized groups posing domestic dangers best handled by law enforcement) that might overrule existing barriers to a formal security alliance. Are there major external threats to the region requiring united response? No such threats appear immediately on the horizon. Is there a requirement for in-theater peacetime missions such as peacekeeping or humanitarian assistance beyond the scope of one state's abilities? At present there are no peacekeeping requirements in Northeast Asia, and humanitarian assistance requirements have not appeared to outstrip the capabilities of the states affected. For example, during the Kobe earthquake Japanese government officials not only rejected large-scale assistance from the American military, but tried to oppose or restrict aid from their own Self Defense Force as well.³¹

The perceived threats to the region are from nations within the region. As alliances evolve they may mitigate the potential of

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threats from those states within the alliance. Alliances do not form among states that view each other as a danger above all other potential threats. Japan, China, and the two Koreas view each other as threats. It may be an overt fear, as with Japan's growing fear of China. It may be a covert threat, as with Japan's fear of a reunified Korea. It may be an empty but rhetorically useful threat, as with Korea and China's fear of Japan. It may be the collective threat that all states feel from the regions many unresolved territorial disputes. The result is the same. The nations of Northeast Asia do not have the baseline trust necessary to initiate and sustain a multilateral collective security alliance.

A logical alternative would be the creation of bilateral alliances between states. In fact, such alliances already exist between the United States and Japan and the United States and Korea; however, these arrangements are not regional security agreements. They link nations in the region to a nation outside Northeast Asia whose security interests intersect but do not always wholly coincide with their own. To form such alliances within the region would necessitate excluding and, therefore, threatening other nations. Any such alliance would be inherently destabilizing. A Japan-Korea alliance (whether with the ROK or a reunified Korea) would certainly fuel China's fears of encirclement, despite the fact that the two parties to such an agreement would not pose a serious, immediate military threat to the PRC. A Japan-China alliance excluding Korea serves no foreseeable purpose other than to antagonize Korea. An alliance between China and Korea (the most conceivable of all such arrangements) would be superfluous. Either of these two nations

alone is capable of dealing with a military threat from Japan and, in fact, Japan does not threaten either state.

Japan brings three significant impediments to any alliance. The first is its limited military capabilities and the extraordinary domestic political difficulties inherent in attempting to overcome that limitation. Next is its current economic weakness. The largest impediment to any regional alliance involving Japan is that nation's failure to come to acceptable terms with the region's memories of World War II. This is periodically refueled by controversies regarding school textbooks. This dispute is more than a debate about history. To the other nations in the region it is a fundamental barrier to the kind of trust and transparency necessary for any form of alliance.

Status Quo

The third option open to the nations of the region is sustaining the status quo. The United States continues to serve as the security umbrella through bilateral defense agreements with Korea and Japan. Each nation operates within the opportunities and constraints of these agreements according to the limits of their existing capabilities, their financial resources, and their domestic political consensus. But while sustaining the status quo may seem the most obvious solution, it is far more obvious that the status quo cannot stand.

Domestic political costs of the existing relationships have increased. The United States-Japan relationship is under pressure despite the initial success of the recent US-Japan Defense Guidelines revisions.³² In the years immediately following the negotiation of the new guidelines, there was some evidence of an attempt by Japan to adhere to the guidelines while increasing

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cooperation with and accommodation to China. Some policy-makers are urging Japan to develop greater military capabilities and flexibility while maintaining close interdependence with the United States. However, greater capabilities and flexibility are likely to encourage domestic demands for greater independence.

The economic and social costs of the recent banking crisis and the optimism brought by the Sunshine Policy have increased domestic political resentment of the American presence in South Korea. The American footprint has already been reduced in Seoul by relocating a number of military bases out of the city. While early hopes for reunification have diminished, the initial public discussions of a post-reunification role for US forces continue.

Despite all this, Korea is clearly the most volatile location in the region. The two neighboring states are still technically at war. There is still widespread famine in North Korea. Armed troops are on hair-trigger alert along the Demilitarized Zone (one of the most inappropriately named locations in the world). Belligerent rhetoric is still the dominant tone of discussions across the 38th parallel (and between the United States and North Korea). Earlier hopes for rapid progress in North-South diplomacy had already been severely challenged when tensions flared again in the wake of President Bush's "axis of evil" speech. The realization that any outbreak of violence on the Korean Peninsula directly threatens all neighboring states has sustained often frustrated diplomatic efforts and involves Japan to a far greater degree than the threat of war over Taiwan.³³

An often-overlooked dimension of the conflict in Korea is the role of the PRC. While Beijing is routinely assumed to be the staunch ally of North Korea, China has built a substantial

diplomatic and economic relationship with South Korea. Low-level “Track Two” diplomacy and sub rosa trade in the early 1980’s provided the early foundation for this relationship. Now trade and diplomatic exchange between the two nations is substantial and above board. China clearly has an interest in the long-term stability of the two Koreas. At the same time, the tragic state of the North Korean economy has created problems for China to include a flow of refugees seeking economic and political asylum.³⁴

The most significant change has been in the relationship between China and America. President Bush has reassessed and significantly altered the Clinton Administration’s “strategic partnership” between the United States and China. Some of this reassessment can be attributed to US domestic political pressures from those concerned about political and religious rights. The confrontation over a US Navy surveillance aircraft and the tragic accidental bombing of the Chinese diplomatic building in Kosovo demonstrate that the US-China conflict is more than just an ideological debate. This change in the relationship may be less than it seems, however, as the United States and China continue to seek ways to sustain and build on their past diplomacy, particularly in the wake of September 11th.³⁵

Clearly, “status quo” is no longer an adequate term to describe the security environment in Northeast Asia. Previous alternatives to the status quo are not a realistic foundation for determining the future of the United States in the region. What, then, is a viable scenario? What role would United States presence in the region play in such a scenario? Is there still a window of opportunity for

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US policy makers that can promote the long-term common interests of a prosperous and stable region?

A FOURTH OPTION

Given all of the above, the central focus of any proposal for the future security architecture of Northeast Asia must center on the reunification of Korea. While this specific goal is clearly in the long-term interest of every nation in the region, it also provides an exceptional opportunity for building broader, multilateral frameworks for future cooperation and stability in the region. To succeed in this daunting task, there are important steps that each nation must take.

The first common step is the recognition of shared dangers and shared opportunities. Next is the realization that this is an economic as well as a military challenge. Finally, there is the common obligation of accepting the long-term responsibilities inherent in reunification. One of the clearest lessons from the reunification of Germany is that the most demanding tasks come after actual reunification. By most estimates the actual costs of reunifying Korea—economic, political, and social—will far exceed the costs of reunifying Germany.

In order to successfully move toward reunification and beyond, each state has specific steps it must take. The primary task for the two Koreas is the continuation of dialogue, no matter how slow or inconclusive the pace might appear to be. In recent years, South Korea has taken primary responsibility for initiating and sustaining this dialogue. Meanwhile, North Korean leaders are torn in conflicting directions. Survival of the nation requires opening one of the world's most isolated societies, reforming and modernizing the economy, and integrating it into the global

economy. Survival of the particular regime in power requires avoiding all these steps. Mindful of the fate of the rulers of East Germany and Communist Romania, North Korean leaders are directly threatened by the very policies they must endorse. Other nations in the region can contribute to bridging this divide through diplomatic intervention and economic development assistance. In the end, resolution of the first steps in true reunification is a Korean responsibility. While awaiting this resolution, there are things other states should and, in some cases, should not do.

One task that each nation should not undertake is the rapid alteration of the current strengths of the region's military. In the near term this includes sustaining the level of American troops. Changes in troop posture can and should be considered as appropriate to reinforce and reward positive steps in the direction of peace and reunification. These changes in posture can include rebasing within the region, but not redeploying troops away from the region. American forces still play a vital role as both a deterrent and as a symbol of commitment. Removing them from the region could trigger a response from other nations that would easily escalate, even if the intent were to replace one-for-one the military capabilities withdrawn by the United States. One US Army division sustained in Korea is far less threatening than comparable military capabilities developed by the Japanese to replace the Americans.

This in turn highlights the important task for Japan. Before it can contribute a viable force to the region's security it must have the region's confidence. Much of that confidence is tied to how Japan deals with its World War II history in the region. It cannot meet the goal of cooperation when neighbors still fear militarism.

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Those fears are also rooted in Japan's domestic politics. Strong Japanese political leadership—one that has gained the trust and confidence of the people by restructuring of the economy and reforming the political process—will then have the credibility to build a consensus of support for a less constrained military policy. Until then, military modernization and Constitutional revision are far too much to expect.

Furthermore, the rebuilding and strengthening of the Japanese economy before reunification is absolutely essential to both Korea and Japan. The immediate costs of reunification will be borne by Korea's neighbors. In the long run, successful reunification will be to strengthen the region's domestic economy and further secure its important global role. In the short run, reunification will mean refugees, massive humanitarian aid, a complete reordering of the political and economic infrastructure, some form of domestic peacekeeping, and major economic development investments that will not provide any significant fiscal return for years, perhaps decades. A Japan that is not economically strong enough to substantially contribute to that process will have two options. The first option is to endure the high costs and further weaken its domestic economy and political legitimacy. The second option is to attempt to isolate itself from the process, further weaken its regional legitimacy, and perhaps ultimately find itself excluded from the long-term economic benefits of successful reunification.

For China, meeting this challenge can be almost as complex a task as it will be for Japan. China's advantage is its existing ties with the two Koreas. This uniquely valuable position makes China crucial to this initial reunification process, reinforcing to other nations the importance of carefully sustaining a productive

diplomatic relationship with China. Carrying out this role also has domestic risks for China. The initial turmoil of reunification would be immediately felt in China. Economic refugees from North Korea's current economic crisis are already making their way to China in growing numbers. The increasing number of North Koreans requesting political asylum from foreign embassies in Beijing has created a serious political and diplomatic crisis. China walks a delicate tightrope with its own domestic hard-liners. Clearly it must do all that it can to prevent political and economic chaos in the two states on its borders. Of those two states, the regime most in need of change is its ideological ally while the other is one of its most important trading partners. Already struggling to maintain its own economic growth and internal political order, the rush of demands that will follow reunification will be difficult to absorb even for a nation as large as China.

But if China has much to lose it also has much to gain. The economic and political benefits of ensuring successful reunification would be both international and domestic. Through full participation and leadership—where and when it can best do so—in this process, China can provide for broader regional stability. This process will develop confidence-building measures and networks for future cooperation and conflict resolution. To be fully successful, however, China must join other nations in the region in resisting the temptation to dramatically alter the current military balance. For example, a unilateral buildup of troops to contend with economic refugees from North Korea would, at best, send mixed signal to other nations. Hard liners in the United States would be likely to rhetorically exploit such a move no

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matter how logical it might be for the purposes of internal domestic order. Any change in the military balance as reunification draws near must be multilateral, transparent, and focused on humanitarian relief and peacekeeping.

For the United States, the keys to this process are continued dialogue and cooperation with China, continued incremental rather than dramatic revisions to Japan's security structure matched with dramatic rather than incremental revisions to Japan's economic structure, continued involvement in the dialogue between the two Koreas, and continued regional presence. This delicate balancing act is clearly made more difficult by China's tensions with Taiwan and the debate over missile defense, recurring battles with Japan over trade, and the notoriously mercurial leadership in North Korea. Other issues may cloud the regional picture at the margins. However, the peaceful reunification of Korea is the linchpin for long-term security and stability in the region. Those nations that fail to recognize this and fail to take part in the delicate, long-term process undermine the success of this important effort while dramatically diminishing any prospect for securing their own long-term interests in the region.

NOTES

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¹⁸ There are countless scholarly accounts of the origins of balance of power theory and the history of the classic European era from the Congress of Vienna through the outbreak of World War I. For an interesting account of the human as well as the strategic elements involved, see Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1962).

¹⁹ All this is not to say that the nations of East Asia—particularly China—have not skillfully practiced balance of power politics. Japan quickly adapted to the system after the Meiji Restoration, and by the turn of the century the Japanese were among the most skilled practitioners of systemic level balance of power. The Chinese showed particular skill after the end of the Cultural Revolution and the US and China began to reengage. Some of the most outstanding examples of balance of power can be seen in China during the Three

Kingdoms era, while both Korean and Japan also have clear examples of internal balancing. These domestic political examples, however, are not the same as systemic level balance of power politics exercised by unitary actor states on a global or regional level. The historic pattern of state-to-state behavior in Asia has not followed the same dynamic as the patterns seen in Europe. My thanks to Russ Howard for helping me to clarify this key point.

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²⁷ Green notes a number of dramatic events in the mid 1990’s that seemed to stir some Japanese action on security, most notable among these the North Korean launch of the Taepodong Missile. Even with these events, Japanese public opinion still does not endorse Constitutional revision or substantial modernization of the military. Furthermore, even this increased attention from political leaders in the absence of public support has done little to stir concrete policy action beyond a combination of cautious moves toward closer ties to the US security umbrella and a tentative but clear attempt to accommodate China. Green, “Forgotten Player,” *ibid*; In Green’s latest book, *Japan’s Reluctant Realism: Foreign Policy Challenges in an Era of Uncertain Power*, (New York: Palgrave, 2001), he notes

that while no alternative strategic visions to existing US dependent foreign policies have emerged, Japan is moving in a more independent, Japan focused direction than has previously been evident. See also Parker, "Japan at Century's End."

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to publish this forty-seventh volume in the *Occasional Paper* series of the United States Air Force Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). Among its many contributions to United States security, two noted repositories of strategic expertise within the United States Army are its foreign area officer cadre and the Department of Social Sciences faculty at the United States Military Academy. This collection of papers on Northeast Asian regional security taps the combined strength of both; its authors are four Army officers with demonstrated regional expertise, all currently or formerly assigned to West Point's Department of Social Sciences. The combined set of papers covers a broad and relevant swath of territory, both geographic and conceptual. The first paper, by Jay Parker, addresses the regional security context with special emphasis on that strategic landscape as viewed from the perspective of Japanese security and the United States roles both in Japanese security and within the broader region. Sue Bryant then fits the Korean peninsula into that regional security context, adding special emphasis on the Korean road toward unification and on the continuing United States military presence in Korea—both for peninsular and regional security reasons. Finally, Russ Howard and Al Wilner add China to the mix and also add the third level of analysis—their focus is on post September 11, 2001 issues and opportunities, and the specific military-to-military dimension of United States overall military presence and policy. Together, then, the papers cover the region as well as policy recommendations from macro United States security and military policy, to force presence, to the significant roles of individual service members.

One caveat: these papers are going to press just as the press is reporting that the North Koreans have acknowledged the continuation of their nuclear weapons program in violation of assurances that the program was being abandoned. While this may certainly slow the pace of Korean normalization and heighten security concerns in the region—perhaps stretching out or amending a few of the recommendations here—it certainly underscores the centrality of security concerns within this vital region. And it adds an exclamation point to the authors' calls for a continuing and focused United States military presence and security policy in Northeast Asia.

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JAMES M. SMITH
Director

**JAPAN'S CHANGING ROLE AND THE FUTURE OF US
FORWARD PRESENCE IN NORTHEAST ASIA: CONTEXT,
OPTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES, *Jay M. Parker***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Does the commitment of Japan's Self Defense Force to the war on terrorism represent a bold and irreversible step toward greater military self reliance, or is this another in a long series of incremental, ambiguous, and reversible actions aimed at balancing domestic demands and external pressures? If this does represent a lasting change in Japan's defense posture, what does that mean for America's forward military presence in East Asia?

The near-term prospects for America's continuing role in the security and stability of Northeast Asia can only be effectively analyzed in light of Japan's likely security posture and the context of related regional issues and events. Even before September 11th, almost daily events in and between virtually every nation in the region highlighted the continuing United States presence. In the past decade the domestic politics of Japanese national security, the dramatic if erratic momentum toward Korean rapprochement, the re-emergence of China as a regional hegemon, and America's continuing reassessment of its global role have all combined to heighten attention to the future of American policy in East Asia.

This study reviews several specific security scenarios for Northeast Asia, examines the possible roles for all nations in the region, and concludes that in the near term Japan's domestic political and economic weaknesses combine with regional political dynamics to provide a significant, continuing US diplomatic and military presence.

**BEYOND THE SUNSHINE POLICY: AN ARGUMENT IN
FAVOR OF CONTINUED US MILITARY PRESENCE IN
NORTHEAST ASIA, *Susan F. Bryant***

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The accepted logic behind the U.S. military presence in Northeast Asia is simple. American forces remain in the region to protect South Korea from another invasion from the North. This paper argues the reality is far more complex. The American military in Northeast serves as a stabilizing force among the powers in the region. So long as the United States remains committed in

Asia, both Japan and South Korea need not fear the possibility of resurgent Chinese hegemonic aspirations in the region. Similarly, the Chinese need not fear the possibility of nuclear proliferation from either Japan or South Korea, while the United States maintains its existing security guarantees.

This paper argues that the possibility of Korean rapprochement hinted at in the June 2000 summit, should spur US policy makers to consider the role of US forces in the region during a reconciliation between the two Koreas and beyond. The researcher concludes that even given a scenario of peaceful Korean reunification the logic for a continued American military presence on the peninsula remains intact.

This paper calls for a reevaluation of the missions the US military might undertake during Korean reconciliation and beyond. During reunification, the US military could provide external security, allowing Korea the opportunity to reunite free from the possibility of unwanted outside intervention. Possibilities for post-reunification missions for the United States include off-peninsular contingencies such as peacekeeping and peace enforcement.

CHINA'S RISE AND THE US ARMY: LEANING FORWARD, *Russell D. Howard and Albert S. Wilner*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States led war on terrorism has already had a major impact on developing state relationships in Asia. China's changing role in the regional security environment provides the US Army with unique opportunities and challenges. Greater exposure to the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) in order to build trust and transparency must be carefully balanced by reinforcing commitments to US allies and friends and by remaining prepared to quickly respond should the relationship falter.

This paper argues that the US Army should take a dual-track approach. First, efforts should be made to improve relations by expanding Army exchanges with its Chinese counterparts. A strong program, tied to set objectives and a reciprocal framework, would improve understanding between the two militaries. Specifically, efforts should be made to broaden Army humanitarian/disaster relief contacts, increase participation in joint multi-lateral non-war-fighting and logistics related activities at locations such as the Asia

Pacific Center for Security Studies, and to expand Army efforts in counter terrorism.

It is understood that the relationship could turn negative, forcing the US Army into a more problematic scenario. This paper contends that America's ground forces, together with the joint community, must increasingly be trained and educated to meet the emergence of a Chinese military challenge in the region. Recommendations include changes to the United States Military Academy, Command and General Staff College and Senior Service College curriculums, as well as the development of a PLA OPFOR element at the Combat Training Centers.

