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## OPTIONS FOR U.S. POLICY TOWARD KOREA

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## BACKGROUND

Korea is, like the Middle East, a major vortex of world politics. It is the only place where geography brings the forces of all the world's biggest powers, the U.S., the U.S.S.R., China, and Japan, close together. Geographically small and poor in resources, this country has been the site of three wars in the last century, each of which involved the major powers and one of which cost 50,000 U.S. lives. The North and South Korean armies number among the world's larger and more competent. The North's economy spurted ahead early, then slowed somewhat and is currently in default on its international loans. The South's economy stagnated for many years, but under Park Chung-hee took off at extraordinary rates (averaging 10% per annum) and is returning to booming vitality after brief difficulties during the world recession. Diplomatically the North was relatively isolated from non-communist countries until the early 1970s, but after South Vietnam's fall has been able to capitalize on the presence of U.S. forces in South Korea to win recognition from many Third World and other countries and to exclude South Korea from the Third World movement. Politically, South Korea's strengths are somewhat offset by international and domestic opposition to authoritarian policies, while the North's strengths are somewhat offset by a coming crisis of succession complicated by nepotism and by international distaste for the most totalitarian regime in the world. Divided, Korea remains a tinderbox. United, it could conceivably become one of the world's bigger powers, with a homogeneous culture, an army of a million men, a dynamic economy, extraordinary armament, and a nuclear capability.

In the event of war, the major powers would find it difficult to remain disengaged, and the politics of Japan--the state that is the biggest key to the future of the region--could be massively affected in ways adverse to U.S. interests.

## POLICY ISSUES AND OPTIONS

## I. Military Posture

## A. Nuclear Posture

1. Modernize or expand current deployments
2. Continue current deployments
3. Move warheads and/or launchers to less exposed locations
4. Partial withdrawal, combined with modernization, or without modernization
5. Remove with logistics improvements for reintroduction  
--conditionally or unconditionally
6. Remove without logistics improvements

Nuclear weapons would be militarily useful in any Korean War, whether the enemy were North Korea alone or in alliance with either the PRC or USSR. This is the genesis of proposals for adding to, or modernizing, current deployments. But, assuming a moderate infrastructure modernization program, neither current deployments nor enhanced deployments have any warfighting superiority over deployments in Guam, Hawaii or other U.S. territory, because transit time is less than decision and armament time. Korean deployments have the critical political disadvantage that they put a U.S. President in the wartime position of either using nuclear weapons against a small non-nuclear power or else withdrawing them under fire while taking large casualties. Use of the weapons

against North Korea would defeat U.S. political objectives in the region by alienating the Japanese. Moreover, such use would stimulate nuclear proliferation throughout the world. Nuclear weapons are not usefully stored in Korea for defending Japan, for deterring Soviet attacks on China, for global nuclear warfare (SIOP) contingencies, or for second front use in the event of war with the Soviet Union in Europe. They are not necessary to reduce South Korean incentives to acquire indigenous nuclear weapons, since U.S. threats to curtail conventional and logistic support should be adequate to deter such proliferation.

If warfighting cannot justify the presence of nuclear weapons, then deterrence or political influence must do so. Defenders of current or expanded deployments argue that the weapons are for keeping the peace, not for fighting a war. But the North Koreans have enough information on U.S. non-use in the Korean (1950-54) and Vietnamese wars and on U.S. and Japanese sensitivities to identify nuclear weapons in Korea as a paper tiger. The nuclear weapons have no record of utility within the region for positive political influence, and their presence undermines crucial policy initiatives for global non-proliferation. In particular, one cannot pursue a policy of non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear powers and simultaneously maintain nuclear deterrence in Korea. Similarly, Korean deployments are the sole important case of U.S. tactical nuclear weapons deployed on Third World soil. Thus, withdrawal of nuclear weapons from Korea would greatly enhance U.S. options, and the U.S. moral position, in combatting pressure for nuclear proliferation.

Therefore, options (1), (2) and (4) must be rejected as militarily unnecessary and politically damaging, and (3) must be rejected as merely delaying the problems for hours or days rather than solving them.

If one wishes to remove the weapons, two problems must be faced. The argument above that nothing is lost by deploying the weapons outside Korea is strictly true only if certain logistic improvements are made to ensure that air access can be maintained and that the weapons can be quickly unloaded and transported to their launch sites; this means costs for bulldozers, other equipment, airport extensions, perhaps some aircraft, and some roadbuilding. Second, removing the weapons at the wrong time can send a signal of weakness which could invite future attack.

I recommend removal of the weapons at a time that meets the following conditions. South Korean political stability must not be substantially worse than today; the economic boom should be in progress, the North Koreans must be relatively quiescent, and U.S. credibility must not have been thrown into serious doubt by a recent event. Japanese understanding and agreement must be acquired prior to action. These conditions sound stiff, but I would regard them as being well on the way to being satisfied. Without the recent Korean incident, they might well have been satisfied by January 1977. To avoid sending the wrong kind of signal, I strongly recommend that the withdrawal be carried out as part of a global "rationalization" and "modernization" of the U.S. tactical nuclear posture -- i.e., it should be done simultaneously with some major move in Europe.

Since the necessity to reintroduce nuclear weapons during a war would arise only with regard to the relatively unlikely contingency of a joint North Korean attack with either Chinese or Soviet forces, infrastructure modernization for this purpose is a useful but not vital need which could be done over a period of time at acceptable levels of risk. (That is, there would be risks, but the risks would be well below those we find acceptable elsewhere.)

- I. Military Posture (continued)
  - B. Conventional force deployment options
    1. reinforce current deployments
    2. continue current deployments
    3. move U.S. division to rear
    4. begin phased withdrawal of ground division only
    5. withdraw all conventional forces
    6. reduce ground force to brigade level

In addition to nuclear weapons, the U.S. currently deploys in South Korea a single division plus various air and naval forces. These conventional forces have the primary mission of keeping the peace through deterrence, and the subordinate mission of defeating aggression by North Korea and/or the latter's allies. These forces are currently perceived by Japan as an indicator of U.S. interest in Northeast Asia, and by China (PRC) as a useful counterweight to Soviet power.

Reinforcement is of interest only if incidents initiated by North Korea rise to the point of threatening large scale military action. Then air and naval reinforcements will likely be of greatest interest because these represent South Korea's vulnerabilities. Ground reinforcements would become necessary if a radical regime were to come to power in China and show signs of willingness to provide direct backing for a North Korean military attack, or if the Soviet Union attempted to divert U.S. attention from a crisis elsewhere by providing such backing.

Current deployments have kept the peace during periods of great tension and meanwhile South Korean relative strength has risen substantially. Thus it would seem possible to do the same job with less U.S. presence. Reduced U.S. presence would serve to demonstrate South Korea's independent viability in the face of increasingly successful North Korean portrayals of the South as a puppet regime. It might also calm domestic critics of what appears to them as excessive U.S. support of the Park regime. On the other hand, badly executed reductions in presence could prove dangerous. In a period of U.S. recovery from Vietnam, reductions can appear to North Korea as invitations to adventure, to the Japanese as signs of U.S. abandonment of Asia, and to China (PRC) as evidence that the U.S. is not really a useful counterweight to the U.S.S.R. Thus a conventional status quo policy is a quite viable option, and perhaps the only reasonable option in the event of North Korean adventurism, or Sino-Soviet rapprochement, or possible future Chinese support of Northern adventurism. And the status quo is preferable to any alternative in which U.S. forces will not be available for reintroduction in a crisis. Theoretically there is no reason why the U.S. could not maintain a division in Korea for the rest of history. But it would be preferable for the South Koreans to bear most responsibility for their own defense and to be demonstrably independent of the U.S.

Moving the U.S. division from a forward position (between Seoul and the DMZ) would upset South Korea, would send signals to North Korea that could be interpreted as weakness, would cost about \$500,000,000, and might weaken U.S. ability to influence DMZ incidents, and would only gain small amounts of decision time. This option should therefore be rejected.

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(continued)

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Reduction in U.S. ground forces is feasible because of South Korean ground forces' strength, and because South Korean administrative and economic successes promise to augment that strength. The risk is that the margin of South Korean ground strength might be sufficiently small, particularly when combined with certain air and naval vulnerabilities, that the North might gamble on overcoming the South's advantages by virtue of surprise -- an option not open if U.S. presence guarantees massive U.S. support. Moreover, reduction of U.S. forces below division strength worries American commanders, because a division is the minimum effective fighting force in conventional warfare on the scale of a Korean war. Given this balance of considerations, extreme caution is necessary, but caution need not imply immobility. I therefore recommend a policy of reductions in the ground force, to be initiated at a time when it does not appear to be a withdrawal under pressure. The reductions should only come after a highly visible U.S. review and after the most diligent consultations with the Japanese. The reductions should be tied to (1) Japanese agreement, (2) continued South Korean strength, and (3) reductions of tension. (2) and (3) should be viewed as substitutes for one another to some extent, so that either one justifies further reductions. The timetable for reductions should be unstated, because it is tied to conditions, and it should be reversible in crisis.

The reductions should not apply to air and naval forces, because the South is more vulnerable in these respects and because sudden reinforcement of the North by the PRC or USSR could give the North sudden overwhelming advantages. Moreover, and this may be more important, substantial U.S. control of South Korea's air and naval strength facilitates U.S. control of an ally which has tended to overreact in crises. I therefore recommend option (4)

The reductions should be tied to completion of U.S. modernization program promises, as discussed below. These promises are essential to the validation of the argument that Korean strength allows reduced U.S. presence, and also essential simply to keep faith.

The reductions should also be tied to demonstration of what has been called a surge capability, namely the will and technical capacity to reinforce Korea rapidly. Elements of the Second Division withdrawn from Korea should regularly exercise by rotating in and out of Korea. Air and naval capabilities should be regularly demonstrated by exercises such as the recent response to the "poplar incident," a response that included F-111s, B-52s, other aircraft, and a naval task force. (The response was an overreaction to the incident, but a model exercise.)

Elements of the Second Division withdrawn from Korea will need to be stationed elsewhere. Given the global Soviet military buildup, and given the thinness of the U.S. forces available for Asian contingencies, the Division is needed. But the cost of relocation could run as high as \$1 billion fixed costs plus greatly increased variable (labor) costs. In Asia as in Europe, bringing the troops home is expensive.

#### I.C. Military modernization assistance.

The key to U.S. force reductions is Korean strength, and South Korea has certain key vulnerabilities, for instance to surprise air attack against aircraft not so well protected as their Northern counterparts. The previously promised Force Modernization Program, with a cost scheduled at \$1.5 billion

from FY 1971 to the end of FY 1976, has not been completed. It can be completed during 1977 at a cost of \$363 million. (Figure provided by a Congressional aide.) But South Korean needs can be met by current DoD requests of \$275 million in FMS credits, \$8.3 million in military assistance (MAP), and \$2.7 million in military education programs needed to maintain weapons and use them properly. This request is not unreasonably high, but it is high enough to indicate seriousness in a volatile year.

#### I.D. Rationale for military changes

The rationale given for military changes is as crucial as the changes themselves. The rationale for nuclear withdrawals is political and military rationality. The rationale for conventional force reductions is Korean success and, if applicable, tension reduction. Military force changes must not be tied to the human rights issue -- although that issue is of course very important. The implication of such a connection would be that we would be willing to risk regional, and perhaps world, peace, over this issue, and that we would be willing to risk having South Korea's people subjugated by the most totalitarian regime in world history (not an exaggeration) in order to protest Park's authoritarian ways. Such a course would be neither sensible nor moral.

#### II. Diplomatic Policies

##### A. Response to rising South Korean authoritarianism

1. Ignore it
2. Explain it
3. Denounce it
4. Take specific economic or military actions in reprisal
5. Emphasize curtailment of KCIA activities in U.S.

As argued above (I.D.), it would be both irrational and immoral to jeopardize the peace in Korea through withholding needed military equipment. It is difficult to imagine specifically economic reprisals which would be effective without endangering the regime. We really have very little leverage over authoritarianism in a culture with a 1300 year tradition of authoritarianism, an extraordinary military threat which justifies harsh rule in the minds of many Koreans, and a society which feels that the economic growth made possible by strong government at least partially offsets the violations of human rights. Nonetheless, unjustifiable abuses of human rights have become an intense political issue, and an administration committed to emphasizing traditional American values in foreign policies faces a severe dilemma here.

We must therefore dissociate the U.S. from the regime and from its specific abuses while continuing to defend Koreans and to facilitate their prosperity. I recommend: (1) emphasizing repeatedly that we are defending the Korean people, not the Park regime; (2) vigorously denouncing specific infringements of human rights as they occur; and (3) taking vigorous action against Korean CIA activities in the U.S. as the most vulnerable aspect of Korean authoritarianism.

##### B. Response to Korean CIA infiltration, bribery, and intimidation

The basic options are continued low-key countermeasures, more vigorous private countermeasures, and vigorous public countermeasures. I strongly recommend the latter, because low key measures have proved ineffective, because effectiveness is needed to protect American freedoms, and because public attacks will signal our seriousness about the issue here and in Korea.

## II. Diplomatic Policies (Continued)

### C. Potential Diplomatic Positions

1. Do nothing
2. Emphasize revival of North/South talks
3. State U.S. desire for contacts with North Korea, but condition these upon PRC/USSR reciprocation toward South Korea
4. Unofficial---e.g., press or academic---contacts with North Korea
5. Four power or six power conference

The goals of U.S. diplomacy should be peace (above all), reciprocal recognition of the Koreans by one another and by their big power adversaries, a formal peace treaty, and dual U.N. membership. The latter three are likely to be distant goals.

The options are not mutually exclusive. Unofficial U.S. contacts with North Korea are likely to do little damage and could become a crucial form of communication. On the other hand, official contacts without PRC/USSR reciprocation toward the South and without North Korean acknowledgment of South Korea as a diplomatic equal, will simply contribute to North Korea's current massive campaign to isolate South Korea diplomatically. Our friends will be inclined to recognize the North, but the North's friends will have no incentive to reciprocate. And because North Korea is so small, none of the advantages that accrued to the U.S. from simple contacts with China would follow from similar contacts with North Korea.

The North Koreans demand a two-power conference (North Korea and the U.S.) to renegotiate the armistice, on the ground that South Korea was not a signatory of the armistice and therefore has no right to attend. The U.S. has proposed a four power conference (U.S., PRC, North Korea, South Korea), and some have suggested a larger conference including Japan and the Soviet Union which, although not parties to the armistice, have interests that must be satisfied and also considerable ability to disrupt a conference that excludes them. North Korea, pursuing a strategy of isolating South Korea and denying its right to any diplomatic status, has no interest in such conferences. The PRC and U.S.S.R. are interested in such conferences if they would prevent renewed war in Korea, but neither can press North Korea too hard for fear of pushing North Korea into an alliance with the other. Thus, such conferences are unlikely to occur until North Korea has been persuaded by diplomatic success and military strength in the South that the current strategy cannot succeed.

If there is any opportunity to re-start North/South talks, they would appear to have the greatest likelihood of achieving progress.

### II .E. U.N. Strategy

Strategy in the United Nations will become an issue for President Carter in September of 1977. The problem will have been defined by what happens in September 1976. In 1975 the U.N. passed contradictory resolutions, the pro-South Korean one conditioning termination of the U.N. Command on achievement of a satisfactory substitute, and the pro-North Korean simply demanding termination. If the "North Korean" resolution passes and the other does not, we shall have to fall back on bilateral ties to justify defense of South Korea.

## III. Economic Aid

For several years the U.S. has provided no economic aid because South Korea does not need it. Projected 11% growth in GNP this year indicates that this happy situation will continue.

APPENDIX I

Active and Reserve Military Personnel and Equipment, South and North Korea, 1975

Branch of service, personnel, and type of equipment	South Korea		North Korea	
	Number	Breakdown or description	Number	Breakdown or description
Total active armed forces	625,000		467,000	
<i>Army</i>				
Active personnel	560,000		410,000	
Reserve personnel	1,000,000		250,000	
Surface-to-air missile (SAM) battalions	2	With 8 Hawk and Nike-Hercules batteries	20	With 180 SA-2s
Medium tanks	1,000	M-47s, M-48s, M-60s	1,000	300 T-34s, 700 T-54s, 55s and T-59s
Light tanks	0		130	80 PT-76s, 50 T-62s
Artillery pieces	2,000	Up to 203 mm	3,000	Up to 152 mm
Artillery, other	1 battalion	With Honest John surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs)	200	Self-propelled guns
			1,800	Rocket launchers
			12	FROG, SSMs
			2,500	Antiaircraft guns
<i>Navy</i>				
Active personnel	20,000		17,000	
Reserve personnel	33,000		40,000	
Submarines	0		8	4 Soviet W-class, 4 Chinese R-class
Patrol boats	22		18	10 Komars with Styx SSMs; 8 Osas with Styx SSMs
Destroyers	7		0	
Destroyer escorts	9		0	
Minesweepers	10		0	
Subchasers	0		15	
Gunboats	15	Coastal escorts	54	
Torpedo boats	0		90	
Landing ships	20	8 tank, 12 medium	0	
Amphibious craft	60		0	
<i>Marines</i>				
Active personnel	20,000		0	
Reserve personnel	60,000		0	
<i>Air Force</i>				
Active personnel	25,000		40,000	
Reserve personnel	35,000		40,000	
Combat aircraft	216	70 F-5As, 36 F-4Ds, 100 F-86Fs, 10 RF-5As	558	60 IL-28 bombers, 28 SU-7s, 300 MIG-15s and -17s, 150 MIG-21s, 40 MIG-19s, 10 IL-28 reconnaissance
Paramilitary personnel	2,000,000	Militia	1,500,000	Militia
			50,000	Internal security and border patrol

Source: Table 2-1 from Ralph Clough, Deterrence and Defense in Korea (Brookings, 1976), derived from The Military Balance, 1975-1976 (IISS, 1975).

APPENDIX C

DATA ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO KOREA  
(in millions of U.S. dollars)

I. <u>FMS Credit sales</u>			II. Military Assistance			III. Military Education**		
<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 1975</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 1976</u>	<u>Proposed*</u> <u>FY 1977</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 75</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 76</u>	<u>Proposed*</u> <u>FY 77</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 75</u>	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 76</u>	<u>Proposed*</u> <u>FY 77</u>
\$59	126	275	82.6	74	8.3	1.4	2.7	2.7

\*Proposed FY 1977 figures are those proposed in the Department of Defense presentation to the Congress on 8 March 1977

\*\*International military education consists largely of training programs connected with maintenance and use of equipment previously purchased.