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AN ANALYSIS OF

- U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN NORTH EAST ASIA -

DOES OUR NEW STRATEGY FIT THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

COURSE IV WRITING REQUIREMENT

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- U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN EAST ASIA -
DOES OUR NEW STRATEGY FIT THE CIRCUMSTANCES?

THE HISTORICAL STRATEGY FOR THE REGION -

Our principle of "Europe First" for defense planning has never been a secret to the nations of the Pacific Rim. Originally, we used the "swing" strategy, according to which large elements of the 3d fleet in the Eastern Pacific would redeploy to the Atlantic if Europe were threatened. This strategy was replaced during the Reagan administration by the notion of "horizontal escalation". Horizontal escalation maintains that Soviet attacks in a theater may result in a U.S. strike on Soviet assets elsewhere.¹ Without a 600 ship Navy, it appears that Pacific naval assets will be required wherever a conventional threat appears, as evidenced by DESERT STORM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SETTING -

Since World War II, the United States has invested heavily in the Pacific region. This region is now our largest trading partner.² We have active security arrangements with Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia. We also have non-treaty security relations with several other countries in the region. The possibility of a diminished Soviet threat, reductions in our defense budget and Allies who have the ability to do more for their own defense, suggest that it is now desirable to reduce U.S. forces in the region.

THE POLITICAL OBJECTIVES -

Broadly stated, our political objectives in the region :

include:³ "- maintain regional stability and reduce tensions where possible;

- limit proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, especially on the Korean Peninsula;

- continue to encourage our Asian allies to assume a greater share of the responsibility for regional security and stability;

and, - encourage security cooperation among countries based upon agreed mutual interests."

The news media and our Congressional leaders appear anxious to show the "peace dividends" which may solve our economic problems when we make the required changes to our National Strategy in light of the "New World Order" and the reduced Soviet threat. Mr. Paul Wolfowitz, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, briefed a change for our National Strategy in North East Asia to the Senate Committee on Armed Forces on 19 April, 1990. The recommendations made for the President by the Department of Defense lack, in my opinion, the degree of specificity necessary to maintain stability within the region. Granted, too much specificity may make it easier for our potential adversaries in the region (North Korea and the Soviet Union) to complete their threat assessment of us. However, I feel that in its present form, THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN EAST ASIA (subsequently called the "report") may result in one of three undesirable outcomes.

These outcomes are:

1. North Korea could attempt the military reunification of Korea if it perceives that the United States doesn't have the wherewithal to respond rapidly to such a threat.

2. The Association for South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and other countries within the region fear that Japan will build up its

military to the point that it again presents a threat to the stability of the region.

3. The Soviet Union still has massive military forces in their Far Eastern Region and may be looking for the opportunity to fill any perceived vacuum in the balance of power in the region.

These outcomes are problematic because the strategic changes of Europe are not mirrored in North East Asia. Therefore, force reductions attempted at this time may create conditions where one or more of these three situations can occur.

PHASED MILITARY OBJECTIVES -

With the end of the Cold War, the United States is preparing a strategic response commensurate with the changes - both foreign and domestic. To meet this objective, the Senate amended the 1990 and 1991 Defense Authorization Acts to require a comprehensive report on the future role and structure of U.S. forces in the Pacific Region.⁴ The "report" was provided during Senate hearings before the Committee on Armed Services by Mr. Wolfowitz, team leader; Mr. Carl Ford, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs; Ambassador Allen Holmes, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Burdensharing; and Rear Admiral William Pendley, the Director of Plans in the U.S. Pacific Command. The three phases for achieving the military objectives outlined in this "report" are as follows:⁵

PHASE I -- 1-3 YEARS: Thin out the existing force and begin rearranging security relationships

- Over the next three years, the Department of Defense will, in a balanced and measured way, restructure and reduce its forces in the region without jeopardizing its ability to

meet its security commitments. Adjustments in our combat forces will be minimal. As an interim goal, our overall force total of 135,000 forward deployed in Asia will be reduced by 14,000 to 15,000 personnel.

PHASE II -- 3-5 YEARS: Reduce and reorganize the force structure

- During this phase, proportionally greater reductions in combat forces will be undertaken incrementally to ensure that potential adversaries do not misread our deterrent capability and intentions.

PHASE III -- 5-10 YEARS: Further reduce forces and stabilize at a somewhat lower level as circumstances permit

- Continue modest cuts beyond Phase II reductions, as appropriate, given existing circumstances.

These reductions are phased over time and will be accomplished in a deliberate manor so as not to jeopardize our security commitments. If this does occur the way it is intended, then these phased military objectives should result in the achievement of our political objectives. This means that Congress would perceive that the U.S. is reducing it's share of support to the region, and that Japan and Korea are increasing their share of the burden for stability in the region. Ultimately, Japan and South Korea could achieve a bi-lateral economic and security relationship which needs little assistance from outside the region.

VULNERABILITIES -

THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Phase I sounds innocuous with regard to its effect on security in the region, except for issues such as The 2d Infantry Division force modernization program. The last active Army unit to transition to the M1 Abrams tank and the M2/M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle, the 2d Infantry Division will be fully occupied during

1992. Training its personnel to operate and maintain the new combat equipment is a full time mission for any unit. In addition to these two vehicles, there are new radios, new trucks, new test equipment, etc. - all under a program the Army calls the Total Package Fielding concept. Typically, each battalion falls to a lower readiness rating until it feels it can again achieve its wartime mission.

Originally, the transition of the 2d Infantry was to be accomplished by the unit replacement system, or COHORT. New company-sized COHORT units trained on the new equipment would arrive in Korea, draw their new equipment and train on their new mission. When they were ready to assume their duties, the old companies would turn-in their equipment and return to the States. After receiving training on the new equipment stateside, they would be assigned to meet the Army requirements worldwide. This process would maintain combat readiness in Korea and complete the 2d Infantry's Force Modernization program. Reducing 5000 ground force personnel by the end of this phase without affecting the combat forces⁶ means that operational readiness may suffer due to the lack of skilled personnel to provide maintenance support on this new equipment. North Korea may be looking for any sign of a change in our commitment to support South Korea...the question is would the removal of 5,000 U.S. soldiers signify such a change?

Domestic politics is also a part of South Korea's security problem. The governments of Seoul have held to the belief that discipline is required to guard against the military danger

Pyongyang presents. This discipline has resulted in a repression which sometimes makes President Kim-Il-Sung's government comparatively less credible to alienated students and other dissidents. An outbreak of anti-regime violence could also act as a catalyst for a second Korean War.⁷

When considering stability on the Korean Peninsula, remember Kim Il-Sung swore to unite Korea before he died. He has stepped up the growth and modernization of the North Korean military forces⁸ and is better prepared than ever to invade the South. Because his son may not be accepted as his successor, and he is getting old, he may make a final effort to unite North and South Korea before his death. Phase II and III do not ensure that we will retain the ability to react to a changing situation. If the United States is once again perceived as not willing to commit forces to protect South Korea as happened in 1950, North Korea may attack. Kim realizes that the DPRK needs both China and the Soviet Union for economic and military aid. If Korea is to unite, Kim must play one off against the other to maximize their support. He has been increasingly successful in doing this. Gorbachev has called for Korean unification and shows great interest in Pyongyang's proposal for creating a "nuclear-free zone" on the Korean Peninsula.⁹

Doug Bandow , a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, comments in a Foreign Policy No. 77, winter 1989-90 article entitled "Leaving Korea", that the State Department does not see the Korean Peninsula as vital to our interests. Senator Warner made almost the same statement during the Senate hearings on U.S. Military

Presence in East Asia.¹⁰ Mr. Wolfowitz's reply to Senator Warner cautioned against acting precipitously lest the North Koreans again draw the wrong conclusions and start another war. I agree with Mr. Wolfowitz and feel that specifics are therefore needed to prevent just such an occurrence. Considerations for Army pre-positioned equipment on the peninsula and creating a "Reforger-like" exercise out of "Team Spirit" are examples of specifics I feel we needed to signify our resolve to support South Korea if threatened by the North. With modern simulation it is possible to exercise the joint, combined arms team (as demonstrated by Reforger 89) on the Korean peninsula in a realistic warfighting exercise without maneuvering forces. The command and control personnel from the stateside units could visit the sites where their pre-positioned equipment is stored, and conduct a detailed terrain analysis of their tactical assembly areas, counter-attack routes, and objectives.

U.S./JAPANESE CONCERNS

Japan has developed one of the world's strongest economies yet they are not a "superpower" because they do not possess the military strength to affect world affairs. Japan's constitution restricts its military capabilities. In 1981 they made their first move to defend themselves by extending their self-defense territory out to 1,000 miles. Japan now spends about one percent of its GNP on defense. The United States alternatively spends about five percent of its GNP on defense. Relatively speaking however, this is not as big a discrepancy as one might imagine. One percent of Japan's GNP

big a discrepancy as one might imagine. One percent of Japan's GNP spent on defense gives this nation the third largest military budget in the world." This fact, together with the "Country Specific Objectives" of the "report", encourages the Japanese to improve the quality, but not necessarily the quantity of their Self-Defense Force. Insisting that the Japanese purchase, rather than manufacture, military hardware may increase the already high tension and friction between the U.S. and Japan. In spite of the fact that it is cheaper for Japan to purchase directly from us (R & D costs, low volume, etc.), they appear intent on obtaining the manufacturing rights to produce military equipment, such as the F-16. If they acquire the ability to manufacture high-tech weapons, the ASEAN nations would blame the United States. Indeed, the past aggressiveness which the Japanese people have shown in military matters is the greatest concern to our other allies in the region; therefore I feel that more specificity regarding U.S. resolve in the region would allay such fears. The cry for burden sharing must be finessed in order for the American public to feel that Japan is doing more, and for the ASEAN nations to feel that the situation is unchanged. To accomplish this difficult task, the State Department must remind our citizens how much the Japanese actually are spending on the defense of the region. State should also point out to the ASEAN nations at every opportunity that Japan possesses only defensive-type weapons, and encourage bi-lateral security agreements between Japan and ASEAN.

THE USSR AND THE PACIFIC REGION

The Soviet Union is going through change that is so immense it may threaten its continued existence. The apparent switch to a free trade economy has signalled the end of Communism. The soviet people are reeling from psychological shock after years of trying to convince themselves that eventually they will prosper. Then the announcement comes of a transition to a "Free economy". Price ceilings are gone, the price for a loaf of bread increases 300 percent, factories are free to regulate what they manufacture - nation wide shortages occur - simple items such as hypodermic needles become even scarcer. Doesn't it make sense for the Soviet Union to turn towards Japan and the Pacific region to try to improve its economy?

Japan and the Soviet Union have laid the framework for the resolution of their longstanding Kurile islands' dispute. The Soviet Union has wanted to establish a "free trade zone" on the two larger islands. Japan is aware of Moscow's economic problems and may try a form of "checkbook diplomacy" in an attempt to buy back the northern islands. If they do, they may risk isolation from the nations who stepped forward to provide economic assistance like the U.S. and Great Britain.¹² The world will be watching to see what events unfold during Gorbachev's visit with Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu during the week of 15 to 20 April, 1991. Although the predictions are that nothing significant will occur, it's enough that this, the first meeting in 100 years between these two nations is happening. The Soviets badly need both the kind of "mega-yen", and technological assistance which Japan could provide.

Alternatively, the Japanese may become involved in a game of their own as they "play the Soviet card" to evoke a more favorable response from America on current differences.¹³

The Soviet military has reduced its forces in Mongolia. However, through unit transfers and qualitative improvements, the apparent strength of their Far East military districts (minus Mongolia) and their Pacific Fleet have increased overall.¹⁴ Additionally, the Soviet Air Forces in the Far Eastern District have benefitted from Conventional Forces Europe treaty-generated redeployments. With such a military presence, the Soviet Union could easily fill any void in the balance of power if the U.S. reduced its forces in the region. Because of her disastrous economy and the unrest in the Republics, Moscow cannot risk "a loss of face" in North East Asia. Therefore, Moscow is seriously concerned that a triangle composed of an anti-Soviet Washington, Tokyo, and Seoul emerges to choke off the Soviet's vital need for an expanded economy in the region. If this becomes a reality, Moscow may respond by providing even more military aid and convince the DPRK that now is the time for unification! ¹⁵

CHINA - AGAIN THE SLEEPING GIANT!

China is once again an enigma within the region. Possessing the largest land force and the largest Navy in the region, she has mended many past differences with South Korea, Japan, and Moscow, and is seen as waiting to see who will ultimately possess the balance of power within the region. It is doubtful that further Sino-Soviet re-approachment will occur during the next five years

since China is not able to help alleviate Moscow's economic situation. For the future, China will remain as a counterbalance against Soviet expansion in the region, and a "friend" to work with regarding sub-regional security issues.¹⁶

CHANGES TO OUR STRATEGY -

KOREA: Phase I - 1. Re-institute Company-level COHORT for the tank battalions in the 2d Infantry Division. This is the only way to transition the units in Korea. (They must transition because the M60 tank which is currently used by the 2d Infantry is phasing out of the Army's inventory - both Active and Reserve) 2. After preparing a transition strategy for 2 ID, look at the 5,000 spaces which Phase I now eliminates to ensure sufficient support remains to handle the total fielding package concept.

Phase II - 1. Establish pre-positioned equipment in country and reduce the 2d Infantry Division to a Division Forward element. U.S. presence would then consist of a rapid reinforcement capability which would serve as a deterrent to Kim Il Sung if he attempted aggression. 2. Expand Team Spirit exercises so that units from the America's Command participate regularly in much the same manner as Reforger exercises.

JAPAN: Phase I - Push to facilitate the Japanese purchase of U.S. military hardware rather than allowing them to purchase construction rights. This precludes them from benefiting from our technological advancements without payment for their portion of Research and Development costs, and limits the possibility of their expanding such production to more advanced hardware.

Phase II - Move the Maritime Prepositioning Ships (MPS) located in Hawaii to Japan. This would provide a quick reaction capability which would cause the Soviets, North Korea, and Japan to think twice before attempting offensive operations in the Pacific. (The MPS located at Guam is for the Indian Ocean.)

SOVIET UNION: Phase I - 1. Continue efforts to obtain conventional (and nuclear) arms reductions. Take an objective look at naval conventional forces to determine if we can make concessions. We have made many voluntary changes (i.e., decommissioning's) which could have been used to exact something in return from the Soviets. Naval force development changes should be "wickered" into conventional arms reductions if it is advantageous for us. 2. Promote the benefits derived from a free trade economy. No special deals are needed. The people of the Soviet Union are the catalyst for change. Attempts by the U.S. to help their economy transition to a free economy may prove disastrous. As the Soviet people experience the drastic changes which must occur, they may blame the United States for their "short term" misfortune and not their own government.

Phase II - Maintain sufficient forward deployed forces to symbolize U.S. commitment to the region. This includes the repositioning of the MPS mentioned for Japan.

REGIONAL OBJECTIVES: Remember that Japan is the linchpin of Asian security. Other nations of the region fear that she may become the military aggressor of the past. Building trust between Japan and the other ASEAN nations will take time, but will

hopefully improve enough within five years for Phase III to occur. North Korea's unchanged attitude towards the South requires prudence and vigilance.

Phase III. Promote regional stability by encouraging Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN nations to build complementary forces to support their common interests. It would seem natural for the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to protect the sea lines of communications (SLOC) coming from the Persian Gulf and Europe through the Malaccan Straits and the Philippine Sea. South Korea could, due to her position on the peninsula, protect against a North Korean and Chinese air and land threat. While Japan could protect against an expanded Soviet threat to the region.

POTENTIAL RESULTS -

If the recommended changes to the strategy for this region are adopted, it would permit a reduction in overall overseas troop strength. This reduction would be possible because we will retain the ability to quickly project the same size force using pre-positioned equipment. This would demonstrate the U.S.'s resolve to maintain stability in the region. A program which would expand the current Team Spirit exercises in a fashion similar to the Reforger exercises (Return of Forces to Korea - RFK) would ensure that Kim-Il-Sung does not become the aggressor and attempt to unite Korea under Communist rule. Maintaining the sole proprietary rights to weapons manufacturing induces the Japanese to buy U.S. military hardware, and keeps the other ASEAN nations mollified regarding Japanese plans for military expansion. If the above goals are met,

I think it inconceivable that the Soviet's could expand their role in the region. Consider: 7 out of 10 U.S. mutual defense treaties and 7 of the world's largest armies are in the Pacific. The U.S. trade in this region has exceeded trade with the European Economic Community for 18 consecutive years. We must not permit a false sense of security from doing what we must to maintain the balance of power in the region.

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